SMOKING

The Homoerotic Subtext of *Man Alone*

JANET CHARMAN

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The Homoerotic Subtext of *Man Alone*
A Matrixial Reading

Janet Charman

Foreword by Tracey Slaughter

genre books

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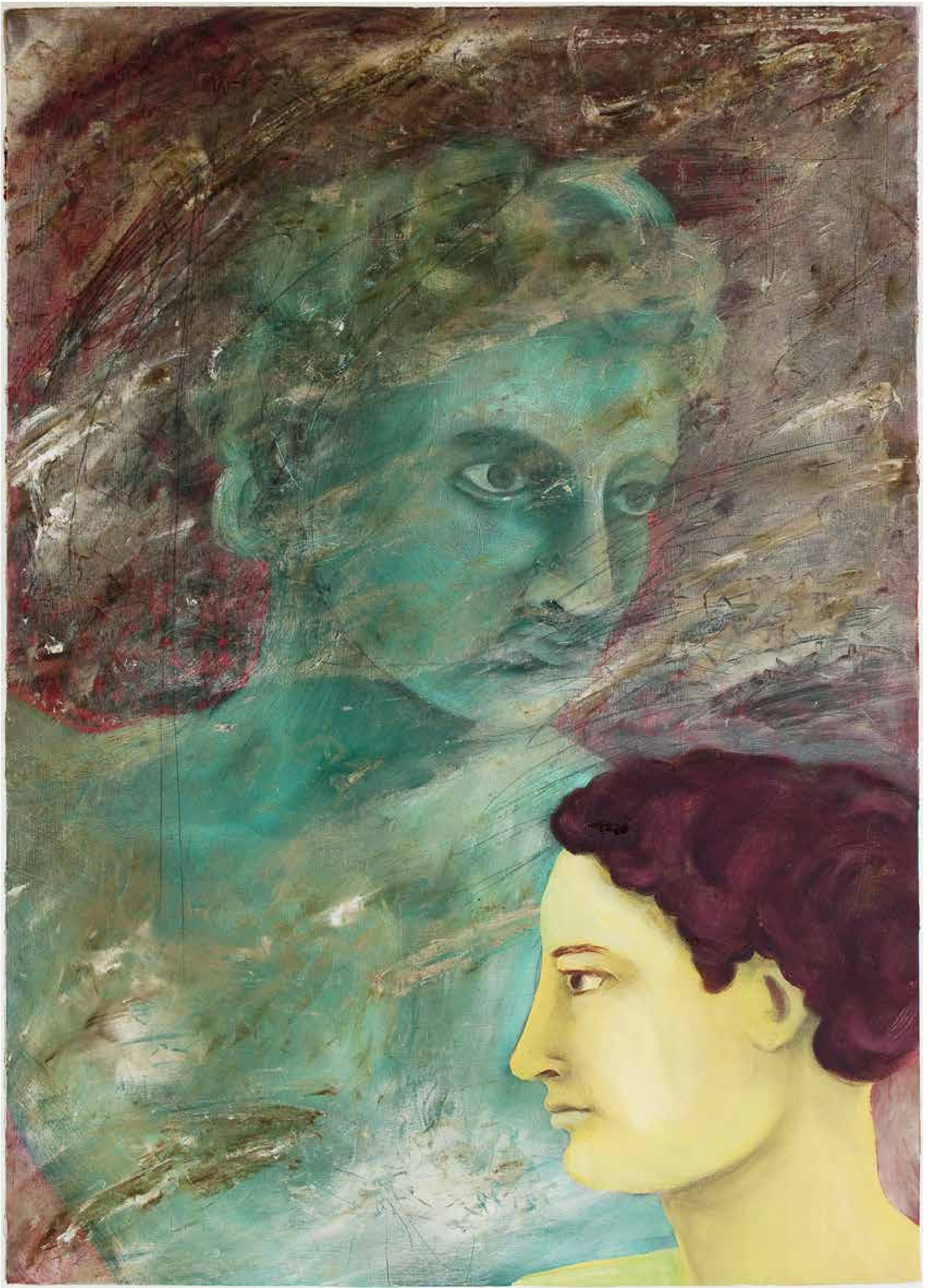

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FOREWORD

AN IMPORTANT and impressive feat of scholarship, Janet Charman's *Smoking: The Homoerotic Subtext of Man Alone* takes up a text that has been seen as a mainstay of masculinist New Zealand literary history and activates a vastly different account. Taking apart the masculinist surface of Mulgan's text, with its seeming valorization (even to the Spartan minimalism of its narrative style) of the stereotypical dominion hardman, Charman foregrounds the "calculated subtextual ambiguity" which animates an alternative reading, working with stunning and stringent skill through the connotative intricacies of the novel to show how *Man Alone* both raises and elides, asserts and disavows a homoerotic content.

Charman's examination makes original and illuminating use of Bracha Ettinger's psychoanalytic theories, moving beyond the binaries of "the phallocentric discourse on whose terms *Man Alone* has been conventionally read" to mine the rich and resonant seam of "matrixial alternatives" embedded in the text – in a matrixial reading, Charman finds, Mulgan's tough uprooted protagonist is not a conventional masculinist hero but an out-law of an-Other kind. Pointing out the paradox that in a text that opens and closes with war – and whose original title centred on *Talking of War* – the body of the novel talks solely of Johnson's nomadic civilian (mis)adventures with his mates, Charman moves to explore "what goes without saying"

in Mulgan's narrative, finding that it's not matter-of-fact and militaristic male courage but covert homoerotic comradeship that's "at the heart of it all."

Through a series of sharp-eyed and dazzlingly executed examinations of textual detail, structural significance and subtextual sleight of hand, Charman exposes *Man Alone* as a novel subversively "in touch with" homoerotic content – her rigorous and razor-sharp analysis follows the "dog-whistle implication" of homoerotic desire which penetrates the subtext "at a frequency imperceptible to the implied reader," exploring the methods via which Mulgan enticingly yet circumspectly deploys "an enigmatic subtextual symbolism" which both hints at and hides a homoerotic undercurrent. In stunning close-analysis of passage after passage in the protagonist Johnson's encounters with his fellow mates, Charman pinpoints with inspired scrutiny how the text's seemingly "straight-faced delivery" of masculine norms is embedded with subversive "double entendre." Examining the major structural phases of the text – the spousal bond with Scotty which develops during the protagonist's wandering labourer days, the Queen Street riot which violently parts them, the Stenning farm where the hero enacts his Oedipal revenge, the wilderness in whose "psychic terrain" he seeks his deliverance – Charman moves through the phallocentric surface of the narrative, to reclaim the matrixial resonances which offer resistance to heteronormative models. Yet she also identifies with striking insight the features of the phallocentric framework the text keeps strategically in place to supply a surface the implied reader "habituated to the constraints of homophobic society will endorse."

With acute analytic attention to the major structures, the historical context and the fine linguistic details of the text, Charman charts how characters, constructs and connotative terms both mobilize and mask, energise and deflect the matrixial subtext, convincingly examining the manifold symptoms of textual ambivalence which mark *Man Alone*. Her analysis also, importantly, illuminates *Man Alone*'s significant "borderlinks" to other texts of the period which raise subversive or same-sex desire. Within Aotearoa she links the novel to *The Story of a New Zealand River*, Jane Mander's notorious work of "'sex-problem' fiction," for which (Mulgan's own sister) Dorothea Turner's critical reappraisal gained some respite from the local hostile and dismissive reception. Internationally placing *Man Alone* on the continuum between the "full on" confrontation of Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness* and the more slippery finesse of Virginia Woolf's "now you see it; now you don't" lesbianism in *Orlando* and *A Room of One's Own*, Charman establishes the shared lexicon of homoerotic connotation which resonates between the novels – including, brilliantly, Hall's metaphor of a war less troubling to "inverts" than peacetime casualties, and Woolf's deliciously ambiguous idiom of 'liking.'

Picking up on *Man Alone*'s array of likewise sexually charged signifiers – including character names, terms and objects – Charman tracks the sexual lexicon implicit in the linguistic particles and participles the text uses to 'touch' upon its subversive content. Highlighting *Man Alone's* absences, innuendo, tongue-in-cheek, infiltrations and double-play Charman conducts a dynamic exposure of the subtext *Man Alone* 'likes' to both stage and conceal, diagnosing the minute

syntactical symptoms of sexual alertness in the text, down to sentence structure and even grammatical conjunctions. Dissecting the encrypted symbolism of Mulgan's easily-missed minutiae of objects – from boots to smokes, letters to mounts – Charman exposes the "dark horses" of Mulgan's props as subtly and subversively used in the text's simultaneous manifestation and evasion of homoerotic desire – one particularly striking example is her slick and intricate deconstruction of the smoking gun that is Mulgan's cigarette, which follows the phallic image of the 'roll-your-own' from its early insinuation in 'lighting up' same-sex attraction to its triumphant post-bloodshed release at the site of Stenning's slaughter and beyond. Through a scrupulous and devastating dissection of such detail, lifting significance from all the text doesn't say, Charman convincingly bares the skill with which the text hides its "making of a fag" in plain view.

Drawing fascinating insights from the intercourse Johnson has with his "fellows" in his homeless passage through the nation, Charman shows the invert subtext alive in their talk, building from these close exchanges to an assertion that the setting of the appositely named *Queen* Street, with its cast of sexually ambiguous characters, features (á la Freud) as the royal road to the text's hidden unconscious. From this symbolic pathway, where Charman argues the central trauma of separation from his same-sex mate occurs amidst the riot, Mulgan's hero is propelled into the Oedipal psychodrama staged at Stenning's farm – and Charman's fluent analysis of this deadly rural drama and the wilderness quest which follows it, in terms of both matrixial resonances and the five stages of a grief which

the hero cannot dare to speak, make striking sense of omissions and oddities which mar the heteronormative reading of the text. Johnson's labour of survival within the punishing NZ landscape is examined as a travail that also works through and represents "deep psychosexual wounds," and Charman foregrounds potent mythic connections to both the Ancient Greek homoerotic and Maori* mythos.

Yet ultimately, as Charman powerfully identifies, *Man Alone*'s author must take pains to strenuously defuse the profundity of the subversive love which circulates in his matrixial subtext, preserving his detachment and the implied reader's obliviousness. Charman's analysis places the text in the punitive historical context of criminalized homosexuality – showing how the subtext subtly yet poignantly testifies to the trauma of its victims and calls upon the alert reader to "wit[h]ness the sense of psychic devastation felt by those of whichever gender should find themselves sexually &/or racially 'othered.'" Undercutting the text's seeming hypermasculinist defense of Pakeha cultural dominance, Charman demonstrates how the novel's evocation of homosexual trauma intersects with traces of oppressions based on indigeneity, class and gender, drawing attention to how the text's "tone of rebuke" towards New Zealand society spreads further than deriding the material deprivation of economic crisis to implicate a pall of gender, racial and sexual depression which also looms over the dominion. However, penned in the context of a society able to incarcerate on the bounds of same-sex desire, *Man Alone* is

* The use of macrons is precluded in this text by technical constraints.

sentenced to ultimately “quarantine” the pollutant connotations of cultural sedition it so slyly spreads, to avoid “a catastrophe of identity which would also engulf the writer,” and Charman’s essay draws brilliant and moving material from this aspect of the text, analysing marks of the text’s abiding sadness at the self-mortifying tactics it must enact to safeguard itself from the hostile homophobia of the implied reader. Beneath ‘the front’ which textually produces the hero’s eventual return to war as a masculinist celebration of arms, Charman stresses the counter reading which grieves “behind the lines” for the society which will not sanction the protagonist’s yearning for the arms of his same-sex partner. Forced to revisit the battlefield, the protagonist is not an archetype of the brand of stoic Kiwi bloke “you can’t kill,” but a camouflaged locus of the cultural loss visited on “his kind,” where the wounds of war are a “veritable respite” compared to the psychic price that civilized life exacts from men of his predilection – and Charman draws poignant attention to the “straight-faced” narrative tone that does not function as a militaristic endorsement of lone masculinist endeavour, but rather resonates with mourning for alternative modes of connection never realized.

Passionately argued, analyzed with stunning erudition and agility, and penned with stylistic energy, Janet Charman’s dynamic and extensive engagement with John Mulgan’s *Man Alone* is a significant achievement in New Zealand literary studies.

Tracey Slaughter
University of Waikato, 2018

INTRODUCTION

ISN'T IT TIME "Johnson" the watchful hero of *Man Alone*, took his place at the high table of world literature? This text is overdue for recognition not just as a great Aotearoa New Zealand novel but also as a ground breaking literary classic in anyone's terms. John Mulgan has conjured from his sexually transgressive subject matter and his incendiary homoerotic subtext a protagonist who is a cultural provocateur, one who dares to share with strangers the love of his life. But is Mulgan's hero to remain shelved under warrior immortality or is he destined for a fate immeasurably sweeter? I argue that *Man Alone* should now be credited as Mulgan's template for a change to the norms of heroic masculinity. Through this marvelously turbulent fiction Johnson somehow glides unscathed to an uncannily predictable ending. Yet his "happily ever after" leaves a lot to be desired – by the reader. It's this sense of unfinished business in *Man Alone* that repeatedly calls one back to it. But a rereading will never reveal any motive or consolation that could lead to a complete resolution. A sense of satisfactory closure is withheld. And if Johnson's fate is left unanswered the question arises – *what will you do?*

My response has been to analyse in *Smoking* the homoerotic sensibility with which John Mulgan saturates the subtext of *Man Alone*. In some readers this may provoke assumptions about Mulgan's sexual orientation and mine. A Gotcha! in terms of the

patriarchal sexual binaries. But Mulgan's text is not interested in whether you or I are gay or straight, even though he of all people was fully aware of the tyranny or privilege such labels attract. In particular, the threat of sexual persecution that haunts Mulgan's suicide is long overdue for the discussion of it I initiate here. My reading of Mulgan's farewell note to his commanding officer recognizes it as pointing directly to the "smoking" subtext of his novel. And in this way unrepentantly affirming his fiction's critique of those responsible for the traumatic sexual inquisitions of his era.

The reader of *Man Alone* is implicitly invited to examine how sexuality is orchestrated in *their* life and times. But *Man Alone* is no more to be "explained" by an essentialist definition of its protagonist or writer's sexual orientation, than a tidy marriage ceremony or a respectable line of work can quiet the enigmatic undercurrents that have carried those intriguing voices who are Johnson's peers and equals – characters like Huckleberry Finn and Emma Woodhouse or Yuri Zhivago and Jane Eyre – into the imaginations of generations of fascinated readers.

There will doubtless be some who find my interpretation of Mulgan's text an affront to the writer's memory. So be it. For me to accept that the questions I raise about *Man Alone* should not be addressed would be like agreeing to proceed through life with one hand tied behind my back.

Over its eight decades of literary interpretation some critics have intimated they know more about *Man Alone* and its writer than they are saying. But despite these hints, a degree of "tact" towards the homophobia of the implied reader has made poking

the taniwha of the text's transgressive sexuality unthinkable. Yet Mulgan's critique of heterosexual prejudice is interwoven so closely with his equally perceptive critiques of misogyny and racism that a tug at one leash must awaken consciousness of the others. This has meant that the snarls of sexual and racial contempt towards women and Maori, most prominent in the implied reader's attitudes towards the character of "half-caste" Rua, have for years been sheltered under a cloak of critical invisibility to be glimpsed fleetingly if at all.

In fact Johnson's treatment of Rua is his calculated act of revenge against homophobic hegemony. Her seduction and Johnson's subsequent abandonment of her enable the hero's mysterious re-connection with his soul mate Scott. But to dismiss Rua as Johnson's little sexual "conquest", as the implied reader callously does, reveals a misogynist sense of heterosexual entitlement that the novel's subtext resists as strongly as it does the implied reader's homophobia. I show here that it is as critically foolhardy to underestimate Rua's significance in the novel, as it is to ignore the symbolic and actual power of her mountain namesake Ruapehu; or the equivalently "volcanic" bond that links Johnson inextricably with his mate Scott.

Yet silence on the critique of heterosexual entitlement and homophobia found in the novel is partly understandable, since until relatively recently any examination of the novel's subversive subtext would have provoked calls for its immediate suppression. Even if it escaped outright banning, on the grounds of its advocacy of criminal sexual immorality, it would have been removed from open library access in the prisons, psychiatric hospitals, youth welfare institutions, and secondary school

curricula where in Aotearoa New Zealand it has been, at least officially, patriotically under-read.

Despite the more than three decades which have passed since the 1986 Homosexual Law Reform Bill, and the novel's frequent reprinting in "popular" editions – including as a Penguin Classic – not to mention its sequels and fictional homages, critical discussion of the sexually dissident subtexts of *Man Alone* has been notable by its absence. This omission reflects the dominance in Aotearoa New Zealand (and elsewhere) of patriarchal assumptions about what constitutes "heroic manhood". The novel's own implied reader authorizes only the conventional tropes of masculinity enforced in phallocentric discourse. In these terms Johnson continues to be misunderstood as an untouchable Pakeha warrior paragon: a quietly bolshie prick who "fucks" with Maori and then emerges unscathed from their primeval forest – now symbolically his – living on to fight again another day. In this reading he is valorized as a thrilling "Kiwi" hero who, on the basis of the heterosexual European male as the *neutral-universal* citizen, supposedly represents us all.

At the same time, the ongoing struggle of the colonized to claim their indigenous land and language rights under the Treaty of Waitangi has seen *Man Alone* acquire for Maori all the irrelevance of a dominant culture "selfie". Pakeha critics who are alert to the disdainful perspectives of the tangata whenua towards monocultural hubris – and perhaps discomforted more than ever before by the self-entitled attitudes of the novel's implied reader – have therefore begun to treat the novel as a guilty pleasure now outgrown. But whether oblivious,

complacent or hostile towards its racial subtexts, writers and critics have continued to ignore or actively diminish its subversive sexual politics. They inadvertently confirm we are still in the suffocating grip of the very patriarchal cultural repression John Mulgan set out to dislodge.

That *Man Alone* might be heading for a more or less affectionate literary "retirement" was a prospect unlamented by feminists like myself who, on the basis of hearsay, had always refused even to open it. Its woman-excluding title *alone* signaled that reading it would be an act of self-harm. But after I encountered Bracha Ettinger's matrixial theories, I felt compelled to pick up this text that, unread, I had hated all my life. I wanted to test Ettinger's thesis that in the connectivity of the matrixial-feminine domain, it is possible to treat the objectified "unknown other" – in this case the novel's protagonist Johnson, from whose reputedly staunch machismo I was sure of feeling utterly alienated – as a "subject" more important than "the self".

To my continuing shock, what I found in *Man Alone* was Mulgan's refusal of patriarchy's attribution of monstrous phallic-femininity to both the homoerotic and the "dark continent" of indigeneity. His resistance to the extermination of the homoerotic sensibility in Aotearoa New Zealand borderlinks Johnson with the character of Rua to reveal the European colonizers' *wrongly held* "terroir" – as both terror and territory – of tangata whenua.

Mulgan equally engages in what Bracha Ettinger calls "the struggle of oblivion to become a memory" (Ettinger, 2006, 164.5) when he subtextually reinstates in cultural consciousness

the "homely strangeness" of Johnson and Scott's undying love for one another.

Here, as throughout my analysis of *Man Alone*, I am using terminology from Ettinger's Matrixial theories, which I know will be unfamiliar to many readers. I do this because I believe the very newness of her terms effectively reveals and dislodges hostile assumptions about femininity-effeminacy that are engrained so deeply in patriarchal culture they are all but invisible. It is this engrafting of misogyny which has made the homoerotic subtext of *Man Alone* unthinkable in critical discourse for more that eighty years. I therefore draw on Ettinger's refreshing Matrixial theories, explaining them in detail in order to illuminate the patriarchal assumptions that obstruct readerly awareness of John Mulgan's deep affirmation of the homoerotic sensibility.

Section 1 of *Smoking* reveals how the novel's critical under-reading is partly explained by its truncated publication history in an England on the brink of war. The text's patriotic co-option in the immediate post war period to the so-called "nationalist project" in Aotearoa New Zealand is then shown to have inadvertently intensified these restrictive critical conditions and denied readers a full appreciation of Mulgan's aesthetic achievement.

Section 2 closely reads the sexual initiation scene in which the protagonist first encounters his soul mate Scott. This episode in the novel's opening chapter establishes the homoerotic import of the "smoking" imagery with which the narrative is punctuated from then on.

Section 3 closely reads the talismanic letter that registers the critically overlooked but crucial significance of Scott's threatened death.

Section 4 analyses the Queen Street riot's notable documentary realism to reveal the underlying Freudian and Matrixial symbolism of this scene as the catalyst of Scott's narrative disappearance.

Section 5 addresses the historic persecution of the homoerotic sensibility in Aotearoa New Zealand which necessitiates Scott's ostensible narrative banishment. The effects of this climate of coercion on John Mulgan himself are borderlinked here with the criminalisation of his contemporary, the writer Frank Sargeson.

Sections 6 to 8 consider how the transgressive relationships Johnson has with both Scott and Rua are made to subtextually subvert patriarchy's unheimlich horror of "femininity-effeminacy".

Section 9 reveals the ambivalence of Johnson's investment in the warrior code and contrasts this with Scott's rejection of it.

Sections 10 to 12 consider how Mulgan uses the imperious actions of Rua's inevitably doomed husband Stenning to condemn the colonizing exploitation of Maori land and Maori women. Mulgan's innovative registry of works by Raclyffe Hall, Virginia Woolf, Jane Mander and Katherine Mansfield are shown to offer him significant precedents for the sexual empowerment of women advocated in *Man Alone*.

Sections 13 to 16 analyse the magic real features of Johnson's spiritual retreat to the volcanic plateau of Te Ika a Maui. A subtext entirely ignored by those critiques of the novel that are invested in the patriarchal perspectives of the novel's implied reader. The emotional and sexually restorative aspects of Johnson's wilderness sojourn are discussed with

reference to Mulgan's matrixial appropriation and refashioning of Maori, Pakeha and Greek myths. These are used to explain and justify the hero's re-immersion in and full acceptance of his homoerotic sensibility. The epiphanies Johnson experiences in the symbolic settings of the Rangipo/Onetapu/Kaimanawa are then shown to pervade the matrixial encounters he has with the series of "unknown other" characters he fleetingly encounters throughout the narrative.

Sections 17 and 18 recognize Mulgan's collegial affirmation of the candid treatment of the homoerotic sensibility found in Radclyffe Hall's banned novel *The Well of Loneliness* and her courageous assertion of the legitimacy of lesbian identity. However in the subtlety and complexity of Mulgan's party scene in *Man Alone* he is also shown to closely read and refute the eugenically Fascist apologias Hall advances in the party scene in *her* novel. In these sections I also show how Mulgan concurrently allies his novel with the homoerotic and anti-racist imagery of feminine empowerment in Woolf's novel-essay *A Room of One's Own*.

Sections 19 and 20 consider the ecologies of Te Reo and English that signify in Johnson's epiphanies on the volcanic plateau.

Sections 21 and 22 address Johnson's wilderness experiences as exemplifying his temporary tenancy of a Matrixial Borderspace. This symbolic locale connects Mulgan's protagonist with the aesthetic sensibilities of the writer's father Alan Mulgan, in terms of the latter's extraordinary poem "Dead Timber". I then suggest the ways in which recognising the historic and literary connections between *Man Alone* and "Dead

Timber" may in some respects ameliorate the desperate tragedy of John Mulgan's immediate post-war suicide.

Section 23 examines the philosophical and dramatic parallels that the ritual killing of Stenning in *Man Alone* has with the act of suicide performed by the heroine of Sophocles' play *Antigone*. This section is informed by the feminist philosophy of Judith Butler and the post Freudian psychoanalytics of Bracha Ettinger, whose respective theoretical destabilizations and supplementations of the Oedipus Complex in *Antigone* are shown to be equally applicable to John Mulgan's astonishing treatment of love, death and beauty in *Man Alone*.

Sections 24 and 25 register Johnson's time in the wild Kaimanawa as his self-fragilised exposure to the domain of the matrixial-maternal. Mulgan's womb-like imagery reveals the forest as a symbolic setting. His text's imagery recognized as potentially enabling "the one" who is the reader of *Man Alone*, to relate without horror or fear to the "unknown other" – in Johnson. I then consider how the hero's eventual re-entry into phallocentric discourse is driven by Mulgan's ambivalent acceptance that in the absence of a community of peers and mentors to support his hero, both he and Johnson will be left fatally exposed to the homophobic fury of the implied reader.

Sections 26 to 28 analyse Mulgan's ostensibly "careless" use of narrative repetition and his insertion of "insignificant" narrative incidents as representative of what Bracha Ettinger identifies as the "Eurydicean moment" of reconnection. These scenes are matrixial encounter events which offer the reader and Johnson relief from the cumulative psychic trauma of his ongoing cultural alienation. The protagonist's

symbolic re-connections with the “unknown other/s” from both mythology and everyday life, compensate him for the anguishing binary scissions to which he is subjected as he shelters his homoerotic sensibilities from patriarchal attack.

My concluding **sections 29 and 30** consider features of the protagonist’s intimate early and late homoerotically alert exchanges with the narrator. These scenes are the compassionately hospitable social framing for Mulgan’s dangerous attempt to retrieve long buried cultural memories from oblivion. In my discussion of the subtleties of Johnson’s relationship with the narrator particular reference is made to the following topics: Mulgan’s jouissant representation of the homoerotic sensibility shared by the two men; his text’s stylistic borrowings from Richard Crawley’s translation of *Thucydides*; the unreliability of the critical assumption that *Man Alone* is indebted to the work of Ernest Hemingway; Mulgan’s grounds for ambivalence towards his Rhodes scholarship nomination and his recognition of his own social privileging at the expense of his sister Dorothea Mulgan; and, finally, his novel’s inspiring affirmation of the lives and writing of Virginia Woolf and Oscar Wilde. The calculatedly unfinished aesthetic of the novel’s final scenes are then analysed as Mulgan’s open-ended invitation to the reader to initiate their own retrievals of transgressive memories as a means to cultural healing.

There are those who will say that the complex ideas and terms I advance in *Smoking* can be of little interest to the general reading public. However I believe such sentiments reveal a preference for, or an unconscious accommodation of, the equally complex conventions embedded unquestioned in

phallocentric discourse. These hidden cultural assumptions hegemonically maintain the patriarchal status quo. My perspective on *Man Alone* is complex, but that is because it honours the subtlety and stylistic innovation with which John Mulgan dared to question the dominant sexual discourses he found so stifling. He offers his readers a deceptively simple entertainment that is actually freighted with enlightening "other" alternatives to the sexual rules policed by patriarchy.

In *Man Alone* Scott and Johnson are a *match* Mulgan made, not in heaven but here on earth in the country he called "God's own". If, like me, you think it is time this match was lit, read on…

1. True blue

THE "TRUE BLUE" weft of *Man Alone* has enjoyed around eighty years of critical appreciation with only an occasional glimpse of its homoerotic subtext. But the detailed reading that follows is intended to make fully visible the rainbow cast of its warp.

Man Alone was first published in 1939 in England, where it fell immediately into literary obscurity due to the outbreak of World War Two. But in post-war Aotearoa New Zealand it had by 1980 achieved an astounding twelve reprints (Te Arama Menzies, 1990, 84).

The novel's iconic status in its writer's birth country is partly explained by its protagonist's obstinate refusal to reveal any of his wartime exploits. "Johnson" is a returned soldier who, eighteen years on from World War One, enlists yet again, this time as an anti-fascist fighter in the civil conflict in Spain. Yet a glimpse at one point of his boss's fatal close-range gunshot wound produces for him a horrifying peacetime flashback: "it was like some old memory of the war that he had drowned" (Mulgan,123).[1]

In this self-possessed hero the novel's readers recognised the stoic forbearance with which Aotearoa New Zealand's World War One veterans had buried their traumatic combat memories. World War Two veterans now expected to remain similarly mute. Thus in Johnson's elaborate reticence about his combat experiences the reader finds a paradoxical acknowledgment of

1 This and all following references to the text of *Man Alone* are from the 2010, Penguin paperback edition, Ed. Patrick Evans.

the suffering pent up among returned service-people, a suffering whose very existence Mulgan's culture is attempting to repress.

John Mulgan earned a distinguished WW2 combat record, so bestowing his own name on his fictional hero "Johnson" meant his protagonist would acquire a halo of similar warrior fortitude. Johnson's exceptional acknowledgement of battle trauma could therefore still be read as proving the rule of fearlessly resilient "Kiwi" masculinity. Yet the writer's suicide in the immediate post-war period also signalled that for anybody maintaining a traumatised silence the stakes could not be higher.

Mulgan's hero is met first in France, where he is on a short leave from the Spanish war. He treats the imminence of his return to the front line with a sang-froid that is fascinating to the questioning narrator but seems a matter of course to the implied reader. Johnson's resolute stoicism is reinforced in the novel's epilogue by the bald list of six now-all-but-forgotten Spanish civil war engagements in which he has seen action – names that, despite their foreignness, the narrator treats as a roll of honour with which the implied reader will be all too familiar. It's as though in the circles in which this implied reader moves, courage like Johnson's simply goes without saying.

But the term "implied reader" is used here and throughout this topic not to identify an "ideal" reader, but rather an ironically prescribed one – someone whose "mateship" with both the narrator and Johnson himself is only ostensible. In fact, subtextually Johnson's courage and his particular rapport with the narrator arise from a quarter wholly alien to the implied reader — a "borderspace" in which the text's substructure of imminent threat implicates a reader who is an "unknown

other". Somebody whose responses Mulgan neither assumes nor predicts. For his novel's protagonist is committed as much to the "losing side" of sexuality as he is to the losing side of the Spanish Civil War. And it is not Johnson's return to combat that places a question mark over his prospects of survival, but rather the novel's subtextual affirmation of his homoerotic sensibility.

What little Johnson does say of life in the frontline implies it was unspeakable. "You wouldn't understand it unless you saw it. If you did see it you wouldn't understand it." (Mulgan, Introduction). But this apparently stoic acknowledgment of war's pity and incomprehensibility also anticipates the implied reader's wilful blindness and tone deafness to the homoerotica [in]visible in plain sight within the novel's subtext. Johnson's "peacetime" exploits are in fact a detailed register of the escalating hostilities he endures daily in a homophobic society.

In the novel's one-page epilogue the narrator notes with approval Johnson's disinclination "to rise in the army or to give orders" (Mulgan, 207). For the implied reader this is simply the hero's expression of his "egalitarian-Kiwi" determination to do the job while refusing to be it. This pose is fully in keeping with the apocryphal story of the New Zealand soldiery's habit of waving at, rather than saluting, passing officers. Whereas in fact Johnson's stubborn maintenance of his status as "*private*" is an ironic expression of the text's underlying advocacy of his entitlement *privately* to love—without public stigmatisation—anybody he chooses. This position is explored in detail in the novel's subtext and hence in the critical discussion of it pursued here.

Sandwiched between the framing scenes of the soldier's

introduction and epilogue, the substantial account of Johnson's civilian life that forms the novel's body text is posed as the hero's studied evasion of the narrator's attempt to get him to share his combat experiences. Yet Mulgan's working title *Talking of War* (Mulgan, Foreword) rejected any such reticence. However if the novel is seen as a record of the grievous conflicts Johnson has endured in the undeclared "warfare" civil society wages against those who dare to express a homoerotic sensibility, the title *Talking of War* is immediately recognisable as irony.

At the behest of his publisher, *Talking of War* was changed to the allusive *Man Alone*. (O'Sullivan, 2011, 191-192). But rather than suppressing the subtext of Mulgan's own title, this alternative (one of several they suggested to him) is a refinement of it. The upstanding phallic singularity of *Man Alone* has symmetries with the vaginal symbolism of Radclyffe Hall's famous lesbian title of 1928, *The Well of Loneliness*. Mulgan's text makes a number of additional references to Hall's, both explicit and implicit, as discussed here later.

It is therefore more than probable that somebody at Mulgan's publishers, Selwyn and Blount, recognised the thematic sexual affinities of *loneliness/alone* and, in proffering *Man Alone* as a suitable replacement for Mulgan's own title, affirmed his work as a male complement to Hall's. This was likely premised as much on commercial as philosophical considerations since despite being banned *The Well of Loneliness* had been a runaway bestseller. Whatever ambivalence Mulgan may have felt about the potential for *Man Alone* to be read in explicit parallel with *The Well of Loneliness*, he could not have been unconscious of the link. The connections that would be

drawn between the two texts by certain of his readers would have been made inescapable by the ubiquity of *The Well of Loneliness* in Mulgan's milieu.

Mulgan's biographer Vincent O'Sullivan notes the absence of any reviews of *Man Alone*, and that 'few copies seem to have been sent out, and few were sold. Stock held at the publishers was later lost in an air-raid.' (O'Sullivan, 2011, 192). If these apparent inadvertencies weren't a calculated suppression of the novel motivated by a belated political reality check, they were a blessing in disguise, because England's declaration of war with Germany at the time of the novel's publication, and Mulgan's concurrent enlistment, meant that the threat posed to him and his publishers by military homophobia would have been ever more acute.

The extraordinary post-war resurrection of the novel in Aotearoa New Zealand was possible because once its author was perceived as a war hero and deeply revered as one of his country's military dead, the subtext of *Man Alone* became unthinkable. Of course Mulgan's text eschews Radclyffe Hall's courageously forthright assertion of her protagonist's transgressive sexuality. Instead Mulgan relishes his full and subtle use of subtext to covertly "get even" with the straight world on terms that very understandably serve his own instincts for (literary) self-preservation.

Radclyffe Hall's novel had argued overtly for social inclusion and tolerance towards sexual difference. But *Man Alone*—Mulgan's own cri de coeur for sexual freedom—begins as a covert revenge drama in which, sotto voce, he slyly mocks those he assumes impervious to his subtext. All the while his

narrative is acutely tuned to the dangerous consequences for him and "others" of being understood.

Mulgan's rupture with patriarchal sexual hegemony can nonetheless be felt in the dare implicit in Johnson's introductory assertion to the narrator that "I could tell you worse things about the peace. […] Truer things" (Mulgan, Introduction).

Are today's readers ready to listen?

2. *"Hail fellow, well met!"*

JOHNSON IS PRESENTED to the reader as a penniless young Englishman who after coming of age in the World War One trenches, is at only twenty-two in need of a completely new life. On an "assisted emigrant's ticket" (Mulgan, 7) he therefore travels halfway across the world to a foreign country in which he knows not a soul.

The opening voyage in *Man Alone* has coincidental parallels with the one that would be made in 1939 by the wife of the writer, Gabrielle Mulgan. Carrying their sixteen-week-old baby with her in a Moses basket and herself only twenty-two years of age, she was to embark as a Second World War evacuee on a gruelling yearlong sea and land passage from England to Aotearoa New Zealand. John Mulgan's army enlistment had precipitated her journey to the Antipodes (G. Day, 1986, 210). The traumatic aspects of her passage into exile make for a poignant example of life reflecting art, for in the opening paragraphs of *Man Alone*, her husband had previously sketched

the "distance and strangeness" (Mulgan, 7) of the voyage to New Zealand in terms of the shipboard suffering and death of four of his protagonist's fellow passengers. This fictional anticipation of dislocation and brutal threat speaks to the cruel reality that Gabrielle Mulgan, as she sailed away in wartime from the land of her birth, could not be sure if either she or her little son, Richard, would ever see his father again: Woman alone.

However the intimations of suffering the fictional Johnson is exposed to on his voyage are seemingly dispensed with at the point of his arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand. For across a series of male-focused settings Mulgan goes on to present his hero's staunch resilience as he establishes himself in apparent conformity with the "hard man" stereotype prescribed for mature masculinity in patriarchal "God's own" (Mulgan, 8) country.

Yet it is also necessary to read *Man Alone* for its stealthy subversion of such conventional masculine norms. Mulgan's subtext in fact constitutes a systematic interrogation of the code of exclusive heterosexuality that is the implied reader's default expectation of (New Zealand) society.

Ostensibly Johnson's bachelor independence is celebrated through the commonality of his single name with a handful of other single-name male characters he meets on his travels: Scott, Thompson, Petersen, Sayers, Roach. All are depicted as being free of family ties and obligations. Yet this seeming valorisation of heroic male independence is tellingly undermined in part two of the novel when it is the thwarting of Johnson's attempt to reclaim his family connections that induces his military re-enlistment.

The singularity of Johnson's name also eases his insertion as a symbolically unrecognised son in the Oedipal triangle incorporating the "parental" figures of Stenning and Rua. These ambiguously "mythic" characters, not to mention the reader, are able to project their own desires more readily onto Johnson if he appears to be a narrative object without explicit kinship ties.

He fulfils such emblematic expectations from the beginning, when in the novel's Introduction the use of the demonstrative pronoun "*This* Johnson", [my emphasis] distinguishes the hero from all other Johnsons. In this he is both an enigmatic "everyman" and an intriguing repository of untold stories. Yet despite the narrator's empathic anticipation of his new friend's history, a name shorn of kinship connections also suggests that significant parts of the protagonist's identity are calculatedly hidden. And so it will prove.

Similarly, the man who becomes Johnson's best mate is also singled out as an emblematic character "type" with the demonstrative pronoun: "This Scott" (Mulgan, 19).

Here the pronoun "this" links two characters whose intimate connection is fated to enter the narrative crevasse into which the sexual specificities of one man's bond with another are required, at this time, to disappear. The name "Scott", with its historic echoes of the polar explorer's tragic fate, also allows Mulgan to ironically foreshadow just how ill-equipped the mates are to survive the hostile social and economic climate in which their bond will be tested.

A less ominous antecedent for the Scott character's name emerges from Paul Day's 1968 short biography of Mulgan, which identified "E.J. 'Scotchy' Patterson" as one of the writer's

foremost university friends. Scotchy Patterson was the fellow student with whom, over the university summer vacation of 1930-1931, John Mulgan travelled from Nelson to Takaka doing seasonal work and tramping (P. Day, 1968, 20-22). Meanwhile Vincent O'Sullivan's biography records Scotchy Patterson as being beside Mulgan on Karangahape Road during his chastening experience as a special constable after the Queen St riot of 14 April 1932 (O'Sullivan, 2003, 63).

But when Johnson sets eyes on the fictional Scott, this meeting, even as it indicates the inevitability of the mates' ultimate separation, is subtextually suggested as an embodiment of love – and sexual attraction – at first sight:

> This Scott was a small man and dark, with a moustache like a Mexican, and kind and tired looking eyes. He stood with hands in his belt below his hips, in the doorway, looking out at the night coming down over the pinetrees.
>
> "I wasn't in the war," he told Johnson. "No, boy, no war for me. M'chest's bad so they said. It's a good thing it's over now."
>
> And Johnson, sitting on the doorstep, was trying to roll a cigarette.
>
> "You got to pack it fairly tight," Scott said, "and roll it round a bit. You want to roll the end off and shake it down. They're better than anything you'll buy" (Mulgan,19-20).

Scott's disclosure to Johnson of a physical vulnerability that will see his apparent termination in the narrative is made while the listening protagonist struggles with the assembly of a smoke, his difficulty seemingly explained by a lack of experience with roll-your-owns. The implied reader can therefore presume that

in the filth and misery of Johnson's immediate past years in the World War One trenches, he only had access to tailor-mades. However the grammatical conjunction 'And' makes it possible for the reader to infer an emotional conjunction between Johnson's feelings on meeting Scott and his own clumsiness. His trembling ineptitude points to a sexual alertness in him that is fully reciprocated in Scott's attentively detailed response.

The subtext of Scott's suggestion 'You want to roll the end off' assumes that Johnson, like himself, is uncircumcised. This is a logical presumption since such surgical interventions became commonplace (in Aotearoa New Zealand) only after World War One, when a generation of men who suffered the agonising infections of trench warfare were fatalistically moved to pre-empt any such future suffering in their sons.

The homoerotic double entendre of Scott's overall advice—"'You got to pack it fairly tight,' Scott said, 'and roll it round a bit. You want to roll the end off and shake it down. They're better than anything you'll buy.'"—is a revelation of Scott's own instant attraction to the man with whom he is going to live for around half of the next twelve years.

Of course, to paraphrase Freud's apocryphal remark about his own habitual pipe smoking: *Sometimes a cigarette is just a cigarette*. But it is precisely this scepticism of phallic symbolism that insulates the implied reader of *Man Alone* from the homoerotic import of Mulgan's subtext—not only in this scene but across the whole course of the narrative.

By way of highlighting the subversive particularities of Mulgan's description of the way the men of his era went about the construction of their rollies, here is an account by Sister

Pauline O'Regan, Mulgan's near contemporary – Mulgan being born in 1911, she in 1922 – of the same task:

> Nice men smoked Craven A and Capstan, what were known as the tailored cigarette, but the real man rolled his own. […] He held the cigarette paper delicately with the tips of his fingers, cradled the tobacco in the ball of the same hand, used his unoccupied fingers to work on it and then with the dexterity of long practice, transferred it in an even line along the paper; he then rolled the thin tissue, […] ran his tongue along the edge, sealed it, pinched one end and put it in his mouth (O'Regan, 2004, 197).

O'Regan certainly acknowledges the machismo displayed by a man who chooses to smoke rollies, but hers is otherwise a practical, step-by-step account that anybody could follow. That is because for her a cigarette *is* just a cigarette. Whereas in *Man Alone*, Scott's homoerotic innuendo is masked by the narrator's straight-faced delivery: *The Importance of Being Earnest* indeed!

Scott's recognition of the physical and emotional effect he is having on the protagonist is further distanced from the implied reader by Johnson's eventual characterisation of his mate as "stupid" (Mulgan, 58). Scott's directions would indeed be fatuous if they were only a reference to the assemblage of a cigarette—especially when offered by one adult to another. It's as if somebody only fractionally more experienced in a proscribed grown-up activity is sharing his "superior" expertise with a beginner. However at the point of the mates' first separation the protagonist cherishingly refers to these patently superfluous directions, thereby inviting a subtextual reading of this moment's peculiar emotional resonance as being, for both men, sexually charged.

And although in the novel's introduction Johnson is depicted as a mature, combat-hardened man of the world, his apparent shakiness at this, his first encounter with Scott, may be believably indexed to his sexual inexperience: "He was young then, not more than twenty-two" (Mulgan, 9-10).

Sexual innocence is entirely credible in somebody whose emergence from adolescence into adulthood has taken place during active army service. While the text ultimately establishes the exceptionality for Johnson of his relationship with his mate, the hero's implied loss of composure at this moment can also be seen as evidence of the unprecedented strength of his emotions.

Hidden here in plain view, the apparently casual *making of a fag* points to an audacious homoerotic subtext. Scotty's roll-your-own advice offers Johnson and the reader unequivocal reassurance that despite the inexpertness of the hero's initiatory attempt to piece together what is an implicitly phallic symbol, the effort will be well-rewarded. Scott's final remark—"They're better than anything you'll buy"—while directing attention to the relative merits of roll-your-own versus tailor-made cigarettes, actually misleads in suggesting that Johnson would not also have to buy the makings of DIY smokes. Therefore the reader attuned *otherwise* may treat this remark as a metaphorical one. Scott's cocksure implication is that an intimate relationship with him, freely entered into, will produce better sexual rewards than could ever result from Johnson's purchase of "tailor made" sexual services from women like the prostitute Rose.

In the previous chapter Johnson's half-hearted attempt to buy sex from Rose is depicted as fizzling out (Mulgan,12) By contrast, after Scott's assurance of the merits of rolling-your-

own Mulgan subtextually implies in the phrase "a little later", that post-coital bonhomie is what accounts for the geniality of Scott's remark about their boss Blakeway: "'He's not a bad old sod,' he said, a little later of Blakeway, 'only it's an easier life when he's off the farm'" (Mulgan, 20). The sexual-afterglow unreliability of Scott's assessment is apparent in its direct contradiction of the chillingly impartial summation of the farm boss offered to Johnson but a page earlier by the hotel-keeper: "He's got money alright, but he's mean as death" (Mulgan, 17).

Mulgan's carefully nuanced use of the roll-your-own as a sexual symbol is further apparent in the homosocial prospecting of Johnson's offer to make a rollie for the trucker Sayers, whose lift assists him to escape the Auckland police (Mulgan, 73). Then in part two of the novel, when the protagonist offers a smoke to Jim, his brother, Mulgan recognises the incest taboo by restricting Johnson to the prefabricated courtesy of a tailor-made: "He opened a packet of cigarettes, offered Jim one, and took one himself" (Mulgan,198).

The sexual symbolism of the roll-your-own, as referenced at the point of the protagonist's first period of separation from Scott, also allows Johnson to recall the smoking details of his original encounter with his mate as being "the teachable moment" of their relationship. Here the elegiac tone of what is in fact only to be a temporary separation permits Mulgan to subtextually reaffirm the sexual symbolism of Scott's lesson:

> He was going, as far as Thompson and the farm were concerned, without sympathy or regret, but was sorry to leave Scotty, with the lank hair and the twisted drooping moustache, the man who had shown him how to roll his cigarettes (Mulgan, 29).

Apart from the single chapter describing Johnson's sojourn in the north, the pair will not be parted again until their traumatic separation, years later, in the suggestively named Queen Street riot.

3. *"The letter was not nice, but full of charge, Of dear import."*

ALMOST IMMEDIATELY after his flight from the riot, news of Scott's critical ill health and imminent death is delivered to Johnson via correspondence from a third party, Robertson. This letter arrives after Johnson has written to Scott without reply, but once apprised of Scott's rapidly deteriorating condition Johnson again tries to make contact with his mate: '[Johnson] wrote to Scotty at the hospital and got no answer' (Mulgan, 83).

Scott's disappearance into hospital is a textual "whiteout" that symbolically echoes the arctic blizzard into which the heroic Captain Oates suicidally vanished, thereby giving the rest of his party of explorers a chance of survival. Scott's sacrifice in *Man Alone* similarly gives Johnson, his fellow sexual "explorer", an equivalently slender chance of survival – though as a literary hero.

Mulgan himself, after his first experience of the chilly Christmas and Easter tramps of an English holiday season, had in late February 1934 given into the care of a cousin returning to New Zealand the signal gift of "a small tent" (O'Sullivan,

2011,101). Assuming Mulgan's parents forwarded it as he requested, the protective explorers' intimacy symbolised by this token reminder of their joint expedition may or may not have been lost on its intended recipient, his old friend Scotchy Patterson.

Mulgan uses equivalently compelling symbolism to register the loss of Johnson's mate, Scott. This grievous trauma is admitted in the full transcription of the letter from Robertson, which forewarns Johnson of Scott's likely end. The letter's importance is further highighted by the fact that its text is visually offset from the standardised margin of the pages before and after it. For the implied reader this only suggests that the bad news it contains about Scott is a dispassionately documented medical inevitability for which the novel's author has diminished responsibility. But paradoxically this presentation also confers on the letter a talismanic significance peculiar to archived materials, so subtextually signalling the centrality of the protagonist's relationship with his mate.

At this point the reader who has suspended disbelief can assume that either Johnson has memorised Robertson's letter and recited it to the narrator word for word, or that after carrying it with him through long years of exile and strife Johnson has handed this precious relic over to the narrator for transcription. But why would Johnson treasure or memorialise a piece of correspondence about the fate of a man he considers "stupid"? Critic Trixie Te Arama Menzies therefore very reasonably suggests, in an explanation that also serves for the implied reader, that in supplying an "original" text Mulgan simply forgets about the framing narration that she rightly

considers is used everywhere else in the novel to enhance Mulgan's "authorial concealment" (Te Arama Menzies, 1990, 85). But in fact this "transcription" is no authorial lapse. Johnson has every reason to know the letter by heart, though only a reader alert to the novel's homoerotic subtext will recognise this.

Before he reinstates the urbanity of his mediating narrator, Mulgan uses the letter's personal style to give the reader warning of Scott's fate, and Robertson's unequivocally bitter tones to utterly condemn the social climate in which Scott must die. The traumatic effect that news of Scott's physical deterioration must have on Johnson is thereby safely displaced onto Robertson's weary and outraged summation of the deteriorating political conditions of the nation.

The introductory lines of the letter are devoted to what its writer, an old shepherd, sees as the most salient point of his communication – the fact that the protagonist's second-best boots are missing from the package of personal effects he has forwarded. This is Mulgan's ironic admission that he feels constrained from jumping in *boots and all* with what must, for Johnson and the reader, be the most significant feature of this missive, even though in its third paragraph, symbolically speaking, Mulgan will *put the boot in* after all.

In the meantime Robertson's opening prevarication shows that the spousal nature of Scott's significance for Johnson is as invisible to their good friend as it must also remain to the implied reader. The theft of Johnson's boots is nonetheless rendered immediately irrelevant by the starkly noted facts of Scott's deteriorating condition—news that causes the

protagonist to write again, albeit too late, to "Scotty" at the hospital. (Mulgan, 83) This miscarried-letters motif references the mates as a pair of star-crossed-lovers, their tragic epistolary near misses echoing Shakespeare's reproach of unwarranted prejudice against true love in *Romeo and Juliet*.

The ostensible theme of Robertson's letter is that since the riot following the unemployed workers' protest march, New Zealand's "haves" must now face the ghastly reality of the social deprivation previously recognized only by the country's "have-nots". Here Robertson refuses the complacent perception of the wealthy that working people's *lack* is, as if in Lacanian terms, simply innate.

> Somehow I don't think things will be quite as good again for a time to come, not to my way of thinking. This has brought too much out into the open that people didn't like to think about. It's like if you had a body in the cellar you didn't want known about and suddenly you found it laid out on the table when your friends went in to dinner (Mulgan, 82).

But this allusion to the social rituals of the English aristocracy – "when your friends went in to dinner" – reads queerly from the pen of a mere relief-camp pick-and-shovel hand: "He had come out to New Zealand as a young man and worked all his life on a sheep farm in the South Island. It had taken a major depression to uproot him." (Mulgan, 49). 'Mac' Robertson's working-class origins are confirmed elsewhere in the novel by his colloquial Geordie idioms (Mulgan, 48-50). So in fact the symbolic effect of this allusion to formal dining surfaces from a deeper level than the "cellar" of Robertson's letter. It is the homoerotic body

that reappears here. Mulgan's metaphor of this transgressive "subject" as being "laid out on the table when your friends went in to dinner" both indicts society's denial of the homoerotic sensibility and bears penitential witness to the text's own refusal of readerly communion with Scott in his hour of need. Despite society's attempts to kill it, the homoerotic body is nonetheless preserved and ready for resurrection from shameful obscurity.

Robertson's harrowing metaphor also echoes the "dining" passage in *The Well of Loneliness*, in which Radclyffe Hall bitterly condemns the symbolic precedence of heterosexuality at formal dinners:

> They were long, these dinners, […] they were heavy, being weighted with polite conversation; they were stately, […] above all they were firmly conservative in spirit, as conservative as the marriage service its-self, and almost as insistent on sex distinction.
>
> "Captain Ramsay, will you take Miss Gordon in to dinner?" […] Then the solemn and very ridiculous procession, animals marching into Noah's Ark two by two, very sure of divine protection – Male and female created He them! (Hall, 2008, 81-82).

Hall's refusal of heterosexual entitlement is reinforced in Mulgan's dinner table "offering". But although the body "laid out on the table" at the end of his dining procession seems the naked revelation of a grotesque crime, it also carries perceptible echoes of T.S. Eliot's 1920 image of the patient in *The Lovesong of Alfred J Prufrock* who lies etherised upon the table awaiting the surgeon's "skilled hands". (Childs, 1993, 381) In the "dining" context supplied by Mulgan's "skilled hand", the

homoerotic sensibility is equivalently “anaesthetised” but may be aroused at any moment.

The reader alert to Mulgan’s subtext may thus evade the terrors of the Freudian unheimlich (Freud, 1919) felt when something repressed that was supposed to remain hidden – as here – comes to light. For if this scene is recognised as symbolising the potential for the homoerotic body’s cultural and social redemption, Mulgan’s image loses its unheimlich horror. It then becomes possible to read the object on this dining table as a sacramental subject—and thus a secular acknowledgment of the unrealised creative potential of the sexually transgressive “other”. In this, what was felt at first as unheimlich can be understood as one of those disrecognitions in which, according to Bracha Ettinger, we are “‘tricked’ by our own unconscious and conscious associations to believe that we are in contact with some horrible instances from an unremembered past” (Ettinger, 2009a, 10).

But if the reader understands the subtext of Robertson’s letter to Johnson “correctly”, they have in *Man Alone* the possibility of no longer being traumatised by the homoerotic body—no longer seeing it as a passive, “feminine-effeminate” object, synonymous in phallocentric discourse with castration and death. Instead the reader is able to see it in terms of the matrixial heimlich, namely as an “unknown other” that is not only an object but, as met in compassionate hospitality, a “subject” also, and hence no longer a horrible threat.

Of course, throughout his novel Mulgan assumes the existence in his implied reader of an entrenched horror of the homoerotic sensibility. But Mulgan also treats this abhorrence

as symptomatic of patriarchy's deeper controlling hostility towards, and horror of, the phallic-feminine. The assumption of femininity as unheimlich is so pervasive in patriarchy it is frequently not even consciously registered. But Mulgan, in his ironic evocation of the expectations of his implied reader, systematically illuminates this prejudice. The implied reader's hostile assumptions are being called into question by the novel's subtext.

These subversive undercurrents permeate every aspect of *Man Alone* and thus warrant the novel's full reappraisal—a detailed approach to the text that is justified by the sheer reach and depths of Mulgan's intent. For with the turn of every page his reader is given an opportunity, through Mulgan's own self-fragilisation, to "correctly" recognise, if they will, the sexual sensibilities of Johnson, Scott and the symbolic m/Other figure, Rua, who compassionately illustrate the variety of the human condition. Such a small claim, but recognising it potentially dislodges a whole edifice of patriarchal sexual entitlement, denial and persecution of "the other".

In *Man Alone* it becomes possible to enter the matrixial domain, which supplements the phallocentric arena inhabited by the novel's implied reader. In matrixiality, homoerotic sensibilities are understood in non-binary terms, and are therefore neither pejorative nor affirmative – such binaries belong in the phallocentric domain. A different Eros operates in the matrixial.

> The matrixial Eros is linked to sexuality in ways that weaken the importance of gendered "object choice". The centrality of gendered

> "object choice" –the question of male or female partner– moves to the margins when Eros intends the other as subject and does its work of borderlinking on the level of partial subjectivity beyond identity (Ettinger, 2006b, 115).

Here Ettinger's term "partial subjectivity" denotes the subject's lowering of his or her own ego-boundaries, in self-fragilisation, so as to register "the other" as more important than "the self".

But this is not to demonise the phallocentric paradigm. As a locus of binary concepts phallocentric protocols, which include the principles of freedom and justice implicit in Mulgan's very desire to publish his novel, are as indispensable and ineradicable in human consciousness as matrixiality. In fact the matrixial domain only ever supplements the phallocentric domain. It never replaces it. Therefore when seven lines after Robertson's letter ends Mulgan makes it his narrator's business to deliver Scott the coup de grâce, the writer can be seen to explicitly return his narrative to the phallocentric domain's binary scissions: "[Johnson] wrote to Scotty at the hospital and got no answer and had a card a month later from Robertson to say that Scotty was dead" (Mulgan, 83).

Since a complete month has elapsed between Johnson's first receiving word of his mate's hospitalisation and the belated informal notice of Scott's death, the implication is that this piece of correspondence was sent to Johnson without exceptional urgency. However, a "card" is an ambiguous medium of communication, which may go beyond the concise update offered in a postcard to imply written condolences offered to the bereaved next of kin. This allows Mulgan to subtextually recognise the nature of Johnson's relationship with Scott as both

formal and familial. A reading that also registers the belatedness of Johnson's notice regarding Scott's end as being an indictment of the stunted social recognition a de facto relationship such as theirs is accorded in their homophobic society.

Yet if Johnson's relationship with his mate had continued to develop in person the novel would have risked the possibility of its hero's criminal sexual self-incrimination. Johnson's clandestine flight from the city is therefore a narrative tactic that insulates him from sexual exposure, something that his defence of Scott during the riot could have triggered after it drew hostile attention from "The Law". And it also provides a justifiable reason why Johnson's attendance at Scott's deathbed, or even his funeral rites, is not narratively pursued.

The exclusion of scenes of Scott's hospitalisation and death can thus be seen not as a failure of the literary imagination, but rather as a structural feature of the text dictated by the homophobia of the implied reader. This view is supported by the author's own contrary action during the war after he learned that a comrade in arms had died of a fever in enemy-occupied territory. Mulgan had been a leader of partisans at that time, living in hiding among rebel Greeks fighting the German occupation. Yet: "He had walked for hours to the village when he heard of the death, and dressed the body for burial."

Vincent O'Sullivan's eloquently detailed biography of John Mulgan additionally notes of this courageous behaviour that after Mulgan had read from the *Bible* at his comrade's graveside service "[he] then walked alone the five hours to Yannitsou" (O'Sullivan, 2011, severally, 302).

Mulgan's choice to risk his life to participate in this

formal act of mourning points up the absence of any such ritual recognition of Johnson's loss of his soulmate Scott, a speaking silence in the text of *Man Alone*. To the reader familiar with the writer's own history, this implies that the dire social consequences that could arise for Johnson from any admission of his grief at Scott's death would be even worse than capture behind enemy lines. Read thus, the omission of scenes of formal morning for Scott are a withholding of readerly catharsis.

The narrative disappearance of Scott's body can also be seen as a textual "empty tomb", which in terms of the homoerotic body on the dining table of Robertson's letter holds out the possibility of an eventual resurrection of Johnson's mate in readerly communion. Therefore, despite the absence of those ritual observances that would provide Johnson with emotional resolution for his apparent loss, the hero is seen over the balance of the novel to symbolically traverse the five stages of grief that are theorised in the work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross as being *denial*, *anger*, *bargaining*, *depression* and *acceptance* (Kübler-Ross, 1997, 264). In this, the protagonist's grief trauma is displaced onto the very structure of the text.

Thus in the new chapter that starts but a turn of the page from the report of Scott's end, a quite literally business-as-usual discussion of the economics of Stenning's farm presents an abrupt change of subject. This functions as Johnson's *denial* of the significance of the loss of his mate, a perspective that gives way to the underlying *anger* motivating Johnson's otherwise implausible engagement in the disastrous relationship with Rua that occupies the novel's next four chapters. Then immediately after Johnson's "innocent" dalliance with another man's wife has

revengefully culminated in the utter destruction of her culturally sanctioned heterosexual relationship with her husband, whose jealousy then results in his own death, the narrative proceeds to the *bargaining* of Johnson's penitential traverse of the Rangipo followed by his epiphany at Onetapu. This is a symbolic journey, a kind of secular "stations of the cross[ing]" in which the life or death extremity of Johnson's physical deprivation subtextually conveys the extremity of his emotional deprivation – implicitly of Scott. During this progress Johnson is ultimately granted a revelatory metaphysical experience of both the homoerotic and the indigenous, subtextually registered in terms of certain myths of both the Greek and Maori "classical" eras.

Johnson's overwhelming relief at his successful negotiation of this physically—and more particularly, psychically—difficult terrain is followed by his descent into the frustrated *depression* he then experiences during his time in the maternally signified Kaimanawa Forest. This is followed by the protagonist's ritual rebirth into the phallocentric domain in part two of the novel—a transition that sees Johnson's reversion to his previous homo[sexual]social habits:

> There were memories of men he had known and *liked*, men, black and clay-stained on New Zealand roads, sweating on steamer decks, paint-blistered, dirty, and lice ridden in the seamen's camp at Panama, tough, sceptical, on New York docks [My emphasis] (Mulgan, 196).

In this sentence Mulgan's usage of *liked* appropriates the very code word Virginia Woolf deploys to reference the lesbian subtext of her novel-essay *A Room of One's Own*. (Mulgan's

collegial appropriations of her term are detailed in the section "Louis a Rangipo exile".) Mulgan's subversive usage of this word in Johnson's survey of his past signifies the protagonist's expression of a lifelong homoerotic sensibility that is, despite all, wholly unrepentant.

However, after his escape from New Zealand, his ostensible accommodation of patriarchal culture's approved sexual norms sees him reach an ambiguous *acceptance* of his own fate and Scott's "[…N]o longer eager but still living, grey but not beaten, moving impersonally and unquestioning through a world of which he had not yet understanding but which he could accept" (Mulgan,189).

Yet in his ultimate army re-enlistment—this time to fight in the Spanish Civil War—the protagonist's bitterly ironic return to his "normality" reinstates him in the brutal male-only military machine from whose ominous "mateship" he emerged at the start of the novel. In this Mulgan subtextually implies that in any-body like Johnson['s] the expression of a homoerotic sensibility endures – one way or another.

4. Femininity-effeminacy and the Queen Street riot

THE RATIONALE for Johnson's detachment from Scott arises in the wash-up of the Queen Street unemployed workers' riot. In the midst of this "class struggle", the protagonist sees that a policeman has taken hold of and is punching someone. Already angered by the gratuitous violence happening all around him,

Johnson suddenly realises that it is his own mate who is on the receiving end of these brutal attentions and so finds his feelings have become personal. Then in the middle of what is quite literally a blow-by-blow account of first Scott's and then Johnson's confrontation with The Law, the narrator abruptly cuts away from the action to interpolate a philosophical defence of Johnson's violent intervention:

> […] and angered, too, to think that of the few who would be picked out and punished for all that night's work, one of them must be Scotty, the small, the stupid, at heart the inoffensive (Mulgan, 58).

At the very moment Johnson is about to strike a blow for Scott's freedom, Mulgan freezes the action to establish the protagonist as empathising with the sergeant's demeaning estimation of his mate. But Scott is not given the chance here to defend himself against either The Law or Johnson's seeming confirmation of its view of his mate as "stupid".

Instead, in an "eye of the hurricane" moment Johnson gets access to the high moral ground. His brutal intervention, assaulting a police officer, is suggested as ethically appropriate because it is in support of someone incapable of his own defence. This is also the principle that ostensibly justifies the hero's eventual military reenlistment to fight against Fascism in the Spanish Civil War. But in fact Johnson's joining up is his way of displacing onto a "legitimate" target his fury at society's exclusion of the homoerotic sensibility.

Similarly, his use of violence in the Queen Street riot scene is not simply an expression of Johnson's ideological attachment

to democratic freedoms, but rather represents his fury that The Law has attacked his mate. Yet Mulgan's seeming denial to "stupid" Scott—of even the intellectual form of self-defence he makes available to his protagonist—suggests the novel does not dare to offer a directly reasoned rejoinder to The Law's contemptuous estimation of Scotty.

At the same time Johnson's practical exertion of violence against a police abuser—"Johnson drove one fist into the small of the sergeant's back, the other going high swung catching him on the side of his face" (Mulgan, 59)—self-protectively asserts for the benefit of the implied reader that the hero is in full possession of the very qualities of machismo The Law considers Scott lacks.

However, this begs the question of why an intelligent man like Johnson would choose to spend all but one chapter of the years between his arrival in New Zealand at the age of twenty-two and his flight from Auckland to Stenning's farm at the age of thirty-five in the company of an intellectual weakling.

This apparent contradiction is made explicable by recognising that the attributes singled out for condemnation in Scott are "feminine" ones. For in phallocentric discourse the implicit *lack* that may make a woman cherished and adored is reframed as contemptible if it is suspected in a man. In these terms Scott's expression of a "feminine" persona when he has all the privileges of "masculinity" at his disposal can only be a mark of his sheer stupidity.

This scene therefore registers the protagonist's anxiety as to the wisdom of Scott's attachment to him. The "effeminate" features of Scott's identity imply that his engagement in a

spousal relationship with Johnson is a kind of stupidity, which must eventually contaminate both parties. Even the “manly” Johnson has no immunity from such a transgressive association. His violent defence of Scott therefore shows the protagonist doing the “right” thing, for what the implied reader must never suspect are the “wrong” reasons. In this Johnson is a hero who is the antithesis of all those “others” the police despise—someone demonstrably big and intelligent enough to go on the offensive against the social agencies that denigrate “effeminate” men (like Scott) as “stupid”.

But in paradoxical contrast with Scott’s “vulnerable-effeminacy”, Mulgan simultaneously depicts the women characters—whose “vulnerable-femininity” *is* socially legitimate—as conspicuously during the riot, perpetrating acts of unprovoked brutality towards “others”. And of the two women rioters whose injuries are described, only one is harmed accidentally—the other receives her wounds as a direct consequence of her greed as a looter (Mulgan, 57). Thus with one exception to prove the rule, the “real-feminine” characters at the riot are treated as morally unworthy of any chivalrous efforts in their defence, thereby justifying Johnson in only offering support to his mate.

Scott’s ethical entitlement to Johnson’s protection was communicated subtextually to the reader in the first moments of the men’s assembly at the relief camp. Scotty’s principled and peaceful intentions were signalled by his appearance: ‘He stood thin and ill by the tent door, dressed in his only suit, ready to go’ (Mulgan, 51) Here the dangerously contaminating “feminine-effeminate” *lack* embodied in Scott’s physical frailty

is supplemented by the formal-business masculinity of his suit. In this he is portrayed not just as "ready to go" on the march, but also as formally prepared to serve the novel's purpose in the seeming irrevocability of his imminent disappearance into textual oblivion.

Mulgan constructs the scenes of the march and the riot that follows as an eyewitness account of what was an actual event. However on the evening of the affray he was attending a play with his sister Dorothea, and so by the time they emerged from the theatre: 'Queen Street was strangely quiet' (O'Sullivan, 2011, 63). In reality, all he saw was the property damage that had arisen during the police confrontation with the demonstrators. The seemingly historical realism of Mulgan's description of both the march and the riot after it must therefore be read not as the eyewitness live-action account it purports to be, but as a fictional construct lending "documentary" authority to the novel's thematic concerns.

He describes the march as a transcendent medium of exclusively masculine solidarity: 'In the grimness and tenseness of that mass of men a new spirit came over them' (Mulgan, 53). The words "men" and "man" are used a hypnotic nine times in the page-and-a-half description that tracks Johnson and his fellows from where they leave the lorry at the bottom of Queen Street, through to the 'wild business' that starts as the march falls apart at the top of the street outside the Town Hall (Mulgan, severally, 53-54).

However the prominence Mulgan then gives to women in the riot, after their complete invisibility during the scene of the march, subtextually calls attention to their enforced

exclusion from the socially and morally legitimate aspects of the night's events. In this Mulgan acknowledges his patriarchal culture's presumption that women have no right of access to the paid labour force. His sudden representation of their active presence once the violence starts thus confirms Bracha Ettinger's perception that "In the phallic framework, hysteria […and] revolt are subjectivising responses on the part of women to men's definition of female sexuality." These female rioters can thus be read as not only expressing their rage at their unpaid economic exploitation, but also their fury and frustration, as subjects, at the intellectual and sexual objectification of them that enforces their social erasure in patriarchal culture. Mulgan's riot scene is therefore exemplary of Ettinger's view that '[…] hysteria is produced precisely when the passage to the matrixial field is blocked' (Ettinger, 2006a, severally, 183.4).

The "matrixial field" from which these rioting women [and men] are "blocked" is the domain Bracha Ettinger theorises as supplementing that of the phallocentric. Its terms recognise the matrixial-feminine as a locus of active, non-binary creativity and connection that is accessible to us all, whatever our sex/gender. However Mulgan's representation of the women's actions during the riot invites a phallocentric view of them such as that of the implied reader, where femininity is premised on the binaries of goddess/whore.

The "perpetrator" women here are shown to be falling from their patriarchal pedestals into a kind of subhuman animality. To the implied reader, this represents them as the inferior term of a binary in which they are in any case the embodiment of the graphic Lacanian symbolisation of ~~woman~~ as *lack*. In these terms

"good" women require protection, while "bad" women attract the punishments they deserve. And since the acts of violence committed by the "bad" women in the riot are equal in number to those committed by men, paradoxically this renders them disproportionately more visible than their male peers and their actions more shocking.

The narrator's repeated references to the vocality of the women in the riot crowd highlights their inarticulacy – "women shrieking" (Mulgan, 56) - and their punningly animal incomprehensibility: "A woman screamed hoarsely beside him" (Mulgan, 58). Mulgan additionally specifies the gratuity of the women's attacks as implicitly Fascist: "Johnson saw a woman kick someone as he fell, screaming in her anger all the time" (Mulgan, 55). This brutal Fascist element is further pinpointed as "feminine" in the attribution of anti-Semitism to a group of females who were targeting:

> […] a little jeweller who must have lived above his shop and come down to protect it, driven in by women who cursed him as they beat at him. His small, kind, Jewish little face was sweating and fearful (Mulgan, 57).

These women have donned the political mask of anti-Semitism—for which Fascists are notorious—as a way of justifying what is actually their narcissistic "feminine" pursuit of valuable personal adornments. So in punning terms their target here is not actually Jewry but jewellery. Their "ideological" abuse of the jeweller is simply a façade for their own self-serving greed and sadistic pleasure at the expense of a suffering "other". The venality stereotypically ascribed to Jewishness in anti-

Semitic discourses is pointedly reassigned to these women.

Equally, with the description of the jeweller as "small", "kind", twice as "little", "sweating" and "fearful", the submissive vulnerability valorised as an aspect of "phallic femininity" is implicitly stripped from the inarticulately "cursing" women rioters and reassigned to the jeweller, making him not only racially "other" but sexually "other" as well.

For the implied reader t/his appearance of "effeminacy" is a provocation, which gives to any man who attacks such a persona a mitigating argument of self-defence. Societal tolerance of such a prejudice is apparent in New Zealand in the practice of "queer bashing", with the result that "There is a long history of the homosexual panic defence being successfully used to reduce the charges against killers and, in some cases to acquit them" (Laurie, *NZ Herald*, 2004).

The jeweller, as an "effeminate" man, has in homophobic terms invited just such a "punishment", but this produces an ironic conundrum for the implied reader in that the women who carry it out have usurped a male prerogative and so are as "unnatural" as their victim. In actively taking part in the riot these women have also forfeited their customary "right" to chivalrous male protection – though this isn't passed on to the jeweller. Nobody comes to his aid. Jewish people across Europe were subject at this time to a tsunami of hate crimes. Mulgan's staging of a violent attack by women in an Auckland jeweller's shop recognises that such acts of pathological hostility may be perpetrated anywhere and by anybody. This is Mulgan's subversive recognition of the spurious ethical dilemmas that paralyse those who ignore such attacks. All such hesitancies

are obliquely rebuked by Johnson's immediate intervention to support Scott.

Mulgan's accompanying destabilisation of the constituents of "real" womanliness and "real" manliness are his attempt to clear the way for a different model in which no bystander could equivocate about the legitimacy of their protective personal intervention, whether on Scott's behalf or the jeweller's. But this is also Mulgan's attempt to insulate the hero from the homophobic suspicion of the implied reader. For them, once the protest turns ugly Scott's failure to either defend himself or attack others should disqualify him from manhood. But subtextually his "lack" of aggression reveals his moral strength. In this Mulgan produces Scott's supposed "feminine-effeminacy" as in fact a form of matrixial subjectivity. Scott's self-fragilisation when faced with abuse is Mulgan's ethical rebuke to the grotesque and selfish actions of the "real" women (and men) in the riot and a repudiation of Scott's victimisation by The Law. Scott's status is therefore reframed here. His ostensibly unheimlich social mien (supposedly "stupid" because "effeminate"), is actually a manifestation of his unique human subjectivity, and may register with the reader as a matrixial heimlich, which is no longer repugnant or contaminating.

This corroborates the complex summation of Scott's supposedly "feminine-effeminate" personal identity that was offered to the reader during the period when the mates lived together on Thompson's farm: "Scotty never got up before six; it was a covenant he had made with himself" (Mulgan, 27). Here Johnson's drolly reported response to Scott's sleeping in while others work does not denigrate his mate's behaviour

as indolence – that "foppish" characteristic synonymous with "feminine-effeminacy" – but rather recognises Scott's "late" rising – at all of 6am – as a poignant assertion of his human dignity.

Equally, Scott's oddball enthusiasm for Social Credit currency reform (Mulgan, 40-41, 49) is an obsession that falls well beyond the pale of economic and political orthodoxy. But his seeming economic heresy – "Well it doesn't suit these boys to print enough [banknotes]…No, Johnnie, a real farmers' Government that'd take hold and run these banks, that's what's going to happen" (Mulgan, 40-41) – is actually his practical and entirely peaceable alternative to the violently confrontational capitalist vs communist polemics that dominate this period of punishing depression.

It is ironic that Scott's queer economic prescription of bank bailouts and "quantitative easing" should be the precise remedies chosen by today's desperate world leaders to counter the economic depression provoked by the latest global financial crisis, but Mulgan was not actually advocating any particular economic remedy via Scott's enthusiasms. Rather he was subtextually asserting, as a point of principle, that Scott's right to the peaceful expression of his supposedly "stupid" homoerotic sensibilities is not a whit less defensible than his right to peacefully express his allegedly "stupid" economic and political theories.

Of course for the implied reader Johnson's tolerantly wry response to Scott's economic prescription can be taken as a summary dismissal of it as the simpleminded magical thinking of desperate poverty. But subtextually, via Johnson's compassion for

his mate, Mulgan invites the reader to keep an open mind – as much towards Scott's transgressive sexuality as his politics.

Man Alone is Mulgan's own wildly unorthodox corrective to an intractable "depression" in the sexual economy of the homoerotic. The novel is his test to see if the reader, irrespective of whether they agree or disagree with his "queer" views, will support – or censor – his peaceful (literary) exercise of freedom of thought, speech and action, and by doing so engage with the deeper ethical and aesthetic questions that the text invites.

5. *"via regia"*

IN STAGING his hero's conflict with patriarchal authority on "Queen" Street, Mulgan reiterates the sexual ambiguity of a name he also uses for Auckland as a whole. For just before Johnson goes ashore in the port city that is his destination, he speaks to a returning soldier who refers to Auckland as "the Queen of the North" (Mulgan, 8).

From his new acquaintance's complacently partisan perspective it is "not a bad little town" (Mulgan, 8). It is also Mulgan's old hometown, and his narrator's evocation of its brightness of "red iron roofs straggling down to the shore" (Mulgan, 7) treats its absence of architectural majesty with unabashed enjoyment. Yet in the Pakeha "introduction to country" represented by the returning soldier's insistence that the moment they disembark he will shepherd Johnson to

the pub, the writer hints that the local refusal of ceremony – architectural or otherwise – is also a sort of bloody-minded social obduracy: queenliness incognito.

That this relentless understatement has an element of callousness is underlined in the returning soldier's refusal to engage with "the wife and kids" (Mulgan, 8) waiting at the dock to welcome him home after a three-year separation. But his reluctance is in marked contrast to his nostalgic enthusiasm for the sexually ambiguous past contacts he had with those "fellows like you" who, in what is a cheeky homoerotic double entendre, he used to meet "'at the "National" […] right at the bottom of the street.' His face lit up. 'I used to know the fellows there. If they haven't changed.'"(Mulgan, severally, 9). The implied reader's presumed ignorance of the sexually transgressive character of "Queen" Street allows the soldier's dismissive attitude towards resuming his relationship with his waiting wife and children to be understood as simply a war veteran's "patriotic" entitlement to assert the precedence of mateship over familial demands. Yet the grounds for any such dismissal are rendered both ambiguous and poignant by the uncanniness of the man's appearance: "The soldier had a face that was shrunken and pock-marked and unhealthy looking; his left arm had not recovered from a shrapnel wound; he carried it stiffly in front of him" (Mulgan, 8). The implication is that the man's family – as he himself anticipates – may be grateful to defer the eventual unheimlich of their reunion since pre-existing social and sexual silences are cruelly inflated by the unspeakable traumas of war.

The wounded man explains his wish to delay his family reunion by saying to Johnson, 'I won't probably be seeing

fellows like you again for a time' (Mulgan, 9). His homoerotic desire is made apparent here in the doubly qualified admission that he will only "probably" give up "for a time" his clear underlying intention to continue "seeing fellows like you".

This subtext acknowledges his longing for an/other milieu – one revealed in the "noble savagery" of the wild Rangipo-Onetapu-Kaimanawa. The attractions of "fellows like [Johnson]" are utterly distinct from yet deeply seductive to such ignobly domesticated br/Others as the wounded man. The price of his continued family membership is his ostensible compliance with the restrictive patriarchal rules of the heterosexual mainstream.

However the soldier's unswerving enthusiasm for the "National" is then ironically contrasted with the prostitute Rose's response when, not long after this, she finds out that is where Johnson is "accommodated":

> "I don't think I'll go there," she said.
> "What's wrong with it?"
> "There's nothing wrong with the 'National', only I don't like it much" (Mulgan, 12-13).

For the implied reader this remark simply confirms Rose as the capricious type, for she happily frequents other hostelries that to any "respectable" woman, would appear equally unsavoury. However Rose's preference here may be read subtextually as a straightforward business decision in favour of drinking premises where her "vanilla" sexual services will be in more assured demand. At the same time Mulgan slyly reminds the reader that the "National" is there for everybody though we don't all experience it the same way.

Rose, for one, makes clear in this exchange her tolerance for the alternative sexual predilections of "others", with the implication that, like the wounded soldier, she already knows Johnson better than he knows himself. Hence on their arrival at her preferred pub, her instant abandonment of him.

Johnson's approach to Rose at this early point in the text has asserted for the implied reader the "normality" of the hero's sexual tastes. But her pretty English-flower name is soon revealed as a professional nom de guerre that disguises an underlying sexual menace. Her "red hat" acts like a traffic signal, warning that though her face may be "pleasant and kindly" (Mulgan,12) her body is suspect (Mulgan, 14).

However just before his fellow drinkers make their damning revelations about Rose's venereal misfortunes, Mulgan sees her welcomed from across the barroom "There were two *other* women there who called out to her as she came in" [my emphasis] (Mulgan, 3). Rose's acceptance of their compassionate hospitality borderlinks the three of them as a non-binary (hence implicitly matrixial) limited severality of unknown "others". This compensates Rose for the instant pariah status she achieves in the eyes of the implied reader as soon as Johnson learns of the health disadvantages of a date with her. A revelation that serves as Johnson's reprieve from the implied reader's expectation of his further sexual traffic with Rose.

The initial description of Rose as having "false teeth that fitted unnaturally" (Mulgan, severally,12) draws on "*the primal phantasy of the devouring mother*" in an image that serves to justify the implied reader's erroneous dismissal of Rose as a horrible "mother-monster" (Ettinger, 2006b, severally, 106) But

subtextually this description of Rose's visible *oral* orifice alludes to the difficulties posed for the protagonist by her invisible *sexual* orifice. The initial "toothsomeness" of her appearance is rendered ambiguous by the unnatural fit, for Johnson, of what is a supposedly tailor-made attribute of Rose's (sexual) identity.

Of course Rose's obviously false teeth are also, for the implied reader, a symbolic reference to punter's remorse – the "castrating" realisation that sex at a price will actually require payment. Such hypocritically dehumanising second thoughts are subtextually rebuked by the compassion of Rose's response to the apparent transgressivity of Johnson's sexual proclivities.

Complementing this covert narrative advocacy for transgressive sexuality – whether heterosexual or homoerotic – the Queen Street riot may be understood as a furious rejection of social marginalisation. The riot's "hysteria" is a representation of the rage and anguish not only of unemployed men and silenced women, but of any-body objectified and "othered" in phallocentric discourse as a consequence of gender, sexual orientation or activity, traumatic disability, disease, race, religion or poverty – and so denied entry to the humanising connectivity of the matrixial domain.

It is therefore no coincidence that in the wake of The Law's assault on Scott, the hero should set out to undermine phallocentric authority, on this particular road. For the implied reader the name Queen Street may signify "the way" of imperial progress, but here it subtextually signposts a symbolic cultural crossroad – implicitly a matrixial borderspace. *Man Alone* offers to any reader disposed to decode its subtext, knowledge of his or her own (culture's) alternative, repressed wishes. Indeed the

protagonist's first steps towards changing the heteronormative bias of his society are taken under a street sign that points allusively to Freud's 1900 assertion that: "At any rate the interpretation of dreams is the *via regia* to a knowledge of the unconscious in the psychic life" (Freud, 1911, 483). Freud's thesis "The interpretation of Dreams" was read widely after its 1911 publication in book form, and its terms of expression became a commonplace of intellectual discourse. His phrase "via regia" is echoed in an essay of John Mulgan's, where Mulgan uses the descriptor "royal road" in an extended metaphor whose watchword is the "bad" intentions with which Fascism paves the "royal road" to hell (Mulgan and Whiteford, 2010, severally, 191).

The collection of essays in which this reference occurs were written towards the end of the war and published posthumously in 1947 in *Report on Experience*. The writer's son, Richard Mulgan, observed in his preface to the 2010 edition: "Reading the book in hindsight can certainly uncover an elegiac tone that suggests it may have been written as a deliberate testament and legacy" (Mulgan and Whiteford, 2010, 9).

The "royal road" reference in John Mulgan's essay points to the writer's familiarity with the famous Freudian use of the "via regia" metaphor. Today psychological interventions based on dream-work are commonly viewed as therapeutically contentious. (APA, 2009-2013). However in the fictional context in which Mulgan is operating in *Man Alone*, it is certainly relevant that the protagonist's first steps towards the fulfilment of the narrative's subtextual argument for a change in the homophobic, implicitly sexually Fascist direction of the

hero's culture should be taken on a "royal road" that will lead him to Stenning's remote farm. This is the place where he will enact his own subversive critique of the "primal phantasies of: Seduction, Castration, and Oedipus, classical psychoanalysis considers as reconstructed or redesigned to regulate smoothly male subjectivising processes". (Ettinger, 2006b, 107).

Mulgan's personal appreciation of Freudian concepts was attested to by his old friend Colin Reeve who claimed that one of the few things that stood out for him in their many talks was Mulgan's self-estimation that "he had had an Oedipus complex" (O'Sullivan, 2011, 197).

In *Man Alone* Mulgan can thus be seen as attempting to divert the realisation of mature (male) sexual subjectivity away from the conventional symbolism of phallocentric discourse recognised by Freud, to an alternative pathway. This has cataclysmic consequences for Johnson's relationships with both Rua and Stenning – a couple whose life circumstances are no less desperate than the protagonist's. Yet the eventual removal of Stenning will offer both Rua and Johnson – and by implication the reader too – a symbolic supplement to the restrictive binary of heteronormative femininity/masculinity found in phallocentric discourse. Thus the text may be understood as recognising the protagonist's potential access (and the reader's) to the different difference accorded to femininity in the matrixial domain – femininity constructed there as non-binary, actively generative, compassionately hospitable and made available at the originary level to every body (Ettinger, 2006a, 37.8).

In the text's engagement with the phallocentric perception of the feminine, the hero's claim of superiority over his "stupid"

(since implicitly "effeminate") mate delivers a forceful blow against Scott to the reader. However this narrative dismissal of Scott merits consideration of yet another instructive passage from *Report on Experience*. Mulgan asserted that:

> You don't need to be very clever to love someone. It is better not to be clever. The people who are simple and honest have a great advantage here. Anyone who imagines that rough and conventionally educated people don't understand these things, should live with them for a while, or censor soldiers letters. These latter often know very much more about these things than do the sophisticated and the intelligent and the self-conscious (Mulgan and Whiteford, 2010, 192).

In light of the extract above, the fact that Mulgan felt the need to insert a disclaimer of Scott's intelligence in *Man Alone* should be understood as an accommodation of the forensically punitive homophobia of the implied reader. And Johnson's assumption of intellectual superiority over his mate can therefore be read as, paradoxically, a subtextual narrative rebuke to the protagonist. For in this authorial comment Mulgan implies that because Johnson is far too "clever" to unequivocally reveal his private self-fragilisation towards Scott, either in the riot or any other scene, his protagonist's purported detachment from his mate is actually a profound transgression of the ethical integrity of their relationship. And this transgression will point to aspects of the protagonist's treatment in the balance of the narrative, rendering them symbolically penitential. Did the writer have any alternative?

Though born in Christchurch, Mulgan was largely brought up in Auckland and also went to university there. He

did not arrive in England until 1933, when he was twenty-two years of age. However sexually restrictive (or not) his life experiences were before he left Aotearoa New Zealand, while he was studying English Language and Literature at Oxford University between November 1933 and June 1936 (Day, 1968, 25-33) a window into a parallel reality was open to him: "In that almost exclusively masculine world […o]pen homosexuality was common in pre-war Oxford, not least among dons, even though gay sex was still a criminal offence" (Fraser, 2011, 3). Mulgan's biographer Vincent O'Sullivan acknowledges the existence of this permissive sexual milieu – albeit explicitly denying that it had any personal significance for his subject (O'Sullivan, 2011, 118). However in the passages in which he discusses the acceptability of homosexuality at Oxford University (O'Sullivan, 2011, 117-118) and in the wealth of fascinating detail his biography provides about John Mulgan's life and times, the reader alert to the subtext of *Man Alone* will find ample grounds for a markedly more sexually complex reading of Mulgan's life.

But no permissive sexual milieu is made accessible – in either England or New Zealand – to the hero of *Man Alone*. This is despite the fact that David Herkt's history of gay Auckland (2013) records that as early as the 1920s:

> Auckland pubs and hotels begin appearing in court documents and newspaper reports as places where men could meet and bed each other. […these included] the Waitemata Hotel in Lower Queen Street, which appears to have been a place where gay men felt comfortable, to judge by its appearance in another trial which featured upstairs rooms, drinking, singing and sexual contact.

> The hotel porter would run messages between couples and the owner of the hotel testified, “At Christmas time our double beds were full of men together” (Herkt, 2013).

However the various homoerotically charged comments of the wounded serviceman on the boat can be read as Mulgan’s subtextual acknowledgment that in fact the sexual liberties commonplace in collegial relationships at Oxford and among certain circles readily accessible to him in London and elsewhere in England were also available on at least one appositely named street in his old hometown.

But Johnson, as a penniless member of the unemployed working class struggling to stay afloat in the punishing economic currents of Depression-era Aotearoa New Zealand, is imagined to be oblivious to such a milieu. And after his defence of his mate he has no alternative but to cut and run.

In the subsequent melee Scotty apparently disappears, never to be seen again. And with the policeman’s threat ‘I’ll get you for this’ (Mulgan, 59) ringing in his ears, the protagonist finds his way to the railway yards and hops a freight train out of immediate physical – not to speak of social, sexual and emotional – danger.

Such a retreat is necessary because Johnson lives in a society where, every bit as much for him as for his working-class English counterparts, any social recognition of a man’s relationship with another as sexual is synonymous with criminality and will result in public humiliation, likely imprisonment with hard labour, and potentially flogging.

For example in 1929 a man then known as Norris Davy offered evidence in the high court in Wellington against his

co-accused, an artist named Leonard Hollobon, in the wake of their joint arrest for a privately conducted, consensual sexual encounter. This resulted in three charges of indecent assault for Hollobon, who received a term of five years' imprisonment with hard labour for each charge, to be served concurrently. As a "first offender" Norris Davy was ordered, if called upon within the next two years, to come up for sentencing on a charge of indecent assault. If that happened he would be subject to a five-year maximum term of imprisonment.

The trial of Leonard Hollobon and Norris Davy took place in John Mulgan's last year at school. Mulgan had spent the first two years of his secondary education boarding at Firth House, Wellington College, while his parents were overseas. On their return to Auckland they brought him home from Wellington and enrolled him as a fifth-form dayboy at Auckland Grammar. His sister Dorothea later recalled that Firth House had a reputation for being "a pretty uncouth place and although [John] was not the kind of boy who is victimised, he was shockingly thin and gaunt by the time he left" (O'Sullivan, 2011, 29). Mulgan's biographer Vincent O' Sullivan adds that "Firth House's rough-house reputation – although John mentioned not a word of it – may have added to the family's determination to have him back" (O'Sullivan, 2011, 33).

Mulgan's early adolescent exposure to the "rough-house" of what I assume to be the homophobic-homoerotic constituencies of Aotearoa New Zealand male (and female) boarding-school culture were not then – or even now – experiences that could be readily chronicled publicly. But George Orwell, in his ironically titled essay *Such*, *Such were the Joys* gives a courageously candid

account of his own harrowing experience of institutional homophobia in the English public school he attended – though its subjects' real names were not published until a later incarnation of his essay (Orwell, 2008, pp. 271-277). Orwell's anguish gives some idea of what might cause a boy like John Mulgan to become, in such coercive circumstances, "shockingly thin and gaunt".

But in any case, after his return to his family in Auckland a very public account of the "rough-house" of *adult* homophobia would have been accessible to John Mulgan in terms of the legal proceedings brought against Davy and Hollobon. This was because after their arrest "the story of the trial and verdicts [were] carried by newspapers throughout the country" (King, 1995, 95). In fact such hegemonically bullying prosecutions were enacted and widely publicised as a warning to "others". And as newspapers were freely available and highly esteemed in the Mulgan household – John's father Alan Mulgan worked as a newspaper journalist – it is more than likely that John read the reports of this "indecent assault" trial – and others as well. As a result of his observations and experiences at Firth House he would doubtless bring to this reading a personal appreciation of the humiliation felt by those publicly named in such stories and a strong sense of the profoundly traumatic effects of their punishments.

Immediately following the testimony given at his trial, Norris Davy changed his name to Frank Sargeson. This was the identity under which he went on to become – after Katherine Mansfield – Aotearoa New Zealand's then most stylistically innovative exponent of the short story. He was the person

who offered Janet Frame a place of refuge in which to write on her release from psychiatric committal, and he became a compassionate literary mentor for her and many other writers. Michael King's ground-breaking 1995 biography of Frank Sargeson was the first to publicly link this writer's criminal prosecution with his later life and identity.

Despite Sargeson's conviction for "indecency" the judge had dealt "leniently" with him. His biographer Michael King suggests this was in exchange for the younger man's incrimination of his co-accused. This cannot be corroborated as Sargeson's court file appears to have been lost (Brickell, 2008, 71). However he did escape the charges police laid against Leonard Hollobon, whose file does survive, under section 153 of the Crimes Act of 1908. The maximum penalty was "ten years imprisonment with hard labour", with a further provision for a convicted prisoner to be "flogged or whipped once, twice, or thrice…" (King, 1975, severally, 93-95). Staggering the lashes over up to three sessions represents a humiliating maximisation of torture, while contemptuously withholding the "mercy" of a death sentence. However social historian Chris Brickell notes that "unlike the authorities in Canada, and Britain who monitored public places and staked men out", police prosecutions during this period in Aotearoa New Zealand were either "reactive" or opportunistic (Brickell, 2008, severally 72). But the publicity attending conviction and imprisonment, however they were arrived at, had as chilling an effect in Aotearoa as anywhere else. King notes that at this time:

> All sex offenders were sent to New Plymouth gaol, which was reserved for what the Controller-General of Prisons referred to as

> 'perverts'. B.L.S. Dallard was especially punitive towards this class of offender and had stated on at least one occasion that they had to be watched constantly while working in the prison quarry in case they offended again (King, 1995, 94).

Yet decades before King's registry of these refinements of homophobic persecution John Mulgan had, in *Man Alone*, offered symbolic solace to those "sex offenders" set to work, like Leonard Hollobon, in the New Plymouth prison quarry. Such inmates could, in the environs of their hard labour, keep a percipient eye on the symbolically defeated heterosexuality of Mount Taranaki. Those who had read *Man Alone* with an alertness to its homoerotic subtext were able to relish Mulgan's subversive reconfiguration of the myth, attributed to Maori, of the maunga Taranaki's sexually humiliated retreat to the coast. This withdrawal is subtextually registered in *Man Alone* in terms of the cataclysmic removal of one "Stenning" – husband of "Rua [pehu]" – his "retreat" having been precipitated by the relationship-wrecking intercession of Tongariro [Johnson]. (The presumed "adultery" of Ruapehu is a contemporary European mythic appropriation of an older more complex Maori legend, and is considered here in the section "Taranaki, Ruapehu, Tongariro: Ménage a trois?").

In a bitter irony, after the Second World War, in the very institutions where New Zealand people with homoerotic sensibilities were imprisoned and punished and "treated", Mulgan's novel was deemed suitably patriotic rehabilitative material for inmates with library privileges. It was also prescribed reading in the nation's universities and "rough-house" secondary schools. The authorities, whether literary or

institutional, were as oblivious as the novel's implied reader to the fact that during the Queen Street riot Johnson's assault on The Law and subsequently on Rua's marriage were Mulgan's covert gestures of defiance of the then criminal indefensibility of a homoerotic sensibility. His protagonist's violent retaliation against police brutality and misogynist heterosexual self-entitlement was carried out with the subtextual intent of symbolically avenging the state-sanctioned victimisation of those like Johnson and his vulnerable partner, Scott.

In the chapter immediately following Johnson's escape from the police comes the novel's only words of explicit mourning for Scott, with the narration pausing to acknowledge the intimacy of the bond that existed between the mates as being physical, while in the same breath seeming to relinquish this connection: 'So the only man he wanted to keep in touch with was dead, and he was glad to be back in the country and away from it all.' (Mulgan, 83).

But there is a Shakespearean pun here in the word "country". A linguistic "play-within-the-play" that is a nod to the "c[o]untry matters" of Hamlet's inescapably doomed relationship with Ophelia. Johnson's ostensibly "glad" affirmation that he is now "away from *it all*" is in fact rendered bitterly ambiguous by the conventional obscenity of his now being "back in the c[o]untry". Ironically, Johnson's act of furious Oedipal rebellion against his culturally enforced separation from Scott is facilitated by his exploitation of Rua's supposedly "tailor-made" female sexuality.

Yet as soon as Stenning is gone, the hero discovers while journeying to Onetapu that paradoxically the very extremity of

this mysteriously wild and marginally inhabitable place (which is nonetheless at the centre of Te Ika a Maui, The North Island) has in fact returned him – in terms of his relationship with his mate – to "the heart of *it all*" (my emphasis) (Mulgan, 154).

However first the social risks attending Johnson's subtextual acknowledgment of his commitment to Scott must be mitigated by his mate's hospitalisation and death. In what is therefore Scott's textual quarantine, the narrative "contamination" of the hero that would inexorably attend Johnson's continued physical association with his mate, is prevented – and in quite literally medical terms.

Yet despite Mulgan's treatment of Scott's end as (for the implied reader) a medical inevitability, this does not erase the acute emotional and moral dilemmas raised by the hero's apparent relinquishment of his relationship with Scotty – not least because in the Kiwi-masculine codes of the time a "real" man would never desert a mate. Therefore Mulgan's introduction of the Queen Street riot halfway through *Man Alone*, also functions as the catalyst for a suggestively "runaway" series of plot events. This is Mulgan's attempt to pre-empt any ethical consideration of Johnson's apparent abandonment of Scott. But even as the social conflagration of the riot implies the brutal necessity for Johnson to flee The Law, the serendipity of his escape simultaneously reads as an act of involuntary desertion under fire.

Such ethical concerns are adroitly marginalised for the implied reader by the narrative's shift in focus to the titillating unorthodoxies of the hero's conventionally scandalous relationship with Rua.

For now Mulgan introduces the woman who will, with traumatising force, breach the façade of his protagonist's ostensible sexual stoicism. In the wake of the cataclysmic events that then unfold "in the c[o]untry", the subversive irony of part two of *Man Alone* is Mulgan's unequivocal depiction of Johnson as a man older, but in his reversion to his previous homo[sexual] social habits no "wiser". For despite the narrator's explicit assertion to the contrary (Mulgan, 189), Johnson remains fundamentally unchanged.

6. The Oedipal engine of *Man Alone*

THE OEDIPAL ENGINE of *Man Alone* switches on at the point where Mulgan's hero ventures into a sexual relationship with another man's wife: "Johnson had not touched a woman since he left Auckland. He put his arm round her and kissed her fully on the lips" (Mulgan,106). This sentence carries a sardonic echo of the scandalous thrice-repeated phrase "full on the lips" from Radclyffe Hall's lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness*, a phrase that assumed disproportionate significance for Hall's readers, whether supporters or detractors, because her erotic references are otherwise negligible. Nonetheless *The Well of Loneliness* became an instant commercial hit.

Initially railed against in the daily press as a provocation to public decency, her novel was banned in England shortly after its publication and was then immediately reissued in France: "Jonathan Cape shifted the printing of it to Paris. He could

not produce copies of it fast enough"(Souhani, ed. Hall, 2008, x). The Paris edition was "printed by the publisher Pegasus in vast quantities, and covertly shipped back to England for distribution" (Roiphe, 2008, 240). It was therefore a text both freely available and entirely commonplace in the London and Oxford literary circles in which John Mulgan moved, where reading it was an act of symbolic resistance to censorship.

In the first part of Hall's novel her masculinely named heroine Stephen observes jealously as a footman steals a heterosexual kiss from the housemaid Collins – on whom Stephen has a childish crush (Hall, 2008, 23). The phrase "full on the lips" is first used in this scene, then repeated twice more in reference to Stephen's subsequent infatuation with Angela Crossby, a married woman: "Stephen took Angela into her arms, and she kissed her full on the lips, as a lover" (Hall, 2008, cf. 162 & 230).

Therefore the mirroring language of Johnson's initiating adulterous heterosexual kissing of Rua in *Man Alone* can be read as constructed emblematically, by John Mulgan to obliquely affirm Stephen Gordon's "indecent" lesbian embrace of Angela Crossby. In this Mulgan endorses Hall's assertion of the rational equivalence of heterosexual and homosexual acts, as signalled by Hall's own use of the phrase "full on the lips" in both hetero and homoerotic contexts.

Mulgan's appropriation of the all but identical 'kissed her fully on the lips' also slyly cashes in, straight-faced, on the "best-selling" sexual frisson of Hall's portentous sentence. Its known efficacy in piquing the appetite of the implied reader for transgressively titillating sexual scandal cocks a snook at the banning of Hall's book.

In Mulgan's preceding sentence the use of the word "touched" – "Johnson had not touched a woman since he left Auckland" (Mulgan,106) – is deeply deceptive. In fact the only women he had contact with in Auckland were the ones who jostled him in the riot. But this phrase's subtext now characterises Johnson's intentions towards Rua as explicitly sexual – a usage that therefore obliquely affirms the sexual significance of the protagonist's previous assertion that Scott is "the only man he wanted to keep in touch with" (Mulgan, 83). Mulgan's deployment of "touch" in terms of its sexual significance is a repeated narrative trope that also features in reference to Rose the prostitute: "I wouldn't touch our Rose, Lad" (Mulgan, 14) and with reference to Louis the sailor – as discussed in detail in a later section ("Louis – a Rangipo Exile").

However, at the moment of Johnson and Rua's first kiss Mulgan can also be seen to embody in her feminine-indigeneity his hero's own double displacement from the sexual and social consolations that were formerly "native" to him. For here Mulgan repositions his hero to accommodate the heterosexual norms of the phallocentric domain.

In this Johnson, at the age of thirty-five (Mulgan, 90), registers as practically old enough to be a father figure for twenty-year-old Rua (Mulgan, 103). But her husband, Gallipoli veteran Bill Stenning, is ten years older than Johnson. Therefore in the sexual triangle of these three characters' interrelationships it is Stenning who comes to occupy the paternal role. At "about 45" (Mulgan, 74), he is over twice the age of his wife. In fact Mulgan's specificity about the ages of these three characters draws subversive attention to the "real

world" instability of the relationships onto which the rigid structure of the Oedipal mythos is here applied. Alternative possible symbolic relationships between the members of the trio vie for readerly attention. This is evident initially in Stenning's attempted exercise of paternal authority over Rua as, in marital law, his dependent minor. Meanwhile Johnson's initial self-serving perception of Rua's Oedipally incestual m/Otherliness towards *him* is ultimately supplemented by his matrixially non-prohibited incestual br/Other-sisterliness towards *her* (Ettinger, 2010a, 215). These supplementary queered "sibling" features of their relationship are discussed in detail here in the section "Antigone at the scene of Johnson's 'crime.'"

But for the purposes of the Oedipal myth, since Rua as "farmer's wife" is responsible, however ambivalently on her part, for feeding any farm worker (Mulgan, 103), to the implied reader she occupies a symbolically maternal role in relation to Johnson. The hero's own projection of motherly attributes onto Rua is made apparent in the novel's scene of their first sexual consummation. Here Rua's indigeneity is depicted as synonymous for Johnson with "nature" as a force of maternal instinctuality. The description of Rua's bodily presence is all but indistinguishable from the Edenic setting and biblical language in which their tryst is staged. Mulgan keeps any sense of Rua's own sexual agency at a textual remove by representing her physicality through Johnson's eyes as being equivalent to the disembodied – and for all practical purposes, invisible – effect of "clear sunlight" and "clean…fresh air":

> After they had eaten she put her arms around him and they lay together on the sand. Johnson felt grateful and kindly towards Rua

> as he had never felt before. She was good to him there and he felt clean and refreshed. Lying there in the clear sunlight and with the fresh air around them was pleasant; it made him feel stronger and more alive. Rua sat up, smiling down at him. She ran her hand through his hair and laughed softly (Mulgan, 108).

Mulgan's use here of the biblical euphemism for sexual consummation "they lay together" is further reinforced by Johnson's description of Rua as "good to him". This gives her imaginative equivalence with both the archaic plenteousness of the earth as conceptualised by Maori in the form of the divine earth mother Papatuanuku, but also as a disembodied function of Christianity's creation myth where God, in looking over his handiwork in the book of Genesis, "saw that it was good". Mulgan's description thus recognises "half-caste" Rua as having the status in both her cultures of a divinely creative force of nature. However, the fact that the lovers' sexual intimacy occurs on a bed of "sand" also foreshadows the fact that their coupling is as temporary as the house built on sand by the biblical "foolish" man of Matthew 7: 24-27, and will prove equivalently unstable.

A tender maternal gesture from Rua – "After they had eaten she put her arms around him" (Mulgan, 108) – inaugurates their sexual relations in terms of Johnson's passive receptivity. But for the implied reader Rua's circling "arms" will come to represent not shelter, but dangerous weaponry and entrapment. This manifests the physical bond between the lovers as the maternal/son attraction, which is fated in phallocentric discourse, to elicit the deadly sanctions of the Oedipal drama.

In the coda moments of an initiatory sexual consummation whose transgressivity is signalled by its occurring outside the bounds of conventional European "civilisation" – as represented by the farmhouse – Rua, in the freedom and danger of the forest, now addresses Johnson with the diminutive pet name "Johnnie" (Mulgan, 108), an affectionate usage previously only applied to him by the mate whose intimacy he reciprocated with the pet name "Scotty"' (Mulgan, 23). Johnson has no pet names for Rua. Rather, at the close of their tryst in an implicit assertion of her dominant maternal authority, Rua dismisses Johnson as if he were her child with the words "you better run along and do some work now. I'll take the basket back." (Mulgan, 109). Her infantilising language, "run along" and her feeding reference to the picnic basket reinforce her in the symbolic role of "mother-figure".

The paternal aspects of the text's Oedipal symbolism were established previously, in Stenning's endowment of Johnson with a third share of the farm (Mulgan, 105). This is a patrimonial gift offered without consulting Rua, who when she finds out strongly objects. However at this time in New Zealand all marital property is automatically in the sole ownership of the husband (Wanhalla, 2013, 47). Therefore Stenning has the legal right to cede Johnson an interest in "his" land without consulting his wife. But this is a fool's gold bargain, as calculatedly enticing to the avarice of the implied reader as it is to the destitute Johnson.

The two men enter into an unenforceable verbal contract that Johnson will work on Stenning's farm without wages in return for a pledged third share in his property, with the

additional prospect that when the Depression lifts Johnson might take over the abandoned acreage adjoining Stenning's. But Rua's subsequent sexual liaison with her "owner" husband's hired man will subtextually punish Stenning for his presumptuous usurpation of his spouse's economic interests.

That the lovers are breaking the archaic Oedipal sexual taboo is recognised in Johnson's insistence on the absolute secrecy of their dalliance. This is not because of any desire on his part to clandestinely gain a deeper level of intimacy with Rua, but is simply necessitated by his belated realisation that gaining his share of the farm (kingdom) depends on the stability of his relationship with Stenning. Therefore at the point when he is ready to finish his affair with someone he now prefers to see only as his boss's wife, Johnson insists that any consciousness of what they have done must be repressed: "Listen now Rua, that was all right, but it's the end of it now, and you and I, we're both going to forget it, see" (Mulgan, 110). This command to "forget" marks Johnson's awareness of the unheimlich danger of attracting the primal fury of Stenning, his "father-figure".

In his panicked response to Rua's subsequent public acknowledgment of their liaison Johnson disingenuously attempts to enforce her status as mere object-of-exchange between men. This attitude appears to privilege his relationship with Stenning at Rua's expense: "He could deny it, or tell Stenning it was true. Either way, if they talked it out, he could convince Stenning that Rua didn't matter to him, that he didn't want her" (Mulgan, 112).

However for Stenning, his employee's symbolically incestual sexual transgression is an unforgivable affront made

the more offensive by the purported sexual accessibility to Johnson of Rua's younger sister. Previously, Stenning had advocated that Johnson should marry her (Mulgan, 104), thereby seeking to establish an explicitly familial dynastic relationship in which the protagonist, as junior partner, would not have challenged his own superiority. Thus Johnson's covert seduction of Rua can be read as a direct challenge to Stenning's position as his patriarchal elder and parental authority figure.

The sheer audacity of Johnson's assertion that his departure from the farm comes now only as a result of the unreasonableness of Stenning's hostile attitude towards him sees Mulgan toy sardonically not only with the implied reader's propensity for covetous phantasies of land acquisition but also of patriarchal heterosexual entitlement:

> That's a hell of a thing, he thought, and a way to treat me. That's a hell of a way to end a partnership. That's the end of this little run that was going to settle me nice and dry and comfortable on a farm here and marry me off to one of these girls. That's the end of that all right (Mulgan, 118).

Here Johnson's moment of apparently transparent self-pity actually masks the narrative's subtextual gloating over the hero's success in wrecking Stenning's marriage. The protagonist's injured innocence camouflages the element of payback in his relations with Rua – for why should Stenning expect to keep his wife if Johnson is to be deprived of his husband?

Despite Johnson's attempted dismissal of their concerns, first Rua and then Stenning persist in their belief in the currency of the illicit sexual liaison and refuse to treat it as unimportant, this produces a violent climax at this point in the narrative.

However, for all the suspense and drama that attends the public revelation of the lovers' clandestine connection, Stenning's smouldering jealousy and his subsequent "accidental" shooting and death play out in Oedipal terms as being simply inevitable. The phallocentric inescapability of Johnson's relationship with Rua and hence its tragic end has been signalled to the reader from the outset in the subtextual juxtaposition of the lovers' names. Since at least 1863 the word "Johnson" has carried the English colloquial meaning "penis" (Harper, 2001-2014), so making the protagonist's character the archetypal phallic complement of the feminine receptivity implicit in the name "Rua", as used in Te Reo to signify a "storage pit" for root vegetables (Orsman, 1997, 684).

But "Rua" is also prescribed linguistically as being of secondary importance to Johnson, since in Te Reo "rua" is additionally the number two. Of course paradoxically Rua is actually of prime importance in enabling Mulgan to depict his protagonist as both recipient and executor of the deep psychic wounds of Oedipal anxiety. Therefore her name's numerical meaning can also be read as foreshadowing the inevitability of her "two-timing" of the men with whom she lives. And counter to the local truck driver Sayers' pejorative diminishment of her as "half-caste", the "doubleness" of Rua's name also affirms her as having an identity positively informed by each of her ethnicities. In the relationship two-some also implied by her name, her determination that she and Johnson should establish their liaison as a partnership of travelling "mates" actually signals her expectation of their sexual equality.

But Rua's very understandable expectation that she and her lover will form a permanent couple brings into sharp focus

the unitary assertion of the novel's title *Man Alone*, since her assumption is greeted with inexplicable (to Rua) astonishment and outrage. This is not so much because Johnson rejects the idea of a companion in principle – after all his travels with "mates", and Scott in particular, have been the most rewarding experiences of his life. Rather, his hostility arises from the fact that in desiring to go with him Rua implicitly refuses – even as she exposes – his conception of her as occupying the symbolic role of primal Mother. For on the road with him she would be free of the marital contract that has soothingly confirmed Johnson's expectation of the strictly limited terms of their relationship.

7. Rua and masquerade

ALEX CALDER has commented on the indigenous context from which Stenning's wife emerges – that "One of the minor achievements of *Man Alone* is that Mulgan makes neither too little nor too much of the small Maori community Rua comes from" (Calder, 2011, 233). However these "cultural" conditions, so peripherally entertaining for the implied reader, are only ostensibly about offering an authentically nuanced backdrop of "local colour". The novel's whanau scenes actually have as their subversive underlying purpose a textual recognition that the stereotypical assumptions used to denigrate Johnson and his kind have direct parallels with the stereotypical assumptions used to denigrate Rua and hers. And while in an expression of cultural superiority the narrator and some other characters have

both good and bad things to say about Rua's "people", Johnson himself, though making his own observations and summarising the perceptions of others (Mulgan, 94-95) ventures no generic personal judgments about Maori.

Emblematic in this regard is the moment when the protagonist watches to see if any of the three Maori children "fishing with tea-tree rods" from a wharf up north will fall in (Mulgan, 33). The implied reader may speculate as to whether this is to laugh at, admonish or rescue them. But in going about their own business these Maori do not ask or require any outside interference – implicitly like Johnson himself. In fact in their fishing these "children" are pointedly more productively employed than the protagonist as he idles away his early days in the north.

This is Mulgan's counter to the dominant culture's condescending stereotype of innate Maori juvenility. An infantilising prejudice, also shown in the narrator's description of the young men of Rua's family: "They were an odd, cheerful, shiftless lot, as careless as gypsies, and more temperamental" (Mulgan, 93). Johnson shares all these attributes. In particular, his "temperamental" riposte to his separation from Scott is soon to be dramatically visited on Rua and Stenning.

The "young men" in this passage also have in common, on account of their transgressively "effeminate" dress, a subtextually enticing theatricality: "Rua's young brothers and cousins were smart young men who affected wide purple flannel trousers and broad brimmed hats with coloured feathers in the band." Attributes of "feminine-effeminate" otherness, designed to attract attention – but from whom? Johnson, for one, is

closely alert to these eye-catching performances of which he is so ostentatiously tolerant. However the hostility of the implied reader is accrued to these young men via both homophobia and the various disparaging comments about Rua and her "people" made by Sayers and Stenning.

But the cultural superiority conventionally accorded the colonisers' point of view is then "unsettlingly" questioned in Johnson's glimpse of Stenning and himself as they appeared to Rua and her connections.

> It was obvious to Johnson that she made jokes with them about Stenning and himself, and once he saw her imitating Stenning with his slanting eyes and rough, shambling walk, to an admiring group of children. If Stenning noticed this he didn't seem to mind. His contempt for them all was too great (Mulgan, severally, 94).

Rua's subversive antics reveal the corrosive effect that Stenning's contempt for her "people" has had on her marriage. However the implied reader is free to focus here on Rua's "acting out" as an unpardonably castrating act of wifely disloyalty. Her noncompliant attitude towards her husband thus makes her fair game for voyeuristic sexual objectification, with Johnson's eventual humiliating rejection of her a patriarchally justifiable punishment for her infidelity.

The "theatrical" revelation of Rua's hostile feelings towards her husband also confirms her already recognisably ambivalent performance of wifely "submission" as being nothing more than a sexual masquerade. Her playacting for her relatives' children is a paradoxical revelation that in fact her greater "theatrical" performance is the role she undertakes in everyday life as

Stenning's wife; behind that façade her own subjectivity remains an "unknown otherness".

The psychoanalytic premises of *Womanliness as Masquerade* (Riviere, 1929), the paper published by the English Freudian analyst Joan Riviere, were readily accessible to Mulgan, because he was interested in Freudian theory and had the library holdings of Oxford at his disposal. Riviere had posited that the phenomenon of a woman's expression of receptive-submissivity towards a man has the [un]conscious intent of defensively manipulating patriarchal conventions about femininity, with a view to her own preservation and/or self-advancement.

Yet any woman who guarantees her sexual desirability by assuming a façade of submissivity sentences herself to a perpetual "performance" of the very abjection that she seeks to evade. And if her behaviour is ever recognised as a deception, the men she has set out to fool will view any such revelation of her superior intellect as an unheimlich assault on their own egos. Therefore, as Bracha Ettinger has noted:

> Although [Riviere's] concept of masquerade is intended as a denial of women's inferiority in relation to male sexual difference, it in fact constructs femininity, precisely, as castration! (Ettinger, 2006a, 96.7).

So when Rua's pantomime for the children reveals that her everyday performance of submissivity towards her husband is indeed a masquerade, she confirms for the implied reader both her own inauthenticity (lack) and that of her sex. In patriarchal terms, she therefore deserves everything that's coming to her.

But the particular audience of young family members to whom Rua feels able to reveal her true feelings about

Stenning permits Mulgan to subtextually allude to a different route by which Rua may escape from what Bracha Ettinger calls the "phallic vicious circle" in which Joan Riviere is trapped (Ettinger, 2006, 96.7). Unlike Johnson – whose own performance of submission to heterosexual norms is in fact equally a masquerade – Rua has among her "people" another "home" to go to. But her "half-caste" status ensures that, in a refusal of essentialism, the precise details of this "home" – its setting, inhabitants, norms and practices – remain an unknown otherness.

At the same time any reader who on encountering the transgressive subtext of *Man Alone* warms to its homely strangeness (matrixial heimlich), will themselves be contributing unbeknownst to Johnson, towards a "home" for him to go to, and might thus count themselves as one of *his* "people".

Johnson, by progressively "seeing through" his lover's biddable "feminine" compliance towards both her husband and himself, is made to realise, along with the reader, that in her self-determination Rua – precisely like Scott – is not so "stupid" either. However through this process the implied reader's voyeuristic complicity with Johnson's predatory sexual opportunism is also rebuked. This comeuppance plays out in Johnson's astonished outrage when, after assuming he has the power to arbitrarily terminate his liaison with Rua, he suddenly has to deal with her steely determination to accompany him in his quest for liberty from Stenning.

As a married woman, Rua's contractual monogamy, and the titillating covertness of Johnson's transgression of it, makes her public acknowledgment of their affair as astounding to the

implied reader as it is infuriating to the protagonist. Specifically Johnson's symbolic role as Rua's juvenile "dependent" should have ensured that he had no need for concern as to his lover's emotional or physical wellbeing. Indeed, since in Oedipal terms Rua is implicitly a mother figure for Johnson, the implied reader has been able to index the hero's degree of maturity to the success of his eventual separation from her.

Her symbolic maternity thus saw Johnson's initiatory sexual connection with her take place immediately after her presentation to him of a bucket of milk – for separation! This gesture was followed by the symbolically primal, male-child/maternal bonding of oral gratification as Johnson "sensationally" kissed Rua "fully on the lips". But just prior to this the reader was also offered the suggestion that in milking beside Rua every day Johnson has felt "drowned in the monotony of continual intercourse" (Mulgan, severally, 106), so giving the reader explicit notice that the hero's heart is not in this (sexual) relationship. In fact this description registers the suffocating tedium for Johnson of any long-term heterosexuality and foreshadows the revengeful calculation and planned obsolescence that actually motivates his liaison with Rua.

In patriarchal terms he engages in sex with her as a diversionary pastime, simply because she is "available". As he never expresses any particular attraction towards Rua this positions her in the text, for the implied reader, as a "natural" resource to whose exploitation, much like the cows they are milking, Johnson is in some inevitable sense entitled. Yet his callous indifference towards Rua is also notable for its studiedly injured innocence.

Of course, for the implied reader Johnson's predatory sexual exploitation of Rua is patriarchally justifiable as the "natural" prerogative of any red-blooded male. But the curiously dispassionate tone of Johnson's sexual gratification arises from the fact that Rua's seduction is not his primary motivation. Rather, it is the means by which the Oedipal authority of The Father, as represented in the character of Stenning, may be symbolically sabotaged.

In this Mulgan can be seen as taking the fight for sexual autonomy to that stronghold of primal phallocentric Law symbolised by the Oedipus myth, with the intention of revengefully undermining the repressive sexual mores of his society. The protagonist's relationship with Rua is the novel's raid on the headquarters of the very patriarchal authority whose hetero-normative cultural policing refuses legitimacy to his "smoking" relationship with Scott, while hypocritically permitting the implied reader's voyeuristic, albeit abruptly curtailed enjoyment of Johnson's utterly banal relationship with Stenning's wife.

8. Sexual dirtiness: Straight pot vs bent kettle

IN ORDER TO CONCEAL Johnson's homoerotic preferences, Rua's unsuitability as a long-term mate for the hero is justified for the implied reader by the "otherness" of her indigeneity – as represented by her adulterous sexual promiscuity. (The historical origins of such prejudices are discussed in the section

"Wild Rua and the wasted land".) Yet at the same time Mulgan's sly framing of indigeneity as in no way a social disadvantage compared with the narrow-minded conventions of European society taunts the implied reader for harbouring any such racist and sexist presumptions. For in terms of Mulgan's subtextual nuances, Rua's "preposterous" belief in her entitlement to both sexual autonomy and an equal partnership with Johnson appears not only entirely reasonable but also wholly desirable. This reproaches the tacit assumption of the implied reader that Johnson's "heroic" outrage at the prospect of his public pairing with Rua arises from her assumed inferior status as Maori. In fact the peculiar intensity of Johnson's indignation towards Rua actually arises from his refusal of the expectation that she, or any woman, could ever supplant the relationship he had with Scott: man alone!

Critic Alex Calder notes the effect of Rua's refusal to accede to the "grown-ups" code of silence about affairs, which her married status ought to make mandatory, in terms of her capacity to *accidentally* infuriate: "Rua becomes pesky and careless, and no sooner has Johnson decided to move on than a flagrant piece of idiocy on her part propels a crisis" (Calder, 2011, 233). This summation eloquently captures both Rua's objectification by the implied reader and the utter effrontery they feel on Johnson's behalf at her exercise of an agency challenging his own (and her husband's) patriarchal self-entitlement. But Rua's decision to make her relationship with Johnson public is in no way "careless" – it is entirely calculated on her part, a point discussed in detail in the section 'Wild Rua and the wasted land'. Her act of autonomy imperils the

protagonist's own well-established narrative preference to go anywhere and do whatever while saying anything he likes – or preferably nothing at all – about his sex life. Such freedom is the exclusive prerogative of male bachelor status, which Rua ought to have recognised – since she is subject to the Christian vow of obedience to her husband, which is required in the patriarchy of married women.

In a further irony, Rua is shown here to be just as ineffectual in fulfilling the prescribed terms of her "womanly" sex role as Scott was at conforming to the performance criteria deemed to express "manliness".

Johnson expresses doubts about Rua from the first in terms of her hopeless efforts at housekeeping. Even her costume is unconvincing: "She dragged about the house, as a rule, in a soiled frock the neck torn and open, her hair unwashed and uncombed, in down trodden slippers" (Mulgan, 93). This sullen performance of "femininity" is an ironic contrast with even the scant grooming undertaken by a "manly" man like Johnson:

> He disliked dirt, preferring to be clean himself, and in the welter of smells that belonged to the farm, from the reek of stale milk to the greasy smell of wool, he would probably have admitted that Rua had a dirtiness of her own (Mulgan, 105).

The fastidious conditionality of the words "would probably have admitted" therefore wryly distances Mulgan's hero from the terrifying unheimlich that phallocentric discourse embodies in female sexuality. For here Mulgan alludes to the unspeakability of menstruation by positioning Rua's scent as the base note in a catalogue of farmyard stinks. Of course for the implied reader

the straight misogyny and inherent racism of Johnson's assertion of Rua's "animal" dirtiness delivers a titillating fix of sexual and racial superiority. However in the prefacing sanctimony of the hero's "preferring to be clean himself" Mulgan can also be seen as subtextually refuting the purportedly unique "dirtiness" of the homoerotic with the implication that since all sex is odiferous those who want it must get over their prudery. Rua's pungency is Mulgan's "equalitarian-Kiwi" pastoral equivalent of Sappho's tart coastal quip: "If you are squeamish // Don't prod the/ beach rubble" (Barnard, 1958, 84).

The trope of the "unclean feminine" was carefully established at the opening of the novel as being a phenomenon equally applicable to Pakeha as to Maori, in the intimation by Johnson's pub mates that Rose, the heterosexual European prostitute he tries to pick up in Auckland, is sexually diseased. Her initial description as "our Rose" establishes her for the implied reader as one of "us", but immediately after this she turns out to be one of "them":

> "I wouldn't touch our Rose, lad."
> "She's no good?"
> "She's no good to touch."
> "I won't touch her" (Mulgan, 14).

But if men do know this "Rose" *by any other name*, it doesn't quench her sweetness towards the sexually innocent Johnson. Mulgan's use here of the name "Rose" slyly echoes the musings of Juliet Capulet over the forbidden attractions of Romeo Montague, to subtextually remind the reader that heterosexual transgressions enjoy no more immunity from ill effects than

any other kind of sexual pursuit. Mulgan's point is that traumas such as sexual harassment, rape, forced prostitution, STD's, "honour killing", and paedophilia all feature more prominently in heterosexual interactions than they do in any "other" sexual setting. Equally, Mulgan uses the fresh air and sunshine that attends Johnson's first outdoor sexual experience with Rua to claim that the so-called "dirtiness" of women, whether indigenous like Rua or European like Rose, is in any case an entirely natural, "earthy" aspect of their – or any body's – material humanity.

Of course the implied reader perceives the references to Rua's personal smell, jointly with Rose's reputed venereal disease, as evidence in phallocentric terms of women's innate unheimlich. But subtextually Mulgan's comment on the infectious and/or menstrual specificity of a female's distinctive tang is actually his ironic rebuttal of those arguments that valorise heterosexual purity by ascribing uncleanness to the homoerotic. In other words here the bent kettle reminds the straight pot of its own blackness.

Additionally, the narrator's catalogue of Rua's household slovenliness – and her attempted remediation of it after she becomes sexually alert to Johnson – is a mirror inversion of the text's earlier celebration of the superior cookery and housekeeping skills at Scott's disposal. This narrative endorsement of Scott's domesticity – "[Scott] had more domestic feeling than the others and liked to keep the hut clean" (Mulgan, 27) – reinforces the innateness of the hero's own desire for cleanliness. The text's wholehearted approval of Scotty and Johnson's domesticity as against its ambivalence towards

Rua's disinclination to household cleaning forms yet another ironic representation of the higher standing of both men on the stereotypical scale of sexual "purity".

Yet despite these subtextual justifications of Scott's sexual unconventionality, whenever femininity is ascribed to a male subject he must register pejoratively in phallocentric discourse as an "effeminate" object. This perception of femininity as a form of disqualifying contamination is clearly reflected in critic Alex Calder's playful relegation of Scott:

> Given its title, it is perhaps appropriate that the most feminine character in *Man Alone* is a slightly built bloke with a Mexican moustache named Scotty[…] he is a feminine character (in Western terms) not so much because he likes to take care of the cooking and tidy the hut, but because there are three *far worse* strikes against him: he knows nothing of war, he talks too much and he wants to settle down [my emphasis] (Calder, 2011, 229).

To Calder's comedic umpiring of the "three far worse strikes" that mark Scott for social disqualification on grounds of "effeminacy", there must also be added his transgressive desire for reciprocal physical intimacy as revealed in his wanting to keep 'in touch' with Johnson; his bestowal of a pet name on Johnson and his receipt of one in return; and his "dangerous" heartfelt emotional self-fragilisation towards Johnson as symbolised by his "bad chest".

Yet however pejoratively Scott's "feminine" characteristics see him rendered in terms of phallocentric discourse, such attributes do not require his dismissal from the matrixial field in which his relationship with the protagonist operates

differently. Here the proto-feminine characteristics of compassionate hospitality and self-fragilisation are as freely available to men as to women. However according to Bracha Ettinger these particular psychic propensities remain feminine in their matrixial origin, because at the originary level they are established in every body, in the differentiation in jointness between the unknown becoming infans and its unknown becoming m/Other in the besidedness of late pre-birth.

Indeed Ettinger has suggested that even as felt specifically between males, the compassionate hospitality of "the one" towards "the other" – as in mateship generally and in *Man Alone*, in Johnson's relationship with Scott in particular – is in fact always already an echo of the originary "self-fragilisation" in late pre-birth, in which we first experience "the other" as more important than "the self". A borderlink Ettinger sees as exemplified between males in terms of the mythic story of Isaac's consenting response to his father Abraham's preparedness to sacrifice him at the command of God. Ettinger proposes that:

> Isaac was compassionate towards his father, because, as Infant he had already been compassionate towards his mother, apprehending her compassionate hospitality uncognisingly, and emotionally feel-knowing the trauma he had been to her in her bringing him to life (Ettinger, 2006b, 124).

This compassion can be applied to Mulgan's "bringing to life" of his protagonist's relationship with his lover Scott. Despite Johnson's desertion of his mate in his flight from the city, Scott's compassionate response to Johnson's "sacrifice" of their relationship is revealed in his self-fragilisation towards Johnson at the point of his own death. In the letter Johnson receives

from their mutual friend Robertson, the protagonist is told in wit[h]ness: “He was worried about you. No-one else is worried about you” (Mulgan, 81). In this Scott is recognised as treating Johnson, who has seemingly abandoned him, as nonetheless in matrixial terms more important to him than “the self”.

9. *“I could tell you worse things about the peace”*

A KEY FEMINISING ASPECT of Scott’s character is the fact that, as perceptively noted by Alex Calder, he “knows nothing of war” (Calder, 2011, 229).

> “Christ, turn it in, I wasn’t at the war,” and Thompson said nothing, looking at him, pale, gaunt, contemptuous.
> “No,” he said, after a time, “you wasn’t in the war” (Mulgan, 28).

Thompson, who is an army veteran, sees Scott’s “lack” of military experience as tainting him with “effeminacy”. This further legitimises for the implied reader Johnson’s apparent acquiescence to The Law’s estimation of his mate as “stupid”.

Yet simultaneously Scott’s self-exclusion from Thompson’s obsessive war talk subtextually suggests his character as manifesting, not the “effeminacy” that in phallocentric discourse must turn him from subject to object, but rather his receptivity to that matrixial-femininity, which is as accessible to a man as to a woman. And in this Scott, in worrying about Johnson when nearing the point of his own death, is specifically attuned to the

features of response-ability and compassion towards his mate, which Bracha Ettinger considers the indispensable precursors of peace:

> Compassion is not only a basis for responsibility. It is also the originary event of peace. Peace is a fragile encounter-eventing, an ever re-co-created and co-re-created fragile and fragilising encounter-event in terms of the particular epistemological parameters of matrixiality. From the point of view of compassion *peace is not in dialogue with war* [my emphasis] (Ettinger, 2006b, 124).

In other words peace is neither made nor kept by *talking of war*. But when, immediately before World War Two, Mulgan chose the phrase *Talking of War* as his novel's working title, in most circles there was talk of little else.

Ettinger's point is that to be sustainable, peace actively made with "others" in the past must be jointly and compassionately renewed in the present. But the valley where Thompson farms and ominously manages to engage Johnson – at least for a time – in his obsessive-compulsive *talking of war*, is a setting fraught with the unheimlich horror of the repressed memories encrypted among the wider group of returned soldiers who subsist in traumatised isolation all around them: "The valley was haunted by strange men who had been to the war." (Mulgan, 28). There is no "mateship" here. Rather, in what in symbolically biblical terms is *the valley of the shadow of death*, the civilian life of these ex-soldiers, in its absence of meaningful relationships or family ties, is a brutal echo of the alienation they experienced in the trenches:

> [One returned soldier farmer] bled to death, and lay for a week before anyone thought of looking for him, and when they found him the blood was black and dry where he had crawled half-way up the track to home, and there were flies on him (Mulgan, 29).

Thus the fact that Scott is unable to enter into a dialogue with Thompson about war, while Johnson is willing to, foreshadows the later failure of the matrixial fabric of the protagonist's own family relationships. Johnson's eventual army re-enlistment was actually brought about by the determination of his brother and his sister-in-law, Mabel, to have nothing more to do with him. This rejection refused him the compassionate hospitality that, according to Bracha Ettinger, is integral to the production of peace.

This Mabel, wife of Johnson's brother Jim, fears that any further association with the hero will attract the attention of The Law. Her rejection of the protagonist is achieved with the active complicity of her husband and is received by Johnson as permanent and unalterable: "'O.K.,' Johnson said 'You don't worry about me any more. You haven't heard from me. I won't write to you.'" (Mulgan, 199). These three statements endorse his brother's decision that they should sever the very strands of communication that, by ironic contrast, have sustained Johnson's relationship with Scott throughout their separations in both life and death. For it is *worry* about the other, *hearing* from the other and *writing* to and about each other – in particular the writing about Scott and Johnson that the narrator is sharing trans-subjectively with the reader-as-stranger in the aesthetic artefact of the novel – that are the basis of Johnson's assurance that he and Scott are always and forever "in touch".

But Johnson, by acceding to the withdrawal of the compassionate hospitality that his sister-in-law Mabel and his brother Jim could extend in continued communication, formally accepts, in terms of his own immediate family, the closure to him of the matrixial domain. He also sees the severing of these links as then justifying his own neglect of the outstanding financial and moral debt he still owes Jim and Mabel and their children (Mulgan,199).

It is this joint failure of compassion as a basis for what Ettinger calls "response-ability" that is the cause of the hero's personal choice to once again take up arms. This severing of family relationships can be understood as a microcosm of the international "neglect of relation" that when Mulgan is writing *Man Alone* – immediately before the Second World War – appears chillingly imminent in the "family" of nations:

> War as a form of cultural evil is caused by a large moral evil – the neglect of relation. War can thus be defined as a psychosis caused by an inability to see relationships. The neglect of relation causes separation and is instrumental in creating rivals and making enemies (Van Soest, 1995, 168).

Dorothy Van Soest's point is borne out in *Man Alone* in the implied reader's own "inability to see" the true relationship Johnson has with Scott. Equally it is Johnson's brother and sister-in-law's quite literal neglect of their "relation" that causes the scission, which to the implied reader makes Johnson's renewed immersion in the psychosis of war appear both justifiable and inevitable.

But Johnson's apparently game acceptance of his familial exclusion is given subtextual poignancy by any reader's

consciousness that it will compound the traumatic isolation he feels at his loss of Scott.

Of course if Johnson's brother and sister-in-law (or the implied reader) were to register his grief at losing his mate, far from evoking their compassion this would further legitimise for them his familial rejection. In that sense the bitterly caustic account Mulgan gives of Mabel and Jim's imagined satisfaction at the prospect of Johnson's imminent embarkation for Spain (Mulgan, 204) is an implicit rebuke to the implied reader's acceptance of the facile "logic" of Johnson's joining up. Their sanguine acceptance of the hero's renewed exposure to the virulently spreading cultural psychosis of war reveals their complicity in Johnson's unenviable fate.

The taint of criminality they fear comes ostensibly as a result of Stenning's death, but subtextually what drives this family scission is the criminality associated with Johnson's actual and symbolic assault on those social forces that perpetuate the "stenning" of the homoerotic sensibility.

The cruel result of his family's misguided deference to official prejudice is echoed in the novel's Epilogue, in the images of the indiscriminately strafed "roads jammed with half a million people" (Mulgan, Epilogue) who are fleeing the consequences of their fellow citizens' unquestioning compliance with the dictates of the authorities.

In this Mulgan implicates the implied reader, suggesting their failure to see the true significance of the relationship between Johnson and Scott is an act of culpable self-delusion. In highlighting such obliviousness as [un]conscious submission to totalitarianism, the subtext of *Man Alone* asserts the

ethical obligation of every individual to question those in authority, since the misuse of power is emboldened by servile acquiescence.

Yet this judgmental attitude towards the implied reader for their obliviousness to the homoerotic subtext of *Man Alone* is ironically offset against the fact that the revengeful ritualised act of psychological and actual guerrilla "warfare" Mulgan's protagonist perpetrates against Stenning is itself founded in a "neglect of relation". For in the Oedipal context of what is a symbolically familial sexual triangle, it is the protagonist's withdrawal of his own compassionate hospitality towards Rua and her husband, symbolically his own "parents", that provokes the outbreak of psychotic fighting that results in Stenning's violent end.

Johnson's desperate attempt immediately before the shooting to deny the significance of his relationship with Rua is posed for the implied reader as evidence of the hero's innocence of any ill intent. However, on closer examination his protestations actually reveal Johnson's guilty conscience.

In particular, on the night he has decided will be his last at the farm, he insists that Rua must stay there: "He wanted to get her back to the house as quickly and quietly as possible" (Mulgan, 120). In this denial of his "relation" to the woman he henceforth intends to objectify as only his boss's wife, Johnson refuses to recognise Rua's independent agency as she manifests it here in her entirely positive view of what they mean to each other.

Since he is now determined to neglect his "relation" to Rua, her decision to take responsibility for her actions by declaring

her relationship with the protagonist publically to her family and privately to her husband is felt by Johnson as a traumatising horror:

> She twisted herself, wriggling away from him, and the fingers of her other hand laid themselves softly on his bare arm; and like that he felt her fingers stiffen until the nails sunk into his flesh (Mulgan, 120).

Here Johnson struggles both to separate himself from Rua and to propel her back to the misery of her marriage. Therefore as Rua asserts her independent subjectivity by laying her hand on him, the hero disrecognises her bodily action as a terrifying manifestation of the castrating unheimlich of phallocentric "femininity". Yet her gesture may also be understood in terms of the matrixial heimlich since from Rua's point of view it is not threatening at all. For her it is an act of physical self-fragilisation, immediately prefaced by a vocal assertion of personal responsibility as a first step towards peace: "'It's alright,' she assures Johnson, 'I've told Bill. I'm coming with you'" (Mulgan,120).

Rua's honesty in speaking directly to her husband about what she sees as her ongoing relationship with Johnson presents her as border-linking the three of them in an attempt to make peace. But the self-fragilisation of Rua's open acknowledgment to Stenning of her transgressive relationship with Johnson is an admission whose honesty the implied reader can dismiss as "stupid" because it displays Rua's belief in her own significance – a position that does not recognise her feminine and racial *lack*. Rua's obliviousness to her status as mere sexual-racial object

highlights her phallocentric abjection. But in fact Johnson's own subtextual recognition of the invidiousness of Rua's patriarchal position exposes to the reader his guilty conscience over his concealment from her of the true nature of his relationship with Scott.

Johnson's remorse for his acts of sexual and emotional subterfuge are recognisable in the grammatical structure of the final phrase of the sentence in which the hero struggles to separate himself from Rua: "and like that he felt her fingers stiffen until the nails sunk into his flesh" (Mulgan, 120). The feminine personal pronouns "she" and "her" that three times in this compound-complex sentence have personally linked Rua with her physical actions now give ground to a gender-neutral definite article "the". This suggests that what Rua begins as a gesture of intimate outreach Johnson receives as an act of metaphorical crucifixion. Hence: "the nails sunk into his flesh". In this the reader is suddenly party to Johnson's self-mortifying anguish at his deceitfulness towards Rua about his relationship with Scott. Her open acknowledgment of what she believes to be the genuineness of her relationship with Johnson presents the hero (and reader) with the "piercing" truth of the ongoing torture it is for Johnson to continue his cruel deception of her – in a denial of his own emotions, history and sexual instincts. Of course the implied reader may see Rua as here simply "getting her hooks" into Johnson. But in fact her hand's sudden tension is not a claim but a warning. Her soft touch only stiffens when she hears Stenning's stealthy approach.

And although the physical struggle with Rua in which Johnson is engaged represents his utter determination that she

shall not accompany him when he leaves the farm, the insistence on her part that she shall, should not be mistaken for a desire to become his dependent. Her refusal to obey his order to forget about him and return to the house is in itself an assertion of her independent agency. As they struggle she reaches out to Johnson with only one hand, while the rest of her body is described as "wriggling away from him" – indicating to the reader that Rua will neither attempt to merge her identity with Johnson's nor submit to his patriarchal authority. Her seemingly contradictory movements thus show her as wanting a partnership of independent equality.

But the present participle describing Rua's body as "wriggling" also supplies the reader, in what is a hallmark of the unheimlich, with a sense of something that ought to have remained hidden, which is now emerging into horrible sight.

In this "Rua's arms" are punningly staged as her deployment of a terrifying weapon, but when understood matrixially – as the agent of her breath-taking honesty in making her relationship with Johnson socially visible – they are not actually threatening at all. In fact Rua's are the loving "arms" of interracial relations, whose healing significance in the poem "Dead Timber" (written by Alan Mulgan, father of John Mulgan) will be discussed elsewhere here in terms of its deep symbolic significance for *Man Alone*. ("*'To reach the heart of it all'–'Dead Timber'* for the Rangipo").

Although initially offering the protagonist the encircling security of nurturing maternity, Rua's "arms" now signal her, for the implied reader, as an embodiment of the primal phantasy of "The Devouring Mother" (Ettinger, 2006b, 106).

Rua is no longer the pliantly nourishing figure of Johnson's initial dalliance with her, so he disrecognises Rua's desire to maintain their connection as entrapment. His fury at her public disclosure of what *she* sees as the "loving arms" of their ongoing relationship also gives advance warning of Stenning's "armed" rage.

In the ensuing confrontation Johnson and Stenning wrestle, not for "possession" of Rua – Johnson has already relinquished his relationship with her – but rather in a struggle for Oedipal dominance. Their fight is over who will have control of the phallic signifier, represented symbolically here by Stenning's gun. Or in other words, who has the authority to determine the legitimate constituencies for the expression of male (sexual) subjectivity – whether these should be heterosexual or homoerotic, European or Maori, single or married, secular or religious. But Mulgan, as he highlights the fact that this determination will be made by whichever of these two men gets control of a weapon, subtextually calls into question the whole edifice of patriarchal male sexual entitlement.

Johnson's role in the subsequent shooting is framed for the implied reader as justifiable self-defence. But subtextually it is apparent that he has provoked this conflict so as to vent his rage towards the "stenning" his culture has imposed on his relationship with Scott. The protagonist's fury is directed at the expectation that he should abandon the relationship he does want – with a man who is his true mate – in favour of a relationship that he doesn't want – with a woman.

10. The removal of Stenning

TODAY'S ASSOCIATION of the character 'Stenning' with the machine gun invented during the Second World War is merely fortuitous since as the Merriam-Webster dictionary records, the use of 'Sten' to describe this weapon, did not arise until 1942, three years after *Man Alone's* 1939 date of first publication. Doubtless, on hearing the name, Mulgan would have appreciated the ironies.

In fact it is the etymology of 'sten' as signifying 'narrowness' or 'constriction' that has originary significance in Mulgan's naming. The narrowness of the life the Stennings lead together on the farm is itself a form of 'stenning'. Rua, in becoming Stenning's missus, is "ideally" restricted from then on to the social norms traditionally imposed on married European women, distancing her from the expectations of Maori society.

The eventual death of her husband is also a structural "stenning" of the novel's plot, in the sense that in symbolic accordance with the Oedipal psychodrama, Stenning's end is tragically inevitable. His first name, 'Bill' (Mulgan,107), is a punning subtextual intimation that the "account" Mulgan has *made up* of Johnson's dalliance with Rua is given here to *bill* Stenning for the protagonist's loss of Scott. A reckoning underlined in the narrator's pointed remark that "[Johnson] used Stenning's Christian name only when speaking of him to Rua" (Mulgan,107).

But Mulgan subverts Rua's ostensibly limited role in the novel as Stenning's wife – and the implied reader's impression of her narrative abjection – via her ability to provoke outrage

in both her husband and the stoic, ostensibly "put upon" protagonist: "Johnson felt in himself an over-burdening anger and irritation, a desire to strike her and hurt her" (Mulgan, 120). And at the point when Rua is deprived of both her lover and her husband she does not retreat into broken despair or remorse for her actions, but expresses herself with symbolically explosive fury.

Of course, Johnson and Stenning's failed efforts to "manage" Rua are also an essential plot device firing the narrative. Her culturally transgressive attempts to escape the "stenning" effects of her marriage culminate in her outrage that she has been humiliated at Johnson's hands. However the implied reader's approval of her shaming as a rightful punishment for her "bad behaviour" in committing adultery is simultaneously called into question by the naked self-interest motivating the male characters most directly affronted by her actions.

In the comprehensiveness of her final narrative release from their control, the two men's presumption of their entitlement to exercise authority over Rua is explicitly denied. Her freedom is made apparent in her safe return to her friends and extended family – "I'm going home. I'm not running away" (Mulgan, 125) – and in Mulgan's conferral on her of the financial independence she is guaranteed, in the middle of the Depression, by her inheritance of Stenning's savings (Mulgan, 170).

That Rua's financial and sexual freedom is revealed just as the fugitive Johnson is being forced to flee the country is, for the implied reader, an illustration of the stereotypically childlike "happy-go-lucky-native-irresponsibility" with which a coloniser

is predisposed to patronise Rua's feminine-indigeneity. Her financial independence reads as a damning thirty pieces of silver for the betrayal of her marriage vows and a caustic reference to the inadequacy of material compensation in the amelioration of genuine grief. Also Rua's ostensible textual irrelevance after the climactic events of Stenning's death suggests her as having, in a narrative sense, "fallen off the wharf". Yet her eventual resurfacing in Hamilton where Johnson runs into her holidaying with her sister in law symbolically finds and leaves her in her own element – part of the "social swim".

Furthermore in Johnson's estimation of the origins of the tragedy in which he, Rua and Stenning have been embroiled, the hero is made to advance the idea to Petersen – the sea captain arranging his escape – that in mitigation of anybody's having individual culpability for Stenning's death, it is impossible to maintain and act with self-respect when beset by poverty.

> It came with working away there on that farm, just the three of us, and no pay, none of us had any pay. You couldn't get away. You couldn't do anything but go on working. I've been thinking about that and the way things were there. It wasn't any life (Mulgan, 182).

But in the phrases "just the three of us" and "none of us had any pay", this passage pointedly includes Rua – so making no distinction between the unpaid domestic labour she is required to undertake as Stenning's wife and the farm work she does alongside the men. In this Mulgan offers his own wit[h]ness to Virginia Woolf's analysis in a *A Room of One's Own* of the eroded self-respect experienced by women sentenced to humiliating

impoverishment as a result of their consignment to the "feminine" tasks accorded inferior status and lesser or no pay under the dictates of institutional patriarchy. Woolf says:

> 'I need not, I am afraid, describe in any detail the hardness of the work, for you know perhaps women who have done it, nor the difficulty of living on the money when it was earned, for you may have tried. But what still remains with me as a worse infliction than either was the poison of fear and bitterness which those days bred in me (Woolf, 1977, 37).

Johnson's conspicuously fair-minded acknowledgment of Rua's contribution to the farm's economics is ironically silent on her additional impoverishment as Stenning's unpaid housekeeper. But Johnson tellingly also observes that Woolf's "'poison of fear and bitterness"' does indeed pervade Rua's performance of her domestic role: "'When Stenning swore at her, as he did, she would stop and give them a meal, banging and clattering with pots and burning the food as likely as not […]." (Mulgan, 92) This, in addition to Rua's expression of anger at her marital exclusion from equal ownership of the farm, should leave the reader in no doubt of Rua's sense of her pernicious exploitation. However the implied reader can dismiss her acts of non-compliance and 'burning' sabotage as merely evidence of her "sulkily" (Mulgan, 92) innate racial and feminine "lack".

Acknowledgment of the exploitation of those locked into "women's work" is further nuanced in *Man Alone*, in terms of the taint of "effeminacy" applied in New Zealand society to any man who does it. But in this Scott's housework is carefully signalled as discretionary, not compelled: "Scotty got breakfast,

porridge and bacon, and oatmeal scones when he felt good" (Mulgan, 27). And provocatively, despite the text's registration of Stenning's superiority as senior male, landowner, husband, heterosexual and "real white" (Mulgan, 95), the protagonist's estimation of the three of them on the farm as equally impoverished conspicuously strips Stenning of any patriarchal advantage. Their common economic abjection thus subversively registers that in any ethical sense Rua and Johnson – and implicitly Scott too – are the rightful peers not just of Stenning, but also of the implied reader.

Moreover when Johnson describes the extremity of their material deprivation as creating a kind of emotional swamp, his compassionately (self)-absolving assertion imaginatively reinforces the idea of the three of them as trapped in a kind of inevitable (Greek) tragedy, whose foregone conclusion renders them all innocent, albeit socially instructive, players.

But Rua's receipt of Stenning's bank balance is a supplementary stroke of good fortune for her that subverts Johnson's apparent "no-fault" truth and reconciliation disclaimer of his own guilt to Captain Petersen. In fact this is Mulgan's textual reparation to Rua for his narrative ascription to her of the essentialist trope of "woman-trouble": "'There'll be trouble,' Johnson said, 'and trouble's not worth having, not even for you'" (Mulgan, 109). This payment is a symbolic act of ethical restitution, which compensates Rua for Mulgan's exploitation of her as an "object of exchange" between two men, used to facilitate the revenge drama he mounts here against those cultural tendencies that deny the legitimacy of his protagonist's relationship with Scott.

Rua's inheritance also points to the irony that she gets off "scot free", while the Scott-less hero, though in fact equivalently "widowed", remains as bereft as she is relieved. Indeed when he learns of Rua's windfall Johnson has only just completed the sorely "taxing" Kaimanawa retreat in which, during a deferred period of reclusive mourning, he does symbolic penance for his abandonment of his mate.

However the implied reader, in scorning Rua for her betterment at the expense of her husband, may simply register Johnson's wilderness sojourn as an episode of outlaw daring forced on him by his "accidental" role in Stenning's death.

But any implication of Johnson's contrition with regard to Stenning's end is entirely disingenuous. For the intentionality of the text's symbolic revenge against the patriarchal hegemony that has deprived the hero of his mate is brazenly flourished by Mulgan in the accusations Rua levels at Johnson in the immediate wake of Stenning's shooting:

> "But you had to come and stay here, making up to him to get part of his farm and laughing at him all the time, laughing at us both. Laughing at me, yes, you were laughing at me, too, all the time." […] and her voice rose until she screamed shrilly (Mulgan, 124).

Johnson "had to come and stay here" because he was engaged in a subversive act of retribution. Rua recognises this and "blows her top" in a hysterical outburst, which is a symbolic allusion to the volcano Ruapehu, from which her name is also derived.

In this Mulgan's narrative once again exemplifies Bracha Ettinger's conception that "In the phallic framework, hysteria […and] revolt are subjectivising responses on the part of women

to men's definition of female sexuality." And therefore "hysteria is produced precisely when the passage to the matrixial field is blocked" (Ettinger, 2006a, severally, 183.4).

Rua's outburst recognises in the hero's machinations his calculated destruction of her relationships with first Stenning and then himself. Her accusations, here "screamed shrilly", are her subjectivising response to her realisation of Johnson's objectified treatment of her female sexuality as inferior to his own and hence disposable.

Moreover the "laughing" Rua four times attributes *to Johnson* in this passage is Mulgan's revelation to the reader of the latent hysteria produced in his protagonist by the phallocentric imperatives that required him to abandon his relationship with his mate, and so block his own passage to the matrixial field.

Of course, for the implied reader, oblivious to the true significance of Johnson's loss of his mate, when Rua "screamed shrilly" in hysterical fury she was simply venting her self-serving refusal of responsibility for her own immoral actions.

Conventionally, a woman engaged in any such "hysterical" behaviour should be ignored, mocked, or shocked – even quite literally – into silence. These are punishments Rua escapes, but they are also the very sanctions patriarchy imposes on men suspected of homoerotic sensibilities.

Rua's seemingly incoherent words therefore have a purposeful subtextual narrative task. The hysterical laughter she imputes here to the protagonist actually gives him – Mulgan's blackly comic agent of frustrated defiance of "The Wor[l]d of The Father" – the last laugh.

11. Marital rape and sexual agency: At home and abroad with Rua & Johnson

THE SUBVERSIVENESS of Rua's role in the novel is evident in her hostility towards what in Pakeha terms, is the traditionally feminine domain of the household. Alex Calder summarises Rua's presentation inside the farmhouse as: "bored and slatternly" (Calder, 2011, 233). However in her movements around the farm, and outside it, she is a self-motivated, capable figure, acting with precisely the independence of spirit, both sexual and economic, that Johnson and the narrator of *Man Alone* admire in a man:

> She milked well and, in spite of the fat lines of her face, was as strong as many men. She could lift the cans of cream up onto her horse for the ride to the corner without effort (Mulgan, 93).

Rua's expertise in these farming tasks is the equivalent of Johnson's own. Yet his estimation of Rua's ease with milking, horse riding and hefting cream cans is an approval nuanced by the ambiguity of the mixed metaphor singling out: "the fat lines of her face". This repeated description – "Her cheeks had filled out and she looked fat and well"(Mulgan, 170) – recognises Rua's mature female fertility. In light of the implicit "motherliness" of her overall Oedipally symbolic framing, this alerts the reader to what must be understood as the serious anomaly of Rua's childless state:

> "He's got a half-caste wife," he said.
> "What of it?"
> "Nothing. She's a bitch, that's all."
> "He got any children?"
> "Nope, he aint got any children. He aint been married so long, a year or a bit more. She was well known around here, she was" (Mulgan, 76).

In fact "a year or a bit more", is plenty of time for a new bride to become pregnant. Significantly, what therefore first recommends Johnson to Rua is his acceptance of her entitlement to childfree sexual agency when after an argument with Stenning she flees the farmhouse for the symbolically indigeneity-friendly refuge of Johnson's outside "whare" (Mulgan, 92). The latter is the Maori word for "home" and so serves to subtextually reframe in terms of the matrixial heimlich what is for the implied reader the unheimlich of both Rua's indigeneity and her – or anybody else's (Johnson's) – non-patriarchally approved sexual sensibilities.

The likelihood that Rua's flight from the marital bed after an attack on her by her husband in the middle of the night is related to sexuality is confirmed by both the acuteness of Rua's terror and her expression of physical repugnance towards Stenning: 'He said he'd kill me. He said he'd cut my throat. […] He's a dirty swine' (Mulgan,101). Rua's very reticence to talk in any further specific detail about the cause of this conflict with her husband further implies that it is sexual in nature – a probability confirmed for the reader by Johnson's conversation with a sheepish Stenning the next morning:

> “She’s just a kid really. […] She ought to have children and settle down.”
> ”Doesn’t she want to have children?”
> “I don’t know. Seems not,” Stenning said, and relapsed into silence again (Mulgan, 103-104).

Stenning is here seen to rationalise, in terms of his wife’s immaturity, what is quite evidently Rua’s sexual rejection of him. But in New Zealand at the time Mulgan is writing – and for forty-six years following the first publication of *Man Alone* – Rua, as Stenning’s wife, had no legal grounds on which she might refuse her husband’s sexual demands. A married woman’s “chattel” status in law ensured that marital rape would not be recognised as a criminal offence in Aotearoa New Zealand until1985 (Adamo, 1989, 568). It is therefore society’s complicity with Rua’s sexual exploitation – as a woman who is married to her abuser – that explains her incoherence when Johnson asks her why her husband is threatening her in the middle of the night. Her inarticulacy is the result of society’s refusal to Rua of any avenue of legal redress.

The abruptness of Johnson’s response to Rua’s choked speech and crying therefore represents the protagonist’s awareness that Stenning’s sexual assault on Rua is beyond the reach of The Law. This is why the reader is told twice that Johnson “shook her roughly by the shoulders” and then counselled her immediate return to the house: “Johnson said, talking to her quietly as to a child: ‘He won’t kill you. Now, listen, he won’t kill you […] He’s a good fellow. […] He wouldn’t really hurt you. […] I’ll take you back now and we’ll see that everything’s alright.’” (Mulgan, 1960, severally, 101-

102). Here Johnson speaks to Rua "as to a child" because her status in law as a married woman is precisely that of juvenile dependent. Johnson's rough shaking of Rua signifies the paradox that in his patriarchal society, if Rua is to be considered an adult she is required to reorder her priorities to put Stenning's (sexual) preferences ahead of her own. Her degree of "maturity" is signalled by her acceptance of her husband's sexual demands as being both inevitable and unavoidable. Johnson's suggestion that Stenning "wouldn't really hurt you" therefore implies with chilling, subtextual irony that Rua can take comfort from the knowledge that though her husband may rape her with impunity it is illegal for him to murder her – even though that is precisely what he has threatened. Johnson's adoption of a soothing tone in this exchange further implies that Rua's experience is in no way exceptional.

Readers who have no personal experience of such a predicament can find precursors to Rua's sexual exploitation in two epiphanies in New Zealand literature – firstly of Linda Burnell in Katherine Mansfield's 1917 short story "Prelude" (Alpers,1984) and secondly in Alice Roland's sexual trials in Jane Mander's 1920 novel, *The Story of a New Zealand River* (Mander,1975). John Mulgan and the audiences he anticipated in New Zealand and England were entirely familiar with these two texts, and the passages in *Man Alone* about Rua's sexual conflicts with her husband are indebted to both of them.

But in Mulgan's trope of male marital sexual entitlement, working-class Rua is extraordinary for claiming as of right – both publically and privately, in the presence of strangers, family and friends – the very sexual agency of which Linda Burnell

in “Prelude”, for all her middle class “privilege”, can quite literally only dream. (Mansfield, Ed. Alpers, 1984, 254). And furthermore working-class Rua, on recognising her feelings of seemingly mutual attraction for a man who is not her husband, achieves almost immediately the sexual gratification that middle class Alice Roland in *The Story of a New Zealand River* repeatedly defers.

In fact for the bulk of Jane Mander’s novel, Alice’s infuriating sexual dithering tantalisingly withholds readerly catharsis. Mander enticingly plays off her heroine’s repressed desire for sexual autonomy against her “patient Griselda” submission to the punitively life-threatening conditions imposed on her by her marital status. Her wifely “patience” eventually turns Alice, with ironic effect, into a literal patient:

> Ever since the birth of her last dead baby she had lived alone in her room. She did not know that Bruce, in his capacity as Doctor, had, after much deliberation, decided to talk seriously to her husband about her health, which had declined steadily after Elsie’s birth. She had merely thought that at last he had come to feel that she was unattractive as a wife, and that he preferred to drop the pretence of caring for her in the only way she had supposed he cared (Mander, 1975, 206).

Here the brutal ambiguity of the phrase “last dead baby” implies that the miscarrying of Alice’s most recent pregnancy is but the latest in an unspecified number of previous such traumas. Only on the death of her first husband will her eventual remarriage see her welcome a sexual fulfilment that does not require her to endure further [still]births.

Previously Alice Roland – like Linda Burnell and Rua Stenning – has had no legal right to refuse to have sex with her husband, even if becoming pregnant will kill her. Yet Alice's daughter, Asia, who at eighteen is Rua's age contemporary, upstages her mother in *Story of a New Zealand River* by entering into a de facto relationship with a married man. Like Rua, she is revealed as having acquired some mysterious agency with regard to birth control. And like Rua, she is also narratively equipped with the personal authority in her relationship to enforce it: "You know people of their type don't have children today unless they want them" (Mander, 241). This sentence in Mander's novel specifies the efficacy of contraceptive techniques as a product of the joint cooperation of the interested parties. However Rua, in fleeing the marital bedroom to seek refuge with Johnson; and in later choosing to leave her husband; asserts her right to sexual autonomy. And so with the support of her "people", stands physically and psychologically against the strictures of patriarchy represented by "Stenning"; as well as in defiance of the social polity represented by "Sayers". And even, finally, against [the] "Johnson", as symbolic signifier of self-entitled phallic dominance.

Mulgan's depiction of Rua's sexual struggles with "stenning" are his explicit recognition of the dire circumstances faced at this time by any woman who, if she is unable to establish a climate of sexual equality in her marital relationship, must endure repeated rape without legal redress – rapes that are then followed by unlimited and increasingly life-threatening pregnancies. Not to mention the permanent commitment demanded of her towards the child[ren] in whose conception

she had no choice and whom she will be forced to abandon should she die in a future labour.

Thus Sayers' moralising sexual contempt for Rua actually masks his appalled recognition that if she and "other" women like her begin to act as if they are entitled to autonomous agency in their (sexual) relationships their submission to patriarchal authority can no longer be presumed or compelled.

While Mansfield, Mander and Mulgan all treat access to birth "control" in one form or another as unequivocally desirable, it is also a matter whose practical details, in a withholding of readerly catharsis, they leave mysteriously unspecified. Unlike the two women writers, Mulgan also shows his heroine asserting her right to sexual choice publicly, in terms both verbal and physical, with the implication that her expression of her right to sexual autonomy is linked in some unspecified way to her feminine-indigeneity

Mulgan's subtext is that even if Rua were to have a child out of wedlock, the "gypsy" (Mulgan, 93) character of her friends and extended family means they would not disdain or reject her. An assumption [in]conspicuously not available to Johnson's European girlfriend, Mabel, whose circumstances are addressed elsewhere in the section "The Abandoning Mother: Walking out with [on] Mabel". Since Rua's "people" do not denigrate her "half-caste" connection with them, they do not perceive her as in any way "illegitimate" and so would not designate any child of hers as "illegitimate" either. Her confidence in her family's full acceptance of both her and her sexual choices is confirmed by her decision to seek refuge with them immediately after Stenning's death.

In contrast, Alice Roland's avenue to social and sexual freedom is medicalised by Jane Mander via the life-saving – if draconian – option of a hysterectomy. This procedure is narratively authorised, not via Alice's own agency, but rather at the behest of her very own doctor-lover who first seeks and receives – in a narrative intervention notable for its outrageous fairy-tale wish fulfilment – the permission of her husband. Mander's ironically provocative implication is that the likelihood of meeting in real life a respectful "Prince Charming" who is supportive of his "patient-wife's" right to reproductive choice is but a fantastical romantic dream!

Mander masks her text's critique of patriarchal authority over women's reproductive choices – and her heroine's eventual attainment of sexual liberation – by describing the "operation", which Alice eventually undergoes as a necessity "to save attacks of pain and debility from which she had long suffered" (Mander, 206). The subtext is that the penetrative acts of unaroused intercourse initiated by her husband are perceived by Alice as sexual assaults. These "attacks of pain" – otherwise rapes – result in the unwanted pregnancies represented here as the "debility from which she had long suffered". For she must then endure up to nine weary months of pregnancy culminating in life-threatening labours – all but two of which have ended in traumatic stillbirths.

But the detail Jane Mander then gives of her heroine's post-hysterectomy recovery at the Rotorua sanatorium "where Alice was being massaged by the best masseur in the colony" is akin to a subtextual public service announcement alerting any similarly sexually traumatised reader to a potential avenue for their own

relief. And if they might still have doubts, Alice's post-operative appearance reveals her "At forty-two […] a more beautiful woman than she had ever been" (Mander, severally, 206).

When her novel was reviewed in New York and London, Mander's discussion of such transgressive sexual matters – including her ascription of her heroine's sexual rejuvenation to her miraculous "treatments" at the exotic, internationally renowned "Maori" tourist destination of Rotorua – were met with generous critical appreciation. However in her home country, where ironic fantasy can be read and pursued as fact, *The Story of a New Zealand River* was received with what Dorothea Turner's survey of the local critical response reveals as defensive distaste (Turner, 1972, 129-140).

New Zealand reviewers dismissed Mander's text as an exemplar of "sex-problem" fiction (Turner, 1972, 131). Therefore the 1978 monograph on Jane Mander's writing by Turner – who was, in fact, John Mulgan's sister – played a crucial role in producing a more insightful local appraisal of Mander's work. Turner's reassessment of *Story of a New Zealand River*, recognised the previous New Zealand critical responses to Mander's novel as narrow-minded and mean-spirited, but also gave prominence to her feminist literary courage and to the creative authority with which she had evoked her novel's Northland setting.

Of course the dismissive categorisation of *The Story of a New Zealand River* as "sex-problem fiction", which for decades stifled local responses to this ground-breaking text, can be applied just as pejoratively to *Man Alone* – and most likely would have been if the subtext of Mulgan's work had come to critical

light in its writer's country of birth at any time before the mid-1980s when homosexual acts were first decriminalised in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It's therefore more than probable that the thematic parallels *Man Alone* has with *The Story of a New Zealand River* were not lost on Dorothea Turner. She would have recognised that both Mander's novel and her brother's were narratively invested in examining transgressive expressions of sexuality in a patriarchy structurally hostile to femininity-effeminacy. This would have likely contributed to her decision to supply, in her monograph on Jane Mander for the "Twayne World Authors Series", the holistic contextual reappraisal of the literary affects and effects of *The Story of a New Zealand River*, it so richly deserved.

Her critical recognition of the ethical, social and sexual complexities of *The Story of a New Zealand River* would go on to reverberate in Jane Campion's thematically allied film of 1993, *The Piano*. There is every possibility that Turner saw Campion's film, since she did not die till four years later – in 1997, aged 87. Doubtless she would have welcomed an equivalently subtle cinematic response to the aesthetic complexities of *Man Alone*. That neither she nor John Mulgan, her younger brother, lived to see one is a great pity for her and an irresolvable tragedy for him.

The failure of any filmmaker to attempt a visual text of *Man Alone* is testament to the continuing cultural repression of its homoerotic subtext. And while in all likelihood its homoerotica was privately acknowledged in certain quarters, it continues to be suppressed in the public domain. Where it has been critically glimpsed it remains disrecognised as unheimlich to this very day.

It must also not be forgotten that John Mulgan was personally aware of the genesis of *The Story of a New Zealand River* since he and his younger brother, David, spent a boyhood holiday at a particularly idyllic Northland property where ‘One could step from the family home of the novelist Jane Mander, which [his Uncle] Arthur recently had bought, cross the back lawn and clamber down to a creek and a moored scow” (O’Sullivan, 2011, 28).

Later, of course, Mulgan became personally attuned to the hostile local critical dismissal of Mander’s novel as “sex-problem fiction” but he was already personally conscious of the authenticity, or otherwise, of its setting – critics as early as Katherine Mansfield had carpingly faulted Mander for the hyperbole of some of her novel’s descriptive passages. (Stevens, 1961, 38) However it is too simple to single out *The Story of a New Zealand River* – as Mulgan’s biographer Vincent O’Sullivan does – for the target of the article Mulgan contributed to a 1932 issue of the student magazine *The Kiwi* (O’Sullivan, 2011,73). In this article Mulgan suggested that “An attempt to gain a native born atmosphere has ruined most New Zealand novels to date…” (Mulgan, 1932, 9-10). But despite this sweeping aesthetic condemnation, Mulgan’s short opinion piece makes no specific reference to Mander’s novel or any other. Rather, in a technique he would repeat over and over in *Man Alone*, having cloaked himself with the dominant narrative he goes on to offer subversive houseroom in his article to any artist who is willing to take creative risks without self-censorship or fear of failure – a challenge that Jane Mander manifestly met. Mulgan’s piece also alludes ambiguously to the anxieties that beset such innovators:

> The salvation of this country seems to lie with the creators, primarily, with the "poets" in the Greek sense, who must compose, and paint and write as New Zealanders, and it does not really matter how badly they do these things (Mulgan,1932, In: *The Kiwi*, 9).

Those "Greeks" again – with their "Trojan Horse" gifts. The homoerotically attuned poetics of the Greeks – Sappho for one – obliquely name-checked here as validating the contemporary artist's right to self-expression, whether or not such efforts are met with contempt or dismissal.

But in *Man Alone*, as if in ironic anticipation of exactly the hypocritically hostile estimations with which local reviewers dismissed *Story of a New Zealand River*, Rua's autonomous sexual behaviour attracts laughably contradictory condemnation as both flagrantly promiscuous (Sayers) and unnaturally withholding (Stenning). Damned if she does and damned if she doesn't! Yet despite the unequivocally "bad" reputation Rua's assertions of sexual agency must give her in the eyes of the implied reader, the dominant-culture hostility voiced towards her – "She was well known around here, she was" (Mulgan, 76) – is revealed as entirely suspect when it is recognised that Rua's sexual appetites (by turns needy, spontaneously playful and stifled) have direct parallels with behaviours attributed to Johnson himself.

Comparatively speaking, Rua's hopelessly misguided attempt to recommend herself to Johnson by improving her housekeeping has its mirror in Johnson's own poignantly confused attempt at the opening of *Man Alone*, to engage the prostitute Rose: "He talked to her in the only way that he knew"

(Mulgan, 12). An inchoate neediness also present, in homoerotic terms, in the trembling tentativeness of Johnson's initial meeting with Scott.

In another similarity with Rua, one of Johnson's old male mentors will upbraid him for promiscuity in allegedly "messing round with Maori girls" during the years he is apart from Scott on the riverboat in the north. This is an imputation to Johnson of the casual sexual liaisons that Sayers alleges Rua has pursued. But Johnson's awkwardness regarding the [in]frequency of these heterosexual dalliances then earns the ambiguous response from him that "I've seen enough of them now" (Mulgan, severally, 173).

And Rua, changing partners at will during the farm's Christmas party while her old and sexually incompatible husband sleeps, is seen spontaneously enjoying a festive occasion very similar to those attended by Johnson both in the Waikato and (by implication) in the north. Her behaviour – "Rua laughed and left him, going back to the young Maori boy who seemed to have been waiting for her" (Mulgan, 98) is here as carelessly pleasure seeking as Johnson's earlier euphemistic "kissing" of Mabel in the back seats of cars at Waikato dances.

In fact in terms of their sexual enjoyment, the only major difference between the lovers arises from the ironic paradox that even though for most of the novel Johnson is actually in a long-term, committed, monogamous, homoerotic relationship with Scott, he appears to the implied reader to be an unattached heterosexual playboy bachelor. Meanwhile Rua, who is supposedly part of a sexually exclusive married "couple", refuses monogamy and the wifely sexual obedience it mandates the first – and reputedly every – chance she gets.

Yet although Johnson demands that Rua forget about their liaison, and after Stenning's shooting even threatens her in a desperate hope that she will keep silent as to his own whereabouts (Mulgan, 170-171), he never expresses any condemnation of her sexual behaviour. This is Mulgan's tacit indictment of the heterosexual double standard – his novel's ethical recognition of the hypocrisy of the heterosexual freedoms granted to men at the expense of women.

12. Wild Rua and the wasted land

JOHNSON EVENTUALLY discusses what happened on Stenning's farm with three confidantes who analyse his behaviour towards Rua in the ambiguous terms patriarchal culture reserves for a fellow's affair with another man's wife. In their father-confessor relationships with Johnson, these three "wise" men attribute the problems the lovers' jointly encounter as a result of Stenning's jealousy and death to the hero's commission of a [sexual] "property" offence against another man. In this they operate on the assumption that Rua, as Stenning's legally dependent marital chattel, had no business exercising sexual agency either within her marriage or outside it. Thus it is she who is held principally responsible for the "trouble" arising from what these "consultants" think of as her extramarital offence.

These men also voice the implied reader's expectation of the "assumed […] promiscuity of Maori women" (Wanhalla, 2012, 149). Historically Europeans had treated wifely status

in Maori customary marriages as culturally cheap, since such relationships were not contingent on Christian ceremony or subject to European law, whereas a European woman's wifely status was valorised in the dominant culture as in every sense "dear".

Captain Petersen epitomises this attitude when in his anxiety at being called on to arrange Johnson's escape from Aotearoa New Zealand he exclaims of Rua and her sister-in-law, "I don't care which one of your whores gets you into trouble only I don't want any part of it" (Mulgan,176). In this the implied reader understands that despite having a "higher" status as a "half-caste" Rua has now "cheapened" herself to the level of any wholly Maori married woman. She is particularly culpable in this because from her European "side" she should have known better than to commit adultery – and publicly! She must therefore bear the irreversible social consequences of her reduction in the eyes of the implied reader to the default status of Maori women as generally speaking, a cheap sexual commodity.

European justifications for the dear/cheap distinctions made between Pakeha and Maori women as sexual "properties" can be traced, in terms of the patriarchal goddess/whore binary, to the earliest period of cross-cultural contact in Aotearoa New Zealand, where the acceptance of pre-marital sex in Maori society "fostered a view [among Europeans] that fathers, brothers and uncles traded women for goods" (Wanhalla, 2013, 1). Yet in fact traditionally such gift-exchanges simply denoted the good-faith establishment, for the duration of a liaison, of obligations of support and alliance between the concerned

parties and their family and tribal connections (Wanhalla, 2013, 3-5). Under these provisos a temporary relationship was publically "acceptable as long as it did not affect the future prospects of the young woman" (Wanhalla, 2013, 5). The legitimacy among Maori of temporary couple relationships, was extended at the initial point of cross-cultural contact to include Europeans. And today, for those with access to contraception and abortion, unstigmatised serial monogamy persists in Aotearoa New Zealand. In my experience gift-giving remains commonplace between the families of informally cohabiting couples, and acknowledges such temporary alliances as being undertaken in good faith.

Mulgan makes it clear that Rua, prior to entering into just such an informal relationship with Johnson, had committed to an entirely formal marital relationship with Stenning as recognised in terms of both European law and customary Maori marriage. Yet when her people discover she has begun a relationship with the protagonist that falls outside this contract their acceptance of her does not falter. This is contrary to the contempt she feels from everyone else in the district. They consider her, as Rua is well aware, to be amorally promiscuous: "They always talk like that around here. They probably said it the first day you were here" (Mulgan, 112).

By contrast, on her return from two separate visits home – implicitly to announce and then discuss her new relationship with her family – he notices that "She had a confidence and a cheerfulness, which surprised him" (Mulgan, 110). The implication here is that "Rua's people" approve of her plan to leave Stenning and go north with Johnson. It can

therefore be surmised that in the eyes of her friends and family Stenning's behaviour gives her the right to walk away without disparagement from her European marital contract. For when considered in terms of customary Maori practice, what appears to the implied reader as Rua's morally and socially unacceptable sexual betrayal of her marriage vows can be seen subtextually as entirely justifiable. Stenning's decision to cede Johnson a third share of the farm, in accordance with European commercial transactions and patriarchal marital law, has flown in the face of Rua's tribal land rights. Her husband's act of unilateral land alienation is a direct insult to the mana and legitimacy of Rua's marital status: "Johnson remembered how angry she had been when Stenning made the offer to him of a third share in the farm, though she had not dared to speak of it directly to him and if she argued with Stenning against it her talking had no effect" (Mulgan,105). It is implicit here that what in European legal terms is now solely Stenning's farm was once part of Rua's whanau's original demesne. Her marae is but "ten miles down the valley" (Mulgan, 93), so Stenning and the bank can only have got hold of this land because of its seizure from Rua's "people". Her marriage to Stenning in its restoration of the land to the lineage of its former and rightful owners, had therefore signalled the potential for a fortuitous reversal of the land's alienation.

In Maori terms Stenning has only been able to gain access to this property due to it being one of the spoils of the colonising wars – land whose ownership by Stenning or anyone non-Maori is, from the tangata whenua perspective, entirely contestable. And in any case, as far as Rua's whanau are

concerned the limits of Stenning's legitimate marital occupancy of the land are clear-cut: "Land gained through marriage gave a couple occupation rights, but not the right of ownership" (Wanhalla, 2013, 54). In traditional Maori marital practice Stenning could not have traded away any of this property to Johnson without the consent of Rua's family since "A gift of land […] functioned to bond newcomers to the iwi or hapu socially and economically, and to retain any future children within the wider whanau" (Wanhalla, 2012,53-54). Stenning, in taking advantage of the European law that treats the farm as solely belonging to him, thus exemplifies the continuing erosion at this time of the complex whanau, hapu and iwi marital obligations and privileges held by Maori women such as Rua. These effects were so widespread and so vigorously contested by Maori that by 1920 a legal precedent had to be established that customary Maori marriage had no legal standing in European law (Wanhalla, 2012, 51).

Therefore Mulgan must make it clear to the reader that Rua and Stenning's marriage is based on European legality. Thus at one point Stenning specifically tells Johnson that "Them's my relations-in-law" (Mulgan, 94). This is necessary because if theirs were solely a customary Maori marriage Rua would not have been recognised in New Zealand law as Stenning's widow and legal next of kin, and could not have inherited his savings.

Of course for the implied reader, Rua's subordinate status under the terms of her European marriage contract is unexceptional. However in Maori terms Rua has legitimate cause to abandon her relationship with Stenning because her

husband has ceded to Johnson, land to which neither man has any moral or ethical right.

Indeed her "people", in their support for her new association with Johnson, are pointedly no more acquiescent to Rua's legally deficient status in her European marriage to Stenning than Johnson is acquiescent to the illegitimacy in the eyes of The Law of his own "customary" marital relationship with Scott.

That the implied reader is entirely oblivious to these treacherous undercurrents is Mulgan's subtextual indictment of the self-serving attitude of racial and heterosexual economic entitlement that was found in New Zealand's European colonisers.

Rua nonetheless brings an initial optimism to the dynamic complexity of her interracial relationships with both Stenning and Johnson. But across the course of the narrative this devolves into a sense of deep disillusionment with Stenning, which reaches its nadir in her romantic betrayal by Johnson. *Man Alone* is thus ironically alert to the anguishing realities of inter-racial marriage in Aotearoa New Zealand, also recognised by Angela Wanhalla in her study, which notes with judicious understatement that "interracial relationships evolve and change over time, and they range along a continuum of emotional connections" (Wanhalla, 2012, xi).

In Rua's case the romantic convention of the marital "fairy-tale ending" is ironically inverted when it is not thorough marriage, but through her "divorce" from first Stenning and then Johnson, that she finally achieves by returning to "her people", the "they-all-lived-happily-ever-after" of sexual,

economic and social freedom. And Mulgan even drops hints during the Christmas night dance at the farm of her eventual autonomous relationship with a new partner – the younger Maori "boy" who, in a metaphor of implicit respect for Rua's personal agency, "seemed to have been waiting for her" (Mulgan, 98).

In predatory contrast, the bank's selling up of the farm after Stenning's death draws attention to European attitudes to land and women's interest in it, as being reducible to solely commercial commodification. Through matrimonial and business deals newly immigrant men like Stenning and Johnson were able to gain outright ownership of acreages previously held for centuries by Maori in joint tribal trust.

The legal and illegal processes of European expropriation of Maori land reinforced the objectification of Maori women like Rua, who could themselves be perceived as a form of sexual property. As long as Rua is not under the explicit control of one particular man, the implied reader can think of her as "wild" and "going to waste" – precisely like any piece of land under Maori stewardship, coveted by Europeans. This assumption lingered in the popular imagination for decades.

> Those who had been obliged to accept the view that Maori owned all the land in New Zealand were determined, 'in the Maori's own interests', to relieve them of their so-called wastelands guaranteed them by the Treaty (Riseborough,1997, 17).

Such "properties", whether sexual or real estate, are in these terms deemed free for the taking – by Johnson or anyone else who can get hold of them.

Man Alone indicts the ethics of such nakedly opportunistic European land grabs through the ironically sanitised recollections of the father of Johnson's European girlfriend, Mabel. Her father's fond memories of his family's (short) history on their Waikato farm are centred around what he terms the "pioneer days, when you had to bake bread, no groceries coming in three times a week on the cream-lorry". But his amnesiac nostalgia is punctured in the next sentence by the narrator's acerbic aside that "Mabel's grandfather had shot Maoris for his bit of land" (Mulgan, 22). This is a juxtaposition that cracks the veneer of self-congratulation under which Europeans customarily repress the criminal brutality of colonisation.

Mulgan later associates this unheimlich reverberation from the violent and illegal seizure of Maori acreages in the Waikato with Scott's entirely honourable but completely extra-legal "proposal" to the protagonist that it is *they* who should settle down together on a farm (Mulgan, 68). This suggestion Johnson teasingly reciprocates with the counter "proposal" that simply by marrying Waikato Mabel he could obtain solely for himself the Maori land now occupied by her father.

Thus in story events that equally objectify European Mabel and Maori Rua as sexual "properties", Mulgan subversively traces the "soft" colonising patriarchal power of European heterosexual marriage back to the "hard" colonising patriarchal power of the gun.

This recognition is then combined to devastating effect in the sequence in which Stenning nightly patrols "his" farm with a rifle in an attempt to repel Johnson. And thereby reassert Stenning's exclusive "ownership" of his other "wild" (marital)

property – Rua. (Mulgan 115). At the same time Johnson's own attempts to force Rua to submit to the authority of her deranged husband are rendered macabrely comic by their sheer hypocrisy. Here Mulgan subtextually upbraids both men, and the implied reader, for the selfishness of their assumption that since, like the farm, Rua is Stenning's marital property, he should have exclusive sexual title to her as well.

However Rua's contrary assumption of her right to sexual and social autonomy is made ironically ambiguous by Mulgan's ascription to her of "half-caste" status. For in accordance with her European ancestry she is both enculturated and contractually bound to recognise that legal marriage to Stenning obliges her to accede to his authority. The implied reader can thus dismiss Rua as morally lacking since the "deficiencies" of both her feminine sexuality and her "mixed" race have prompted behaviours from her that are profoundly disruptive to patriarchy. But by highlighting the inequities to which women – of whatever ethnicity – are subject under European marital law, Mulgan subtextually calls into question here the supposed "superiority" of the dominant culture.

The protagonist's earlier seemingly dispassionate consideration of the conditions of Rua's life can thus be understood as Johnson's subversive acknowledgment of Rua's situation as having significant parallels with his own: "He tried to imagine once what it must be like *for her* living with Stenning, and reckoned it probably wouldn't be the world of fun' [my emphasis] (Mulgan, 92). Mulgan's ironic implication here is that while Rua has only been "living with Stenning" since her marriage, Johnson has lived with "stenning" his entire life.

Rua's explicit "othering" as ethnically "half-caste" therefore draws ironic attention to Johnson as a sexual "half-caste". However on their joint escape from Stenning, while Rua is allowed to reassert her material, social, sexual and cultural links with "her people" as ongoing, Johnson realises only an ambiguous, symbolic refuge among his connections.

Nonetheless Rua's relieved return "home" signifies the text's underlying allegiance to "other" models of sexual expression and to different kinds of familial structures. Of course Mulgan can only get away with his novel's assault on the edifice of patriarchal, heterosexual marriage and the conventions of the nuclear family by appearing to accommodate the colonisers' assumption that since Rua is a sexually "wild" indigenous woman, the opportunity for a legal marital union with a European husband was "wasted" on her. But at the same time the implied reader's assumption of the cultural superiority of the European, legal, monogamous, heterosexual relationship in which Rua was mired is subversively undermined by Mulgan's attention to the stifling inequality of her marriage contract. And whether Rua's ultimate abandonment of its "privileges" can be seen as a mark of lower or elevated intelligence on her part is a point left disingenuously to the determination of the reader.

13. Louis: A Rangipo exile

MULGAN'S DESCRIPTION of the Rangipo recognises it in geophysical terms as a locale originally fertile and inhabitable

whose creative potential, like that of the homoerotic sensibility it symbolises, has been all but destroyed: "What he saw was a waste of scarred and pitted desert […] and the ground was strewn with the charred fragments of old forests wasted by volcanic fire" (Mulgan,135). The "waste" of this site's archaic potential is then reiterated by the narrator yet a third time:

> He had heard men speak of this too, the Rangipo desert, the waste area where long before the volcanoes of the mountain had burned and embedded the forests, and the loose volcanic sand, played on by years of driving winds, had given no home for anything to grow (Mulgan, 135).

In the phrases "a waste", "forests wasted" and "the waste area" Mulgan implies the gratuitous despoliation of a site that, with an alteration to the prevailing "climate", could yet return to fertile abundance. The winds that stunt the Rangipo thus represent symbolically the winds of archaic cultural change that now stunt the implied reader's appreciation of the homoerotic dimension of Johnson and Scott's relationship in *Man Alone*.

Mulgan's metaphor of the environmental waste of the Rangipo thus allies its impoverishment with his society's repression of any memories associated with the homoerotica of the Greek "classical" period. As Christina Stachurski has noted, New Zealand society conventionally repudiated any such transgressive expressions of sexuality:

> Male homosexuality was enmeshed with homosociality in ancient Greece, whereas the opposite is true in contemporary western societies. Just so a taboo against homosexuality was strong in

> the predominantly male early colonial society of New Zealand (Stachurski, 2009, 20).

This explains Mulgan's elaborate reliance in *Man Alone* on metaphor and symbolism to carry a sexually transgressive subtext, specifically invoking the Greek classical era as cultural precedent for acceptance of the homoerotic. In this Mulgan had always to be acutely aware of how the sexual censoriousness of New Zealand Aotearoa conflicted with the tolerant sexual sensibilities of the elite English university where he reached mature manhood. And where he had delved further into the Greek classics before writing his novel.

His early personal consciousness of the homoerotic as a classical commonplace may be inferred from an episode in his late teens, which also speaks directly to the prevailing climate in New Zealand of the cultural inadmissibility of the homoerotic sensibility. Mulgan's intellectual and emotional rebuff occurred on the occasion of his first drinking to intoxication, while he was an Auckland undergraduate. Such binges are a youthful "Kiwi" male – and increasingly female – bonding rite of passage. In the event described in Mulgan's biograpy his friend Scotch Patterson explicitly censored Mulgan's drunken expression of his idiosyncratic view of the peculiar local significance of Greek classical history:

> When Patterson told him he had got to the point of talking nonsense, and that the philosophical arguments he claimed derived from Greek History were irrational, John stopped mid glass. Then Scotch, as one of the few students who could afford a car, dropped him off at Landscape Road (O'Sullivan, 2011, 47).

Vincent O'Sullivan gives no examples of the "irrational" assertions that made this occasion memorable to his informant. But whatever Mulgan said then points to his preoccupation with the "nonsense" he derives from "Greek History" as persisting into his later life and work in *Man Alone*. His treatment of the locales of the Rangipo and Onetapu depicts these local places as the symbolic sites for his novel's subtextually "Grecian" riposte to the profound cultural silencing of the homoerotic in the dominant culture of his home country. And since it was Scotch Patterson who drew the existence of this youthful exchange to the attention of Mulgan's biographer, this anecdote also registers as a veiled pre-emptive disclaimer on Scotch's part of any homoerotic significance in their relationship .

The perceived necessity for this covertly voiced demurral unwittingly underlines the implicit plea in Mulgan's novel for the long outlawed homoerotic aspects of the "classical" era, to be accepted once again as a legitimate aspect of contemporary sexual mores. In this *Man Alone* serves as Mulgan's act of self-fragilising matrixial resistance to the profound (Aotearoa New Zealand) cultural taboo – noted by Stachurski – against any recognition of the interplay of the homoerotic with homosociality.

However Mulgan is scrupulous in not implicating the homoerotic sensibility as featuring uniquely in dysfunctional relationships. His protagonist's ethical and sexual dilemmas are portrayed jointly with the traumas faced by the many "other" characters in *Man Alone* over whose troubles the narrator skips so allusively. For example: the venereal suffering and social notoriety of Rose the prostitute; Death Valley Thompson's

obsessive-compulsive reliving of the murderous horrors of The Great War; after her stifled daughter's departure, Mrs. Blakeway's chillingly meek prisoner's existence at the beck and call of both her mean husband and sadly demented mother; and the gambling-addicted Captain Dawson's enforced northern sequestration at the hands of his humiliated family.

This is not to deny that material registered as expressive of homoerotic social interactions has the power in Mulgan's society – and hence Johnson's – to horrify above all else. Despite this, the text's ready acknowledgment of the transgressive "otherness" of almost every character the reader encounters in the social fabric of *Man Alone* subversively undermines any assumption that to possess a homoerotic sensibility in some way automatically outdoes the suffering, or indeed the happiness, of an/other.

Critic Christina Stachurski perceptively reads the text as recognising and then summarily rejecting the sensual homoerotic bodily characteristics of two of its characters. However in my view these rejections are featured for the benefit of the implied reader. In this they serve as Mulgan's representation of the propensity among those afflicted with homophobia to acknowledge sexual difference only for the purpose of dismissing it with scorn or condescension, in an implicit valorisation of heterosexual norms. But at the same time the complex subtexts of these rejections repay deeper consideration.

Stachurski considers that the first of these culturally "stifling" reactions happens in the hero's initial itemising appraisal of Stenning's physique: "Johnson looks appreciatively at Stenning's body, the 'littleness' of which makes 'the great

thickness and strength of his forearms and legs the more striking' ". But she then suggests that Johnson's appreciation of Stenning's physicality is rendered here "in terms of utility rather than beauty or sex appeal" (Stachurski, 2009, severally, 22) and so sees Johnson as ascribing to Stenning's appearance a mechanistic colonial conceptualisation of man's dominance over the land. However this reading, which will undoubtedly satisfy the implied reader, can be supplemented with a recognition that Mulgan's "utility" description of Stenning's body also reflects the farmer's essentialist characterisation, subtextually, as a stereotypically villainous father-figure – Goliath to Johnson's heroically upstart David.

Stenning is destined to fill an emblematically sacrificial role in the narrative, in that he is necessary to Mulgan's schema of Oedipally orchestrated revenge against hetero-normative hegemony. In these terms, although Stenning's defeat is inevitable, if it is to have symbolic significance he must register for both Johnson and the reader as a formidable opponent. The calculatedly objective detachment of the protagonist's "appreciation" of Stenning's physicality is thus intended to reveal Johnson, in terms of the two men's mismatch, as a heroic "underdog".

Moreover, the perfunctory treatment accorded by both Rua and Johnson to Stenning's body as made "monstrous" in death, can be explained in terms of the text's subtextual endorsement of Stenning's end as an eminently desirable narrative fait accompli. Rua "hesitated for a moment at having to pass across Stenning's body, then went quickly across the room and half jumping, half falling through the doorway disappeared into the darkness

outside" (Mulgan, 125-6). This is a Maori woman who would customarily treat the head of another person as tapu, so to overstep the smashed skull of her own husband in this way is a gesture of profound disrespect.

Johnson is equivalently disrespectful, for in what is a symbolic textual undercurrent of triumph he stays in the room with Stenning's mutilated remains, busy with his departure plans for two and a half pages – while smoking:

> He did not call her again, but sat there listening. Then he leaned over to where his coat hung at the top of the bed and, taking out his tobacco and packet of papers, began to roll a cigarette (Mulgan,126).

Conspicuously ignoring Stenning's corpse, Johnson deliberates on his options until he finds "His cigarette had gone out and instead of relighting it he dropped it into the blue enamel candlestick" (Mulgan,127). Only then is his escape strategy sufficiently to his satisfaction for him to step "carefully" (Mulgan, 128) but without any ambivalence at all over Stenning's corpse that was left a-sprawl on the threshold of the whare.

The callousness of Rua and Johnson's responses to Stenning's mortal remains arises from the calculated inevitability of the plot development that has produced his downfall. The implied reader may understand Johnson's matter-of-fact report of Stenning's corpse as simply conveying the pitiless grotesquerie of human mortality and referencing Johnson's traumatically repressed war experiences. They can also justify the abandonment of Stenning's corpse as rightly ensuring that

the authorities can investigate an untouched crime scene. But in fact Johnson and Rua's perfunctory treatment of Stenning's body subtextually registers the fact that his end is an eventuality celebrated by both the hero and the narrative as a symbolic conquest:

> It was not necessary to look long, or very closely at him. He was very dead. It was a kind of mockery to think of what lay there as being Stenning, with face and shoulder merged in a mess of blood on the floor (Mulgan, 124).

Johnson must also now contemplate the possibility of his own execution for murder or, if he's "lucky", his anticipated twenty-year imprisonment for manslaughter (Mulgan, 125) – and so decides on escape. However in events that he has so clearly provoked, his own sense of innocence speaks obliquely to his underlying motive of exacting symbolic payback for the unconscionable criminalisation of those thousands of "other" men convicted for consensual homosexual acts and sentenced to rot in jails. Their suffering and the waste of their lives is an undercurrent in Johnson's musing here about the likelihood of his own imprisonment:

> They would take and tie him, probably for years, to work in a prison camp, perhaps under the shadow of the mountain there, where he had himself seen the convicts road-making in the rain (Mulgan,127).

This is Mulgan's covert expression of full empathy for the misery endured by anybody persecuted and imprisoned as a "homosexual".

But nonetheless, as Christina Stachurski notes, there is something callously "utilitarian" in Mulgan's treatment of *Man Alone*'s "other" homosexually transgressive – and therefore at that time implicitly criminalised – character whom Johnson rejects decisively.

The view Mulgan offers of "Louis" – the man Johnson watches on the evening of his escape from New Zealand. and who observes the protagonist in return – represents this fellow as having the same cartoonish Popeye-the-Sailor-Man upper body that Johnson appraised so pitilessly in Stenning. And for the implied reader, Johnson's eventual very public rejection of Louis' touch certainly suggests distaste for his "deviant" sexual behaviour.

However subtextually Johnson's eventual words of rebuff, rather than being a dismissal of Louis' sexuality are actually an assertion of his right to take or leave this "sea dog". And are thus emblematic of the very freedom of sexual choice that the protagonist has striven for and won in the symbolic removal of sexual constraints availed him by Stenning's end.

In Johnson's first scene with Louis, Mulgan therefore gives the reader, no less than the protagonist, the unimpeded liberty to gaze at the male body as an object of desire, and after that – if this desiring gaze is reciprocated – the freedom to either respond sexually or, equally important, to refuse further contact.

In the men's exchanges, Stachurski notes both the intimacy of this episode's initial location and the specificity of it being in Johnson's point of view: "At night in the close quarters of the ship's bunkroom […t]his is Johnson's own observation (via the narrator)" (Stachurski, 2009, 21). However, her further

conclusion that in the very next scene Mulgan negates the homoerotic impact of his protagonist's initial observation of Louis is unwarrantedly prescriptive, as the close reading below will show.

Johnson is unaware of Louis' first view of him, since, on entering the bunkroom, Louis finds the hero seemingly sound asleep. Johnson's posture is carefully described so as to convey to the implied reader the hero's consciousness of his vulnerable economic status for he is yet to hand over to the captain the cash bribe he must pay for his escape passage. 'He slept with his left hand hunched over the breast pocket that held his money and his right hand crooked under his head." However this posture subtextually also exposes Johnson's concurrent "attitude" of unselfconscious easiness with respect to his sexuality:

He is lying thus when "Later in the night he was awakened by a light in his eyes [...] The big man laid his lantern down on the floor and put his hand on Johnson's shoulder" (Mulgan, severally, 184). Louis has awakened Johnson with the compassionate motive that he feels it would be bad luck for him to sleep in the bunk of a recently deceased shipmate. But the reader is also made implicitly aware here that Louis' lantern inspection has first fully registered the entirety of the hero's unconscious bodily disposition. For on what is not coincidentally a Greek ship with a Greek captain (Mulgan, 183-184), Louis is able to avail himself at this moment of a sexually unshielded view of the protagonist. His "foreign" gaze is then immediately reciprocated through Johnson's eyes. In Johnson's appraisal the "superior" homoerotic lineage of classical Greece, which the novel has previously metaphysically reclaimed in

the Rangipo sequence (a point discussed in detail in sections following this), is implicitly contrasted with the exhibitionistic machismo of the contemporary European, as represented by Louis:

> This was a big man, he had the same dark hair and swarthy face as the other man Johnson had seen, but he was built massively like a bull. He had bare arms bristling with black hair and thickly matted hair on his chest. […] The big man put the lantern down on the floor and laid his right hand on Johnson's shoulder. […] Johnson sat up, pulling his shoulder away from the big man's grasp (Mulgan, 184).

This description of "bare arms bristling with black hair" and "thickly matted hair on his chest" evokes Louis as expressing a virile, homoerotically alert sensibility. And since he is built "like a bull" it also reveals him as an animalistic caricature. The reader is then told in the same scene a few paragraphs later that "[Louis] took off his shirt baring his arms and chest". But as these features of his physique have already been described in close-up detail, this unveiling is actually an action replay, which invests this moment with the voyeuristic titillation of a striptease:

> He took off his shirt baring his arms and chest. Then he found a bottle in his kit and rubbed his chest and arms with oil so the muscles glistened, standing out in the lamplight. He was a big man. He must have weighed fifteen or sixteen stone (Mulgan, 185).

Louis' fetishistic removal of his shirt is the second time his bare arms and chest have been described to the reader – a repetition

that signifies him as the knowing object of Johnson and implicitly the reader's fascinated gaze.

However on deck the next day, when Louis once again touches Johnson, he is rebuffed with the words: "You can keep your hands off me" (Mulgan, 188). But in agreeing with Stachurski that this is a sexual rejection in which Mulgan "actively closes off homoerotic possibility" (Stachurski, 2009, 21), in the light of what was so calculatedly revealed to the reader through Johnson's eyes the night before it is also necessary to recognise this rejection as being marked by defensive ambivalence.

It is Louis who is made to carry the burden of Mulgan's textual ambiguity: "He grinned at Johnson, disliking him" (Mulgan, 188). This moment of *dis*liking staged publicly amongst the other crewmembers has a private counterpoint in chapter three, in Mulgan's use of the verb "like" to describe Scott's "touching" gesture at the moment of Johnson's first separation from his mate: "Scotty […] patted him on the shoulder liking him as he said goodbye" (Mulgan, 28).

Mulgan appropriates the homoerotic subtext of liking/disliking from Virginia Woolf's use of the same verb in a lesbian context, in *A Room of One's Own*. During the three speeches Woolf made at the women's colleges of Cambridge that were the genesis of her famous novel-essay, the woman with whom she was then having an affair, Vita Sackville-West, sat on the stage beside her (Marcus, 1996, 33). Their relationship gave Virginia a personal reason for including in her remarks her defiant ridicule of Sir Chartres Biron, the judge who, by the time her essay was published, had suppressed Radclyffe Hall's

lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness*.

> Are there no men present? Do you promise me that behind that red curtain over there the figure of Sir Charles Biron is not concealed? We are all women you assure me? Then I may tell you that the very next words I read were these - 'Chloe liked Olivia…' Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes happen. Sometimes women do like women (Woolf, 1977, 78).

Critic Jane Marcus points out that Woolf's arguments here, in specific support of the (woman) artist's creative entitlement to represent a homoerotic sensibility in literature, were a public act of solidarity with Radclyffe Hall, whose "lesbian" novel's obscenity trial was scheduled to be overseen by Biron later that month.

Mulgan's use of Woolf's "liking" euphemism in the homoerotic subtext of *Man Alone* therefore stands with her – not only in subtextual affirmation of the significance of the homoerotic in life and literature, but in defiance of censorship. At the time of her speeches Woolf's own "lesbian" novel, *Orlando*, had just been published. It had escaped public censure by dint of the allusive intellectual sleight of hand with which she deployed its homoerotic content: now you see it, now you don't. It formed a direct precedent for Mulgan's use of similarly allusive techniques.

In *A Room of One's Own* Woolf also explicitly repudiated coercion and power imbalances in homoerotic – or indeed any – sexual encounter. It included a searing representation of Mr Oscar Browning – a notorious Eton master who was dismissed in 1875 for paedophilia and appointed immediately

afterwards to a life fellowship at Cambridge University that was not relinquished till 1908 – and skewered the man's sense of patriarchal sexual entitlement. Woolf first reveals his intellectual misogyny towards women students. And then, through what should be read as "one representative charge" – his despicable exploitation as a sexual predator of the desperately vulnerable stable boy, "Arthur" (Woolf, 1977, 52).

Here Woolf asserts the principle – undoubtedly contingent on her own childhood experience of sexual abuse – that informed consent is an indispensable prerequisite in sexual encounters between subjects, whatever their age, class, race or gender.

Mulgan implicitly endorses this ethical standard in Johnson's ultimately unequivocal sexual rejection of Louis. But the protagonist's subtextual motivation for this rebuff is his wish at this moment to honour his relationship with "the only man he wanted to keep in touch with" (Mulgan, 83). In fact this is Johnson's reassertion of the primary and continuing homoerotic significance for him of his "liking" for Scott.

Louis's answering grin accepts his rejection, but with a sardonic reminder to Johnson of the narratively staged "liking" of their mutual "looking" the night before. Yet even as Louis apparently taunts the protagonist for the belatedness of this sexual dismissal, the implied reader can be presumed to endorse it. For Johnson's refusal of Louis' touch is, for them, a seemingly unequivocal assertion of Johnson's heterosexuality and as such an implicit acknowledgment of the contempt and hostility homophobic society must feel at any suggestion of a sexual relationship between these two men.

But in fact Johnson's fastidious response here to the caricatural magnificence of Louis' narrative presentation recognises a self-containment in the hero, which quite apart from its obviously protective benefits in a homophobic society, finds its lesbian and heterosexual parallels in the emotions of anybody who, no matter how attractive they may privately find the attributes of say a Marilyn-Monroe-robust-specimen, or a Princess-Diana-fragile-waif, would quail at the prospect of entering the public spotlight with either of such queenly paragons.

Therefore, while Johnson's rebuff can be seen by the implied reader as a rejection of Louis' "homosexual nature", Johnson's behaviour can also be read subtextually as, given the overblown theatricality of Louis self-grooming of the night before, Johnson's rejection of any public association with such an exhibitionist. In this Louis is treated as representative for Johnson of that degeneration from the archaic heights of unaffected grace and beauty idealised in classical homoerotic mythology, which the hero has symbolically communed with in the Rangipo and Onetapu, and then regretfully relinquished in the Kaimanawa as being currently, for him, unattainable.

However the narrator's initial description of Johnson's own appearance actually embraces such a persona. Johnson is himself a man more of Louis' vigorous physical type than Scott's: "he was a medium-sized man, very brown, almost black from the sun, with a round ordinary-looking face and a large mouth and strong teeth yellow with tobacco […with] eyes that are either grey or green" (Mulgan, Introduction). The reader is thus offered the opportunity for [erotic] identification with both the robust physiques represented by Johnson, Louis and Stenning as

well as with the very different physical characteristics the hero is attracted to in his mate. This variety of forms is something critic Kai Jensen has recognised in the work of Frank Sargeson, whose descriptive range can equally be seen as encompassing "the older strongly built male" alongside the "waif-like appearance" (Jensen, severally, 1995, 74). A version of the latter is clearly manifest in Scott.

In Mulgan's additional rendering of Louis' quite literal oiliness and his accented English as "broken" – 'You feel the better this morning, eh? How you say, ain't love grand, eh?' (Mulgan, 187) – the sailor also serves as a metaphor for cultural decay. In a man twice described as "Italian" (Mulgan, 187), Mulgan thus implies Johnson's sexual ambivalence towards the "degenerate" Roman, as opposed to his idealisation of the classically Greek.

Yet despite this apparent valorisation of the "superior" character of Johnson's own homoerotic sensibilities, Louis himself remains sardonically unconvinced by what is therefore also implied as a rationalisation on the protagonist's part. By rejecting in Louis someone of his own physical type, the protagonist refuses a man whose sexual confidence offers a conscience-pricking rejoinder to Johnson's own [homo]sexual reticence. Louis' response to his rejection is to smile at Johnson, with his accompanying "disliking" marking the protagonist's deletion from favoured status in Louis' sexual lexicon. Simultaneously, Louis' compassionate response to the [hetero] sexually rejected little Captain's steward, standing emotionally wounded on the deck beside them, underlines further the complex ethical considerations that inform this scene.

The Captain's steward is a failed heterosexual suitor, jilted by the young woman to whom he proposed while they were in port. He receives Louis' "grinning" (Mulgan, 187) interrogation about his dumping with heartfelt gratitude. As overheard by Johnson, he reveals to Louis that his pain is the more intense because he was willing to overlook in his potential fiancée the denigrating assessments other people made of her as "illegitimate" (Mulgan, 186). At first glance this episode of unrequited love appears to invite Louis' malicious delight. However, his immediate offer of full compassionate empathy towards the broken-hearted steward is received by him so gratefully, their exchange actually serves as Mulgan's textual rebuke to schadenfreude of any sexual persuasion:

> "I'm alright now, Louis," the steward said. "I'm alright today." The Italian pushed with his great hand on the little man's shoulder so he had to hold himself off from the railings (Mulgan, 187-188).

In the "touching" matrixial Eros of Louis' proffered hand, the mutual compassionate hospitality of these two very different men towards one another sees the little Captain's steward gratefully accept Louis physicality. Mulgan is giving a caution here that not every touch will be sexually motivated and nor, if it is, will be automatically reciprocated, while also narratively endorsing the right to test one's desires. And this is irrespective of whether the implied reader might be predisposed to scorn such declarations and their recipients – of whatever sex – as "illegitimate".

Mulgan reminds the reader that coping with sexual refusal is as much a matter for the heterosexual as for the homoerotic

sensibility, and that such refusals, while they must be respected, don't necessarily imply a rejection of the other's sexual orientation – or one's own.

Therefore, irrespective of the homophobic presumptions of the implied reader, Johnson's rejection of Louis is not actually based on the "foreignness" of his sexuality, but rather, since it takes place at the moment of the protagonist's involuntary departure from Aotearoa New Zealand, rests on the acuteness of Johnson's enduring feelings for Scott.

As he leaves the land he travelled with his own "illegitimate" mate, Johnson is even more heartsick in his remembering than the little Captain's steward. However the poignant personal grounds of his rejection of Louis must remain as empathically inaccessible to the big Italian as they are to the implied reader. This point is subtextually revealed in the complex structure of the lines that now bring part one of the narrative to a close.

Before the publisher's request for a lengthening of *Man Alone*, Mulgan envisaged the long sentence at the end of Part One of the novel would be the last. Its elaborately contrived imagery is thus freighted with symbolic import:

> He did not want to talk to [the Captain] now, but he turned and went, going aft towards the bridge with the sun on the water and on the country that was dropping behind them coming into his eyes (Mulgan, 188).

This ambiguously convoluted sentence conceals Mulgan's estimation that because a "real" man can never be seen to cry, his hero's renewal of grief at Scott's loss can only be expressed

here in a caul of linguistic indifference. But in fact "the water […] coming into his eyes", is a covert assertion that at this moment Johnson wept.

The implied reader may take the image of "the country that was dropping behind them" as a simple elegy, but in the word "them" Mulgan also implies not just the departing collectivity of the ship and crew, but that since Johnson is accompanied wherever he goes by the love, desire and respect he and Scott always felt for each other, here "they" are co-emerging into the world of literature – a realm that could offer their relationship a permanent home. This redemptive image of the mates' symbolically joint, aesthetic "co-rebirth" (Ettinger, 2000,158.9) also subtextually recalls the bitter first mourning of Scott, which sent the protagonist vengefully back into heterosexual 'c[o]untry'. Yet in Johnson's acknowledgement here of his enduring feelings for his mate, the br/Otherly resonances of "the sun" are a subtextual affirmation of Scott – now and always the symbolic light of Johnson's life. The earlier unheimlich of the word "co[u]ntry" is able to be understood "correctly" as signifying in this context a m/Other[land] whose originary, active, [pro]creative femininity carries a matrixial heimlich, a *homely strangeness* that is as accessible to males like Johnson and Scott as it is to any female.

Bitter irony remains in the concurrent knowledge that if, at this moment of departure, Johnson's abiding connection with Scott should be disrecognised by the implied reader as sexually unheimlich, this must produce an immediate schizing of compassionate empathy for both the mates and their writer.

14. Taranaki, Ruapehu, Tongariro: Ménage a trois?

THE MYTHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS in *Man Alone* are not restricted to those of Greek mythology. For the novel also appropriates Maori mythology in such a way as to allow the reader to find in Rua's liaison with Johnson at the expense of Stenning subtextual echoes of a famously adulterous Maori relationship conflict.

In this tradition the mythic figure Ruapehu – in defiance of her husband the peak Taranaki – embarks on an illicit sexual liaison with the mountain Tongariro. However the eloquent drama of Mulgan's adaptation of this allegedly ancient Maori myth draws on versions of it likely tailored towards the romantic tastes of European tourists, since Ruapehu does not always appear as female in Maori mythology.

Europeans were rarely present on the climatically inhospitable central plateau of Te Ika a Maui before the late 1920s. But after the completion of the Desert Road and the building of Chateau Tongariro around this time, easy access and comfortable accommodation began to attract visitors there in all seasons. John Mulgan, enjoying in boyhood the adventurous camping, tramping and horse-riding holidays at Mt Ruapehu his mother arranged for her three children, is therefore certain to have become familiar with the story of the region's mountains being embroiled in a competitive drama of unrequited love. The simple "adultery" version of this complex mythic conflict became well known to Pakeha, and by 1966 its heterosexual and monogamous orthodoxies had been reified in *Te Ara - An Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, in an article titled: "Maori Legend

of Mounts Ruapehu and Taranaki (Egmont)" (Foster, 1966).

Thus Mulgan, writing his novel in the absence of any sources in Oxford whose understanding of Maori mythology was greater than his own, could feel assured that the version of the myth he had heard and which so [un]cannily served his aesthetic purposes, was both "authoritative" and readily accessible to his readers.

Mulgan's choice of Rua as the name for his female Maori love interest therefore presumes that the mountain Ruapehu can be read as her symbolic "female" counterpart – a "woman" whose sexual favours are fought over by the "male" mountains Taranaki and Tongariro. In this version of the tale, her spurned and defeated husband, Taranaki, eventually storms across the country to the coast, gouging out the course of the Whanganui River in shame and fury as he goes. A guilt-ridden Ruapehu then rejects her erstwhile lover, Tongariro, who to this day continues to smoulder beside her on the volcanic plateau in unassuaged desire (Foster & Grant-Taylor, 1966).

However in *Man Alone* the protagonist's usurpation of the exclusive marital "rights" of Stenning-Taranaki in relation to Rua[pehu] subtextually avenges the cultural denial of Johnson-Tongariro's wish for a relationship with a fourth party – Scott. Therefore the omission of any reference to that "other" peak, Ngauruhoe – which is conjoined so prominently with Tongariro as you take the Desert Road – is in Mulgan's text a volcanically thunderous silence. The narrative implication is that the "official" ménage a trois of the Maori legend is subtextually in *Man Alon*e a sexual quartet.

Although Mounts Tongariro and Ngauruhoe are about the same size, the remarkable bulk of Ngauruhoe is recognised

vulcanologically as one of Tongariro's secondary cones. Therefore the absence of any mention of Ngauruhoe in the conventional tale of Taranaki and Tongariro's fight over Ruapehu may be read as a startlingly potent metaphor of the cultural blindness towards the existence of the homoerotic, which is in Mulgan's novel subtextually staring the reader in the face. Mulgan's ironic presumption is that the apparent focus on Johnson's disruption of the relationship between Rua[pehu] and Stenning-Taranaki makes the implied reader completely oblivious to Johnson-Tongariro's *smokingly* intimate connection with Ngauruhoe-Scott.

The text's symbolic subtextual recognition of the mates' volcanic connection comes about on the lower slopes of Ruapehu, where Johnson meets two young trampers with whom he shares a ritual meal. The implied reader may see this as a sacrificial "last supper", with the later presumed deaths of these two youths simply underlining the heroism of Johnson's own solitary wilderness travail and his eventual rightful return to the world. But subtextually this meeting may also be read as Johnson's attendance at a kind of subversive wedding breakfast, courtesy of two homoerotically transgressive kindred spirits. In fact the narrative introduction of these two young fellows represents Tongariro's bond with Ngauruhoe as being both inextricable and [geo]logically male.

After their breakfast of bacon and bread is finished the two young students take careful farewell of Johnson and tramp off together into the textual mists, never to be seen again. But their presence obtains deeper narrative significance if they are also considered as having doppelganger resonances from the

matrixial heimlich, of the younger selves of Scotchy Patterson and the author himself, who in the long Auckland University summer vacation of 1930-31, spent several months working and tramping together in Te Wai Pounamu, the South Island. This sojourn was recorded by Mulgan's first biographer, Paul Day, as follows:

> [They] took a succession of seasonal jobs – pea-picking, fruit-picking, tobacco hoeing, and general farm work. Then for the last fortnight they took their bedrolls and tramped from Ngatimoti over the top of Mt Arthur, then in a wide arc across the wild country to Takaka (Day, 1968, 21).

That youthful journey is also referenced in *Man Alone* in the fictionalisation of Johnson's prior South Island experiences with Scott:

> So they went south together through the King country and farther. They crossed over to the South Island, picked fruit and hoed tobacco through the summer, then went on the railway again in from Nelson and lived easy on public works (Mulgan, 40).

This "couples" work and play experience is reintroduced in *Man Alone* at the start of the Rangipo sequence when Johnson meets with the two students, and returned to at the end of the Kaimanawa episode in the form of hermit Crawley's relief that – unlike the prolonged search triggered by the two young men's disappearance – the world's loss of contact with Johnson won't attract any attention at all. In their presumed deaths, the implied reader is offered an elegiac sense of Johnson's own lost youthful innocence.

For the critic Christina Stachurski, the disappearance of these two young men further highlights the exceptionality of the hero's strength: "Johnson's status as an extraordinary individual is magnified by Crawley's report of the deaths of two young trampers on the mountain range, Johnson met these college boys at the beginning of his trek" (Stachurski, 2009, 17).

The novel is thought of here as valorising Johnson's "heroic conquest of the wild bush landscape begin[ning] during his trek through the Rangipo desert on the way to the Kaimanawas" (Stachurski, 2009,13). The latter feat is considered by Stachurski as achieved specifically at the expense of Maori, in that old-timer Crawley "never heard of anyone doing that, not all the time I been here" (Mulgan, 152). Stachurski notes that this does not acknowledge – or is perhaps ignorant of – the fact that "the Kaimanawas had been culturally mediated by Maori for centuries before *Man Alone* was written, being the tribal homeland of Tuwharetoa and Ngati Kahungunu" (Stachurski, 2009,16).

Christina Stachurski finds in this an attempt on Mulgan's part to valorise the exceptionality of Johnson's survival skills in terms of a "Eurocentrism" (Stachurski, 2009, 16) that she recognises is not unusual for the period of the text's composition. But in fact this undoubted Eurocentrism is only attributable to the implied reader, with Crawley's monocultural hubris explicitly called into question by Mulgan in the comedy of the old hermit's utterly misplaced belief in his own renown:

> The old man's name was Bill Crawley. He was surprised that Johnson had not heard of him and refused at first to believe him.

"Everybody knows Bill Crawley, I reckon […] You can't come into this country without hearing of Bill Crawley. […] All the same I should 'a thought you'd 'a heard of old Bill Crawley where you came from. […] I never heard of anyone doing that, not all the time I been here" (Mulgan, 152).

In this the joke is on Crawley, for Maori have "been here" for centuries before him. Narcissistically fixated on his own "ancient" importance in the district, Bill Crawley is blithely oblivious to its genuinely venerable Maori history. His presumption of his own singularity rendered ironic by the reader's knowledge of that other "Bill" the protagonist has so recently settled. But whereas Bill Stenning's Eurocentric arrogance has been remorselessly punished, Crawley's Eurocentrism, because it is accompanied by kindness, invites the reader's compassion as naiveté.

For Stachurski, Eurocentrism is also apparent in Mulgan's failure to acknowledge that the packs of dogs latterly roaming the Rangipo, rather than dying out as a consequence of their failure to adapt to the extremity of the desert conditions (unlike the heroic Johnson), were actually dispatched by "the farmers guns of reality" (Stachurski, 2009,15).

But in fact all of these Eurocentric attitudes, as found in the implied reader, can be supplemented from a quite different matrixial perspective. The extinction of the dogs and the key matrixial subtext that relates to this is discussed in detail in a following section ("The Rangipo dogs"), while the matrixial dimension of the loss of the "young men from college" (Mulgan, 132) is analysed below.

Hermit Crawley gives the protagonist safe refuge in his Kaimanawa Forest home, and when Johnson offers reassurance

that no one will come looking for him Crawley responds in words that Mulgan gives a calculatedly *fairy*-tale register:

> That's good. *Once there was* some trampers lost in here and I had no peace at all for three weeks. They never found them either. Two of them there was. College boys. That's good. We don't need to worry. [my emphasis] (Mulgan, 153)

For the implied reader, the phrase *Once there was* simply relegates the trampers' deaths to the nonspecific historical past, their relevance only to explain Crawley's grammatically untutored happiness that the nosy searchers of yore will not disturb his privacy now. The unpleasantly narcissistic self-absorption of his apparent disregard for the presumed loss of two innocent young lives is made forgivable by the lack of social niceties requisite to the persona of a hermit and by the reader's consciousness of Crawley's prior generosity towards the hero.

However for a reader attuned to the novel's homoerotic subtext, *Once there was* is the cue for the text's transition to *fairy*-tale fantasy. For at a frequency imperceptible to the implied reader, these words relate to hermit Crawley's previous phrase, "That's good", with the implication that since these two young men have not been found, they may actually be thought of as having gained permanent refuge in "the wild" together. In this reading "We don't need to worry" (Mulgan,153) because what will keep "them" safe is the students' togetherness as a couple of young lovers. The assuagement of any need to "worry" about them implicitly revisits the dying Scott's expression of "worry" about Johnson as relayed in Robertson's letter. This explains Johnson's own unquestioning equanimity when he hears of the young couple's [un]fortunate disappearance.

In what is therefore a proxy resolution of Scott's anxiety for Johnson, the two "missing" young college men may now be imagined as being like Tongariro and Ngauruhoe – tucked up comfortably together somewhere on the volcanic plateau – or even freely roaming the world together in the mutuality of their mateship.

This magic-real narrative trope, attributable to the mysterious prescience supposedly found in a hermit, foreshadows the novel's ultimate refusal to establish narrative closure. For in the end, whether or not the protagonist escapes from the fighting in Spain is left unknown, with the "*fairy*-tale" effect that, as Christina Stachurski notes, 'In the reader's mind Johnson is finally with his mates in perpetuity' (Stachurski, 2009, 29). Mulgan's subtextual implication is that the two "lost" young college men will also be found in this narrative company – à deux.

Those receptive to such a "dog-whistle" may recall the care with which Mulgan records the student couple's thorough knowledge of the mountain terrain and their preparedness for tackling it (Mulgan, 32-33). This can be compared with the logistical improbability Patrick Evans has noted concerning Johnson's own solo crossing of the Rangipo (Stachurski, 2009, 17). The joint expertise of the two young men thus gains retrospective symbolic significance. Their companionability also highlights the unutterable loneliness Johnson must endure in this setting as a consequence of his separation from Scott.

When Johnson first encounters the young men Mulgan describes his hero as being "embarrassed" to be met by them at the hut door. However disconcertion at finding "others" present

in his place of refuge cannot explain the particularity with which Mulgan records the hero's emotion here, since Johnson was already alert to the hut's occupancy and "not really troubled" to see "smoke coming from the flat chimney" (Mulgan, severally 132). In fact this "smoke" reveals symbolically that the hut's inhabitants share the protagonist's homoerotic sensibilities and thus he has nothing to fear from them. This accounts for the improbability of Johnson's venturing without qualms into the company of these "unknown others" after his previous exacting attempt to avoid notice in his night-time flight from Stenning's shooting: "He went through the darkened streets of the little dairy town […] riding quietly here so that afterwards men would not trace his movements nor remember the time at which he passed too easily" (Mulgan,131).

The narrative rationale for the protagonist's seemingly random encounter with the two students is thus its subtextual significance. Johnson's embarrassment at confronting this young couple actually reveals his sensitivity as to what he may be interrupting. The respect he accords the students' privacy by making his arrival noisily known to them is an indirect condemnation of the insufferable intrusion to which Stenning subjected him, by storming unannounced into the whare when trying to catch him out with Rua. By contrast, Johnson "rode Jonquil up to the door of the hut and throwing his bag to the ground, jumped down. The two young men that heard him and came to the door embarrassed Johnson" (Mulgan, 132). In this Mulgan rebukes those authorities culpable for making egregious intrusions into the private affairs of those they suspect of engaging in criminalised sexual behaviours.

Through Johnson's embarrassment the reader is also given to understand how far the hero has fallen, due to his sexual manipulation of Rua and Stenning, from the honourable jouissance of his bond with his mate.

The "compassionate hospitality" the two young men extend to Johnson forms yet another of the text's tacit rebukes to its own narrative abandonment of the hero's relationship with Scotty.

15. *"It was a legend-haunted country"*

MULGAN REFERS in *Man Alone* to a mysterious group of ancient people who once took futile refuge in the Rangipo:

> It was a legend-haunted country. Dreaded by the Maoris. He could remember them telling him how long ago the first natives of the country had been driven *down here* by invaders to die and after that there were stories of Maori tribes caught by snow and starved to death in these same deserts [my emphasis] (Mulgan,135-6).

For the implied reader this passage is simply a compressed version of the myth that Aotearoa New Zealand's original, allegedly non-Polynesian inhabitants, the Moriori, were driven to extinction by a wave of fiercely colonising Maori, suggesting that the latter's own decline, in competition with the even later arriving but "superior" Europeans, was therefore a "natural" progression reflecting evolutionary "survival of the fittest". Contemporary research has now entirely discredited this pseudo

"scientific" purportedly historic premise (King, 2000, 60-61). However amongst the Pakeha of Mulgan's era it was a widely accepted founding myth and one that I, born in 1954, also heard in my childhood from members of my family. It lingers in certain quarters even today.

Thus when Johnson's assertion that "the first natives of the country" (Mulgan, 136) were *not* Maori is attributed by him to information learned from the tangata whenua, this lends an air of impartiality to the implied reader's pre-exisiting assumption that the colonising Europeans' are eugenically justified in appropriating Maori land. Furthermore Johnson's successful navigation of the Rangipo wilderness does indeed imply, as Christina Stachurski notes, his superiority over everybody else who has ever tried and failed to survive in this inhospitable place (Stachurski, 2009, 16). That the "first natives" of the Rangipo (whoever they were) are all now extinct there, as Maori also are, is thus a seeming endorsement of the European hero's exceptional intellectual and physical capacities, and symbolically validates for the implied reader, Pakeha dominance over the indigenous.

Those attuned to the homoerotic subtext of *Man Alone* can also see in this passage Mulgan reproducing another European myth of pre-Maori human occupancy of Aotearoa New Zealand – that of an ancient Greek presence – but with very different intentions:

> Unlike Cook, the European commentators who followed were often influenced by a popular preoccupation of the time – their own historical links to ancient Greece. In New Zealand, the French explorer Dumont d'Urville, in "spontaneous comparison",

> saw Greek towns and landscapes and characters, including a seaborne war party that resembled the "victors of Troy". Placing the origins of Maori and Pacific people in Europe or western Asia was an intellectual tradition that lasted well into the 20th century. Polynesians were often regarded as living archives who might reveal clues about ancient European peoples. Some commentators saw their travels as a voyage back in time, to witness ancient versions of themselves (Howe, 2009).

Of course the German Fascists of Mulgan's era, in their utopian doctrine of Aryan racial supremacy, invoked a chillingly similar myth of their own Grecian origins: "Tapping into a long tradition of German culture […] the Nazis expressed and spread the belief that the Greek Ur-population had settled down in Greece following a migration of Aryan and Indo-Germanic clans from the north" (Fischer-Lichte, 2010b, 339).

But in *Man Alone* Mulgan subtextually rebuts this Fascist assertion of the racially "pure" Germanic-Aryan origins of classical Greek culture by ironically intimating that it was actually barbarous Germanic influences that were responsible for the ancient repression of the homoerotic sensibility. The corrupt racist and sexist inhumanity of contemporary Nazism is provocatively implied in *Man Alone* as being the legacy of an ancient and philistine Germanic persecution of the Greeks.

Mulgan's strategic deployment of his myth of an ancient Greek presence in Aotearoa therefore serves as a counter-narrative to the populist claims of German Fascists, by intimating that long ago a group of non-Polynesian people, fugitives from an archaic form of European sexual fascism, fled to Aotearoa. But Mulgan is careful in this not to suggest any

usurpation of tangata whenua sovereignty. For in his subtly worded account "the first natives of the country" – inferentially those mythical figures whom transiting European seafarers like d'Urville fantasised as emanating from ancient Greece – were "driven down here" (by implication from the northern down to the southern hemisphere) by a group of following "invaders", also from the northern hemisphere. These pursuers, albeit of unspecified origin, were for Mulgan the world's originary sexual Fascists. After exterminating the (Greek) "first natives" who had fled before them to these distant isles, the "invaders" then returned to their former home *up there* in Europe, leaving Aotearoa uninhabited until the later arrival of groups of Polynesian origin – Moriori & Maori, who became the first nation peoples of Aotearoa.

In this passage Mulgan uses the phrase "after that" to convey the idea that the "extinction" of some Maori "tribes caught by snow and starved to death" in the Rangipo was a much later and solely weather-related event.

Moreover, by asserting here that it is the tangata whenua who are the source of Johnson's awareness of the spiritual pedigree of the "legend-haunted" Rangipo – because "he could remember them telling him" – Mulgan also signals Maori as having a paranormal retrospective prescience towards ancient places and events at which they were not present and in which they played no part.

The fact that the "waste" land of the Rangipo is now "dreaded by Maori" but not by Johnson means the implied reader can ascribe his willingness to venture there as an exemplar of rational European thought overcoming irrational

Maori fears – yet another form of racial conquest. But what Mulgan is actually ironically suggesting is that even though Maori had nothing to do with the now repressed trauma of European persecution of the homoerotic, they are nonetheless able on account of their psychic gifts to register its horrific effects – memories to which Pakeha themselves remain numbly oblivious.

Any presumption of Maori somehow misunderstanding the significance of the mythic homoerotic while Johnson recognises its value is patronising. But in fact Mulgan is being careful here to expose the dread of sexual "otherness" as a *European* "superstition". Maori depicted in this as the neutral vector of an introduced trauma, with the sovereign and separate historic and mythic lines of tangata whenua whakapapa in Aotearoa only incidentally implicated, much later, in this "alien" sexual anxiety.

The indigenous are therefore implied to be only sub-subconsciously aware of the unassuaged suffering of their European "unknown others". This is a literary exemplar of the phenomenon Ettinger refers to as "transcryption". She characterises this as the transmissive, intergenerational sequestration of the profound trauma of another in a psychic "crypt", though the subject harbouring this trauma remains unaware of it. So that even though the suffering of my "other" is present in my unconscious and causes me intermittent and inexplicable distress, I do not know why I am subject to these affects. Ettinger considers that it is the role of the artist to alleviate such transmissive suffering by bringing this hidden material to light:

> I need to recognise something for my non-I's, something that has never been cognised by them, nor yet by myself. I need to remember what I have never forgotten, and to find inside me traces of memory that I have never carried and have never lost (Ettinger, 2006, 164.5).

In *Man Alone* John Mulgan, as artist, therefore names Europeans' attempted extermination of their homoerotic sensibility as a concealed trauma. The unknowing, perhaps epigenetic, and even telepathic, intergenerational cross-cultural transmission of this trauma to Maori is then rationalised in the novel's intermittent introduction of a number of "half-caste" characters, with Rua the most prominent of these. At the magic-real level of the narrative, an assumed Maori sub-subconscious psychic sensitivity to a horrific ancient European trauma is then narratively borderlinked with the protagonist's own innate homoerotically alert consciousness of these ancient acts of sexual oppression. Mulgan's implication here is that the affects and effects from the ancient persecution of "his people", and the traumatic repression of any memories of this, are still being inflicted – not just on those with homoerotic sensibilities, like Johnson and Scott, but also onto all the inhabitants of Aotearoa New Zealand (men, women and children) and beyond.

In matrixial terms, the carapace beneath which this transmissive trauma is sequestered from cultural consciousness represents a psychic "crypt", which is then "transsubjectively" (Ettinger, 2005, 703) cracked open in the Graeco-Maori-identified, Rangipo-Onetapu-Kaimanawa sequence of the novel.

Johnson's homoerotic sensibility is thus able to achieve, via a borderlink with the *matrixial heimlich* of the indigenous "other", an unexpected metaphysical connection with

humankind's originary, creative, homoerotic potential – and its traumatic persecution. This re-connection takes place in the ostensibly marginal geophysical setting of Onetapu, which is then revealed as not in fact "away from it all" (Mulgan, 83) but paradoxically as "at the heart of it all" (Mulgan, 136).

That the Rangipo setting offers a matrixial-feminine connection to long-buried memories is a realisation to which the novel's implied reader is, of course, impervious. And currently, despite the numerous literary appreciations and fictional homages to the novel that have been published in Aotearoa New Zealand over the past eighty years, the novel's deep engagement with the traumatic repression of the homoerotic sensibility remains culturally unacknowledged. However at the same time repeated journalistic and critical musings alluding to John Mulgan's suicide as an unsolved mystery point to an unconscious recognition of the novel's subtextual transgressivity, which any reader has remained free to unpack.

16. The Rangipo dogs

THE READER is told that long ago a group of mysterious figures were driven by "unknown others" to take vain refuge in the inhospitable "legend-haunted" Rangipo. They were then superseded there by intermittently transiting Maori tribes – some of these also extinguished – until eventually the place's only permanent residents were packs of savage dogs. These were its last living animal inhabitants before they too died out

(Mulgan,135-6). Mulgan thus portrays the decline of this locale's life force in terms of a degenerative descent from the mythic, to the mortal, and thence to a savagely canine animality, which finally gives way to a vegetal level of bare subsistence. However the pejorative terms in which Mulgan presents the depths of the Rangipo's failure as a life-sustaining habitat are then placed symbolically in reverse with his description of his hero's own adaptation to it as "dogged".

> And there had been times when the desert had held packs of savage and wandering dogs until they, too, died away in that lifeless area, and it was left as barren and desolate as ever. As he went blindly forward, going doggedly, his head down, barely seeing the ground beneath his feet, he came at length to what he knew must be the heart of it all. Onetapu, the place of the shivering sands (Mulgan,136).

Here the initially negative impression of "packs of savage and wandering dogs" is rehabilitated in specifically canine terms by the nobleness of Johnson's "going doggedly" forward. His behaviour is suggested to be worthy of affirmation, for he is making purposeful progress. Indeed Johnson is depicted as having it in his nature to reverse the trend towards extinction in this mysterious place, via the divining strength of his own "savage animal" qualites. His steadfast efforts also tacitly subvert the European myths that patronisingly valorise Maori as "noble savages" for the dignity with which they purportedly accept their "inevitable" racial extinction. For here the mythic "noble savagery" of Maori is implicitly borderlinked by Mulgan with the currently despised but now equally reinvigorated "noble

savagery" of the mytho-homoerotic sensibility. Both are treated as being "at the heart of it all" ready to make a comeback.

For the implied reader Johnson, in proceeding "doggedly" across the Rangipo, is simply a "man alone", a sole survivor. But as the Rangipo's newest and only "native", he is not the kind of "noble savage" over whose imminent extinction a coloniser may weep crocodile tears. In matrixial terms he is not alone. Rather he may be seen subtextually here as "doggedly" rechannelling the ancient classical culture of the homoerotic in himself into a matrixial time and place. This borderlinks him with the indigenous fortitude that the reader will eventually find has secured the future of "an/Other" individual facing hostile hegemonic sexual controls in *Man Alone* – the ambiguously "noble savage-animal" Rua with whom Johnson is thus here a partner-in-difference (Ettinger, 2006, 64.5).

This matrixial link is activated because Sayers' disparaging, canine-animality introduction of Rua was expressed in terms of an ethnic binary: "He's got a half-caste wife […] She's a bitch, that's all" (Mulgan, 76). This callously misogynist characterisation is an estimation of Rua that for the implied reader is wholly unremarkable. And it's one that Sayers then viciously repeats: 'If that little bitch of a wife of his is talking, it'll get back to Stenning and he won't like it" (Mulgan, 112). Thus as Johnson "doggedly" crosses the Rangipo his own unthinkable "canine" attributes are ironically borderlinked with the very "canine" qualities used to objectify "half-caste" Rua and her femininity as sub-humanly "animal". But in the Rangipo all such pejorative attributions are revealed as a disrecognition as unheimlich – of qualities that in fact are not repugnant or horrifying at all.

The borderlink here between Johnson and Rua is thus an exemplar of what Ettinger calls "relations without relating" (Ettinger, 2006, 71.2). At the same time the unspoken presence of Rua[pehu] beside Johnson on his passage to Onetapu sees this mountain and its sexual mythos functioning symbolically in matrixial terms as his "co-emerging Other…both subject and object, not as Object or other only"(Ettinger, 2006, 71.2).

Johnson's symbolic gestation and rebirth in the Rangipo-Onetapu-Kaimanawa sequence of the novel is also marked by his unspoken "jointness in differentiation" with the mountain Ngauruhoe. For in the same way that the protagonist as sexual half-caste is "doggedly" borderlinked – but in no way merged – with Rua[pehu] as racial half-caste "bitch", he also, as symbolically Tongariro-Johnson, simultaneously maintains his transgressive but unmerged borderlink with Ngauruhoe-Scott.

Of course for the implied reader the Rangipo-Onetapu-Kaimanawa sequence of the novel simply serves as the remote setting for the execution of Johnson's plan to outwit the authorities' anticipated desire that he take the rap for Stenning's death.

However Johnson's time in the wilderness is also designed to symbolically reinstate his homoerotic identity alongside the *assumed* heterosexuality implied by his relationship with Rua. This restores to him the homosocial identity (at the very least) that is his only culturally permissible expression of his sexual preference. In this, the physical deprivations of Johnson's wilderness sojourn are indexed to the psychic trauma he endures as a result of his inability to ever identify publicly with a self-chosen homoerotic sexual identity, such as the one Rua claims on ethnic terms by "going home".

But Mulgan, in ascribing "half-caste" racial status to Rua – and implicitly to Johnson also, albeit in sexual terms – is careful to give no prescriptive definition of what it means to express either a "heterosexual" or a "homoerotic" sensibility, or to "be Maori" or "be European". This gives the novel a credible defence against the charge of essentialism.

Of course the singular sexual identity Johnson might well enjoy is one that the implied reader would receive in such hostile terms that only covert textual strategies are used to identify it. For if in the reader's eyes Johnson does somehow achieve an unequivocal identity as "homosexual" – or if Rua acquires an unequivocal identity as "Maori" – this will guarantee the patriarchal subordination of these two characters in terms of the phallocentric binary whose privileged term, in the dominant culture, is European-heterosexual. By establishing Rua and Johnson as "half-caste" Mulgan destabilises the reader's capacity to racially and sexually objectify either of them as wholly "known" or wholly "other".

Thus their potential objectification in the eyes of the implied reader is subtextually supplemented with a recognition that beyond the binary one/other used in phallocentric discourse to establish their patriarchal identities, Johnson and Rua can also be borderlinked with each other, via the reader, in terms of the differentiation in jointness of their ever yet-to-be-defined partial, matrixial subjectivities.

17. Rua's party

IN THE WORK SETTINGS in which Johnson joins Stenning, his boss's industriousness is affectionately valorised (Mulgan, 88-89). But the revelation of Stenning's family background – 'Father was a cabinet-maker. He was a German'(Mulgan, 86) – also renders the two men's friendly working alliance ambiguous, since in the last war (and implicitly in the one coming) Johnson's (and the implied reader's) "enemies" were German. Mulgan's point here is that in some way all of us are "half-caste" – even Stenning – since we each have two parents. So if asked to "choose sides", it is not our blood connections or inherited social, sexual, religious and cultural commonalities that should ultimately determine our allies, but rather "the unknown other's" actions.

This speaks directly to Mulgan's conspicuous refusal to "sing along" in *Man Alone* with the essentialist eugenic stance towards racial "otherness" that Radclyffe Hall advocates in the party-music scene she stages in *The Well of Loneliness*. Hall is Mulgan's "natural" ally in terms of their texts' joint acceptance of a homoerotic sensibility, and for both of them such allies are few and far between, but in his party scenes Mulgan offers a perspective that pointedly diverges from Hall's racism towards the African American br/Others who perform at the New Year celebration in her novel. Instead Mulgan rotates her use of the mastering gaze of the dominant culture, to offer in *Man Alone* an impression of the "otherness" of "Rua's people" – not only in terms of the racial and sexual objectification of them that features in the implied reader's appraisal of this celebration,

but as subjects also. Thus the sophistication of Radclyffe Hall's New Year's Eve, rive gauche studio soiree for the avant-garde of the Paris demi monde is called audaciously into question by Mulgan's staging of a rustic woolshed gathering in backblocks Aotearoa.

Of course for the implied reader Rua's party is simply the colourful "cultural" scenery against which a coloniser can frame the colonised at an "affectionate" distance. But the phoniness of this ostensible detachment is illustrated by the fact that for Stenning the most reassuring and delightful feature of the entire occasion comes at the end when, in a kind of wishful ethnic "cleansing", he happily watches Rua's "friends and family" (Mulgan, 93) pack up and leave. Stenning's callous and self-entitled attribution of demeaning racial stereotypes to these "others" who have come, unpaid, to help him bring in his hay makes him equally contemptuous of the hard work they additionally undertake in staying on to organise the holiday celebration.

But rather than representing Maori as the debilitated supplicants they are for Stenning, these party scenes show them as extending their "compassionate hospitality" to both Stenning and Johnson – and ultimately the reader. However at what is in calendar terms a Christmas festivity (Mulgan, 96) the generous social inclusivity of Mulgan's Maori characters' collectivist practices is celebrated with a pointed secularism, which implicitly rebukes the institutional bigotries of colonising Christianity. And his protagonist does not presume to know the significance of this festive occasion for the tangata whenua, religious or otherwise.

But whatever it means to them, Rua's family and friends' recreational occupancy of the Stenning farm represents a coordinated feat of economic and logistical expertise. In this Mulgan affirms first the efforts of the children and women who set up camp on the riverside, where they cater an inter-tribally resourced feast of "fowls, hot hams and sweet potatoes sent down from the north" (Mulgan, 96). Then follows the theatrical conversion of the woolshed and hay bales into a dance venue with staged musical accompaniment, not to mention the circumvention of Pakeha authority implied by the generous provision of alcoholic refreshments in a "dry" area where drinking is officially prohibited.

The ease with which Rua's family redeploy the amenities of the farm to these recreational pursuits implies, yet again, that this is a wrongfully confiscated part of their own papakainga. In this Mulgan signals the unreliability of Stenning's estimation of Rua's relations as "damn poor farmers". His sour misunderstanding of the resilience and adaptability of Rua's family – "The only thing they can grow's potatoes" (Mulgan, severally, 94) – reveals him as oblivious to the fact that Rua's "people" are simply approaching life from a different perspective to his, but one that is no less economically sustainable or morally worthy. Here Mulgan registers that whoever might lay claim to the farmland – today Stenning, tomorrow Johnson or the bank – it is "half caste" Rua's allusively undefined "family and friends" who belong *to it*.

The utter assurance with which these exiles take up temporary festive occupancy of their alienated property also constitutes Mulgan's rebuke to the anguished ambivalence with

which in *The Well of Loneliness* Radclyffe Hall's exiled heroine Stephen moves with her lover, Mary, among the "queer" folk of the Paris demi monde. For Stephen and Mary, their Parisienne social circle can only ever be agonisingly second best since, to their everlasting chagrin, their low status as sexual "inverts" means that they have been denied social acceptance in their own aristocratic English social caste. By contrast, Rua's culturally diverse friends and relations – which at this time includes Johnson – know their own worth, even though others may deny or expropriate it.

Just as with Rua's party, there is at the Paris party a notable cross-cultural element. Stephen and Mary's hostess is a music student who has engaged Lincoln and Henry Jones – African-American brothers enrolled with her at the Paris Conservatoire – to perform "spirituals". As the brothers' act unfolds Radclyffe Hall itemises the feelings of each sexually "othered" woman or man in the audience. She suggests their own experience of sexual discrimination has created an empathic link with the Jones brothers' traumatic experience of racial discrimination as revealed in the performers' passionate singing (Hall, 2008, 408-410).

But Hall's description of the brothers positions her heroine's attitude towards them at the empty end of the empathy spectrum. Stephen sees in Lincoln and Henry a residual "animality" which she believes reveals that "their people" do not measure up to her self-estimation of the highly evolved human superiority of Europeans:

> Lincoln, the elder, was paler in colour. He was short and inclined to be thick-set with a heavy but intellectual face – a strong face,

> much lined for a man of thirty. His eyes had the patient, questioning expression common to the eyes of most animals and to those of all slowly evolving races. He shook hands very quietly with Stephen and Mary. Henry was tall and black as coal; a fine upstanding, but coarse lipped young negro with a roving glance and a self assured manner.
>
> He remarked: ‘Glad to meet you, Miss Gordon - Miss Llewellyn,’ and plumped himself down at Mary’s side, where he started to make conversation, too glibly (Hall, 2008, 408).

In this itemising appraisal of the Jones’ racial “pedigree”, their appearance and behaviour invite direct parallels with Hall’s enumeration, elsewhere in her novel, of the variously unruly and lovable characteristics of her heroine’s two companion animals. Stephen’s horse, Raftery, and her dog, David, voice their feelings for their mistress in touchingly direct speech. And in fulfilment of the title *The Well of Loneliness*, it is they who remain with her at the end of the novel, in both memory and reality, her only true and loyal companions.

Hall’s anthropomorphic attribution of engaging “human” qualities to her heroine’s horse and dog can also be read as subtextually finessing her protagonist’s racial objectification of the two “coloured” singers, whom Stephen ranks beneath herself and not necessarily above her pets. Hall is implying, with jaw-dropping condescension, that Stephen’s “impartial” judgment of Lincoln and Henry Jones as her racial inferiors could not be considered prejudiced since some of her heroine’s “best friends” are animals! Yet for a resistant reader her portrayal of the Jones’ naïve obliviousness to Stephen’s demeaning estimation of them also endows the brothers with a subversive energy in this scene, which challenges Hall’s racist

presumption. Mulgan is alert to this, so in *Man Alone* the refusal of the "animal other" to recognise their inferior "place" is registered by the writer as a mark of strength rather than weakness. This point is discussed later, in the section "*Ce chien est à moi*".

The first names Hall has chosen for the Jones brothers are her attempt to classify them in narrowly racial terms before they can be appreciated as artists or anything else. Thus (white abolitionist Abraham) "Lincoln" and "black as coal" (working-class up-start miner John) "Henry" are treated as the respectively "good" and "bad" exemplars of a particular racial "breed". The revelation of these men's "natural" inferiority allows Hall to comparatively valorise the insights and abilities of sexual "inverts" like her heroine Stephen as being superior.

But in *Man Alone* the names and descriptions that Mulgan gives to his dog and horse characters – as discussed in detail in following sections – will offer pointed matrixial resistance to Hall's essentialist hierarchy of racial-animal determinism.

Hall further implies the Jones brothers' subhuman animality in the "intemperate" character of their musical performance:

> Once started they seemed unable to stop; carried away they were by their music, drunk with that desperate hope of the hopeless – far drunker than Henry would get on neat whysky (Hall, 2008, 410).

This represents the brothers' singing as a state of involuntary emotional arousal and as such becomes a revelation not of artistry, but of "animal" racial inferiority. Yet Hall's objectifying

description of the brothers' African-American music meets with self-fragilising matrixial resistance from Mulgan. For in *Man Alone*, in an implicit response to Hall, Mulgan pointedly describes the "unknown otherness" of Maori music as simply outside European Johnson's knowledge and experience:

> Then they sang songs which were their own and which Johnson had never heard before, with Maori words and Maori rhythms, [to which] he listened half drowsily until, growing sick with the beer he had drunk, he went out and walked up and down in the cool air away from them (Mulgan, 98).

This appraisal suspends judgment, neither wholly objectifying Maori music nor attempting in its unknown otherness for Johnson, its aesthetic assimilation. And any intoxication with which it is accompanied is attributed more to the protagonist than anyone else.

At Rua's party all the guests have been drinking – in the case of one "boy" to a level of belligerence, which the big Maori concertina player with the inexplicably Irish nickname "Tom Heeney" (Mulgan,96) manages with tolerantly defusing comedy. Mulgan then specifies that Tom Heeney is not the musician's real name, thereby establishing him for the reader as an "unknown other", an object who is nonetheless a subject also. These nuances subvert the demeaning generic racial stereotypes of "drunken Maori" (or "drunken Irish") held by the implied reader as justification for this being kept a "dry" area. And since at Rua's party the only other person Johnson singles out as imbibing beyond socially acceptable limits is himself, this is also Mulgan's even-handed acknowledgment that alcohol can

be as much of a problem for tau iwi as for tangata whenua, and for "heroes" as much as for "villains" – or anybody else. This therefore stands as an implicit rejection of the self-justifying racial essentialism offered the reader at the climax of Hall's party scene in Henry Jones' episode of "drunken" singing.

In Hall's treatment of African-American music the trope of intoxication sees Lincoln Jones publicly distance himself, in embarrassment, from the canine animality he attributes to his brother's performance as it degenerates into incoherent howling: "'Shut your noise, you poor mutt!' commanded his brother, but Henry still continued to bawl" (Hall, 2008, 412). Lincoln's self-conscious attribution of mongrel status to Henry – as a poor, bawling "mutt" – carries the racially demeaning implication that he considers himself to have achieved a higher level of "domestication" than his still "wild-animal" sibling.

Lincoln's self-abnegating "insight" represents the final scission of the performing ("animal") Jones men from their audience, and serves as Hall's subtextual means of assuring the reader that her novel's advocacy of the full humanity of sexual 'inverts' poses no challenge to the then fashionable polemics of Aryan supremacy. For this was a time when Fascists everywhere were aggressively proselytising the pseudoscience of racial hierarchy.

But there can also be compassion, in matrixial terms, for Hall's self-deluded entrancement with such ideas. They beguiled many inflated or fragile egos – not least prominent members of the very English aristocracy from whose privileges Hall's heroine so mourns her exclusion. For example, in a seventeen-second film clip recently leaked, the six-year-old

Princess Elizabeth is captured at a family occasion, in a scene orchestrated by her uncle Edward VIII, offering a childish "sieg heil" salute to the camera in emulation of her mother – both of them destined to be Queens of England. This recording was kept in the family archives, with the likely intent of charming Hitler in the event of a Nazi victory by affirming the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (aka "Windsor") family's "Aryan" connections. A perceived "necessity" likely prompted in part by the cruel fate of their royal relatives, the Romanovs, at the time of the Russian revolution.

Radclyffe Hall's own acts of equally self-entitled naiveté towards theoretical Fascism (in the decade before the war she once ordered herself a tailored Black-shirt and boots ensemble) would be rendered equivalently hollow by the colour-coded insignia the Nazis imposed on all those they singled out for extermination – whether on the grounds of disability, race, religion, politics or sexuality. If England had been invaded Hall's public profile as a lesbian (she died in 1943) would have seen her and her partner Una Troubridge made to wear, for however long they lasted, the pink triangles used to humiliate "degenerate homosexuals".

But Mulgan, publishing *Man Alone* on the brink of World War Two, adamantly does not accede to an accommodation with Fascism. His hero's observations and experiences at Rua's party forcefully rebut Hall's implicit argument that fighting homophobic sexual prejudice is incomparably more important than highlighting racial prejudice, which is anyway for her "scientifically" justifiable. In contrast Mulgan's novel, while acknowledging both sexual and racial oppression, refuses to

rank these hierarchically. Instead, his party festivities subtly establish Johnson's sense of "otherness" in this social setting as multifaceted and "intersectional".

However in the eyes of the implied reader Johnson's social withdrawal arises from his disconcertion, as a supposedly superior European, at finding himself among a vibrant, fully self-actualised Maori majority. Ironically, this is the very group the implied reader is predisposed to look down on as a debilitated and inevitably dwindling racial minority. But Johnson's eventual self-exclusion from this vivid social scene actually implies not only his "outsider" status as a European, but also, subtextually, his feelings of alienation in terms of his homoerotic sensibility. For although the reader is made very aware that interracial partnering comes as a matter of course at this gathering, Johnson is still prevented by continuing sexual discrimination from having the (male) partner of *his* choice either at this dance or in the dance of life.

At the same time, among a group of over thirty of her extended family and friends, Johnson notices Rua's "slight and pretty sister" dancing with "a white boy whom he had never seen" (Mulgan, 97). That he notes this partnership twits the racial and heterosexual presumption of Stenning's earlier suggestion that, in a sweetener for their land deal, Rua's sister is *also* Johnson's for the taking. Here, clearly, she has her own ideas. And in any case, teasingly, it is arguably her male partner who principally attracts Johnson's eye.

In addition Mulgan's explicitly cross-cultural description of Rua and her sister's dance partners as respectively a "young Maori boy" and a "white boy" is slyly directed at the implied

reader in a "see-how-you-like-it" usage calculated to deprive the word "boy" of its infantilising sting of European racial superiority. There then follows the comedic realisation, brought home to the reader by repetition – but poignantly not made accessible to the protagonist – that in comparison with a *"boy"* of whatever "colour", to Rua and her sister Johnson is simply old!

As the night goes on Rua exercises her own sexual and racial agency by casually leaving "the young Maori boy" (Mulgan, 98) she has previously favoured, and with whom she will later resume dancing, to enlist (like her younger sister) a *European* male partner – the much older Johnson – to take the floor with her.

This scene implicitly revisits the protagonist's earlier appraisal of Rua (on supposedly Maori terms) in "colour-coded" relation to Stenning. The latter's self-exclusion from Rua's party thus speaks here not only to the bankruptcy of his relationship with his wife, but also to the fragility of his identity among her people. And this is contrary to Johnson's earlier estimation, for the implied reader, of Stenning's ostensible racial superiority:

> She had married a white man with a farm, and not a poor white either, who would one day come back and live in the pa with them, but a real white who worked and kept himself (Mulgan, 95).

But the "Aryan" racial hubris of this passage, so flattering to the implied reader's prejudices, comes haunted with an intimation of Stenning and Rua's likely fate if (when) the bank forecloses on what Stenning regards as solely his property. Then his status as "a real white" will be fatally compromised, just as it has been

twice before. First when living down in Nelson, he found that he "couldn't grow fruit trees". Later his bankruptcy at a second property "near here" was a business failure that meant "they sold me out of a farm after the war" (Mulgan, severally, 84). Thus the authenticity of Stenning's "whiteness" must be judged ironically, as more apparent than "real".

In attributing Stenning's high status of "real white" as indexed – by Rua's "people" – to his economic solvency, Mulgan makes it subtextually clear that the hollowness of European claims to racial superiority have not escaped Maori notice. Therefore the qualification in Johnson's observation of Rua's family, that "They *probably* despised [Stenning] for marrying her" [my emphasis](Mulgan, 95), is less a consensus among Rua's friends and family regarding her alleged deficiencies and more an ironic revelation of Johnson's, Stenning's and the implied reader's sense of racial and sexual entitlement.

Yet even if Stenning and Rua do lose the land, as seems inevitable, her "people" would not abandon them. For unlike Johnson's kin – who ultimately sever all ties with him – Rua's family would accept her and even, in compassion, the now "*poor* white" [my emphasis] Stenning "to live in the pa with them" (Mulgan, severally, 95).

The social inclusiveness and conspicuous generosity of the Maori-identified celebration that is Rua's party therefore serves as an ironic counterpoint to the narrow-minded contempt of Rua's husband for the fact that her family is paying for this occasion on credit. In his racist disdain for Rua's people, Stenning thus remains ironically oblivious to the fact that "his" whole farm is equally "on account" (Mulgan, 99) with the bank.

At a time of crushing economic depression and desperately low public morale, and in defiance of the pernicious impoverishment capitalist colonisation had anyway imposed on tangata whenua, Mulgan makes Rua's party a Maori-led exercise in sheer *jouissance*. Thus illustrating with searing irony, a key meaning of this term – namely: *the pleasure we take in things we do not own*.

18. *"Ce chien est à moi"*

RUA'S FLIGHT from the scene of Stenning's shooting sees her claim her freedom from the sexual and economic bondage of her marriage. In this, *Man Alone* offers implicit resistance to any form of enslavement, including that historically featured in classical Greek society that is otherwise idealised by Mulgan for its acceptance of the homoerotic sensibility.

Here an insight from Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* can be read as of specific significance for *Man Alone*. In her novel-essay Woolf highlights the sexual oppression endured by the real women of ancient Greece as a "strange and almost inexplicable fact" (Woolf, 1977, [footnote] 43), when contrasted with the formidable women characters – like Antigone – created by male Greek playwrights in their classical tragedies. This is a paradox Mulgan registers in his own creation of Rua, whose cultural abjection in the eyes of the implied reader subtextually segues into the series of bravely autonomous acts she takes in defiance of first her husband and then her lover.

Woolf, during her discussion of sexual inequality in the patriarchal marriage laws of the western tradition, specifically highlights the connection between sexual and racial oppression. Critic Jane Marcus has noted Woolf's appropriation of the authority of the respected historian George Trevelyan to enforce the comparison in *A Room of One's Own* of the treatment of Englishwomen to slaves: "The misquoted repetition of George Trevelyan's phrase 'locked-up, beaten and flung about the room' from his now classic *History of England* was a brilliant rhetorical strategy" (Marcus, 1996, 6). And it was one to which Mulgan is also profoundly alert. Thus by liberating "half-caste" Rua from sexual and economic bondage in *Man Alone*, Mulgan implicitly acknowledges the fact that enslavement – not least of women – was practised not only by latter-day European societies, but also by the classical societies of both the Greeks and the Maori. Therefore, adjunct to the myths that Mulgan celebrates and in matrixial terms appropriates from these cultures, he can be read as simultaneously repudiating their slave-owning practices. Specifically, he endows Rua with Stenning's savings: "Bill left a little money. He was insured too. They sold up the farm." (Mulgan, 170), which is a tacit nod to the assertion in *A Room of One's Own* that a woman's fulfilment of her creative potential depends on her freedom from financial dependence on or exploitation by a man.

In Johnson's final Waikato encounter with the now financially secure Rua she is therefore calmly able, at his insistence, to pay for their meal: "She put a half crown on the table without a word" (Mulgan, 171). And in this she is the beneficiary of Woolf's own act of teashop agency when in *A*

Room of One's Own her narrator is delivered from previous economic penury by a legacy from an aunt, so that as she receives her change from a waitress she notes the effect of economic security on someone who has previously had to work: "like a slave [...] Indeed, I thought, slipping the silver into my purse, it is remarkable to remember the bitterness of those days, what a change of temper a fixed income will bring about" (Woolf, 1977, 38).

Mulgan can therefore be seen in his text, to equally condemn the oppressive acts of sexism and racism for which in *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf sardonically indicts her fellow men, due to their desire to "own" women, racial "others" and their lands:

> [It's something that] Alf, Bert or Chas must do in obedience to their instinct, which murmurs if it sees a fine woman go by, or even a dog, Ce chien est à moi. And, of course, it may not be a dog, it may be a piece of land or a man with curly black hair. It is one of the advantages of being a woman that one can pass even a very fine negress without wanting to make an Englishwoman of her (Woolf, 1977, 49-50).

Mulgan's response to Woolf's "Ce chien est à moi" accusation is implicitly *je suis ce chien aussi!* As is evidenced by the explicitly canine image of his protagonist moving "doggedly" through the wilds of the Rangipo.

By asserting Johnson's own doglike identity Mulgan suggests his protagonist is just as subject to patriarchy's attempted ownership and control of *his* sexual identity as is a "bitch" like Rua – or any other woman. Thus he claims for his

hero precisely that (implicitly matrixial) feminine sensibility that Woolf asserts makes the urge to "own" or objectify the "other" something that is alien to women. This is a point that somewhat escaped Radclyffe Hall – who tellingly relies on her "invert" heroine's male-identified name "Stephen" to signify her full entitlement to all the ownership privileges of patriarchal masculinity. Mulgan, by contrast, in having his protagonist let the "bitch" Rua – "a very fine" wahine indeed – "go by", is far from any desire "to make an Englishwoman of her".

Mulgan can thus be read as offering jointly with Virginia Woolf, homoerotically identified, self-fragilising resistance to the sexual and racially colonising impulses of patriarchy. And though both writers affirm Radclyffe Hall's courageous assertion in *The Well of Loneliness* of the legitimacy of the homoerotic sensibility, their work conspicuously refutes her racism.

Of course Mulgan's narrative, with its resistance to sexual and racial patriarchal hegemony and its accompanying refusal of any essentialist valorisations of ancient Greek and Maori cultures as being innately "superior" to that of Pakeha culture, acknowledges ethical complexities to which his novel's implied reader is presumed oblivious. The description of Rua's flight from the scene of Stenning's death superficially reinforces the implied reader's assumption that Rua's impulse to infidelity is a consequence of indigenous femininity's "otherness-as-animality". For in this scene her identity registers, at first glance, as inextricable from the animal sound of her horse's hooves:

> As he stood up he heard, through the night, the sound of horse's hoofs galloping up the road. If it was Rua, as he guessed, she hadn't wasted time (Mulgan, 127).

These disembodied hoofbeats in the darkness are a symbolically devilish image, which imply Rua as merged with her horse. Referred to here as "it", she is thus evoked for the implied reader as an objectified "animal-other" and, as such, a monstrous phallic-feminine manifestation of the unheimlich.

Yet in fact this does not prevent Johnson, or the reader, from recognising her "correctly" at this moment as an entirely unthreatening manifestation of the matrixial-heimlich. For the conditionality of "If it was Rua" is met with the [un]certainty of Johnson's "guess" that "it" is – so allowing Rua to register not only as an object-animal, but as a subject also. She is woman and indigenous, and despite her unknown otherness is still able to be seen, when read in matrixial terms, as not horrifying at all.

Moreover the fact that Rua appears to have a clear destination in mind highlights the denial to Johnson of any community in which he can seek refuge. In what is therefore the protagonist's ongoing dilemma of ambiguous identity, his difference from Rua when making his own escape from the scene of the crime is instructive – because his horse, the suggestively named Darky, will not let him mount.

His mount's "animality" is undeniable, yet at this crucial moment Johnson's "little pony" exercises an authority over the blood-drenched protagonist, which actually critiques the ethics of his violent actions towards Stenning – and indeed Rua – on symbolically indigenous terms.

Historically the name "Dark[e]y" was used in Aotearoa New Zealand with explicit racism towards Maori, as a directly interchangeable equivalent of "Nigger" (Scott, 1975, severally, 12). However by Mulgan's era the growing public unspeakability

of the "N-word" saw that label largely abandoned among Europeans, giving ground to Darky as a more genteel, since "amusing" signifier for any brown animal whose purported former "savagery" – like that of the racial "other" – has been successfully domesticated.

However such sophistries are ironised in *Man Alone* by the ostensibly tamed Darky's audacious refusal, at a critical instant, to obey. In an implicit refutation of the Fascist position that the end justifies the means, the "little horse" shies away from the bloodied protagonist (Mulgan, 129).

Darky's resistance is a form of matrixial self-fragilisation in which this animal-object is revealed as a subject also. And one who is now released from "stenning" so is paradoxically free to acknowledge the spilt blood of even his contemptuous former "master" as evidence of a horrific trauma. In this Darky's subjectivity is shown to be both independent of Johnson's and legitimately resistant to his authority. This is a subtextual acknowledgment that the protagonist's act of revenge against Stenning is a pyrrhic victory. The hero's apparent triumph cannot materially restore his relationship with his mate, and Darky's refusal of the bloodied Johnson implies that Scott would not have endorsed either his mate's vengeful act or the sexual dissembling towards Rua that facilitated it.

But Darky's refusal to obey also mirrors Johnson's own unwillingness, despite his outward pose of "domestication", ever to be sexually "tamed". The horse's resistance is a metaphor of the novel's profound subtextual disloyalty to the racist and heteronormative dominant-culture assumptions that erroneously "name" Johnson as "straight". In fact the signifier

"Darky" symbolically identifies the untamable temperament of Johnson's little steed with the wild "dark horse" nature of the hero himself. The narrative can thus be considered as subversively alluding in this to the unrecognised "noble savagery" of all those "unknown others" denigrated as "animal" in racist, misogynist, homophobic, Eurocentric society and expelled to the sexual and ethnic "wilds" beyond it.

It's also of ironic significance that Darky is initially introduced to the reader in terms of Johnson's complacent delight in "his" animal's feisty temperament – with no mention at all of the little horse's ethnically pejorative identifier. However from the first the description given of Darky is ambiguously "feminine-effeminate": 'Johnson['s] a wicked, quick-footed little horse that picked its way over logs and uphill tracks like a dancer' (Mulgan, 86). The horse's insulting name is not revealed till a chapter after Johnson begins riding it (Mulgan, 99). This deferred identification implies Johnson as neither acceding to nor being responsible for the racial reductivity of what is therefore recognisable as a label given by Stenning. Johnson doesn't rename the horse; rather his (partial) "knowing" of it serves to question the demeaning associations of its identifier.

The gender ambiguity of the name Darky also slyly implies that between any (sexual) "mount" and its "rider", far more important than gender or "breeding" are the negotiated particularities of desire and trust. Johnson therefore finds that, not withstanding his own unswervingly positive attitude towards Darky and their earlier compatibility, at a crucial moment his possessive assumptions about his entitlements as Darky's "master" are ignored.

In his treatment of Johnson's relationship with Darky, Mulgan therefore deflates any sense of a patriarchal "master's" entitlement to the unquestioning obedience of even a beloved domesticated animal – let alone his wife. This is a pointed rejoinder to the explicitly "property ownership" model of Stenning's treatment of Rua. And it also refuses the self-entitlement of Radclyffe Hall's heroine Stephen – both towards her animal pets and with regard to her "spouse" Mary.

Stephen, having suffered on account of the inhumanity of her fellow men and women, is sustained first and last by her godlike superiority over her horse, Raftery, and her dog, David. The latter is the only companion left to her when, in what is the climax of the novel, she finds herself all alone following her magnanimous return of Mary, her fragile, domesticated "wife", to her "natural habitat" among the heterosexual English aristocracy. Stephen has previously determined, without consulting her, that Mary is not strong enough to survive any longer in the lesbian social wilderness of Paris.

Here Radclyffe Hall makes the assumption that the denial of the preferential racial and sexual entitlements of European masculinity to her heroine, Stephen, is a tragic injustice that leaves her unable to defend her innately vulnerable "wife" from objectifying patriarchal scorn. But Hall's assumption that Mary's helplessness is an intrinsic aspect of her femininity is called into question by Mulgan's subversive depiction of *Stenning's* wife. For Rua subtextually resists the implied reader's demeaning estimation of her as just another "darky". Instead, the implied reader's assumption that Johnson's woman and Johnson's horse are merely subhuman objects is subverted in *Man Alone* by

the fact that, much to Johnson's dismay, Rua and Darky each perform as independent subjects in their own right.

Furthermore, following the ignominy of Darky's outright denial of Johnson's authority, the protagonist is then obliged to mount Jonquil, his boss's "great white mare" (Mulgan, 86). This circumstance further underlines the ambiguity of Johnson's "triumph" over Stenning:

> He went up to Stenning's Jonquil standing still and white in the darkness. The mare trembled when he put the bridle over her neck, but stood still and quiet when he led her to be saddled (Mulgan, 129).

As he applies the bridle the mare's trembling reveals that the smell of blood on Johnson is every bit as offensive to her as it was to Darky. Yet schooled by Stenning against her own better nature, Jonquil is obedient. But despite her ostensible correctness as a "mount" for the hero, as implied in racial terms by her "white" colour and in sexual terms by the suitably trembling vulnerability of her phallic-feminine submissivity, she will prove to be of only interim use in taking the protagonist where he needs to go. In this Mulgan obliquely references the hypocrisy (and on account of his own married status with implicit self-consciousness) of those men with homoerotic sensibilities who manipulate women into marital relationships that principally serve as heterosexual social camouflage.

Thus Johnson is required to recognise here that if he is to make progress he has to leave Jonquil behind. Only by giving up the (patriarchal male) "riding" privileges she is conditioned to offer – to travel of his own volition – will he be able to access

the allusive juxtaposition of myth and history embodied in the magic real geography of Mount Ruapehu, the Rangipo, Onetapu, and down in the Kaimanawa Forest.

Johnson's strategic use of the mare therefore ends with her parked in a paddock below the Ruapehu hut. But moments before he walks away from her forever he pauses to "let down" the rail. The poetic compression of the sentence that follows this gesture is justification enough for its inclusion:

> The mare watched him without moving as he went up past the hut and then eastward across the open mountain-side of rock and tussock (Mulgan, severally, 134).

But as she interrupts her browsing to gaze after her last rider the reader is also given momentary pause. What will become of her? For it appears that in Johnson's escape bid 'Jonquil' has been as unceremoniously 'let down', as the rail of her paddock.

Yet as Mulgan knows from his own boyhood holidays in the Ruapehu-Kaimanawa region (O'Sullivan, 2011, 36), and as might any of his readers who remember the "Maori hacks" brought to the Stenning farm "wild from the tussock plains" (Mulgan, severally, 86) – the volcanic plateau is home to a herd of horses. A jonquil would struggle to survive there, but a mare won't. Wild horses have roamed the Kaimanawa since 1876 right up until the time Mulgan is writing. With a view to preservation of this unique habitat a herd of them is managed there still. Here, therefore, Mulgan allows Jonquil, despite her prior domestication, to choose freedom in "the wild" if she wishes.

The introduction of the "great white mare" to this iconic volcanic landscape thus has a deeper significance than the picturesque. By conspicuously abandoning any reference in this scene to "Stenning's Jonquil", Mulgan abjures a name plucked from that bunch of introduced English flowers whose conventional significance in *Man Alone* has to be reconsidered just as carefully as the appellation Darky. In this shape-shifting word play it must go without saying that at this moment Mulgan also discards that "other" English signifier synonymous with phallic "femininity-effeminacy" – a "pansy" wouldn't survive in the Rangipo-Onetapu-Kaimanawa but Johnson will.

The instability, in this narrative, of unthinking or self-servingly imported European notions of sex and race was similarly apparent at the moment in chapter one when "our Rose" morphed for the implied reader from "pleasant and kindly" (Mulgan, severally, 12) into a diseased and Devouring mother-monster readymade. But this "Rose", despite *any other name* she might be called, never loses her sweetness for the reader who recognises her subtextual compassion towards Johnson.

And equally, from the moment Johnson "let down the rail" of her paddock, Jonquil was absolved of her *stenning* identification as a delicate English flower. It is now for her to decide if she will stay within the confines of her name, or go her own wild way in "noble savagery" with whatever mate/s she chooses. A freedom already reclaimed by Rua-on-horseback and by Darky alone.

Here the haunting possibility must be acknowledged that when, shortly after Mulgan published *Man Alone*, England

declared war on Germany, what motivated the writer's insistence that his wife Gabrielle and their baby son must immediately embark for Aotearoa New Zealand, was Mulgan's belief that in his "wild" homeland they would have their best chance of an imagined freedom – from Fascism certainly, but heartbreakingly, also from himself.

Such an expectation on Mulgan's part carries an anguished echo of the climax of *The Well of Loneliness*, in which Hall's protagonist, Stephen, without explanation finally expels her "wife" from their relationship, in the selfless belief that Mary will then be able to re-establish herself in social respectability with a heterosexual partner: But unbeknownst to Mary, this condemns Stephen to "The Well of Loneliness".

Of course such a unilaterally imposed "resolution" does not acknowledge that among those ostensibly kept in marital "captivity" not all, given the choice, would characterise themselves as disadvantaged. And in any case "prisoners" granted liberty find all too often that they are desperately ill equipped for the challenges of freedom – as Johnson himself will discover.

Mulgan foreshadows this wilderness versus domesticity dilemma in the image of the three horses on Stenning's property "bred from good stock in the Wairarapa" that he juxtaposes with: "half a dozen Maori hacks of poor quality brought in wild from the tussock plains". Here Mulgan insinuates that the confinement of the "Maori hacks" in the symbolically colonised, hence destructive setting of the farm's "big log paddock" (Mulgan, severally, 86) stifles an untapped potential in them that *stenning* will never realise. Whereas the Darky,

whose supposedly "tamed" temperament sets the standard against which the "poor quality" of the wilderness-bred "Maori hacks" is judged, engages at a crucial moment in an act of such infuriating temperamental disobedience, its superior "quality" is, for the implied reader, called into question.

Conversely Jonquil, as a result of her indoctrination in compliance, is left with her future independent survival on the open range hanging in the balance, even though her potential is clear. For she is surely one "[of the three horses on the farm] who could be told half a mile away by the way they carried their heads" (Mulgan, severally, 86). Darky is the second of this favoured trio. Therefore the third horse of unmistakable "quality", with head held high, must be Rua's. This horse's namelessness makes it synonymous for the implied reader with the unheimlich phallic-feminine-indigenous-animality of Rua herself. However subtextually *Rua's mount*, in its acknowledged spirit – and hers – is punningly borderlinked here with the magic-real mythos of *Mount Rua[pehu].*

Of course Mulgan is well aware that there will be readers who, even if they recognise the wild "animal" subtexts of *Man Alone*, will find entering into them quite unthinkable. But for anybody willing to go there, he has "let down the rail".

19. Onetapu: *The Place of the Shivering Sands*

JOHNSON'S BID for freedom from "stenning" now takes him on a journey in which his "deviance" is sardonically depicted as quite literal. But because this "deviance" positions him precisely where he needs to be to survive, it is also treated here as entirely beneficial:

> He seemed to be caught in something that was wild and furious and stronger than himself. The wind came no longer directly against him, but eddying and whirling in gusts of sand and storm so that he could hardly stand or go forward in any direction.[…] Going sometimes forward and sometimes back or being swayed to left and right, stumbling and falling, going on his hands and knees, until at last he came to the shelter of a pumice bank and stayed there burrowed into it, with his back against the shelter and the rain and sand blowing over him. He was exhausted and if snow came, he told himself, ready to die (Mulgan,136).

Snow does not come and Johnson does not die. Rather, tested by the winds that have defeated so many "others", he is described as "burrowed into" a part of the landscape of Aotearoa that marks his arrival at the imaginative core of his own "deviant" identity. From this symbolic refuge, in what is a kind of sexual and emotional redemption, he emerges alive.

In this Mulgan deploys the Maori word "Onetapu" as the symbolic signifier of Johnson's restored sense of the authenticity of his homoerotic sensibility. And in seeming explication of the

Maori origins of Onetapu, here Mulgan appends an additional phrase in English:

> As he went blindly forward, going doggedly, his head down, barely seeing the ground beneath his feet, he came at length to what he knew must be the heart of it all, Onetapu, *the place of the shivering sands* [my emphasis] (Mulgan, 136).

Mulgan's meticulous crafting of this sentence locates Onetapu in expository terms towards the end of a series of short phrases and a single long one, constructed for its sexual subtext: "he came at length to what he knew must be the heart of it all". This suggests Johnson's determined realisation of his homoerotic sensibility as indeed having "at the heart of it all" a profound potential for creativity.

Having a "heart", Onetapu is not necessarily an inhuman spot then. Rather, it is a symbolic site at which there may be felt those involuntary tremors caused by cold, fear and awe – as when the earth, or the heart, is moved. So at Onetapu in both literal geological terms and – of particular significance for *Man Alone* – metaphorically, there are felt the embodied emotions of sexual Eros. This potential is implicitly recognised by Scott when in their first meeting he responds to the implied "shivering" of Johnson's hands as he is "trying to roll a cigarette".

Although "the place of the shivering sands" is offered as an authoritative English translation of Onetapu, in fact it is Mulgan's own specifically targeted amplification of this Maori name. A more conventional English translation for Onetapu is "the enchanted sands" (Smale, 2012, 92).

Subtextually Onetapu can also be [mis]read as a three-syllable, compound English-Maori word – One/ta~pu – and in that seeming bilingualism can be [mis]understood as a further intimation of Mulgan's half-caste motif.

This reading is possible because the stand-alone Maori word "on~e" at the start of "Onetapu" has not (at time of writing) entered New Zealand English, so a non-Maori speaker may read it as one syllable, carrying the English meaning of numerical singularity.

Additionally, in Te Reo the word "one" signifies not only the desiccant medium sand, but can also be used, depending on the context, to identify any substance whose materiality may, with the addition of moisture, be thought of as a medium of fecundity – "mud", "earth" or "soil" (Te Aka, Maori–English Dictionary). Thus allied to these cloacal resonances, the pumice-white "sands" of Onetapu may be read as also having in their volcanically spumescent origins, a seminal potential that endows them for Johnson, with the "stuff" of life its-self.

But in any case "tapu" as a loan word with the meanings "sacred", "forbidden" or "restricted" is well known in New Zealand English, and has been familiar to Pakeha negotiating Maoritanga from as early as 1906 (Orsman, 1997, 813). The four syllables of On/e/ta/pu in Maori are thus readily inverted to identify this location as being, in colloquial English, a tapu-one – or "sacred one".

Thus in reaching Onetapu Johnson may be understood as entering a zone that is "singularly taboo". This can be attested to in the description of the (sexually) hostile climate the protagonist meets with in travelling through the Rangipo in order to get there.

The name “Rangipo” is its-self translated on occasion as “place of darkness” (King, 2008, 25), in recognition of the atmospheric effects of volcanic eruptions. But “place of darkness” as a seemingly unheimlich horror can also be read as a disrecognition of the matrixial heimlich of the dark as sacred. Rua offers this alternative – specifically affirmative reading – to Johnson, telling him, “I like the dark” (Mulgan, 120). Thus as the “heart” of the Rangipo, “Onetapu” can be understood as a site for the reclamation of those once-sacred behaviours that are now disrecognised in Johnson’s patriarchal culture – and the writer’s – as unheimlich expressions of carnal animality. Of course in that hostile, phallocentric sense, “Onetapu” can also be read as “the forbidden One”, being pejoratively opposed to the sexual orifice of the female that is “the permitted one”.

And finally, whatever “Onetapu” might mean to the reader – or to Johnson and his narrator, or indeed to Mulgan – it is always already a wholly Maori word. The novel’s recognition of the simultaneous unequivocality of the meaning[s] and usage[s] of “Onetapu” among speakers of Te Reo may be inferred from Rua’s assertion, after Stenning’s death, that she is not running away but is “going home” (heimlich). (Mulgan,125).

In this she implicitly declares herself as belonging “at the heart of it all” with the tangata whenua – a position she takes without any expectation on the part of the narrative that it could, or should, define what she means.

20. Ruapehu and the winds of change

MULGAN DRAWS in *Man Alone* on various meanings for "Ruapehu". As a four-syllable compound word, its first two syllables ("Ru~a") resonate symbolically with the Maori word for the number "two". Additionally, the last two syllables of the mountain's name ("pe~hu") may be translated into English as "explode or make a loud noise", thus suggesting the mountain's name in English as "two explosions" (McClintock, Ed., 2009, severally). This is an image that echoes in "the explosive sound of the two shots" (Mulgan, 123) fired in the struggle in which Stenning is blown away as he contests with Johnson for possession of the gun.

Ruapehu is also sometimes translated from Te Reo into English as "blow-hole" (McClintock, Ed., 2009). Yet episodes of violent eruption from Ruapehu are also implied in the Rangipo section of *Man Alone* as having a concurrently nurturing effect on the surrounding habitat. This recognises the meaning of the word "rua" as also a "food storage cavity" and the mountain's eruptions acting as ambivalently beneficial productive events in human terms because they have both "burned and embedded the forests" (Mulgan,135). This ambiguity recognises the continuum identified by tangata whenua in explicitly feminine terms, which arcs between the life giving of the divine Earth mother Papatuanuku and the death bringing of the female divinity Hine-nui-te-po.

For *Man Alone*, the awesome death-dealing and life-giving power of Ruapehu is similarly symbolically maternal, and it is this consciousness of [pro]creativity that informs the fascination

trajectory of the narrative: "[It] seems to move closer each of the seven times it appears in the book" (Evans in Stachurski, 2009, 8). The numerical particularity of this number of citings also makes for a symbolic nod to Shakespeare's seven stages and ages of "man", so as to imply Stenning's end as an [un]predictable "volcanic" event in what is a preordained progression. In these terms Rua's rejection of her husband's authority, even though it produces a psychological explosion in the text, is simply inevitable. In geological terms, this is symbolically analogous to the eruptive removal of the hardened magma plug whose "stenning" of a volcanic vent restricts it only temporarily.

And just as it is seeping rain that loosens the grip of such a vulcanological obstruction, in *Man Alone* it is the "seeping rain" of Johnson's unassuageable grief at his loss of Scott that stealthily infiltrates Rua's marriage. The protagonist's clandestine sexual intervention ultimately loosens Stenning's hold on Rua, so restoring to her, on her husband's removal, all the cultural, sexual, economic and social freedoms that in a cruel reversal her marriage had forced her to relinquish. In fact Mulgan's removal of Stenning is his metaphorical advocacy of the long-term restorative benefits of the (social) upheaval in which the ancient "matter" of the homoerotically idealised classical period of ancient Greece could be productively "broadcast" once more, thereby enriching the social and sexual hinterlands of Aotearoa New Zealand. Mulgan's careful concealment of his intent in the subtext of *Man Alone* recognises that the interim cultural fallout necessary to achieve this end cannot be overestimated.

Yet Mulgan does not hold Ruapehu "maternally" responsible for the "waste" of the Rangipo – for despite the

mountain's acknowledged role in burning the ancient forests, Ruapehu has equally "embedded" them. There are significant episodes of "mother-blaming" elsewhere in *Man Alone*, but in the case of Mount Ruapehu, although the loss of sustainable habitat in the mountain's environs is viscerally conveyed – "here and there stunted shrubs clung desperately to the shelter of breaks and hummocks in the sand" – as Mulgan clearly knows, the ongoing desolation of this area is only indirectly attributable to the mountain. Mulgan rightly connects the desertification of the Rangipo to a different culprit – "the years of driving winds, [that] had given no home for anything to grow" (Mulgan, severally,135). His description of these severe wind conditions is entirely ecologically accurate, and is confirmed by this extract from the text of a magnificently illustrated *New Zealand Geographic* photo essay about the conditions that prevail in what is an extraordinary microclimate:

> It is […] one of only a handful of volcanic dune systems on the planet […] lying in the rain-shadow of the central volcanoes, this so-called desert is not a true desert at all – it receives two metres of annual rainfall in the north and a metre in the south, enough to support a forest. A short stroll onto one of the highest dunes reveals another world – the unmistakable feel of the cool, humid interior of a rainforest. […] The area remains exposed [because it is] located in a wind funnel between two great natural obstacles (Smale, 2012, 92).

Thus the affirming textual symbolisation of Onetapu as "at the heart of it all" (Mulgan, 136), recognises it, despite its current appearance, as a site of potentially exuberant fecundity. The novel in which this potential is recognised is therefore Mulgan's attempt to establish a symbolic shelterbelt against the

destructive winds of cultural change responsible for the creative impoverishment of the socio-sexual habitat of the homoerotic.

The fact that on occasion the name "Rangipo" is also translated from Te Reo into English as "Dark Day" (Macdonald & Thierry Jutel, 2012) recalls, for *Man Alone*, the "dark day" when the winds of cultural change abjuring the homoerotic first began to blow.

21. The Rangipo, Onetapu and the Kaimanawa: A transsubjective borderspace

JOHNSON'S SURVIVAL in the Rangipo-Onetapu-Kaimanawa can be read as more than the feat of physical and mental endurance that valorises, for the implied reader, the self-sufficiency found in a "hard man". For such a perception may be supplemented to acknowledge Bracha Ettinger's concept of co-poiesis:

> Vulnerable and risk taking, co-poiesis, unlike autopoiesis, is not subordinated to the maintenance of its own organism and identity. Borderlinking in co-poiesis is open-ended, at the cost of a catastrophe of identity, and even at the risk of the collapse of the fragile matrixial gaze its-self (Ettinger, 2006a,159.0).

The "catastrophe of identity" Mulgan risks is the criminalisation that may be imposed on him as a result of any readerly assumption that he shares the homoerotic sensibilities of his

protagonist. The "co-poietic" borderlinks of the Rangipo-Onetapu-Kaimanawa sequence of *Man Alone* thus emerge as much from a dangerously "volcanic" *psychic* field as from a geophysical one. And Mulgan represents Johnson's "vulnerable and risk taking" crossing of this psychic field as a process in which the narrative in fact relinquishes the phallocentric idea of the protagonist as a "man alone" – that is, someone whose subjectivity, since "celibate", is "subordinated to the maintenance of [his] own organism and identity". Instead, Mulgan subtextually risks "the collapse of the fragile matrixial gaze" that will attend any recognition by the implied reader of Johnson's "half-caste" sexual sensibility as being joint (but not merged or in symbiosis) with the subjectivities of a limited severality of his equally transgressive "unknown others".

For in this wilderness section of *Man Alone* Mulgan offers the reader a matrixial: "gaze, operated in a transferential unconscious field stretched between several individuals unknown to each other" (Ettinger, 2006a,157.8). Proceeding "doggedly", Johnson is borderlinked here with the "bitch" Rua in a region whose names were conferred by her Maori ancestors. This is a place which is overlooked by her mountain namesake and whose originary indigenous mythos has been supplemented by her Pakeha forbears. At the same time the narrative also subtextually affirms Johnson's (volcanically) "smoking" relationship with Scott, as having symbolic parallels with the [geo-]logically intimate "male" relationship of Tongariro with Ngauruhoe. This connection is signalled by Johnson's own borderlink with the "unknown other" couple of young students he encounters on the flanks of Ruapehu and later in the magic real musings of the hermit Crawley.

The concurrent fact that Scott is dead and Johnson has sexually discarded Rua serves to obscure from the implied reader what is actually the subtextual re-presentation here of the protagonist's two erstwhile lovers. Their presence is felt in their "besidedness" with Johnson throughout his journey.

This means that what at first registers with the reader as an unheimlich locale, a terrifying dead zone in which there have been repeated extinctions, is simultaneously also the symbolic locus of an entirely unthreatening manifestation of the matrixial heimlich. Recognised as such, the homely strangeness of the Rangipo-Onetapu-Kaimanawa is not terrifying at all. For in matrixial terms these are no longer sites of traumatic scission and negation but rather are creative thresholds borderlinking Johnson with Scott and Rua in "relations-without-relating", as part of a severality of "unknown others". This not excluding even the matrixial gaze of the great white mare: 'who watched him without moving as he went up past the hut […].' (Mulgan,134).

The matrixial "gazes" and "voices" of this severality of "others" emerge in "transsubjectivity", because the connections here between subjects and objects unknown to each other make this "a place of besidedness, for a potential shared production/ revelation of home affect at the heart of wandering" (Ettinger, 2006a,158.9).

It is transsubjectivity that changes what are, in the phallocentric domain, Johnson's points of separation from his "unknown other/s", into matrixial thresholds at which he is able to engage with both the readymade mythos of the tangata whenua and the readymade sexual Eros of ancient Greece, and thereby make new meanings.

However in Freudian terms, Mulgan's use of these "readymade" materials is a literary technique that diminishes his art. Freud's preference was for literary originality. He believed that:

> We must separate writers who, like the ancient authors of epics and tragedies, take over their material *ready-made*, from writers who seem to originate their own material (Ettinger, 2006a, severally 72.3).

However, in matrixial terms it is entirely legitimate and equally creative for Mulgan to supplement his protagonist's world-view with the intellectual and aesthetic treasures of "others" because in the matrixial domain he can "share in them as still different dimensions of the same work" (Ettinger, 2006, 117.8). Mulgan's use of the "foreign" materials of his "unknown others" does not imply his ownership or colonisation of either them or their treasures. Johnson, in relation to Rua and Scott, is only ever in besidedness with the mythos of the Maori and Greek classical eras. His use of these myths is analogous to the situation of the *unknown becoming infans* who, as Ettinger notes, although forming in compassionate hospitality from the entrails of its *unknown becoming m/Other* is neither merged with her in this process, nor in symbiosis. Rather, they are *differenciating in jointness*. Similarly in *Man Alone* the myths of "others" function "with-in" and "with-out" the protagonist's subjectivity, in a relation of besidedness where the constraints of co-emergence and co-fading that operate in the matrixial domain preclude the permanence of annexation. The matrixial domain only ever gives access to impermanent, co-adjacent,

incomplete relationships, with residual effects and affects that are unpredictable. Hence they are never rhizomatic. And in that sense *one: infinity* has no purchase in matrixiality, because it is yet another phallocentric binary.

Nonetheless, the limited new meanings Mulgan derives from the materials he appropriates have an (unguaranteed) aesthetic and ethical matrixial potential to assuage suffering and heal subconscious trauma. But the reader's access to such transformative effects is governed by strict criteria. Changed meanings are not achieved in the matrixial domain by (authorial) annunciation. Arrival at new meanings is an open-ended process that entails a variety of risky acts of self-fragilisation from first writer and then reader, with no assurance of reciprocity.

At the same time, the issues raised by Johnson's expression of a homoerotic sensibility are never explicitly broached with his "implied reader", because their schizing patriarchal response is already known. Their horror and revulsion towards the homoerotic sensibility is a non-negotiable given grounded in the abjection of "femininity-effeminacy" as against the privileged masculinity of binary phallocentric discourse. But the context of a "*matrixial aesthetic borderspace*" is an opportunity for the affects and effects of Johnson's transgressive sexuality to register differently:

> A relation transgressing the opposition between the original and the ready-made emerges here, where a gaze wanders, scattered and spread among several floating eyes in a nomadic place, making it impossible to regather the matrixial gaze's traces without a relation of co-emergence or of co-fading with a stranger (Ettinger, 2006a, 157.8).

In other words the new meanings arising from a transsubjective field rely on the presence of a "stranger" who – like the two nameless and disappearing students in the Rangipo-Onetapu-Kaimanawa sequence of the novel – functions as a guarantor of non-binary suspended open-endedness. The "stranger" appears in the matrixial strata of Mulgan's text as an enabling proxy who may engage the reader's sub-subconsciousness of the originary compassionate hospitality they felt as an *unknown becoming m/Other* in besidedness with their *unknown becoming infans – and vice versa*.

Equally, in Johnson's eventual "chance" borderlink with Rua in a Hamilton street his "co-emergence" and "co-fading with the stranger" is what enables the text to "regather the matrixial gaze's traces" that Johnson previously shared transsubjectively with certain "unknown others" whom he encountered on the volcanic plateau.

Rua and Johnson's Hamilton meeting is staged in a "nomadic place" (Ettinger, 2006a,157.8), the street that the fleeing hero is passing through and which Rua is strolling with a friend while on holiday. The transitory "re-gathering" of the erstwhile lovers' "matrixial traces" occurs here under the auspices of the nameless older woman whom Johnson has never seen before. As an "unknown other" this stranger is a narrative "object" for Johnson and the reader. Yet simultaneously, via her insistence that Rua is to be treated courteously, she boldly expresses her own subjectivity: "'That's no way to speak to a lady,' the older woman said sharply" (Mulgan, severally 170).

This stranger demands respect for Rua (and herself) both in the context of their joint femininity – in that Rua is to be treated

as "a lady" – and in terms of Rua's indigeneity on the basis of her kinship with Rua as her sister-in-law. Yet no details of this woman's own ethnicity are revealed. The reader is simply given the option of seeing Rua not only as the implied reader does – as an "object-other" – but as a subject also. And thus is invited to engage here in what Ettinger calls "re-spect". This is

> unarmed re-seeing which is not gazing and not even looking. Re-spect comes, simply, from respicere – to look back at, but, here, where the subject is in touch with the other's vulnerability by self-fragilisation, the subject will not perform a public shaming (Ettinger 2009a, 7).

Of course in the eyes of the implied reader Rua should be publicly shamed. As Johnson's promiscuous "ex" and Stenning's cheating and undeservedly financially independent widow, she is doubly contemptible. Hence the implied reader will dismiss the demand that Johnson treat Rua as "a lady", deeming this a laughable piece of avaricious flattery on the part of her companion. But there is an alternative to the implied reader's hostile assumption of the naked self-interest of Rua's friend, and of the implicit objectification of Rua that accompanies such a dismissal. Johnson and the reader, in the self-fragilised light of *their own* vulnerabilities, could choose not to solely objectify Rua and her sister-in-law as "unknown others", and see them matrixially as subjects also.

The reader alert to Mulgan's subtext must acknowledge Johnson's manipulation of Rua, and his reasons for this. Hence such a reader will be in touch with Rua's vulnerability, and so may withhold a schizing phallocentric judgment of her – as

does Johnson himself. But it is the presence of the stranger that instigates such an attitude of re-spect, by pointing the way to the reader's own originary matrixial susceptibility. In other words, the precedent for the reader's potential to feel compassionate hospitality towards Rua and her "unknown other" stranger-friend, is the compassionate hospitality the reader felt towards their own *unknown becoming m/Other* as they differenciated in jointness with her in late pre-birth.

Similarly Mulgan provides another occasion – at the moment of the protagonist's departure from Aotearoa New Zealand – when the reader may "look back at" (re-spect) Johnson's mate, Scott, through Johnson's borderlinks with two "strangers". This borderlink opens at the initial moment of the protagonist's meeting with the stranger "Louis".

Johnson and Louis then participate in a transsubjective "regathering of the matrixial gaze's traces" at the elegiac moment of their ship's departure from Aotearoa New Zealand. For in the homoerotic subtext of the protagonist's *looking back at* Louis, it is in fact Scott who is enabled to co-emerge and co-fade with Johnson. This episode occurs in the borderlink shared by Johnson and Louis in their re-spective "besidedness" with *the little Captain's steward*, the other (unnamed) "stranger" character who is new to both Johnson and the reader, and who only appears in this scene. Here the compassionate hospitality of a severality of matrixial gazes – which Ettinger calls "floating eyes in a nomadic place" (Ettinger, 2006,157.8) – are "floating" quite literally, since this event-encounter with a "stranger" is set in nomadic transit on board a ship at the moment of embarkation.

But it is the very transgressivity of the "scattered gazes" Johnson shares with both Louis and the little Captain's steward

as they are about to leave Aotearoa New Zealand that make the implied reader oblivious to their borderlinks.

Johnson, though physically separated from Scotty, experiences his mate psychically as his constant companion. And whilst in the phallocentric domain Scott's sexuality is objectified as contaminated with the "femininity-effeminacy", which requires his textual schizing – at the same time, in terms of matrixiality, his "unknown other" subjectivity is understood as an ever-present locus of yet-to-be-realised potential. In that sense Scotty exists in the text – for Johnson and potentially also for the reader – as a *yet-to-be-dead and yet-to-be-alive* partial subject. His narrative viability (whether economic, cultural, social, sexual, literary…) depends – like that of his proxy, the "unknown other" body retrieved from the cellar in Robertson's letter – on the compassionate hospitality of the reader.

Therefore the reader who does self-fragilise towards the subtextual matrixial event-encounter Johnson experiences as he leaves Aotearoa with Louis and the Captain's steward, has the possibility of recognising that Scott too symbolically emerges alongside these "unknown other/s" who are present at this moment. This recognition supplements the implied reader's interpretation of this scene by allowing the instant of Johnson's departure and embarkation to be placed in suspension, resulting in an episode of potential matrixial consolation and healing.

> This may happen if there occurs an unexpected encounter with another who partially and in fragments is affected by the [matrixial] gaze, thus establishing a relation-without-relating to the I's archaic m/Other (Ettinger, 2006a, 157.8).

In this case Johnson, as a fugitive, is on the point of leaving his adopted m/Other[land]. So he must seemingly endure an unheimlich and castrative schizing at the moment of the ship's departure. But the reader who self-fragilises can see beyond the protagonist's (and indeed their own) originary trauma of maternal separation and longing, to a healing assuagement of loss – through wit[h]nessing Scott and Johnson's subtextual co-re-birth. Ettinger describes the matrixial characteristics of such an aesthetic remediation, as follows:

> A centreless *heimlich* affect silently ascends behind the "*unheimlich*" aesthetic experience [...], anguishing and soothing, tearing and stitching the wounds of a nomadic place, opening in it a rhythm of interval for an exile, suspended like a rotating sea-wave between its fading and a next birth (Ettinger, 2006a,160.1).

Johnson has previously experienced one wave of [un]heimlich schizing "rebirth" – into the phallocentric domain – on his emergence from the Kaimanawa Forest (as discussed in detail in following sections). But now as his ship is on the point of leaving port, a recurrence of this scene of "rebirth" sees him co-emerge and co-fade from Aotearoa New Zealand jointly with Scott.

This regenerative potential was also presaged in the introduction of the novel by Johnson's co-emergence and co-fading with the stranger-narrator on their first meeting with the reader – which occured in yet another "nomadic" place: "the quay" (Mulgan, Introduction) of a French port. That meeting borderlinks Johnson's separation from "m/Other" England with the "unknown otherness" of the fate that awaits him in

Spain and at the hands of the reader as stranger. Equally, in the epilogue at the novel's open end, the still roving unknown narrator chronicles from an unspecified "nomadic" place, the suspended fate of Johnson and his several "stranger" mates.

These are the novel's "rhythms of interval for an exile". Transsubjective repetitions that are felt jointly between "several individuals unknown to each other" (Ettinger, 2006a, 157.8). The aesthetic affect of these repetitions emerges in narrative sequences Ettinger has characterised as akin to the rise and fall of a "sea-wave", bringing unacknowledged trauma to consciousness and then assuaging it. Such a "sea-wave" carries "heimlich" affects and effects that the reader of *Man Alone* may experience in besidedness with Johnson – in a "co/in-habit(u)ating" (Ettinger, 2006a,158.9) of the matrixial maternal-feminine.

Ettinger's compendium word, "co/in-habit(u)ating", can be unpacked to recognise the access that any-body may have to the matrixial domain. This is experienced jointly with an "unknown other", and may evoke toleration for and comfort from the originary [pro]creativity of the "archaic 'woman' – m/Other" (Ettinger, 2006a,160.1). It is this originary human propensity to borderlink with the matrixial-feminine that reroutes Scott and Rua's characters, alongside Johnson's, from their sacrificial victimhood in the phallocentric domain, into the open-ended, non-binary agency of alternative matrixial possibilities.

The reader's imaginative involvement in Scott and Rua's fates may thus be seen, in differenciation in jointness with Johnson's, as an expression of the matrixial ethics, which go beyond aesthetics (Ettinger, 2006a, 89.0):

> And then, from then on, you cannot choose when to terminate the covenant, or how, or to what extent, if at all. Because the phallus cannot master the Matrix (Ettinger, 2006a,117.8).

That is surely why I have felt compelled to spend time and energy writing a matrixial appreciation of *Man Alone* and its courageous subtext, despite the fact that I know very well – as did Mulgan himself – that such a reading will be unwelcome in patriarchy.

Mulgan's covenantal involvement in the novel entailed his self-fragilisation in a process whereby his matrixial resistance to the patriarchal dehumanisation of the homoerotic sensibility could become evident to the reader. He lowers his own ego boundaries to risk the reader's perception of him as himself sexually "contaminated" so he can offer an alternative to the phallocentric discourse's disrecognition of "femininity-effeminacy" as unheimlich and repulsive. As an artist, he also registers his covenantal involvement with the tangata whenua and with the classical era of Greece, in a process that makes accessible the new and different meanings he has drawn from the myths of these "unknown others".

Once Mulgan has inscribed his protagonist in the transsubjective matrixial borderspace represented by his wilderness sojourn, wherever else the hero goes in the novel, whatever else he may do, he retains traces of the affects and effects of the matrixial gaze. This is despite the fact that after emerging from the Rangipo-Onetapu-Kaimanawa, Johnson resumes his former stoic textual [dis]guise (a point considered in detail in the following section "Johnson and *The Fisher King*").

It thus also follows that whatever a reader alert to Mulgan's subtext makes of it, they can similarly never "unknow" what his protagonist Johnson endures and shows.

The question Ettinger poses in relation to such open-ended event-encounters is: 'Left with the enigmatic burden of awareness of the other's trauma, what will you do?' (Ettinger, 2006a,117.8).

When I come to answer this "covenantal" matrixial question in terms of my own actions, one of my responses has been this piece of writing, but another has been to repeatedly revisit the central plateau of Te Ika a Maui, the North Island, where Johnson sought refuge. There I can "look back at" (re-spect) for myself the wild tussock grasslands, the Kaimanawa Forest, the volcanoes Rua[pehu], Tongariro-Johnson & Ngauruhoe-Scott, with Taranaki-Stenning visible in the far distance whenever it is a clear day.

I now also anticipate regathering the matrixial gaze's traces with anybody I encounter who has read *Man Alone* or indeed this matrixial appreciation of it.

Johnson's story invites me to recognise formerly obscured aspects of my own subjectivity. In the light of how "well" I can occupy the position of the implied reader of *Man Alone*, I have to interrogate my own homoerotic sensibilities as freighted with ambivalence and fear. Equally I must interrogate the pride I feel at being a fifth generation Pakeha descendant of Aotearoa New Zealand's earliest European immigrants – my ancestors are now registered by me as the self-entitled beneficiaries of a colonising carve-up. In other words, *Man Alone* borderlinks me, as reader and writer, with a variety of traumatic circumstances

formerly encrypted more or less unacknowledged in my own subconscious. My recognition of such affects and effects is part of what Ettinger conceives as the ongoing matrixial working-through of unconscious trauma with "the other", via artwork (Ettinger, 2006a, 157.8).

In these terms *Man Alone* has the potential to contribute to an active-matrixial process of (sexual) decolonisation. This process aesthetically invites from the reader a lowering of their own ego boundaries, thereby making it possible to recognise that what is in play between Johnson, Rua, Scott, and their significant "others" – human and animal, object and subject – is braided together in the transsubjective borderspace of the Rangipo-Onetapu-Kaimanawa. The resultant weaving is threaded through with a magic-real evocation of the mythos of Maori and the classical Greek homoerotic in order to make new meanings.

This then is about more than the reader defining the novel reductively in terms of Johnson's – or any other character's – "identity" as heterosexual/homosexual, masculine/feminine, tau iwi/tangata whenua, Pakeha/Maori: Though that is not to deny the significance in the phallocentric domain of these or any other binaries registered here – indeed *Man Alone* opens up such categories to re-examination and interrogation.

However at the same time, the text supplies a supplementary matrixial Eros, which Bracha Ettinger in her definition of co-poiesis recognises as "beyond identity" (Ettinger, 2006a,159.0). She represents this life-giving and life-affirming matrixial Eros in terms of the *Jocaste Complex*, whose significance in relation to *Man Alone*, is discussed in the later section "Antigone at the scene of Johnson's 'crime'".

22. *"To reach the heart of it all"* – *"Dead Timber"* for the Rangipo

JOHNSON'S SUCCESSFUL progress through the Rangipo wilderness is not sustained by specialist equipment, outdoors expertise or the mutual emotional support availed the two young men who vanish behind him into the Ruapehu mists. Instead the hero keeps going because "He chewed tobacco as he went forward to keep himself from thinking of his hunger and cold."

Tobacco is here a symbol of the raw-stuff-of-masculinity. As such, it is a stimulant that Johnson had access to long before Scott was instrumental in teaching him the homoerotic satisfactions of "rolling-your-own". Yet no such deeply drawn luxuries are available to him now, for the "hunger and cold" Johnson is subject to in the [un]canniness of the legend-haunted Rangipo is more than physical, it is also a manifestation of his emotional deprivation at his separation from his mate.

However in successfully emerging from the Rangipo – symbolically the culturally ravaged zone from which at Onetapu he is delivered into the still viable "heart" of the unknown br/Other – Johnson enters a psychic borderspace that offers him a further chance of psychic renewal: "he came to the edge of the bush" (Mulgan, severally, 138). In this transitional zone Mulgan signals that Johnson now has the ability, as a result of his epiphany at Onetapu, to emotionally refuel in "relations without relating" (Ettinger, 2006a, 71.2) to his own "unknown br/Other" Scott. This will prepare him to engage with the desired, but differently dangerous zone of the primal m/Other – as represented by the Kaimanawa Forest. The token of his

renewed confidence is his risking the lighting of a fire, with the elaborate description of its kindling acting as an implicit affirmation of those men – Mulgan's contemporaries – who are newly subject to the homophobic usage of the term "faggot". As recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary, this pejorative term spread from North America back to England and its empire around 1914. Men abused as "faggots" and "fags" on several continents were thereby implicated in the ancient abjection of their European sisters: Those medieval women elders whose firewood collecting saw them humiliated as witches in livelihood-denying sexual hate crimes, were themselves deemed "faggots" – only good for burning. Johnson, similarly destitute and attempting to survive on the forest margin, is therefore now made to pare from deep inside a corpse-like "dead log", a defiantly life-preserving bunch of "match-sticks":

> […] breaking open a dead log with his axe to find dry wood inside it. He cut bits of this into thin shavings, the size of match-sticks, with his knife and, lighting them, built the fire up carefully until it would take great sodden branches in its flames. […] Afterwards he rolled and smoked two cigarettes – extravagantly – for his store of tobacco was small (Mulgan, severally,138).

In this ritual fire making Mulgan invokes a deeply buried matrixial-feminine potential. The active agency represented by Johnson's miraculous recovery of this "dry wood" serves to confirm his entitlement to the symbolic smoking of "two cigarettes". Only one of these is for him – the other "fag" is for Scott. The implication here is that although the raw "makings" of masculinity may prolong a man's life in the cultural desert, it

John Mulgan, photographed c. 1943, in Greece by an unknown photographer. DA-12924-F, Alexander Turnbull Library.

is the homoerotically celebratory (sexual) fire ritual of "rolling your own" that now elevates Johnson above mere survival to a state of potential sexual and social regeneration in his "relations without relating" (Ettinger, 2006a, 71.2) to his mate.

The "roll-your-own" is thus the metaphor of a homoerotically attuned sexuality, which "husbands" emotional warmth. In this Mulgan implicitly ignites in his own text what his father Alan Mulgan, in his poem "Dead Timber", had lamented was: "the mystery of these lightless towers" (Pope, 1930, v.6.l.8). John Mulgan appropriates this image of unrealised creative phallic energy for *Man Alone*.

Alan Mulgan's poem was drawn to John Mulgan's attention at a formative time in his early life. His boyhood correspondence reveals that he first became aware of "Dead Timber" while he was away at school. It was part of a small selection of Alan Mulgan's work due to appear in the 1926 edition of *A Treasury of New Zealand Verse* edited by Alexander and Currie, and John enquired about these poems in a letter he wrote to his father during the reportedly traumatic (and likely also jouissant) period when he was enrolled as a junior boarder at Wellington College. His English teacher had called his attention to this anthology's imminent publication of some of his father's work, and John in turn advised his father of his teacher's sense of critical anticipation, which clearly he had come to share.

This letter from son to father is one of those they exchanged during the two-year period during which John's parents also went away, on a trip to Europe (Whiteford, 2011, 3), visiting the very "dwellings rich and olden" (v.7, l.3) that in "Dead Timber" Alan Mulgan had, with such subtextually transgressive longing, anticipated seeing.

Dead Timber

ALAN MULGAN

These are not ours—the isles of columned whiteness,
Set in an old and legend-whispering sea;
Nor crowning domes that take the morning's brightness,
Praising the Lord in open majesty;
Nor arches' hushed, eternal invocation;
Nor windows glowing with the love of God;
Nor slender minarets that take their station,
Like spears ascending where the faithful trod.
There, on the hillside, is our nation's building,

The tall dead trees so bare against the sky.
They neither kisst the morn nor take the sunset's gilding,
They hear no brimming prayer, no sinner's cry.
But in the desolation of our making,
Where prey at will the sun and wind and rain,
They call the sky to witness of our breaking,
They tell the stars the story of our gain.

Unranked and formless, stark they stand, unheeding
The whisper of their brothers, soon to die.
Their hearts are dry from the bright axe's bleeding,
And dead the music of their leaves' long sigh.
Mute in their misery of devastation,
They hold between us and the living light,
In twisted agony of revelation,
The lifeless litter of the field of fight.

Yet if some ask: "Where is your art, your writing
By which we know that you have aught to say?"
We shall reply: "Yonder, the hillcrest blighting,

There is our architecture's blazoned way.
This monument we fashioned in our winning,
A gibbet for the beauty we have slain;
Behold the flower of our art's beginning,
The jewel in the circlet of her reign!"

Yet so doth patient beauty work, subduing
The very husks of death to gracious ends;
The heavy, plodding days, their task pursuing,
Slowly transmute these victims into friends.
Dwelling with them, we take them to our living;
Looking on them, we wed them to our sight;
Resting with us, they grant us their forgiving,
And creep into the round of our delight.

Less were the dawn in miracle unfolding,
Did these return not to the breathless hill.
Disturbed the heart, known loveliness beholding,
Did these not watch us as the hours fill.
Strange were the hush of eve by mists enchanted,
Did these not stand to catch the floating flowers.
Common the moonlight by the shadows haunted
But for the mystery of these lightless towers.

Some day our feet may walk where art is golden;
Then round our hearts will lap the tides of time.
We shall be one with dwellings rich and olden,
And fragrant prospects sweet with ancient rhyme.
Yet, though we go where memories come thronging,
And wonder leads us wheresoe'er we roam,
Through our delight will creep the voice of longing—
O dear, dead timber on the hills of home!

(Pope, 1930, 108-110)

“Dead Timber” would be published again four years later, in the 1930 anthology *Kowhai Gold* (Pope, 1930). But the poet-editor Allen Curnow, in the introduction to his own later anthology for Penguin, critically pilloried Pope’s anthology for its feminine-effeminate puerility (Curnow, 1960, 57). But whether the profound hostility Curnow expressed towards *Kowhai Gold*, which was subsequently taken up by numerous (male) New Zealand critics over many decades, is offered under the guise of critical objectivity or comedy, all these self-consciously negative reactions are actually a disrecognition as unheimlich of the fact that half this volume’s contributors are female. Trixie Te Arama Menzies comparative analysis of *Kowhai Gold* (Te Arama Menzies, 1988) has definitively shown that apart from its 50/50 gender representation, this collection is actually in no other way a significant departure from the standard of the anthologies that came before it. Its detractors’ own sexual anxieties are therefore what make the equal presence of women poets in *Kowhai Gold* an unheimlich manifestation of the “femininity-effeminacy” believed by its hostile or ambivalent critics, to be contaminating the arts in general and poetics in particular, in Aotearoa New Zealand at this time. And if continuing attempts to rehabilitate the phallocentric critical perspectives of Allen Curnow’s three post-Second-World-War poetry anthology introductions (without acknowledging his misogyny) are any indication, his particular horror of the “unheimlich feminine” can be said to persist in some Aotearoa New Zealand critical circles to this day.

The traumatic anxiety un/consciously directed by so many (male) critics towards the feminine voices in *Kowhai Gold* was doubtless further exacerbated by the un/conscious revulsion

these same critics felt towards the homoerotic subtext of Alan Mulgan's poem, "Dead Timber". The image of the dead tree was a familiar aesthetic trope for Alan Mulgan's contemporaries. (Dunn, Michael 1979) But they had not seen it addressed in these sexually trangressive terms. However the poem would prove a source of extraordinary affirmation and inspiration for John Mulgan.

In "Dead Timber" Alan Mulgan imbues imagery of the vestigial burnt timber trunks of New Zealand's great native forests – sacrificed to pastoral farming – with the human desolation felt by those bereaved and mourning their war dead. He contrasts the "dead timber" that embodies this unassuageable grief with the "living light" (v. 3. l. 6) which, in a celebration of phallic Eros, he venerates in the white (Grecian) column in the opening line of his poem. This implicitly homoerotic Grecian beauty is affirmed as the equal of any spiritual restorative experienced in the mosques, churches and temples of the world's great religions.

Aotearoa New Zealanders' stunted access to such foreign repositories of spiritual and emotional release is then lamented in lines freighted with an awareness of the sensual self-denial of local people – as represented by the dead timber "columns" of Aotearoa's burnt primeval forests: "They neither kisst the morn nor take the sunset's gilding, /they hear no brimming prayer, no sinner's cry" (v. 2, l. 3-4). These two lines form a narrative arc of symbolic sexual arousal that is then denied. The implicitly homoerotic kissing and touching actions of the "sun" (whose effects fail to register on "dead timber") contrasts with the sensually charged "brimming prayer" offered at "foreign"

sites, where such a "touch" is accepted. This culminates in the "sinner's cry" of symbolically transgressive coital consummation. In this Alan Mulgan gives voice to the idea that despite the brutal reshaping of his nation's (social and cultural) landscape and its official rejection of the sensuality of both the indigenous (forest) and the classical homoerotica of the Greeks, the promise of an accommodation with these "others" can yet be realised "here" – both via art in general and in his poem in particular.

He then goes on in his sixth verse to ascribe to the symbolically devastated and deadened phallic landscape of his homeland a redemptive creative association with "the hush of eve". In this the female fertility imagery of "floating flowers" and shadowed "moonlight" implies that the phallic "mystery of these lightless towers" might be resolved through their association with a currently repressed recognition (hence the "hush") of the sensual beauty of the feminine (Eve). This can be read as Alan Mulgan's recognition of a matrixial Beauty effect, which is as accessible to men as to women in that it arises in besidedness with an appreciation of the compassionate hospitality of the primal unknown becoming m/Other: Eve. (Matrixial Beauty effects are discussed further in the sections: "Antigone at the scene of Johnson's 'crime'" and "Tiresias".)

Alan Mulgan's astonishing poem then goes on to advocate an interracial climate of social and cultural regeneration in which Pakeha and Maori, by *looking back at* each other as potential sexual partners, will, in this *re-spect*, heal the wounds of the colonising past. But this "forgiving" (v.5, l.7) image of "the other" as some-body who may then "creep into the round of our delight" (v.5, l.8) also carries with it an enticing sexual ambiguity

as to precisely which sexual orifice is being *eyed up* for these delightful acts of reconciliation. Among readers who notice this ambiguity, Alan Mulgan risks disconcerting as many as he comforts – for the poet's use of the verb "creep" comes with the transgressive implication of that "desire" not to be noticed – qua the "Love that dare not speak its name" which Oscar Wilde at his trial for gross indecency had been forced to justify.

Alan Mulgan's literary reputation has never recovered from the attacks the poet Dennis Glover initiated towards him in both the 1935 pamphlet *Short Reflections on the Present State of Literature in This Country* and the 1937 satirical poem "The Arraignment of Paris". In these pieces Glover vigorously objects to the allegedly "sentimental" verse of his women contemporaries – poets that Alan Mulgan, in his role as literary editor at the *Auckland Star*, had chosen freely to publish. Glover, along with many subsequent critics, implied that Alan Mulgan's alleged deficiencies of editorial taste were compounded by the sentimental, feminine-effeminate deficiencies of his own writing – a point his critics principally illustrate in terms of the supposed immaturity of his "attachment" to the m/Other[land] (England).

Of course Glover was one of the many br/Others acutely susceptible to the then pervasive cultural horror in Aotearoa New Zealand of the "femininity-effeminacy" of artists and intellectuals generally and of poets in particular. (Charman, 2017) Hence his self-defensively violent repudiation of any work that might "contaminate" by association the ostentatiously "staunch" masculinity of his own poetics.

However in defiance of such critical attitudes and in implicit support of his father, John Mulgan incorporates the

imagery of "Dead Timber" into *Man Alone*. In this he explicitly endorses Alan Mulgan's poetic indictment of the pointless waste of young men's lives in brutal acts of patriarchal imperialism, whether at home in Aotearoa NZ or in Europe. He also appropriates his father's despairing image of the dead bodies of such men, fallen in combat, as the "lifeless litter of the field of fight" (v.3, l.8). In doing so he symbolically reclaims Alan Mulgan's image of the corrupted human detritus of "glorious" warrior sacrifice by symbolically transfiguring this suffering into the "makings" of his hero Johnson's restorative homoerotic peacetime relationship with Scott. The (leaf) "litter" of "fallen" warrior masculinity is symbolically reclaimed as the fuel of Johnson and Scott's br/Otherly love.

Alan Mulgan's poem had horribly represented those wasted br/Others, whether at foreign WW1 sites like Gallipoli and Passchendaele, or at home during the colonising wars of Aotearoa, as "the very husks of death" (v.4, l.2). But John Mulgan picks up these husks, found metaphorically strewn in "Dead Timber" across the psychic landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand, and breathes life into them through the image of the roll-your-own cigarette. The unheimlich of the battlefield corruption of the br/Others in Alan Mulgan's poem is thus matrixially re-gathered by John Mulgan into the "columned whiteness" of the roll-your-own cigarette. This image is ignited in the subtext of *Man Alone* as the symbolic token of Scott and Johnson's burning passion.

Equally, the formerly pristine, indigenous habitat of Aotearoa, which Alan Mulgan indicts Europeans for laying waste to in "Dead Timber", is symbolically regenerated in

Man Alone by the productive "explosion" that occurs on Stenning's discovery of Johnson's illicit sexual relationship with Rua. Through her European husband's death Rua regains her freedom from "stenning" and is able to return to her friends and family – thereby allowing for the symbolic release of a regenerating [indigenous] life force in Aotearoa.

However in Rua's earlier sexual and economic entrapment at the hands of first Stenning and then Johnson, John Mulgan offers an equivocal response to the interracial marital optimism of "Dead Timber". Despite this caveat, by taking up the other major assertion of his father's poem – that as a necessary precursor to cultural healing it is the artist's role to proclaim their truth, however dangerous or unwelcome that may be – John Mulgan's support of his father is unambiguous.

In "Dead Timber" Alan Mulgan offered an explicit validation of transgressive aesthetic projects – not least in terms of his own poem's subversive homoerotic subtext. The audacious literary project later undertaken by his own son John in writing and publishing *Man Alone*, would see Alan Mulgan's poem serve as both precedent and spur.

This is not to overlook the ambivalence implicit in *Man Alone* towards the use of a cancer-causing agent like tobacco as the symbolic token of a homoerotically redemptive masculine subjectivity. The ambiguity of this symbol sees Mulgan register that it is Scott's quite literal smoking that dangerously exacerbates his pre-existing "bad chest" condition. This "debility" justifies both his exclusion from military service and his premature extinguishment from the narrative. But at the subtextual level Mulgan also recognises that Scott's "bad chest"

represents the transgressivity of the mates' heartfelt love for one another, as expressed in their "smoking" sexual passion. Their br/Otherly love being antithetical to militarism. It is this which makes the relationship they have embarked on ever more socially dangerous for them both. This irony speaks to the quite literally life-threatening effects and affects to which those who express their homoerotic sensibilities in a heteronormative society are exposed.

John Mulgan's personal consciousness of the particular dangers of "smoking" for him as a man enlisted in the army are obliquely acknowledged in one of the three letters he wrote immediately before he committed suicide in Cairo at the end of the war. He makes the impossibility of his position subtextually clear in the farewell note he addressed to his commanding officer:

> The fact is that when I came out from Greece last November, I found I was suffering from cancer of the throat – (I had been warned of this some years ago and gave up smoking and drinking for a long time without effect except a diminution of the pleasure of life) (Whiteford, 2011, 300).

Since at autopsy no throat cancer was found in John Mulgan (O'Sullivan, 2011, 337) it must be surmised that here the writer is speaking metaphorically. Mulgan's assertion that he has "cancer of the throat" reveals his belief that a "stenning" of his voice will soon be inescapable. This reading does not, of course, negate the fact that Mulgan had just spent years behind enemy lines alongside Greek partisans engaged in a pitiless guerrilla war against German occupiers while being obliged to take anti-malarial medication that has potentially depressive side effects.

Therefore he could have been suffering from a post-traumatic stress disorder with multiple causative factors.

Nonetheless, what his suicide note pointedly asserts to his commanding officer is his unwillingness to obey the "health warnings" he has received on account of his previous "smoking and drinking". Although he now feels obliged to quit, he believes any such abstinence will traumatically compromise his "pleasure of life". This can be read as Mulgan's subtextual assertion that his wish "when [he] came out from Greece", to both engage in and speak out about his transgressive "habits" is now haunted by a sense of dread that he cannot outlive. It therefore appears that in the brutally unforgiving cold-war sexual climate rapidly chilling all around him, somebody has given John Mulgan a sense that his [sexual] "immunity" is dangerously low.

At the time of Mulgan's suicide a supposedly more "humane" pathologising of the homoerotic sensibility was modifying the conventional demonisation and penalisation. Not just bad, but now mad too. As a "scientific" addition to religious exorcism and legal criminalisation, brutal attempts to produce a "cure" could now entail humiliating "therapeutic" sequestration in psychiatric hospitals where "treatment" included the torture of chemical castration and aversive electric shocks.

Mulgan's medically focused last words are acutely alert to such pathologising tendencies. However what reads in the phallocentric domain as his note of farewell simultaneously emerges in the matrixial domain as a note of introduction. For if the "smoking" imagery in his explanation of his suicide is borderlinked with the subtext of *Man Alone*, a time and space beyond the temporal becomes accessible to the reader.

In this Mulgan can be understood as offering in his suicide note a matrixial aesthetic link to the borderspace Johnson inhabits after his crossing of the Rangipo and before his entry to the Kaimanawa. His symbolic lighting of a fire at this margin and his burning and inhaling of two roll-your-owns, ritually reveals his mate Scott as being, in death, nonetheless the light of Johnson's life. A mate as much a living part of Johnson's consciousness as he ever was. Mulgan's note therefore points the reader away from the irrecoverable schizing of the phallocentric domain – manifested in his attribution of his suicide to a "smoking"-related throat cancer – to embrace the very different meanings "smoking" behaviour carries in the matrixial heimlich of his novel. There it is a metaphor for the compassionate hospitality and homely strangeness (queerness) of homoerotically identified self-fragilisation.

In *Man Alone* Mulgan treats "smoking" as a symbolically alchemical transfiguration of what's "base" into what's "precious". Johnson's architectural construction of the little *white column* of the roll-your-own cigarette draws *tip to butt*, on the celebratory *inspiration* associated with the homoerotic in "Dead Timber". John Mulgan's use of this metaphor is his affirmation of the "kiss" of the "sun" [son] on a white Grecian column. But the unheimlich battlefield death and corruption in his father's poem becomes in *Man Alone* the tobacco-leaf 'litter' whose *dry* (ironic) firing redeems this *waste of men* in the sacred white pumice-ash sands of Onetapu – a symbolically seminal reservoir of br/Otherly love. Of course this is an image that could not fail to viscerally disgust the implied reader – should they register it.

But "Onetapu, the place of the shivering sands" is not for Johnson a region of death and corruption, but a site of [pro]

creative metaphysical access to the Greek and Maori classical cultures, which jointly validate for him his relationship with Scott.

Yet in the Kaimanawa section of his novel, John Mulgan's attempt to express his protagonist's homoerotic sensibility in terms reclaimed from its unheimlich characterisation in phallocentric discourse as "effeminacy", will create unresolvable difficulties for Johnson, leading to a withholding of readerly catharsis.

In this it should not be forgotten that "smoke" is an allusively fluid symbol whose effects in *Man Alone* are noted as pervasive and lingering – both life threatening and life giving. But tellingly Mulgan does not attempt with this image to prescriptively define the source or significance of the transgressive sexual "fires" in any "other". This is an implicit assertion that a homoerotic sensibility may arise, like smoke, from any number of historic, environmental and human causations, and be accompanied by an equally predictable and/or unpredictable diversity of affects and effects. Yet for all that, in *Man Alone* its emergence is understood as simply inevitable.

23. Antigone at the scene of Johnson's "crime"

IN SOME WAYS *Man Alone* can be thought of as a "crime" novel – not only because its plot revolves around a calculated killing, but also because the attitudes of its implied reader place the text's very existence under criminal threat.

By soliciting the homoerotic body in what is for the implied reader all its horrific phallic-femininity, Mulgan engages in a subtextual "outrage" in the Lacanian sense of crossing beyond an allowable limit (Ettinger, 2010a, 223). This plays out in the seemingly perverse Antigone-like incitement to their own deaths that is risked by Johnson, Scott and the narrator – the text's key homoerotically significant characters. Their knowingly transgressive sexual actions resonate of the equivalently transgressive desire of Antigone in Sophocles' play to bury her brother with all due ceremony – even at the cost of her own life. *Antigone* is a text with which Mulgan would have become familiar in his focus on Greek (and English) for his final undergraduate year at Auckland University (O'Sullivan, 2011, 53).

In Sophocles' play Antigone goes against her uncle King Creon's express command that her brother Polyneices' body should be left to the beasts. Her punishment is entombment – a slow suffocation – which she hastens by hanging herself. Equally Johnson chooses, after his vengeance and mourning for his mate Scott, to re-enlist for defiantly suicidal combat in preference to the inexorable suffocation of homophobic civilian life.

But for critic Judith Butler, since Antigone is the product of incest her insistence on grieving formally for Polyneices also registers her transgressive love and mourning for her "other" brother – her father, Oedipus. In this Sophocles is understood to assert that although the incestual bonds linking Antigone with Polyneices and Oedipus are accursed in the phallic structuring, they also exist in all legitimacy in an unspecified domain beyond patriarchal condemnation. This then, for Judith

Butler, is "Antigone's Claim" (Butler, 2000). And for Butler it operates outside the paradoxically prescriptive "universal" criteria (structuralist and linguistic) on which kinship and desire are theorised in the work of Freud, Hegel and Lacan. Butler therefore reads *Antigone* as being Sophocles' aesthetic attempt to question the constraints that phallocentric discourse applies to kinship relations, by tacitly defending a more complex conception of legitimate sexual identity and expression.

Sophocles is joined in this premise by Mulgan. After the death of someone they love both their protagonists assert the full legitimacy of their transgressive relationships with the deceased by engaging in symbolic acts of mourning antithetical to patriarchal authority.

Judith Butler suggests that Antigone's implicit claim to the full humanity of all her incestual sibling relationships (including that with her father-brother Oedipus), calls her from "The Place of Loss" to occupy not only *The Place of the sister* but also "The Place of the brother" (Butler cf. Ettinger, 2010a, 213). This occurs because Antigone, by taking responsibility for her male sibling's burial, is performing a brotherly kinship role in relation to him. Her uncle the King thus signals Antigone's *assumed* "masculine" kinship with himself when he says: 'I swear I am no man and she the man if she can win this and not pay for it" (Sophocles l. 528 in: Grene & Lattimore, 1991). This is a dramatic provocation on Sophocles' part because if, despite her suicide, Antigone "lives" for the audience of his play (as she has continued to do in countless performances since around 441 BC) she wins aesthetically and so, in all her femininity, is paradoxically indeed "the man". Her queered masculine

gender is also reiterated when Oedipus asserts that for him his loyal daughters have taken the place of their brothers (Butler, 2000, 62). The substance of Antigone's claim is therefore a destabilisation of both the norms and constituencies of the permissible patriarchal kinship categories.

Equally Johnson, in his mourning of Scott, destabilises the norms and constituencies of the patriarchal kinship categories of his era by engaging in a symbolically incestual, but retributive Oedipal relationship with Rua as his "mother-figure". And his relationship with Scott can be understood conventionally as a "queer" one because it is pejoratively "feminine-effeminate" – and hence paradoxically not only br/Otherly but (colloquially speaking) also "sissy" – sisterly. The novel's subtextual exposure of the depths of Johnson's homoerotic love and grief for Scott thus transgressively positions him, like Antigone, not only in *the place of loss*, but also symbolically in *the place of the sister*. Furthermore, in terms of his full empathy with Rua's experience as a woman in patriarchy, he is also a "sister" to her in terms of his "sissy" recognition that her formal and informal dehumanisation mirrors his own.

Indeed, the accursed terms of their adulterous transgression and its fated horrific outcome do not prevent Johnson from maintaining an attitude towards Rua of compassionately empathic *re-spect*, disavowing the implied reader's condemnation of her: "He tried to imagine once what it must be like for her living with Stenning" (Mulgan, 92). This subtextual empathy persists even though Johnson is also made to express – via his anger and frustration with Rua – the implied reader's horror and fury at her evasions of patriarchal authority: "'You bloody fool,'

he said angrily. 'What in hell are you doing here?'"(Mulgan, 120).

But equally, as himself symbolically *Tongariro-Johnson*, the protagonist's wilderness relationship with Rua[pehu], sees him co-emerge from *The Place of the brother* he occupies in jointness with *Ngauruhoe-Scott*, to *look back at* Rua in re-spect. He can occupy a br/Otherly position in relation to Rua, in addition to his transgressively "sissy-sisterly" feminine-effeminate connection with her, because the joint masculine and feminine aspects of his own "half-caste" sexuality are unmerged.

However the implied reader, after enjoying the titillation of Johnson's adulterous sexual liaison with Rua, sees the hero in his wilderness travail apparently expiate the sin of his provocation against Stenning's patriarchal right to marital ownership and control of his wife. Rua herself is dismissed in this as a mere sex object.

But in fact, subtextually the adulterous offence that Johnson is expiating is not actually his (entirely calculated) role in Stenning's end, but rather his betrayal, unbeknownst to both Rua and the implied reader, of the de facto marital bond he had with his mate. In this Johnson, like Antigone, definitively occupies the "Place of Loss", with the mates' relationship subtextually reaffirmed. At the same time Johnson celebrates his covert engineering of Rua's equal release from *stenning*.

BODILY BURIAL: BODILY DISPLAY

The novel's talismanic claim to the legitimacy of Scott and

Johnson's shared homoerotic sensibility is lodged with the reader in the facsimile "letter" Mulgan inserts in his text. Its key metaphor – the ritual *disinterment* of an implicitly homoerotic body – alerts Johnson and the reader to Scott's imminent mortal end. In this image the homoerotic body is taken from hidden symbolic preservation in a "cellar", with the implication that it might yet be revived, and placed for formal "public consumption" on a dining table before "friends" (Mulgan, 82). This scene of bodily revelation is a mirror reversal of Antigone's insistence on the ritual *interment* of the body of her brother Polyneices. However the symbolism of both texts, whether of bodily burial or bodily registry, has the same ethical and philosophical intentions. Johnson and Antigone can each be seen as going beyond the context of the Oedipal drama, offering matrixial resistance to the patriarchal ascription of bestiality to a beloved "br/Other" through their own self-fragilisation.

However in an ironic reversal of the transgressive conciliation of Antigone's act of burial, Stenning's death sees Johnson vengefully treat the body of his "father figure" as a mere animal carcass. This is Mulgan's eye for an eye textual retribution for patriarchy's hegemonic refusal to honour the humanity of Johnson's access to the body of Scott, whether in life or in the rituals of mourning.

'Man Alone' thus subtextually asserts Johnson and Scott's entitlement to 'livability' with a same sex "other" and, in the event of the beloved's death, the 'legitimacy of grieving' (Ettinger, severally, 2010a, 213), which Judith Butler reads as the very claims Antigone makes in *her* transgression of patriarchal kinship norms. And tellingly, in 'Man Alone' no mention is ever

made of Stenning's funerary rites: his tangi – or his burial.

But in a calculated contrast with Stenning's brutally unmourned exit, Johnson's end, though it remains tantalisingly unknown, is ambivalently anticipated in the novel's framing introduction and epilogue as being – at least in the eyes of the implied reader – heroically exemplary. This fits with the Hegelian position that for the good of the state, kinship relations in the patriarchal family are ideally constituted in such a way as to furnish young men for war (Butler, 2000,12). Johnson's own family are thus ironically suggested as celebrating his army re-enlistment:

> "My brother'll be pleased," he said, later in the evening. "He won't know, but if he did know he'd be very pleased. So'll Mabel, she'll be very pleased" (Mulgan. 1960, 204).

This familial approval of his return to battle, despite the likelihood of his death, is hegemonically affirmed across the nation during Mulgan's era, as the WW1 casualty lists were freshly carved into granite memorials that commemorated the "sacrifice" of these fallen for the common good in every city, town and hamlet. But Johnson's acceptance of his brother and sister-in-law's approval of his reenlistment carries the cruel subtext that for them, reading his name carved in death on a war memorial would be infinitely preferable to reading of him alive in a newspaper report of his trial and sentencing for criminal [homo]sexuality.

War memorials are a registry of the heroic military "immortality", seemingly endorsed at the beginning and end of

Man Alone when Johnson voluntarily joins the doomed side of revolutionary democracy, in the "just" Spanish conflict against Fascism.

Of course "monumental" claims to the patriotic immortality of the war dead are not actually descriptive, but prescriptive – as admitted in the anxiety that underlies Kipling's carven phrase "lest we forget". Mulgan's novel is equally anxious that the reader might "forget" – not only past military suffering, but more particularly his hero's transgressive sexual presence.

Therefore Johnson's army re-enlistment is constructed subtextually – not as the act of idealistically glorious military self-sacrifice it appears to be for the implied reader, but as a disturbingly homicidal-suicidal impulse towards *Thanatos*. The kinship his family refuses him in civilian life is ironically substituted with the dangerous homo[sexual]social "br/Otherhood" of the army.

However for the implied reader, the protagonist's re-enlistment is purely heroic as is suggested by the ostensibly reverential tone of the narrator's introductory exchange with a fatalistic Johnson during his temporary leave from battle. Their dialogue implicitly acknowledges the historical fact that the "side" Johnson is fighting on may have moral superiority but is militarily fated to lose. Which begs the question whether in matters of conflict, political as well as sexual, peaceful negotiation mightn't ultimately be a more productive form of engagement.

Mulgan's advocacy of precisely such an alternative means of conflict resolution is revealed in his own recourse to the aesthetic forum of the novel. Nonetheless Johnson's apparently

stoic acceptance of the likelihood of his imminent combat death is seemingly valorised in the text's introduction and epilogue. And at the end of his tale the narrator hears from several of Johnson's warrior mates about his apparently *active* heroic assent to his own mortality: "'The boys like him', they said. [...] He took what was coming" (Mulgan, Epilogue). However this willingness to die is supplemented subtextually by a life-affirming matrixial *Eros* (Ettinger, 2010a, 223). And in this Johnson's subversive attitude to the "disposition" of Scott's body and his own has further important parallels with Bracha Ettinger's reading of the matrixial resistance offered by Antigone to the bestial annihilation of her brother's body.

THE THEATRE OF DEATH AND MATRIXIAL EROS

No matter how doomed, in Oedipal terms, are Antigone's transgressive incestual attachments to her father-brother/s and sister, these relationships are always already life-affirming in the matrixial domain – on the basis of the siblings' joint *maternal* origins. This is because, according to Bracha Ettinger's matrixial theory, Antigone and her father-brother/s and sister have each serially enjoyed the compassionate hospitality of the active womb of their mother, Jocaste. And this is despite the fact that patriarchy systematically represses and forecloses recognition of the m/Other as a life-giving and affirming source of matrixial Eros, by positioning the womb in the phallic domain as a solely passive container – a dead end. Yet for Bracha Ettinger there nonetheless exists, in late pre-birth, an originary, *non-prohibited, non-sexual incest* between unknown becoming m/Other and unknown becoming infans (Ettinger, 2010a, 215).

It is this precedent of the co-adjacent infans/maternal intimacy of late pre-birth that matrixially legitimises Antigone's relationships with all her siblings, including that with her br/Other-father Oedipus. And equally it is this maternal precedent that can be said to legitimise the transgressivity of Johnson's relationship with his "m/Otherly-sister" Rua – not to mention his matrixially feminine, albeit fraternal sexualised bond with his br/Other sisterly-mate Scott.

Johnson's symbolic "gestation" in the Kaimanawa Forest is therefore Mulgan's assertion of the maternal auspices under which his protagonist's "incestual" sexual and sibling relationships with both Scott and Rua can in fact be accounted legitimate. And it is on these matrixial terms that the human subjectivity of even "the villain" Stenning is textually recognised, albeit only in death and, in a supreme irony, via the agency of a mere animal. Darky's noble repugnance at the fatal spilling of Stenning's blood is a rebuke to the racist ascription of subhumanity inherent in Stenning's own naming of the horse.

As for Antigone, the incestual Oedipal outrage to which she is heir sees her family unforgivable in patriarchy and so intergenerationally cursed. Thus her own refusal to submit to patriarchal authority – by defying her uncle the king's insistence that Polyneices' humanity and her kinship with him must be spurned – makes her death dramatically inevitable. Nonetheless for Sophocles' audience, according to Ettinger:

> [There is] during the same experience, a form of emergence, the birth of a co-poietic occasion is intuited […] leading from within the aesthetic field, through the sharing of trauma and jouissance and their traces, to the sparkling of an ethical *possibility to respond* according to the intuited co-response-ability (Ettinger, 2010a , 225).

It is precisely this *possibility* to respond, as felt in jointness with an ethical imperative to do so albeit in transgression of the phallic structures – that may also "sparkle" for the reader of *Man Alone*. This dramatic potential is recognisable even in the presence of death because the *ethical possibility to respond* to "the unknown other" is innately life affirming. Such situations reawaken echoes of the subject's originary sub-subconscious experience of the compassionate hospitality of their *unknown becoming m/Other*. As felt concurrently with their own originary compassionate hospitality in late pre-birth, towards her.

According to Ettinger this human susceptibility to the subjectivity of "the unknown other" is evoked with redoubled intensity in females since they are additionally able to *be* the unknown becoming m/Other. This particular aptitude for the matrixial domain exists in women whether they are childfree – like Antigone and Rua – or not.

Such a matrixial-feminine propensity is registered metaphysically in the paradox that a woman's menstrual bleeding is life affirming rather than life threatening. But Ettinger cautions that women's particular matrixial susceptibility is in no way grounds for superiority since – as poignantly also illustrated by Antigone and Rua – it is to them as much a source of trauma as of jouissance.

THE BEAUTY EFFECT

For the implied reader of *Man Alone* any such matrixial possibilities are foreclosed by Johnson's overriding significance

as a warrior. In these terms what registers first and last for the implied reader (quite literally, in the novel's introduction and epilogue) is Johnson's war heroism and its attendant glory. For as a warrior, Johnson accrues the *blinding splendour of the near encounter with death* that is recognisable in the phallocentric domain as a "Beauty" effect. Lacan theorises such a phenomenon as an unconscious revisiting and blindingly immediate assuagement of the buried pain of maternal loss – as felt in the repressed horror of castrative scission:

> "The effect of beauty is the effect of blindness" to the other side. (A castrating schism). The function of the beautiful is precisely "to reveal to us the site of man's relationship to his own death, and to reveal it to us in a blinding flash only" (Lacan in Ettinger, 2010a, severally 223).

In other words, the subject apprehending Beauty in phallocentric terms receives an anguishing intimation of mortality (qua severance from the m/Other), which is immediately obscured by an awe-inspiring sense of life's precious immediacy. And thus the subject is granted an aesthetic reprieve from the trauma of castration anxiety in the form of a dazzled blindness. In *Man Alone* it is this dazzling phallocentric Beauty effect that enforces the blindness and silencing of the implied reader with regard to both Johnson's ultimate fate and the novel's transgressive subtext.

In particular, the imminent likelihood of Johnson's death in combat – as signalled in the novel's introduction and epilogue – potentially awakens in the implied reader the traumatic anxiety and attendant horror towards "feminine-effeminacy" that is

intrinsic to the male-identified fear of castrative scission. But any such "cowardly" anxiety felt on Johnson's behalf then finds dazzled relief in his seemingly stoic assent to his own "glorious" sacrifice.

Equally, Johnson's violent (symbolically castrative) removal of Stenning, in what is referred to ironically in the introduction as "the peace" of the novel's body text, immediately segues to the acute dangers and the concurrently awe-inspiring phallocentric Beauty effect of the hero's wilderness adventures. The *blinding splendour* of the wilderness domain and in it Johnson's *near encounters with death* contribute to the implied reader's narrative blindness and silencing with regard to Johnson's revengefully plotted relief at Stenning's narrative schizing.

But Beauty springs from a different premise in the matrixial domain, wherein it neither blinds nor silences. For here "Beauty is the flash of intuned connectivity that is the condition for aesthetic activity" (Griselda Pollock in Ettinger, 2010a, 221). So the reader alert to the subtext of *Man Alone* may therefore recognise that in Johnson's wilderness sojourn, "Beauty" does not arise solely from his solitary near-death experiences in a sublime and terrible landscape. In fact the "Beauty" of the wilderness he enters is supplemented in matrixial terms, by Johnson's "intuned connectivity" with those "unknown others" symbolically and actually present in these mysterious scenes. In this Mulgan calls forth the originary human connection *with* the unknown becoming m/Other (not castrative separation *from* her) in a trans-subjective web of affect.

Similarly in the novel's epilogue, in the midst of what is pointedly the ongoing peril of battle, the combat reminiscences

offered about Johnson by his mates build on the intimate exchanges the narrator had with Johnson during his short respite from the fighting in the novel's introduction. The self-fragilisation of the several parties to these exchanges represents the *intuned connectivity* of a Beauty effect in the matrixial field. Johnson's handful of anonymous fighting mates (including the narrator) are well aware that they may each yet die as "cannon fodder", but the limited severality of their voices preserves their own humanity and his in a matrixial web of "transference of memory". In this, like Antigone, these men offer self-fragilising matrixial resistance to any phallocentric imputation of anonymous bestiality to either themselves or their br/Other Johnson. (The specifics of this matrixial interweaving of the voices of Johnson's mates with the voice of the narrator are discussed in detail in the last two sections of this topic.)

Theirs is an *intuned connectivity*, which mirrors Antigone's choice to reverence *her* deceased brother, even at the threatened cost of her own life, by preserving her matrixial webs of "transference of memory". To allow her brother's corpse to remain unburied would be to treat him as mere animal carrion. This would allow "bestiality to be forced upon Antigone's own humanity" (Ettinger, 2010a, severally 226) and make her life a living death.

BESTIALITY DENIED AND THE TRANSFERENCE OF MEMORY

Equally, Johnson and Scott's "criminal" expression of love for one another and the anonymous narrator's multifaceted account

of it represent Mulgan's explicit refusal, in matrixial terms, of the patriarchal ascription of bestiality to the homoerotic sensibility. It is no coincidence that in the period in which Mulgan writes, according to his famous contemporary George Orwell, the epithet colloquially used to denounce homosexual behaviour was *beastliness* (Orwell, 2008, 272). Johnson's expression of his homoerotic sensibility in relation to Scott thus courts a "beastly" social death precisely as punitive as the intergenerational punishment patriarchally directed at Antigone and all her family for the incestual transgressions committed by her mother & father-brother.

Indeed Johnson, in subtextually mourning his br/Other-sisterly-mate Scott, is as matrixially resistant as Antigone to the cultural prohibition that determines *her* grief "perverse". But by sharing the story of his relationship with the novel's narrator, Johnson is potentially able to preserve his matrixial webs of "transference of memory" *with the reader* – precisely as Antigone does in relation to Sophocles' audience. In this Johnson is subtextually revealed as willing, like Antigone, to take his life in his own hands. He does this because for him to accede to the patriarchal prescription that his love for Scott is *bestial* would be intolerable and as such, precisely as for Antigone, a living death.

But the actions Johnson takes against patriarchal "stenning" are also designed to secure the economic, sexual and social liberation of his m/Other-sister figure Rua. The success of his transgressive intervention on her behalf is signalled in Rua's relieved return "home" to the unknown otherness of her ethnically "mixed" social and kinship group of extended family and friends.

In this Rua's relationships are as subversive of phallocentric regulation as those of Mulgan's hero. This is shown by the endorsement her "people" give to Rua's decision to leave both the farm and her patriarchally sanctioned marriage, to live at large in an informal, open-ended sexual relationship with Johnson – a man who is not her husband.

Rua's agency is also underlined in the mysteries of her sexually active childfree status while married, and after she returns to her marae as a widow by her freedom to go off on holiday with a female family connection. In this the novel subtextually celebrates Rua's rejection of the patriarchally prescribed feminine role, which has a range of requirements – self-abnegation; subjection to male supervision and control; monogamy; involuntary acceptance of her husband's acts of sexual penetration; involuntary pregnancy and childbirth; and her acquiescence to economic exploitation and dependence. These "stenning" conditions are advocated and socially enforced by the eponymously named "Sayers". Rua's evasion and defiance of these terms positions her as a character socially unacceptable to the implied reader, thereby underlining Judith Butler's assertion that:

> Those various modes in which the oedipal mandate fails to produce normative family all risk entering into the metonymy of that moralised sexual horror that is perhaps most fundamentally associated with incest (Butler, 2000, 71).

It is this "moralised sexual horror" that seemingly explains the peculiar intensity of flabbergasted affront felt by Johnson, as proxy for the implied reader, at the point where Rua shares

with him her determination to leave Stenning. “Johnson felt in himself an over-burdening anger and irritation, a desire to strike and hurt her” (Mulgan,120). Of course subtextually this moment actually reflects Johnson’s complete inability to commit to any long-term heterosexual relationship, coupled with his consternation that Rua imagines he could.

Judith Butler goes on to ask two questions of Antigone, which might equally be addressed to Rua at this moment – and of course, in his patriarchally ascribed “feminine-effeminacy”, subtextually to Johnson himself: ‘What in *her* act is fatal for heterosexuality in its normative sense? And to what other ways of organising sexuality might a consideration of that fatality give rise?’ [my emphasis] (Butler, 2000, 72).

In terms of *Man Alone*, the answer to Butler’s questions is that ultimately only positive consequences arise for Rua as a result of Johnson’s symbolically incestual *outing* with her as his m/Other-sister. The benefits Rua feels are a direct result of the failure of the Oedipal taboo, which legislates normative monogamous heterosexuality. In fact her temporary “incestual” sexual connection with Johnson has produced her liberation from any further compulsion to participate in a patriarchally “normative” family. And it allows Johnson, despite Scott’s death – and even in the face of his own death – to symbolically reclaim the fully human significance of his relationship with his br/Other-sisterly-mate-spouse.

The irreconcilability of these sexually transgressive kinship positions, with the phallic structures, is recognised in the novel’s epilogue, where Johnson’s fate is left suggestively poised between life and death in “a tunnel”. But this is no dead-end,

because a "tunnel" is a pointedly transitory borderspace and as such a matrixial-feminine locus of non-life before life. Here Johnson's now wounded "homoerotic body" is temporarily sheltered from overt attack. But as a symbolic setting, the "tunnel" image actively escalates the tension introduced at the beginning of the novel in the retrieval of the homoerotic body from its safe concealment and preservation in the "cellar" of Robertson's talismanic letter. Now it is up to the reader to decide whether if Mulgan's protagonist emerges from his state of suspended animation he will be met with literary annihilation, or will be granted the cultural healing of a right of passage to a full life – in company with those "unknown others" who are under frank attack in besidedness with him.

This is not to ignore that for the implied reader, Johnson – via his sacrificial transcendence to a patriotically constituted *after*-life – supposedly achieves heroic immortality in death. Through this phallic Beauty effect the implied reader is shielded from the outrage that any recognition of the protagonist's "criminal" sexuality must produce in patriarchy. But in ascribing a heavenly "happily-ever-after" to Johnson, the implied reader is also blinded and silenced with regard to the actual schizing horrors of Johnson's war – and to their own war-related traumas.

However Mulgan offers no such "relief" in the matrixial domain. For here the life-giving matrixial webs of affect – and of memory – that the text subtextually recognises and attempts to preserve, are indexed to the response-ability of the reader.

In these terms Johnson is potentially *aesthetically* availed, like Antigone, of a matrixial *passage from non-life to life*. Both

protagonists, on account of their customarily hidden and foreclosed relationship with the m/Other, are potentially able to access via the unknown otherness of the reader/audience, an *aesthetically* restorative outcome for themselves and – in memory – for their respective beloved br/Others.

THE JOCASTE COMPLEX

According to Ettinger there exists for every subject an active creative possibility, that is crucially "differentiated from the passage from life to death" (Ettinger, 2010a, severally, 213). This creative alternative emerges in Sophocles' play because (as in all human lives) Antigone has a connection – as does Johnson in *Man Alone* – with the m/Other *before as beside* the phallocentric domain.

Although both Johnson and Antigone are indeed transgressively implicated in the phallocentrically predicated Oedipus complex, their actions can also be seen as aesthetically subverting it in favour of a matrixial supplementation of its terms. These actions are invested, via their respective matrixially-feminine acts of com~passion for their br/Others, in the Jocaste complex.

Ettinger theorises that the Jocaste complex – which encompasses the subject's phantasy of their compassionate borderlinks with a Primal Mother figure – is a subconsciousness held concurrent with the subject's anxiety as regards the possibility of being abandoned by her (Ettinger, 2010a, 217).

However all such matrixial propensities are currently treated as unintelligible to phallocentric discourse (Ettinger,

2010a, 219). Nonetheless the mother's compassionate hospitality towards her child, as joint with her impulse towards her own survivability – even (if necessary) at the expense of her child – and the subject's ambivalent realisation of this paradox, makes what Ettinger identifies as *The Jocaste complex* analogous to the suite of psychic anxieties regulated in male terms on the basis of *The Oedipus complex*. The Jocaste complex therefore has the potential to supplement and/or evade the Oedipal (male as neutral-universal) feelings of jealousy towards the father/son as well as the trauma of maternal scission and loss, and the horror of castration and fear of mortality.

Yet the Jocaste complex and the relief it offers the subject are foreclosed in patriarchy as inadmissable and hence its provisions remains unarticulated in phallocentric discourse. Thus Antigone, after she makes the dramatic point that all her transgressive kinship relationships are, for her, ineradicable and fully human, chooses to kill herself rather than face a slow, patriarchal stifling.

However Johnson, although he seems at the very beginning and end of *Man Alone* equivalently set for a predictable death, subtextually has his ultimate fate left to the reader. And in the interregnum Mulgan stages an audacious "trial release" of the homoerotic body from the patriarchal womb-as-tomb. This astonishing m/Other-affirming episode occurs in the symbolically matrixial active-womb Johnson re-encounters in the Kaimanawa Forest.

Mulgan realises this "wild" setting as a life-engendering "place of the m/Other". However since it remains unregulated by patriarchy, it is a locale unintelligible on these matrixial

terms, to the implied reader. Nonetheless the Kaimanawa can be seen as a matrixial borderspace that offers "a glimpse at the Real of womb not in the sense of the parental-Oedipal incest and not as regressive shelter". In fact Johnson's "maternal" Kaimanawa is depicted equally in terms of Mulgan's *novel* aspiration to "*turn it creative beyond the Real*" (Ettinger, 2010a, severally 227). Mulgan's Kaimanawa Forest is a "womb" to which Johnson [re]turns under the terms of an active matrixial "aesthetic", which ensures that this mysterious locale can no longer be disrecognised as a mere dead end from which the subject must escape.

24. Three Primal Mothers Met in the Kaimanawa Forest

THE IMPLIED READER understands Johnson's experiences in the Kaimanawa Forest as a literal evocation of his physical deprivations there. However, for all the justly celebrated authenticity of the protagonist's wilderness adventures, since *Man Alone* is a fictional creation Johnson's experiences in the Kaimanawa must also be read for their symbolic content.

A transliteration of the word "Kaimanawa" into English renders the two parts of the forest's Maori name as kai = food, and manawa = heart. Therefore in crossing into the Kaimanawa Forest Johnson remains symbolically as much at "the heart of it all" (Mulgan, 136) as he was in his epiphany at Onetapu. He is still in an environment with the capacity to offer him the "heart

food" of emotional nourishment. This metaphorical English translation of the word "Kaimanawa" is vitally relevant to the subtext of *Man Alone* because it reframes the transgressivity implied by Scott's "bad chest", in terms of the *heartfelt* love Scott and Johnson have for each other. In the Kaimanawa, Johnson therefore enters a wild place that Mulgan also describes in terms of its depths. But in matrixial terms, this naming in no way usurps or competes with the "unknown-other" meaning/s of the forest's name for tangata whenua.

The abundantly vegetated habitat of the Kaimanawa in which Johnson finds refuge is for *Man Alone* a symbolic manifestation of that "forest" of the mythic homoerotic whose desiccated remnants the protagonist first encountered in his travails in the Rangipo. The exuberant growth of the Kaimanawa shows that the hostile tendencies that have erased the homoerotic sensibility in contemporary society are potentially reversible. In this the text characterises the solacing Kaimanawa in significantly maternal terms:

> [T]he hills seemed to close round and over him until he felt himself to be farther than anyone could ever follow him, surrounded and drowned in the hills and bush, safe and alone and submerged (Mulgan, 139).

This imagery of maternal amniotic envelopment is enhanced by Mulgan's reference to several lunar cycles: "[Johnson] watched the moons go by and when the third full moon, from the day when he had left the farm, began to wane, judged it time for him to move on" (Mulgan, 142). Under these "feminine" auspices the protagonist's three-month forest immersion is also

analogous to the period in late pre-birth where there originates the human capacity, as theorised by Bracha Ettinger, for feminine identified matrixial transsubjectivity.

The novel's Kaimanawa sequence can thus be considered as a symbolic locus of the patriarchally hidden and denied Jocaste complex, whose psychic role is to borderlink the subject with the creative potential of feminine generativity and to habituate the subject to the sourceless enigmas of existence, as realised in phantasies of the *Devouring Mother*, *The Not Enough Mother* and *The Abandoning Mother* (Ettinger, 2010a, 215). But this is a complex that also carries an "entirely visible yet blinding horror, that psychoanalytic culture mostly outrageously ignores" (Ettinger, 2010a, 216) – namely the fact that long before her Oedipal transgression, Jocaste's first crime was her abandonment of her baby son as a result of her husband Laius's jealousy of him. Her act was intended to ensure her own survival and, equally, to protect her son from her husband's murderous intent. But when the baby she hid grows to maturity Jocaste's survivalist action on behalf of both of them has the unintended consequence of enabling fulfilment of the prophecy of incest and murder referenced in the Oedipus complex. The "Jocaste complex", as theorised by Bracha Ettinger, is therefore adamantly foreclosed and repressed in patriarchy.

Yet Ettinger, in nonetheless recognising Jocaste's "whisper" (Ettinger, 2010a, 218), theorizes that it is possible to acknowledge both the primal mother's generativity *and* her survivability, even as this arises, on occasion, at the expense of her own offspring. For despite her incestual transgressions Jocaste was – in compassionate hospitality – the life-giving

mother of Oedipus, Antigone, Polyneices and their two other siblings. The Jocaste complex thus affirms the womb as an actively life-giving site of joint symbolic connection with the "unknown other". Of course the subject's eventual mournfully enacted realisation of their phallic scission from the m/Other is unavoidable. But Johnson's survival in the maternally signified Kaimanawa can be seen as Mulgan's *artworking* (Ettinger, 2010a, 218) of the matrixial supplementation which exists in concurrence with the phallocentric repression of the trauma of maternal separation and the inevitability of death.

In *Man Alone* the thriving Kaimanawa becomes for Johnson a metaphorical guarantor of the transgressive unquenchability of the primal m/Other's own survival impulse, and also of the viability and resilience of the diversity of independent "unknown other" subjectivities, one of which is the homoerotic sensibility, that she has the capacity to hospitably generate and potentially nurture. But consciousness of the womb's active matrixial significance for its daughters and sons remains foreclosed and culturally unintelligible in patriarchy. Instead the womb is rendered in the phallic structures as a solely passive site of repressed castrative horror – a tomb (Ettinger, 2010a, 227).

Yet Ettinger considers that by acknowledging the Jocaste complex the subject can gain respite from the patriarchal perception of the womb as an unheimlich dead end and realise it (correctly) as a symbolic and actual site of transmissivity. It is thus understood as a site of active passage wherein "We must recognise the transmissibility and shareability of accumulated traces of continual survival of traumatic events" (Ettinger, 2010a, 218). Johnson has *traces of continual survival of*

traumatic events – and to spare! But despite this in his relations with several different sexual partners, he offers self-fragilised matrixial resistance to "the centrality of gendered object choice –the question of male or female partner", instead engaging in his relationships with a "matrixial Eros" (Ettinger, 2006b, severally 115) that is beyond identity.

Man Alone thus recognises the enduring traumatic and jouissant significance of Johnson's relationship with the narrator, Scott and Rua (and even Waikato Mabel) in terms of their jointness in differenciation with him – and in terms of their own survivability. This is modelled symbolically by the resilience of the maternal Kaimanawa its-self, which is a textual move that reasserts Johnson's ongoing relationship with Scott in particular (even after Scott's death) as being concurrent with his and his mate's originary relationships with a primal [pro]creative Mother. Her *impulse to survival* is respected in the narrative to the same extent as are the survival instincts of Johnson, Scott, Rua and Waikato Mabel. (A point discussed further in the section "Walking out with [on] Mabel".)

And equally, Rua's transsubjective borderlink with Ruapehu, her volcanic mountain namesake, underlines her own cataclysmic rejection – as facilitated by Johnson – of the attempted patriarchal colonisation of both her sexuality and her indigeneity via *Stenning*. At the same time Rua's "half-caste" status invites the compassionate hospitality of the reader towards her "unknown otherness".

Meanwhile in the matrixially defined *compassionate hospitality* of the Kaimanawa, Johnson takes on himself the supposedly "inferior-feminine" domestic tasks formerly relegated to Rua,

Scott and the other[ed] women in the text. These include tea making, improving and tidying his cave, making his "bed", as well as "cooking", "baking" and "boiling" birds (Mulgan, severally, 141-142). The ostensible "triviality" of such housekeeping rituals – they do not qualify in patriarchy as economic "employment" – is pointedly signified here as being utterly indispensable to Johnson's survival.

His consciousness of the noisiness of the forest also recognises the water and birds that are his principal sources of nourishment: "There was sound all the time there in the dark loneliness of the bush. There was sound all the time, of the river running, and birds from early morning to the owls calling at night" (Mulgan, 141). This is a description that has suggestively "Heimlich" parallels with Ettinger's evocation of the matrixial realm of late pre-birth:

> This matrixial awareness accompanies us from the dawn of life. It is traced in the psyche by primitive modes of experience-organisation, which are attuned to perceive and elaborate readjustments and to reattune connectivity […] It is these variations of amplitude within an ongoing and changing affective and sensorial "noise" that make sense […]. "Meaning", as Francisco Varela puts it, "does not arise in the constituents themselves, but in the complex schemes of activity that emerge from the interactions between several of them." (Ettinger, 2006, 69.0-70.1).

However, once Johnson determines that he must make his way out of this vibrant milieu his initial sensory awareness of it as a naturally noisy, [pro]creatively interactive "womb" setting fades out. Instead his impressions change so that "He came, in

this journey, to hate the heavy silence of the bush" (Mulgan, severally 144).

In this deadening reappraisal Johnson relinquishes the possibility of matrixial connectivity with his "unknown other/s". It is as if in symbolic terms he now belatedly defers, in this maternally identified locale, to the phallocentric perception of "womb" as a "basic passive space, an imaginary 'only interior' locus" (Ettinger, 2006a, 63.4), and so represses his initial and primary experience of the Kaimanawa as a site – both with-in and with-out – of active, non-binary, matrixial co-becoming.

MEETING THE MOTHER MONSTERS

During Johnson's "gestational" residence in the Kaimanawa, certain of his traumatic experiences there also register in terms of what Ettinger identifies as the three archaic maternal phantasies of "The Abandoning Mother", "The Devouring Mother" and "The Not Enough Mother" (Ettinger, 2010, 7).

Ettinger characterises the appearance of these phantasies as "necessary for survival" since they are the "early tools" that help mediate the anxieties accompanying the subject's initiatory habituation to living in the world. However in a therapy setting, Ettinger distinguishes such sourceless affects, using the term "arousals", from those traumatic anxieties that emerge as a reactive response to *actual* maternal behaviours.

She further suggests that these sourceless maternal "arousals" are analogous to the sourceless anxieties that appear post-birth in the paternal symbolisation of:

> The primal phantasies of: Seduction, Castration, and Oedipus, [which] classical psychoanalysis considers as reconstructed or redesigned to regulate smoothly male subjectivising processes vis-à-vis a paternal loving figure with regard to primordial source-less enigmas (Ettinger, 2006b, severally 107).

In the Kaimanawa, the "sourceless enigma" of "The Devouring Mother" is represented by the river's "aggressive" incursion into Johnson's only shelter: "[T]he river flooded and washed into his cave, driving him out with all his possessions and his rifle, to sit wretchedly on the bank above through the night" (Mulgan, 140). Although the river is implied here as able to devour Johnson, his "home" and his possessions at will, in reality it has no such "motives" and in supposedly "driving him out" is simply following its natural course after rain. Read "correctly" these events are not caused by a "mother monster" but are the actions of a maternally manifested "sourceless enigma".

In a following scene the river's inexorable current is manifested as "The Abandoning Mother". Its unstoppable onward progress becomes a force that appears to render Johnson's needs and desires utterly insignificant – yet in reality this too is actually a "sourceless enigma":

> [T]he dark mud brown of the river was icy-cold and terrifying in its strength. His hands caught desperately at a rock, slipped, and caught again while the river poured over and past him (Mulgan, 144).

Perched on the riverbank after this narrow escape from drowning, "seeing the ground drop away and the river fall over

rocks in a fury of yellow foam", Johnson realises that having got hold of him and then let him go, the current has taken his only weapon: "Somewhere down there, he guessed, his rifle lay; its loss meant that he would be foodless now" (Mulgan, severally, 145). But this ascription of "fury" to the river and Johnson's sense of his being cast aside by its "terrifying […] strength" projects his own anxieties onto a force of nature. Once again, despite its incontrovertible effect on him, the river has no intentionality towards Johnson. It has not "taken" his rifle – he has lost his hold on it. And although he is "foodless now" this is not an act of maternal deprivation – in reality it is an entirely coincidental consequence of his being in the "right" place at the "wrong" time. Therefore the dissonance here between Johnson's needs and the frustration of his attempts to have them met can be seen as Mulgan's personification of the Kaimanawa which at this point is representing the sourceless enigma of "The Abandoning Mother".

The "maternal" Kaimanawa is also represented as a "Not Enough Mother" in Johnson's failed attempts to wring sufficient nourishment from the forest's manifest resources: "He had heard men talk of eating fern-roots, and tried this, but could not find anything that seemed like food" (Mulgan, 141). Johnson's progressive deafness to the forest's perpetual sounds further symbolically signifies it as a "Not Enough Mother". But in reality the forest is as noisy as it ever was – Johnson's perception of its oppressive "silence" is his projection onto it of his own unmet need for social connection.

However these overwhelming Kaimanawa experiences do not register in the eyes of the implied reader as they do in the matrixial domain, where Johnson's exposure to sites of primary

awe and respect for the cosmos, as facilitated through maternal symbolisations (Ettinger, 2010, 8), can provide psychic relief to the reader via the Jocaste complex. Rather, these maternally signified primal "arousals" are disrecognised by the implied reader as justifying the seemingly hostile representation elsewhere in the text of various "other" women characters – who for the implied reader join Rua, as "mother-monster readymades".

Such hostile estimations of Johnson's women characters play out emblematically in the negative judgments of Rua offered by the three elder "analysts" with whom Johnson shares his tale of Stenning's death. These "three wise men" give Johnson quasi-absolution for his part in Stenning's end by condemning Rua. Johnson's apparent acceptance of their authority then limits the implied reader's access to any view that might understand Rua differently. They thus have a significant role to play in obscuring Johnson's active subversion of his culture's denial of legitimacy to his relationship with Scott.

Johnson's three wise "analysts" principally blame Rua for what happened to Stenning. They project onto her, as a "mother-monster readymade", the sourceless phantasies of the Primal Mother. This echoes the fact that in "therapeutic" settings, according to Bracha Ettinger, all too often:

> In our western Post-Freudian psychotherapeutic theory [...] a semi-automatic mother-blaming and mother-hating is produced. Unless an obvious trauma is found in the real life history, a mother-monster readymade is offered to the patient qua the major "cause" for almost any anxiety and psychic pain (Ettinger, 2006b, 105-106).

In fact the “obvious trauma” from which Johnson is suffering is his loss of Scott. But this fact escapes all three of his “father confessors”.

Bill Crawley, the hermit who gives Johnson refuge in the Kaimanawa Forest, is the first “father confessor” Johnson apprises of Stenning’s violent end. Crawley immediately articulates a hostile attitude towards Rua in terms of what Ettinger identifies, in her discussion of the three Primal Mother Phantasies, as “The Devouring Mother”. This “devouring” is made explicitly apparent in the image of the headless corpse Crawley supplies when he says: ‘But you shouldn’t ’a got mixed up with married women, not a man your age […] It reminds me […] of a fellow I knew […] got living with native women […] found him one morning in a hut with his head missing” (Mulgan, p.156).

Next is Petersen the retired riverboat captain who, on hearing Johnson’s story, agrees to facilitate his escape overseas. His disapproving estimation of Rua can be read as a reference to the archaic “Not Enough Mother” who represents our “originary disattunement with the outside” (Ettinger, 2006b, 106). This archaic sense of the maternal “insufficiency” of the infant’s first experience of the external environment is represented symbolically in Petersen’s classing of Rua as but one of the overwhelming number of available Maori women who are nonetheless somehow “not enough” to satisfy Johnson: “[I]f I’d ’a known you were that kind of fellow, messing round with Maori girls and other men’s wives. Didn’t you see enough of them up north with me?” (Mulgan, 173). But in an ironic subtextual recognition that *women* – of any kind – are indeed

not enough for the protagonist, here Petersen forgets, even if the reader does not, that Johnson's evenings in the north were actually spent chatting companionably with him on the boat (Mulgan, 35).

And finally there is O'Reilly, who enables Johnson's evasion of the inquisitorial English authorities by vouching for him at his recruitment interview for the International Brigade that's being assembled to fight in the Spanish Civil War. On being told of Stenning's fate, O'Reilly exonerates Johnson in a response that links Rua to what Ettinger has identified as the phantasy of "The Abandoning Mother". He opines that since predatory men are simply inevitable it is Rua who deserves to be punished for what was her act of (sexual) abandonment:

> If my old woman had done a thing like that, […] I'd 'a taken it out of her, she was a good old girl, she never did anything like that, but what's the use of going around fighting all the men that get off with your wife if she's fool enough to let them (Mulgan, 201).

In each of these cases the culpability of Rua's actions is implied as absolving Johnson of any responsibility for Stenning's death. However, while in logistical terms all three patriarchs facilitate Johnson's physical freedom, their analytical m/Other-blaming interpretations of his situation have the effect of confining the implied reader's understanding of what has befallen Johnson to the therapeutic cul-de-sac Ettinger defines as "empty-empathy" (Ettinger, 2006b, 108). For in his mentors' evocation of Rau as a "mother-monster readymade", her demonisation ensures that Johnson's true motivation for becoming involved with her – as vengeance for the cultural hostility attracted by his relationship with Scott – remains hidden in the novel's subtext.

But the reader alert to the sexual subtext of *Man Alone* is invited to see beyond the empty-empathy of these three old mentors, who by damning Rua unwittingly cast Johnson's relationship with Scott into oblivion. Their deeply flawed analyses undoubtedly satisfy the implied reader but leave the hero insufficiently psychically equipped, once he forfeits the maternal shelter of the Kaimanawa, to do any more than seek the ambiguous solace of his previous cultural status as lone-warrior.

And since elsewhere in the text various other women characters are revealed, as far as the implied reader is concerned, as also "mother-monster readymades" Johnson seemingly has little alternative and great justification for once again taking up the gun – as if in symbolically phallic self-defence against the horrors of femininity-effeminacy.

LEAVING THE FOREST: RE-ENTERING THE SILENCE

Despite the pitiless view the implied reader eventually has of the Kaimanawa, it should not be forgotten that Johnson relates to it at first as a realm of tantalising psychic possibility. The novel's tragic paradox is that at the point when he finally gains access to what is, symbolically speaking, a flourishing contemporary preserve of the very "classical" homoerotic sacrality whose near-extinction the text has so lamented; Johnson all but starves to death.

Yet initially he experiences the forest domain's abundant (psychic) resources as only inaccessible to him because of his lack of knowledge. Indeed, critics have noted his inadequate

preparation for the reality of the forest and his deficient survival practices once he gets there, which are so comprehensive as to be symbolically suggestive. His small axe is inadequate; he sites his camp in a spot vulnerable to flooding; he can't find edible plants or big game; he is a poor shot; he fails to devise effective bird traps and he loses his rifle (Evans in Stachurski, 2009,17). These inadequacies reveal that the impairment of Johnson's survival skills occurs not just at a physical level, but also at a psychic level. But Johnson's very failures paradoxically also suggest the existence and likely efficacy of more effective strategies of survival than he is able to imagine or implement. This implication is reinforced by the revelation that:

> He had heard men talk of eating fern-roots, and tried this, but could not find anything that seemed like food. He guessed that someone who really knew the ways of the bush could have found them, but he was unsuccessful himself (Mulgan, 141).

Here the text registers that the refuge for which Johnson has striven in the Kaimanawa, despite its sheltering him in his escape from the Oedipal authority of The Law, threatens him with yet another kind of emotional insecurity. For in a place textually envisaged, symbolically speaking, as his true home, he must now face the unsettling reality that he does not have the social, emotional or material tools or knowledge necessary to access what this (psychic) habitat so clearly offers to the unabashedly "native" plants and animals he sees thriving in it all around him. He has to acknowledge that to survive in the "uncomfortable" Kaimanawa Forest he needs to learn from "someone who really knew the ways of the bush" (Mulgan,

141), which suggests that in terms of his homoerotic identity, what would remedy Johnson's sense of isolation and ensure his successful adaptation to this unfamiliar but symbolically creative terrain is the companionship of knowledgeable peers and mentors. Indeed it is precisely because he is bereft of friends and family, a "man alone", that he is now unable to sustain his life in the Kaimanawa in the way that his (and its compassionately hospitable) heart desires.

However for the implied reader Johnson's admission of his profound sense of isolation simply suggests that his deficiencies in bush craft could be remedied by his annexation of the practical expertise of forest "natives".

Colonisers with access to native guides and translators often betray the very sense of entitlement evident in the: "good deal of ownership" (Mulgan, 93) felt by Stenning towards "his" wife. But Stenning's fate in *Man Alone* is a warning to any who attempt to suppress the individual agency and personal creativity of the domestic experts – native or marital – on whom their own survival actually depends.

And although for the implied reader Scott and Rua's varieties of "domestic" expertise must now appear irrelevant to Johnson's ostensibly alienated wilderness circumstances, the narrative does not overlook the significance of their accomplishments. In fact Johnson's act of revenge against Stenning renders any coloniser's presumption of their entitlement to usurp and control the treasures of the (sexual/indigenous) "other" entirely suspect.

At the same time Johnson's besidedness with and jointness in differenciation from those subjects and objects he

encounters in the transsubjective borderspace of the volcanic plateau – both mythic and real, human and animal – invites readerly recognition that what is perceived as unheimlich in phallocentric discourse may hold no terrors for those attuned to the manifestations of the matrixial-heimlich.

Yet Johnson's steady escalation of discomfort in what is symbolically his ideal locus of homoerotic self-fragilisation also testifies to the profound cultural danger in which Mulgan himself will be placed if the reader recognises and rejects the matrixial Eros of Johnson's sexual *nativity*. For in his residence in the Kaimanawa, what may be understood matrixially as an event-encounter with the potential to borderlink Johnson's subjectivity in besidedness with both that of his m/Otherly-sister mate Rua and his sisterly br/Other-mate Scott, must produce the hero's objectification in phallocentric discourse as "feminine-effeminate".

Nevertheless, the biodiversity of the forest symbolically reveals the social and cultural riches that in the absence of the "driving winds" of sexual and racial prejudice might yet emerge in Johnson's – or the reader's – social habitats.

Therefore the narrator's rueful observation that "Life in the Kaimanawas, while winter lay over them, wasn't dull, it was too uncomfortable to be dull" (Mulgan, 140) can be read not only as a sardonic comment on the inclemency of the weather, but also as a subtextual recognition of the acute psychological discomfort felt by anybody who dares to resist the dominant discourse in a social climate hostile to dissent. Bracha Ettinger characterises any such acts of self-fragilising resistance as risking punishment for fraternisation with "the enemy":

> Withdrawal into borderlinking in matrixial nets of "I and non I" in transconnecting and communicaring beyond social and political boundaries becomes an active resistance whose price the subject must pay. Watch it – your head might be shaved. Can you re-spect this? (Ettinger 2009a, 7).

The Kaimanawa is indeed a locale into which Johnson has symbolically withdrawn "beyond social and political boundaries". This makes it the site of his "active resistance" to homophobia. But that he could feel "at home" in this symbolically homoerotica-friendly habitat is, for the implied reader, unthinkable. If the implied reader did recognise this site as a conservancy of the homoerotic sensibility, such a realisation would come at a high price for Johnson, which would have to be paid by Mulgan. Therefore his protagonist's initial relief at reaching the Kaimanawa gives way to a guilty awareness that his survival there remains conditional on his continued silence:

> […] but he felt within himself a great solitude, a feeling that had never troubled him before in the long periods of his life that he had spent alone. There was heaviness in the bush that pressed upon him, and weighed him down, until the sound of his own voice was startling to him (Mulgan, 141-142).

The implication here is that Johnson has been content for most of his life to know himself – in solitude – even if nobody else does. But in the homoerotically idealised Kaimanawa the "heaviness in the bush that pressed upon him" carries a sense of the ethical "necessity" for him now to speak up. In fact, after a lifetime of silence, in an act of reckless daring the lone voice

of the protagonist has indeed been raised, in his assault on "stenning". This produced in Johnson, as proxy for Mulgan as writer, a "startling" sense of self-reflexive disbelief at "the sound of his own voice".

Despite his finding refuge in the "heart-nourishing" Kaimanawa, Johnson is traumatised by the realisation that his narrative (sexual self) "exposure" occurs in the absence of any societal support. This is followed by an all-too-familiar feeling of self-abnegating, emotional numbness – something Johnson is determined to resist:

> Later when he became weak with exposure and lack of food, there came on him a settled apathy which stopped him from feeling the conditions in which he lived, but this was not dullness: it was a sickness against which he had to fight (Mulgan, 140).

Man Alone is Mulgan's own textual gesture of profound sexual self-exposure. He offers it to the reader without support (nourishment) from any other Aotearoa New Zealand source in an act of matrixial resistance to the "settled apathy" expected of those like him in response to their society's hostile treatment of the homoerotic sensibility. His father's brave poem "Dead Timber" is the exception that proves this rule (as previously discussed in the section "'Dead Timber' for the Rangipo"). *Man Alone* can therefore be understood as its-self representing not only for Johnson, but also for general readers and literary critics alike, a "too uncomfortable" modification of the cultural climate in which women and men like the protagonist are expected to live. Indeed the implied reader can completely ignore Mulgan's subtext in favour of the "settled apathy" of the heteronormative.

Johnson's "lack of food" in the Kaimanawa is therefore as much an absence of suitably nourishing peers and mentors as it is a lack of protein and vitamins. But Mulgan is also asserting that the temptation to collude with the institutionalised cultural unease that silences the homoerotic sensibility is a "sickness" that somebody (anybody?!) like Johnson must resist.

Therefore in these forest scenes Johnson can be understood as not only "weak" with lack of nourishment and exposure to the elements, but also as rendered "weak" in terms of the threatened social exposure of his "feminine-effeminacy".

Yet in matrixial terms, such an exposure is not a revelation of "weakness" at all, but may rather be seen as representing the writer John Mulgan's lowering of his own ego boundaries in self-fragilisation towards the "unknown other" in the reader.

Mulgan's narrative therefore vacillates here between his protagonist's perception of the Kaimanawa as transformational, evoking Johnson's awe and re-spect, and his intermittent awareness that any revelation of his affinities with the symbolic matrixial-femininity of this wild setting will, in terms of phallocentric discourse, justify his permanent and punitive exile to the cultural (Rangipo) desert.

> Arguing with himself, he guessed it was partly fear of the world outside and the troubles he had to face, and partly the tiredness of semi-starvation that had weakened him (Mulgan,142).

Psychically speaking, Johnson's "semi-starvation" began with his separation from Scott. But here the implied reader's focus is limited to practical concern for Johnson's physical

survival and the official consequences that will arise from the discovery of Stenning's body. However, it is the likelihood of the reader's "discovery" of Johnson's own (homoerotic) body, in sexual relation to Scott, with which Mulgan's protagonist is subtextually troubled. Johnson is starved not just of food, but also of compassionate hospitality towards his homoerotic sensibility – a "trouble" grounded in the homophobia that Mulgan's textual removal of "stenning" must exacerbate. Therefore it is no coincidence that Johnson is sitting beside a symbolically "smoking" fire when "in dreams that were half sleep" (Mulgan, severally, 142) he enters a near-hallucinatory state. Alex Calder has perceptively noted of this description that it registers "unselfconsciousness, a form of heightened awareness" alternated with "loss of consciousness" (Calder, 2011, 226).

These two mutually exclusive features of Johnson's psychological outlook are not solely accounted for by the protagonist's physical condition. Tellingly, the reader is also advised that though Johnson feels the "tiredness of semi-starvation" he is "not yet really weak" (Mulgan, severally,142). In fact here Mulgan debates whether or not to make Johnson "really weak" by offering a full disclosure of his homoerotic sensibility.

And what Alex Calder terms "unselfconsciousness as a form of heightened awareness" is the text's registration of its own acts of homoerotic self-fragilisation. This is "unselfconsciousness" because it treats the reader (the "unknown other") as more important than "the self" (of the writer). This results in the "heightened awareness" that signals the potential for matrixial

connection with the reader. But this sense of anticipation alternates with the paralysing "loss of consciousness" caused by the writer's fear of the traumatic affects and effects that may ensue from his novel's transgressive revelations.

The "smoking fire" at the heart of this scene therefore localises the *burning question* – which is Mulgan's conundrum across the whole compass of the novel – as to whether he should brave the social consequences of an overt revelation of his protagonist's homoerotic sensibility. In fact Johnson's shifts here between *loss of consciousness* and *heightened consciousness* are exemplary of the vacillating states of mind Ettinger notes as occuring when: "The phallic-symbolic stratum of the Unconscious is itself repeatedly transgressed by the matrixial processes that it represses and forecloses" (Ettinger, 2009a, 16). In other words the repression and foreclosure of Johnson's homoerotic sensibility, as requisite to his patriarchal society, may be spontaneously overridden at any time – as here – by the resilient impulses of his matrixial subjectivity.

Ultimately this Kaimanawa episode culminates in Mulgan's decision to re-engage with the authority of the phallocentric domain. But this is neither a defeat nor a victory. For the matrixial and phallocentric domains are never in binary opposition. And "the phallus cannot master the matrix" (Ettinger, 2006a,117.8). The text simply acknowledges that to be present in one country does not negate the existence of another – or preclude memories of it and journeys there and back.

> He fought this weakness until he knew that he could only fight it by going on, and, if he could come through, emerging into the world

> again. When he had decided this he hated leaving the cave. In his weakened condition it was a hard thing to do. Its rough shelter was more comforting to him than most homes had been (Mulgan, 142).

The narrator's description of Johnson's cave as "more comforting to him than most homes had been" reminds the reader of the originary (matrixial) heimlich of *their own* borderlinks with their unknown becoming m/Other. And although Johnson now walks away, quite literally, from the compassionate hospitality of the active-womb of the "unknown m/Other", once again made symbolically available to him in the Kaimanawa, the reader wit[h]nesses his refusal of his supposed "weakness" and is reminded that the self-fragilisation possible in the matrixial domain nonetheless remains accessible to them (and Johnson) in the novel's subtext and in their own lives.

25. Johnson and *The Fisher King*

JOHNSON'S PASSAGE out of the Kaimanawa is a "rebirthing", which apparently takes the Oedipal pathway to mature male subjectivity in patriarchy. This requires a progressive series of traumatic scissions from the m/Other, which play out for the implied reader during Johnson's period of "struggle" against and "triumph" over the ostensible "Mother-Monsters" he is faced with in the forest. Johnson's supposed conflict with the "maternal" forest is calculated by Mulgan to deflect any recognition by the implied reader of the true source of his

protagonist's subtextual anxiety, frustration and disappointment at having to leave this symbolically "matrixial" domain.

On his emergence from the seemingly "Devouring", "Abandoning" and "Not Enough" m/Otherliness of the Kaimanawa, Johnson appears to accept his symbolic redelivery into the very conditions of sexual subterfuge to which he was narratively sentenced in the novel's introduction. In this he is seen to capitulate to the phallocentric premise that engagement with the "maternal" is synonymous with lack, passivity and death.

Tragically this accommodation threatens to detach him (but in practice only intermittently) from the literally life-giving resonances of matrixial-femininity, whose apparent unheimlich, if recognised correctly as a home affect, ceases to horrify.

Of course it would also be life threatening for Johnson to continue to inhabit the "forest" realm of the symbolic matrixial-maternal, because any recognition of the attunement of Johnson's homoerotic sensibility to this locale must appear to the implied reader as a horrible attempt to legitimise "effeminacy". And this would justify the repudiation of *Man Alone*, its hero and its writer.

Nonetheless Johnson's "escape" from the Kaimanawa paradoxically sees him descend yet further into the valley's "feminine" depths as "he planned now to follow the river down" (Mulgan, 143). But in fact symbolically this represents the descent of the infant's head into the pelvis of its mother in the hours before birth.

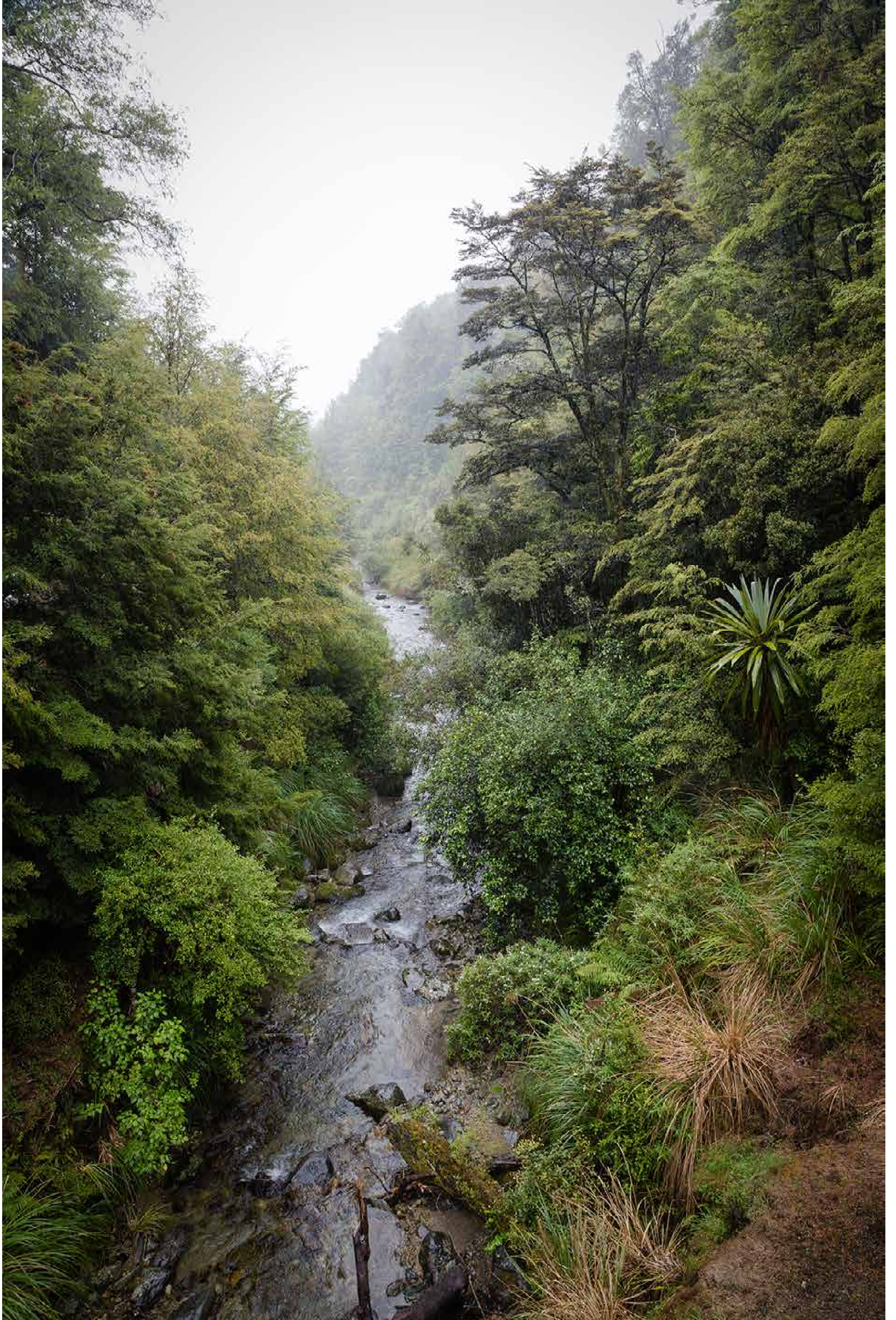
In these initial stages of his hero's passage out of the forest Mulgan also attributes an ape-like persona to Johnson that sees him, with Tarzan-like agility, "swinging along and

jumping from tree trunk to tree trunk" (Mulgan,145). This is an assertion of evolutionary machismo, evoking Johnson's heroic masculine energy as somehow dominating the maternal context of "labour". The implied reader is therefore further reassured of the hero's freedom from any taint of "effeminacy".

But as if on profoundly anxious second thoughts, this elemental surge leaves Johnson in a state of collapse. He's "desperate", "weary" and "hungry", and – in telling ambivalence towards the "progress" implied by his journey – "torn" where his boot (protection) is "wrenched away" (Mulgan, severally, 146). Yet the implied reader can ignore the deep anxiety marking Johnson's exit from the Kaimanawa by focusing on the visceral realism of his surroundings, as noted by Alex Calder:

> [Marked by] geographical accuracy [...] matched by vividly evocative descriptions of making one's way with difficulty through "real" bush: "deep, thick and matted, great trees going up to the sky, and beneath them a tangle of ferns and bush-lawyer and undergrowth, the ground heavy with layers of leaves and mould" (Calder, 2011, 218).

While this is a vivid and even factually authenticated "tramper's" journey, "eastward through the unknown ranges" (Orange, 2004, 1), it also has a deeper symbolic significance. The language of Mulgan's descriptions – "thick", "matted", "tangled" and "dense" with "rotting leaves and mould" (Mulgan, severally, 138-9) evokes the uncanny, suggesting a return of the repressed. Johnson proceeds through hours of symbolic "labour" with these cloying terms conjuring for the implied reader the anxious urgency of Johnson's need for separation from the unheimlich of the "maternal" forest. But in a matrixial sense this language



is an implicit allusion to the visceral formation of the becoming infans from the entrails of its becoming m/Other. And as such it is a description whose *homely strangeness*, when recognised "correctly", is not horrifying at all.

At the point when, exhausted by his toil towards the outside world, Johnson has to rest, Mulgan introduces an explicit image of castrative scission in Johnson's: "building his fire in the shelter of a great tree that had crashed down the hillside, tearing up its roots and bringing undergrowth and smaller trees down with it for a hundred feet around" (Mulgan, 146). This uprooted tree is a symbol of internal placental abruption and represents yet another stage in Johnson's poignant retreat from the matrixial domain. The tree's up-torn roots signal his severance from the emotional nurture that access to the Kaimanawa seemed to promise. It also marks Johnson's impending re-entry to the phallocentric domain where, as a result of his patriarchal culture's rejection of the homoerotic sensibility, he will once again have to face his existential impotence.

This scene's itemisation of Johnson's injuries is constructed as a symbolic echo of the equivalent deployment of hidden sexual injury in *The Waste Land*. T.S. Eliot sourced his material from the legend of *The Fisher King* (Annis, 2007). Similarly, as Johnson sits in a state of collapse beside the uprooted placental tree, the acuteness of his existential suffering is represented by a list of his physical wounds. These serve as an ambivalent justification of his choice to exit the realm of the matrixial-maternal: "He sat, feeling the ache of his legs, the torn side of his right foot where the boot had been wrenched away, his face and hands scratched and bleeding" (Mulgan, 146).

Lesser significance is apportioned to Johnson's upper-body damage (bleeding scratches to hands and face) compared with the graphic language used to describe his lower body trauma ("ache", "torn" and "wrenched"), suggesting the latter injuries are a physical manifestation of the protagonist's deeply hidden psychosexual wounds. This scene is Mulgan's narrative admission that the matrixial alternatives that would allow Johnson to evade the punishing/privileging binaries of phallocentric subjectivity are too dangerous to attempt, since they would expose the protagonist's homoerotic sensibility to the implied reader's hostility. Johnson's injuries therefore appear here as a kind of plea in mitigation of Mulgan's decision to now return the protagonist to the phallocentric domain with his sexuality hidden in the same old subtext that has always had to carry it. Johnson's wounds are an implicit argument that no more should be expected of him: he has suffered enough.

His acknowledged helplessness at this moment of symbolic placental abruption therefore echoes the mythic tale of Arthurian legend where the Fisher King is also suffering debilitating wounds of a mysteriously psychosexual nature. In the many stories of his suffering, this monarch's symbolic potency is compromised by a hidden, unhealed injury to his lower body. The effects of this unspeakable wound lead him to abdicate all responsibility for the welfare of his subjects. Instead, while his kingdom deteriorates he can muster only enough energy to fish the river that runs through his castle grounds.

In *The Waste Land* T.S. Eliot references the mythic tale of the Fisher King both explicitly and implicitly. His reference to the King's mysterious impotence encapsulates the doubt Eliot's

narrator has as to whether his longing expectations of the wider environment, which he has so gloomily canvassed, will ever be met. Eventually Eliot's narrator admits the futility of any broad attempt to effect cultural change and elects – as Johnson will – to narrow his concerns to those that seem to him personally achievable. Following in this the example of the Fisher King, he finally asks: "Shall I at least set my lands in order?" (Eliot, l. 425). Of course, the hopelessness expressed in both the *The Fisher King* and *The Waste Land* is a provocative withholding of readerly catharsis. Equally, at the point of Johnson's symbolic rebirth from the matrixial-maternal Kaimanawa – his own wasted land-of-opportunity – Mulgan implicitly challenges the reader to do better.

Johnson's decision to settle for a measure of *personal* freedom, is now directed towards his access to a site of external "paternal" nurture:

> But his eye caught then, what for a moment he could not believe, hidden in trees miles below on the far side of the valley, the tin roof of a hut (Mulgan, 147).

In his sighting of this roof the rising tension of his long, symbolic "labour" is depicted as "coming to a head". The peep of a possible future, beyond the descending forest darkness in which he is immersed, is analogous to the moment of "crowning" at birth, when the mother's attendants have their first glimpse of the baby's head. However here Johnson's "crowning" is equivocal. The Fisher King stayed closeted within the forest demesne of his castle so that even if his inadmissable

psycho-sexual wounds lingered and his close attendants were puzzled by his refusal to command, he was able to retain his tragic "royal-hero" status – while harming no one but the fish.

Johnson, on the other hand, is about to go out into the world so he must hide the wounds dealt to him on the "royal-road" to fulfilling his [un]conscious wishes, cloaking them under the sexual habit[s] of a common man. Nevertheless, in an act of displacement, his "private's" military role will eventually give him license, if he chooses, to inflict on "others" the supposedly "righteous" wounds his society has so cruelly dealt to him. At the precise point in part two of the novel when his hero decides to re-enlist for the Spanish conflict, Mulgan therefore makes the reader discomfortingly aware of the license warriors are given to engage in revengeful [hetero]sexual atrocities: "'Sure, we'll go out and burn some churches and rape some nuns,' said Johnson, grinning" (Mulgan, 204). This provocative allusion to rape as a tactic of war – a practice ignored by the 1929 Geneva Conventions of Mulgan's era and only recognised as a crime against humanity in 2001 – occurs as Johnson seeks to camouflage his own psychosexual vulnerability in the army. Here Mulgan calls attention to the hypocrisy that sees sexual violence in combat settings, whether against women, children or men, ignored as a form of militarily entitled war "booty", whereas anybody who engages in *consensual* sex with someone of their own gender is publically reviled, criminalised and punished.

However for the implied reader Johnson's re-immersion in patriarchy – whether civilian or military – is an event to be unequivocally celebrated. The climax of the Kaimanawa

sequence sees Johnson propelled to the end of a symbolically vaginal "track" [tract] where "he saw the hut. It stood backed against trees, but through them showed clearly a glint of light from its window" (Mulgan, 149). Not coincidentally, in Maori terms the moment of birth is described as entry into "te ao-marama", the world of light (Moorfield, 2012).

But just prior to Johnson's re-emergence into the specifically human society implied by a lamp-lit dwelling, his gestures are symbolically significant: "Dropping the small axe which he had carried all this time from his hand he knocked on the door and without waiting threw it open and went inside" (Mulgan, 149). Alex Calder suggests that this knock depicts the reinstatement of the ritual civilities of life, so representing Mulgan's granting to Johnson "under the automatism of great stress [a] superfluous moment of politeness" (Calder, 2011, 227). This reading serves for the implied reader. However for those who live in dread of the punitive sanctions imposed by the patriarchal authorities against any expression of a homoerotic sensibility, knocking at a closed door is never a "superfluous" gesture of politeness. In fact Johnson's knock recognises quite explicitly the right of the "unknown other" to the dignity and respect of [sexual] privacy. His "dropping of the axe" also recognises that, Oedipally speaking, this is a symbolic moment of castrative (umbilical) scission. His gesture seemingly cuts Johnson from the realm of the matrixial-maternal, so leaving him no alternative but to submissively request permission to re-enter phallocentric discourse.

But in this ostensible capitulation to patriarchal norms Johnson is immediately supplied with nurturance conducted, ironically enough, under the symbolic terms of compassionate

hospitality towards the “unknown other” found in matrixial-femininity. Here Mulgan marks the fact that, subjacent to the invariably phallic moment of maternal separation at birth, access to the domain of the “matrixial” maternal-feminine always already persists in the subject’s sub-subconscious. Therefore Johnson now finds himself “picked up” by a complete stranger, the old hermit Bill Crawley, and given “warm condensed milk to drink” – a sustenance that is analogous to the concentrated nutrition found immediately post-birth in the mother’s colostrum. Crawley also strips Johnson of the symbolic caul of his forest clothing, and once his injuries are “roughly bandaged” in a manner that references the dressing of the umbilical cord the old hermit-nurse settles him “lying naked between grey blankets” (Mulgan, severally 150-151) into the swaddling of the newly born infant’s long sleep.

Afterwards as Johnson regains his strength he needs to accept the need to crawl before he can walk, submitting to a series of nurturing cares. This progression from symbolic infancy through childhood and back to adulthood is compassionately presided over by the metaphorically named “Bill Crawley” (Mulgan, 152). Indeed Johnson only leaves the “crawl[e]y” stage behind when he is at the point of his return to the outside world. The narrator notes, as a sign of Johnson’s symbolic maturation, that when he parts company with Crawley just beyond the forest “he walked twenty miles that night” (Mulgan, 163).

26. The "Not Enough" Earth-Mother & Son, and the Old Sky-Father

VARIOUS "MATERNAL" characters are encountered in *Man Alone*, but the one who most fully exemplifies the phantasy figure of the "Not Enough Mother" is the woman digging in her garden whom Johnson approaches immediately after his "rebirth" from the Kaimanawa Forest. This woman is actually a personification of the *arousal*, which according to Bracha Ettinger helps the subject deal, post-birth, with their "originary disattunement with the outside" (Ettinger, 2006b,106), but for the implied reader of *Man Alone* she is realised as a Not Enough "mother-monster readymade". The urgent needs Johnson expresses to her in his "disattunement with the outside", are met with a "mean" response that echoes Scott's earlier attribution of Abandoning and Devouring "mother-monster readymade" meanness to Waikato Mabel. The behaviour of this gardening "Mother" also foreshadows the Not Enough and Abandoning "mother-monster readymade" meanness Johnson will later experience at the hands of a second "Mabel" – she who is wife to his brother Jim.

After walking for a day and a night from where Crawley left him at the forest margin, Johnson is desperately tired and hungry. He therefore makes an appeal, in explicitly maternal terms, to this woman: 'Got any work, Mother?' When she replies, the narrator's reference to her "strong foreign accent" (Mulgan, severally 165) further underlines her "unknown otherness" – very different from the wild "heart nourishing" indigenous earth-mother made symbolically manifest in the

matrixial aspects of the Kaimanawa. The stoic fatalism with which Johnson details the shabby treatment he receives at the hands of this explicitly "foreign" maternal figure amplifies her "Not Enoughness".

After working alongside her for several hours Johnson expresses his urgent need to rest and eat, but in a chilling contrast with the tenderly "maternal" ministrations he has so recently experienced at the hands of hermit Crawley, she requires Johnson to keep on hoeing cabbages. Then, during the meal they eventually share, she and her son have nothing to say to their guest. Nor does this "Mother" hand over in person the ill-fitting garments that are Johnson's "payment". Instead she leaves him to find a pile of worn-out clothing on the back step of her house. And after his hard afternoon's work culminates in his helping with the evening milking, far from offering Johnson a bed for the night she sees him suspiciously off her property with a jibe of sardonic disdain for his abject destitution: "'That's alright,' the woman said, watching him. 'Don't go getting shipwrecked again'" (Mulgan, 167).

The contempt she shows Johnson is a rural echo of the callousness of the women among the urban rioters of Queen Street. It reinforces the idea that in the absence of any sign of "feminine" gentility, women's claims to "chivalrous" benevolence from men are redundant.

Mulgan's critique here of supposedly "vulnerable" femininity and the male deference conventionally accorded it is further reinforced by the complicit silence of the woman's son. Especially since, in an uncanny contrast a few pages earlier, Johnson has met a quite different young man – the conspicuously independent fourteen-year-old lad apprenticed to

the odd jobbing mechanic "Ern Thompson". Mulgan gives this absent and fleetingly mentioned garage owner the same surname as the traumatised "Thompson" whom the mates farmed alongside all those years ago in the *valley-of-the-shadow-of-death*. But Ern Thompson happily registers very differently because, despite the striving machismo implied by his identification as *Ern* Thompson, he also comes with a transgressive hint of camp attributable to his sideline in barbering (Mulgan, 164). His young employee then affirms *the importance of being Ern[est]* Thompson in his own self-congratulatory emulation of his employer's jokester tendencies (Mulgan, 165). The lad's cheeky opportunism in charging Johnson sixpence for the use of a mirror and a cold-water razor serves as a rebuke to the subservient compliance Johnson will meet in the gardening Mother's silent twenty-year-old (Mulgan, 167). The latter seems by contrast a queer young man who shows no sign of having a mind of his own.

In fact in subtextual terms, the gardening Earth-Mother & Son are the dysfunctional distaff side of an [un]holy family whose spear side is represented by the Sky-Father figure Johnson met with earlier on the train. It was this symbolic transport-of-heaven that enabled his escape from The Law. But before ascending to his paradisal place of safety Johnson had first to endure hours in an open rail-truck, where the "stench of fertiliser" (Mulgan, 65) represents Mulgan's sardonic dismissal of the Christian doctrine of purgatory as only to be endured in the afterlife.

Johnson eventually achieves the "divine" refuge of an all-but-empty boxcar, whose confines are an implicit comment

on the “boxed-in” character of institutional Christianity. The boxcar is presided over by an old codger who rambles on about an absent “Mother Mary” and “Christ”. Johnson mostly ignores him, but the man’s seemingly meaningless reference to these iconic figures will assume retrospective significance in Johnson’s later encounter with the “foreign” gardening “Mother” & Son. For in fact theirs is a dyad related symbolically to the old man’s own ambiguous positioning as Johnson’s “Heavenly Father”.

The carriage-mate’s additional cryptic references to “Absalom” (Mulgan, severally, 68) subtextually ally Johnson with the biblical story in which a son of King David arranges the revenge murder of his own half-brother as punishment for the incestual rape of Absalom’s sister. In the old boxcar tramp’s incoherent references to this biblical tale Mulgan narratively foreshadows Johnson’s murderous intent towards Stenning and registers a kingly precedent of patriarchal forgiveness. Whether Johnson might, like Absalom, ultimately obtain a “royal” pardon for his transgressive acts remains to be seen.

But in this boxcar episode Mulgan narratively asserts, in what is an ironically “gospel” aside, his unrepentant rejection of the Christian doctrine that to possess a homoerotic sensibility is an irredeemable sin. The symbolic provocation for this defiance is the then popular song “This Train (is Bound For Glory)”, whose catchy lyrics judgmentally itemise the various bad behaviours that disqualify sinners from heavenly salvation.

In Mulgan’s era several groups recorded “This Train”. A version by Wood’s Famous Blind Jubilee Singers came out in the US in 1925. The song’s sanctimonious hook “Don’t carry no-one but the righteous and the holy” is a Christian “line” with

which Mulgan was doubtless all too familiar. He was living in England at a time when, in one of its incarnations, the earworm catchiness of "This Train" must have dampened his otherwise notable "liking for both the words and the music of popular songs […] that poured from Hollywood and New York and the sheet music offices around Soho" (O'Sullivan, 2011,106).

The catalogue of bad habits condemned in "This Train" changes depending on who sings it, but suggestively for *Man Alone*, along with "midnight rambling" (a phrase redolent of transgressive sexual prospecting), "smoking" is condemned in early versions as an unholy vice. In 1939, the same year Mulgan sent off the final edit of his *Man Alone* manuscript (O'Sullivan, 2011, 191), Sister Rosetta Tharpe had a major international hit with yet another version. ("My Babe" has Gospel Roots, 2013), thus potentially giving Mulgan's subtextual dissent from the condemnatory authority of "This Train" lasting popular currency with his readers. But it's important to note here that in her post-war performances of "This Train" Rosetta Tharpe (ironically herself eventually identifying as a lesbian) would lyrically nominate "Jim Crow" – the institutionalised racial segregation imposed in the Southern States of the USA – as being for her a heavenly deal breaker. "This Train", with her version's adamant refusal of racism, would become Rosetta Tharpe's signature anthem. But John Mulgan would not live to know any of this.

In *Man Alone* Johnson is revealed as immune to the institutionalised political and Christian bigotry of his fellow boxcar occupant. His elder's mournful name-checking of religious orthodoxies is skewered in Johnson's extreme close-up description

of his carriage-mate as having "the look of an old and evil toad" (Mulgan, 68), personifying the ugly institutional prejudices he ventriloquises. Mulgan's implication here is that, faced with the repellently engrained bigotries of "others", it's best for a so-called "sinner" to abandon any attempt at reasoned argument, relinquish "glory", and – once it's served its purpose – get off the train: Even if this means ending up, as Johnson does, on the "wrong side" of the tracks.

The old man's drunken deification of two reactionary New Zealand prime ministers – strike-breaking "Massey" and two-faced anti-suffragist "Seddon" – are an additional revelation that politics can equal religion as an *opiate of the masses*: "I knew Absalom, O Absalom, and Seddon, I knew Seddon" (Mulgan, 68). Johnson's theft of the old man's whisky at this point implies that unlike religion and politics, at least alcohol – his own "drug of choice" – doesn't make him hypocritically judgmental of "others". Mulgan's subtextually defiant riposte to the bigotry found in Christian fundamentalism and in the posturing of conservative politicians also sees him opportunistically – albeit shamelessly – help himself to his carriage-mate's food and clothing.

Abandoning the old man to his proclaimed political certainties and holier-than-thou heavenly reward, Johnson feels little guilt as he manages to escape the notice of the guard. "He was sorry to think that the old man's night should be disturbed in this way, but he could not stop to watch" (Mulgan, 70).

Similarly, despite working all day with the foreign-accented gardening "Mother" and doing the evening milking with her silently watchful Son, Johnson only momentarily recognises

this pair's entrenched social isolation: "As far as he could see the woman lived alone with her son, though they did not tell him this nor talk to him while he was eating" (Mulgan, 167). The gardening Mother's signification here as a Not Enough "mother-monster readymade" seems justification for Johnson's failure to compassionately enquire into her or her son's personal motivations and human concerns. As with all such "mother-monster readymades", the protagonist and the implied reader apparently have nothing to lose by leaving her and her boy behind without a backward glance.

The glaring "parental" inadequacies of both the heavenly boxcar "Sky-Father" and the gardening "Earth-Mother" deliver to the reader the message that in what are profoundly troubled social and economic times, everywhere characterised by paternal "stenning" and maternal "Not Enoughness", the meek shall *not* inherit the earth! In the conspicuous absence of either Christian charity or politically bestowed welfare, among people like Mulgan's protagonist only those prepared to rely on their own wits and efforts can expect to survive.

Mulgan also offers a sly, subtextual refutation here of the assumption that a "Holy Family" as divided and dysfunctional as the Christian one should have any authority to determine who is and is not acceptable in society's circle of "normality" – not to mention heaven!

Each met just once, the old boxcar "Sky-Father" and the "Earth-Mother & Son" form a framing binary of familial rupture that appears to justify the hero's brutally self-serving removal of "Stenning". This then is Mulgan's bitter indictment of those families who, guided by reactionary political parties and

institutionally corrupted religious doctrines, choose to ignore the manifest spiritual, social, economic, cultural and sexual deprivations that his protagonist wit[h]nesses throughout the novel.

The implied reader's view of the old Sky-Father and the Earth-Mother & Son is as unconnected, inconsequentially colourful background figures who enliven Johnson's various escapades, but more alert readers may compassionately recognise them as being borderlinked in terms of their "relations without relating". (Ettinger, 2006a, 71.2). Such a re-framing allows them to be read in matrixial connection with a cluster of other ambiguously [dis]connected characters in the novel. This matrixial perspective is discussed further, in terms of Ettinger's concept of full as opposed to empty-empathy, in the following section, "Walking out with [on] Mabel."

However taking the old man's sorrowful sense of his separation from "Mother Mary and Christ" as the precursor of an actual kinship connection, it appears that the links these three characters might formerly have had with one another are now in doubt. In this the orthodoxies of religious and political belief in *The Father* are subtextually implied to be causing more hurt to this separated trio than any benefit brought them by their submission to the unforgiving doctrines of society's patriarchal authorities.

If the reader recognises these three characters as being subtextually connected, this may constitute what Bracha Ettinger terms a Eurydicean moment (Ettinger, 2006, 201.2). This can be defined as the matrixial alternative to "looking back" with the unwittingly schizing gaze found in the mythic

tale of Orpheus. Marisa Vigneault summarises Ettinger's conception of the destructive Orpheic gaze as follows:

> The didactic proscription embedded in the tale of Orpheus that one not look back upon the desired, comes with dire consequences for those who do not obey. Thus if we follow the lead of Orpheus, might we also inflict upon the object of our gaze a second death, whilst at the same time consigning ourselves to the fate of dismemberment (Vigneault, 2011,111).

Applying this to *Man Alone*, any family member who expresses their sexuality transgressively at this time risks being schized from their kinship network. This is the potential fate that must be negotiated by Johnson, Scott, Waikato Mabel, Rua – and even Stenning, having married a woman who in European terms is pejoratively "half-caste". Any hope these characters have for the renewal and maintenance of their severed familial relationships, whether in actuality or in memory, requires that their family members (and the reader) relinquish disapproval in favour of "looking back upon the desired" with "re-spect". If the exile is denied "re-spect", that inflicts on them a "second death". And it is also a further traumatising dismemberment for the family and society from whom they were originally banished.

But Ettinger finds there is an alternative to such traumatic severing, which she sees as signified in the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice:

> As orpheic viewers, we strive to bring this woman [Eurydice] who follows silently behind us back from the past, in order to address her loss to history so that she may not be forgotten again (Vigneault, 2011, 112).

Man Alone is Mulgan's "Eurydicean" attempt to reinstate forgotten parts of the sexual and social memory and history of Aotearoa New Zealand. For example, after Stenning's removal the narrative *looks back at* (re-spects) Rua and – contrary to the schizing assumptions of patriarchy – recognises her family and friends offering ongoing support, and according her legitimate sexual and social agency as a woman. Meanwhile Mulgan, in *looking back at* Rua in narrative re-spect, confers on her the economic freedom of her widow's inheritance.

Equally, by "looking back at" Aotearoa New Zealand's colonising past through Rua's eyes, Mulgan is inviting the reader to share in an act of textual re-spect for her indigeneity. Remembering the trauma of the "forgotten" thefts of Maori land, like the Stenning farm, unlawfully perpetrated against Rua's "people" allows the reader to register the way such past events now shape their current reality.

Similarly, restoration to the reader's memory of the ancient jouissant European and Maori cultural acceptance of the homoerotic sensibility – along with a recognition of the tyrannies of its subsequent traumatic erasure – permits a conscious reappraisal of the current sexual oppression experienced by Johnson and his "people".

But *looking back at* Johnson may also provoke punishment and severance. So as he walks away from the old boxcar "Sky-father", the disconnection of Johnson's own gaze – "he could not stop to watch" (Mulgan, 70) – tacitly acknowledges the Orpheic power of the reader to summon and schize. It is they who can here unthinkingly countenance the permanent traumatic

separation of the old Sky-Father from the gardening Earth-Mother & Son – and from Johnson himself.

Yet it is also possible for the reader to pause at this point in the narrative and, unlike Johnson, "stop to watch", thereby participating in a Eurydicean moment that realises their own potential to reinstate relationships. In this they are exercising a responsive re-spect to assuage the Orpheic anxiety, which threatens with summary dismemberment anyone who dares "to look back at" the exiled "other".

Marissa Vigneault expresses Ettinger's conception of the Eurydicean impulse towards re-connection as follows:

> Perhaps the Orpheic gaze is not the only option. What if there is another gaze, one that offers connection rather than separation and allows for a looking back without punishment. Could this redemptive gaze be associated with Eurydice? Is there a way in which Eurydice could be reformed and granted presence? (Vigneault, 2011, 111).

In *Man Alone* the Eurydicean gaze is "reformed and granted presence" by any reader who, in connecting the old boxcar Sky-Father with the Earth Mother & Son, is able to acknowledge the destructive religious and political dogmas that contribute to the traumatic *familial* separations referenced in Mulgan's *un-familiar* subtext. Any such self-fragilised compassion towards the "unknown other" is a "Eurydicean moment" that may help to repair tears in the matrixial fabric of past events.

From this Eurydicean gaze a potential matrixial re-connection may emerge to produce, behind the unheimlich of traumatic separation and exile, what Ettinger calls an ascending

heimlich wave (Ettinger, 2006a, 160.1). This is an expression of matrixial jointness in differenciation with the "unknown other". Such an experience of transsubjectivity has the potential to assuage the suffering and loss provoked in the subject by their involuntary exile, thereby making their traumatic experience accessible, empathically, to those who formerly would not have acknowledged their existence, let alone their subjectivity.

27. The Abandoning Mother: Walking out with [on] Mabel

THE TEXT'S CRITIQUE of the "property ownership" model of sexual relationships, so prominent in Stenning's treatment of Rua, is equally on display in Johnson's approach to Waikato Mabel. But Mulgan critiques Johnson's speculative marital-property relationship with her in key exchanges that subtextually celebrate the sexual and emotional intimacy of the protagonist's preferred free-and-easy relationship with Scott.

Mabel lives on a small farm neighbouring the Waikato property where Johnson finds work and first encounters Scott. She is "strong", "solid" Mabel, whom Johnson "walks out with" and – in a deadpan euphemism for sexual intercourse – "kissed in the back of the car at Waikato dances" (Mulgan, severally, 21). For the implied reader this "kissed" is Mulgan's "nudge wink" of plausible deniability – the protagonist's insurance against any attempted moral reckoning that might be levied against the sexual freedoms of bachelorhood.

Mabel's appearance – much like Rua's – is the physical antithesis of Scott's. The fact that Johnson's public "attachment" to her is only motivated by pragmatic social necessity is revealed in his response to Scott's repeated suggestion that the mates should now settle down together on a farm. "'You and I could make a nice job of a little farm,' [Scott] said, 'up there back in the hills'" (Mulgan, 22). Mulgan takes care here to render the mates' relationship in terms of Scott's repeated aspiration for a future with Johnson rather than vice versa. The hero's teasingly delayed rejoinder to Scott's repetition of his wish that they should settle down together reveals Mabel's jealousy of his mate:

> "Maybe I'll marry Mabel, get her old man's farm."
> "You won't get that farm except on a mortgage that'll sweat your guts out. That old man isn't giving nothing away."
> "I'm not so sure.'
> "I'm bleeding well sure."
> Mabel didn't like Scotty (Mulgan, 23).

Mabel's dislike confirms the astuteness of Scott's assessment that she, as a daughter, will never inherit the family land. But subtextually it also registers her sense that Johnson's "liking" for Scott poses a threat to her. For neither Mabel nor her father's farm will ever belong *to* Johnson if – as is implied by the candour of this implicitly post-coital exchange – Johnson actually belongs *with* Scott.

The mates' mutual frankness is a revelation of Johnson's experience and expectation of the unguarded intimacy possible in a significant-couple relationship. It forms a telling contrast to Johnson's later evaluation of Rua's relationship with *her*

husband: “Stenning […] never showed any tenderness towards her, what he did show was a good deal of ownership” (Mulgan, 93). Scott and Johnson’s unconditionally honest treatment of one another is the antithesis of the possessive ownership model on which Stenning operates. Thus Johnson’s formal and tender leave-taking from his mate (Mulgan, 29) immediately prior to his own sojourn on the riverboat in the north, represents such a generous recognition of their respective individual agency it is rewarded by the warmth of their reunion a chapter later. By contrast Johnson leaves Mabel without warning or farewell and makes no later effort to explain his departure. Similarly, at the climax of his challenge to Stenning’s patriarchal “ownership” of Rua, Johnson has every intention of abruptly abandoning her also.

For the implied reader these dismissals are based on Johnson’s patriarchally sanctioned perception of women as sexual objects with “best-before” expiry dates. Johnson’s ultimate rejection of both Mabel and Rua is also grounded subtextually in the long-term irrelevance for him of women as sexual subjects per se.

While his attempt to dispose of Rua is ultimately acknowledged as a revengeful sin of commission and narratively expiated, Johnson’s abandonment of Mabel is more complex. Ostensibly his leaving her is treated as a simple sin of omission: “Johnson had the idea at first that after a while he might marry Mabel and she could move up and cook for them, but he changed his mind after he got to the farm” (Mulgan, 24). The reason given for this summary rejection of Mabel is that “there wouldn’t ever be money to build a house”. But the *unhomeliness*

(unheimlich) this associates with Mabel is more than material. In fact the next sentence – "So he forgot about Mabel". (Mulgan, 24) – is the text's symbolic recognition that the anxiety Johnson feels at the threat of a permanent relationship with his old girlfriend is so traumatic it must be repressed. These unheimlich affects resurface later in the narrative, when the mates make an "uncanny" return visit to Mabel in her eventual home, and will reverberate yet again in part two of the novel through Mulgan's re-use of the name "Mabel" for Johnson's "mean" sister-in-law (Mulgan, 197).

On that return visit to the district – three chapters and something over six years after his initial abrupt abandonment of her to go farming with his mate – Johnson and Scott find that Waikato "Mabel was married and had two children"(Mulgan, 43). She is now the wife of a conspicuously landless man who runs the post-office store on the Auckland road – vindicating Scott's assumption that she never had any prospect of acquiring an interest in her father's farm. This confirms her as of no further value to Johnson as a sexual "property".

By contrast Johnson has ostensibly remained "single", so allowing the implied reader to infer that Mabel's apparently painless transition to married life with another makes *her* the one who has abandoned their previous relationship. Her repartnering thus appears to confirm the narrator's earlier suggestion of her emotional shallowness: "Mabel didn't mind much. There were other young men in the district" (Mulgan, 24). And her now having not one, but two children completes the impression that whatever feelings she once had for Johnson have been discarded. In this representation of how effortlessly

his old girlfriend has moved on, Mabel is produced for the implied reader as a "mother-monster readymade", with her demonisation revealed in an explicit attack on her from a protective Scott:

> "You're well out of that, Johnnie", Scotty said afterwards, while they waited by the road to pick up a lift. "She's a mean woman and you can tell that by the way she watches her husband while he eats." (Mulgan, severally, 43).

Scott's allusion to Mabel watching her husband eat implies her as begrudging his nourishment. Thus, in addition to her characterisation as having abandoned her feelings for Johnson, she is also suggested here as a Not Enough and Devouring "mother-monster readymade" (Ettinger, 2006b, 107).

However, despite the seeming impartiality of Scott's observation of Mabel, in fact here he only offers Johnson empty-empathy, in Ettinger's sense, because it masks the reality that Mabel was always his rival for Johnson's affections. Scott's contemptuous assessment of Mabel as a 'mean woman' from whose matrimonial entrapment Johnson as a "bachelor gay", has had a lucky escape, diverts the attention of the implied reader from the realisation that Scott himself always was, and still is, in a de facto relationship with the protagonist.

Scott's dismissal of Mabel also reveals the emptiness of his empathy for Johnson since it obstructs any compassionate consideration of what might be causing Mabel to watch her husband in that peculiar manner. But since here she is a "mother-monster readymade" no further discussion is required of Mabel's underlying motivation for marrying a man for whom

she has ambivalent feelings. Thus the possibility that the elder of her "two children" (Mulgan, 43) could be Johnson's, does not register with the implied reader.

In the carefully staged scene in which this possibility emerges and is repressed, the absence of Mabel's children implies them as both away at school for the day and thus over five and close in age. And because Scott's hostile assessment of Mabel is made just after lunch as the mates wait on the roadside for a lift, it can also be inferred that they leave before the school day ends, without ever seeing these children.

But Scott's critique of Mabel, despite never observing her behaviour towards her young, is offered to Johnson as a seemingly objective assessment that family life with her would be unbearable: "'You're well out of that Johnnie,' Scottie said afterwards." This comment shuts down any consideration of the potential element of social desperation in Mabel's re-partnering. Scott's celebration here of Johnson's lucky escape from a marital "life sentence" with "a mean woman" thus points to his mate's potential paternity in relation to Mabel's eldest child via a speaking silence in the text.

Scott is cast here as a quasi-analyst, with Johnson as his analysand. By writing off Mabel – who is a "significant other" for Johnson – with an implicit dismissal of her as a Not Enough and Devouring "mother-monster readymade", Scott exemplifies what, in a psychotherapeutic setting, Ettinger suggests is the false consolation to be had from "empty-empathy". Yet Ettinger states that long-term healing from previous trauma can only take place if the analyst maintains full compassionate empathy for all the significant figures in the analysand's life. This is a process in which:

> [T]he patient feels emotionally enveloped even if s/he is not entirely empathetically "understood" (since a tender consideration for her non-I's – mother, father, siblings, friends – is maintained by the analyst even if this seems to go against what we usually call empathy) (Ettinger, 2006b, 118).

In that sense Scott's jaundiced observation of Mabel is damaging not just to her but also to the protagonist – and is eloquent testimony in support of Ettinger' further assertion that the absence of "full empathy" means that:

> [A]t moments of heightened fragility […] the patient's internal identifications and objects, her [or his] mother, father, sibling and other human-beings co-implied in her/their history – are at risk of hate and revenge (Ettinger, 2006b, severally, 121).

It is because Scott senses that Johnson, in reflecting on the significance of his earlier relationship with Mabel, is experiencing a moment of "heightened fragility" that he refers to his mate in this exchange, as "Johnny". The narration then immediately reciprocates this intimacy with the endearment "Scotty". But despite this apparent narrative endorsement of Scott's "perceptiveness" towards Johnson, Scott's supposed objectivity about Mabel is actually a mask for his hatred of her. In fact here Scott takes revenge on Mabel for culture's privileging the heterosexual relationship she had with the protagonist over the homoerotic one the mates have long had with each other.

Of course, Scott's relationship with Johnson is spousal not professionally therapeutic, and as a character exorcising

his fear of relegation to marginal status in Johnson's affections he is not required to function with the ethical sensibilities of a psychotherapist. However unless the reader withholds from Mabel the condemnation of her that Scott invites here, they too will be excluded from full compassionate empathy *for Johnson*. For Scott's view of Mabel is understandably, if jealously, calculated to obstruct Johnson's estimation of the likelihood that he is the father of Mabel's first child.

Oblique confirmation of this possibility comes in the concluding section of *Man Alone* when, in an unheimlich "return of the repressed", the name "Mabel" is reiterated to identify the hostile wife of Johnson's brother. This is at a point in the narrative when Johnson's imminent familial exclusion subtextually questions yet again the denial to him (and by him) of parental rights and responsibilities. In this Mulgan covertly invites the reader to renounce the convention that parental roles should be the sole prerogative of married, monogamous heterosexuality.

For her part Waikato Mabel, as a result of Johnson's abrupt absence from her life, has had to cope with the societal imperative at this time that only a woman who is married can "keep" a child to whom she has given birth. Illegitimacy and divorce carry a serious social stigma for both sexes, but for a woman this is intensified by the social and economic impossibility of raising children outside marriage. As an unmarried mother Mabel could be legally excluded from paid work and her family and friends might repudiate her. Lacking financial means, she risks the removal and institutionalisation of any children in her care – or in the case of an infant, its closed adoption.

That is why between 1940 and 1944, immediately after the publication of *Man Alone*, New Zealand's official tally of 873 illegal septic abortions resulted in the deaths of 112 women (Sparrow, 2010, 8). These statistics tell their own story of the active persecution of transgressive sexual behaviour, which was not restricted to the criminalisation of men deemed "homosexual". At the time Mulgan published his novel, solo motherhood was a circumstance that remained as much a social catastrophe for his unmarried writer contemporary Robin Hyde as it had been for the pregnant New-Zealand-born writer Katherine Mansfield late in the previous century. Mansfield had felt compelled to give birth secretly in Germany, to a baby born dead at full term. She was then disowned by her visiting New Zealand mother who, on her return to Wellington, immediately wrote Katherine out of her will. Robin Hyde had to leave the country and go to Australia to have her first baby, which died at birth, and after the birth of her second ex-nuptial child she had to secretly foster her son out in order to keep the journalism job that was her means of supporting him.

In Robin Hyde and John Mulgan's era there was still a diaspora of passively and actively accusatory men and women whose ideal of Christian morality was used to enforce the legal and social illegitimacy of ex-nuptial births. This moral principle motivated many people to repudiate any female kin, friend, colleague or acquaintance revealed as having had a baby outside marriage, deeming her to have dishonoured herself, her child and her family.

A reader compassionately alert to the ways in which Waikato Mabel would thus have to struggle to gain legitimacy

for both her own parental status and that of her child[ren] can reframe the supposedly "mean" watchfulness she directs at her husband as he eats. Instead, such a reader will recognise it as Scott's disrecognition of the entirely non-threatening matrixial "home affect", which in all its "unknown otherness" guides her gaze.

In the novel's last chapter, where the reader encounters the other "mean" Mabel – wife of the protagonist's brother, Jim (Mulgan, 197) – Johnson's most pressing concern is his imminent exclusion from her family. So the reappearance of the name "Mabel" at this traumatic moment is a seemingly unheimlich echo of Johnson's previous exclusion from the family of Waikato Mabel. It marks the text's deep consciousness that Johnson could indeed be the father of the elder of Waikato Mabel's children. This is not just in the sense of narrative probability, but in terms of the protagonist's suitability to offer paternal nurturance – married or not; "heterosexual" or not – to a child. It also assumes that Johnson's capacity for a loving and responsible fathering relationship with any of the young of his family need not be impeded by his ever-lasting commitment to his mate Scott.

As Johnson faces up to his brother and sister-in-law's severance of kinship ties, the reappearance of the name "Mabel" therefore subtextually reminds the reader that the social precedence accorded heterosexual marriage, which so cruelly victimises unmarried mothers, equally disrecognises as unheimlich the *homely strangeness* with which men like the protagonist can in fact engage in the compassionate hospitality of parenting. And not coincidentally, Johnson's complete

exclusion from his English family comes immediately after he has positively affirmed his interest in Jim and Mabel's offspring: "They're nice kids". But Jim's Mabel has taken specific steps to prevent her children ever seeing their Uncle Johnson again, by taking them to the pictures during this scene.

It is during this planned absence that Johnson is informed that Jim and Mabel have decided their family will have no further contact with him: "'Mabel and I've been talking it over,' Jim said, still not looking at Johnson. 'We think you'd be better out of the country.'" (Mulgan, 199). Jim's failure to look his brother in the eye at this moment suggests him as his wife's guilty mouthpiece. This represents an implicit demonisation of Jim's Mabel, and structurally replicates Scott's demonisation of Waikato Mabel. It then reinforces for the implied reader a characterisation of both the "Mabels" as Abandoning and Not Enough "mother-monster readymades", who are culpable for orchestrating Johnson's familial exclusions. But subtextually Johnson's brother can also be seen as in fact selfishly prioritising his own interests here – precisely as Scott did. Both he and Scott are intent on obstructing Johnson's exercise of parental status and responsibility. And in this they displace onto the "Mabels", as "mother-monster readymades", their own guilt at withholding their full compassionate empathy for their br/Other.

However this does not absolve Johnson of his acknowledged responsibilities towards the children of Jim's Mabel: "They're nice kids […] I still owe you some money" (Mulgan,199). Nor, by implication, does it justify Johnson's failure to ascertain his responsibility or otherwise for Waikato Mabel's firstborn.

But this is also Mulgan's sly sidelong assertion that his narrative "reproduction" of the name Mabel as a key aspect of his work of art, can be judged the aesthetic equal of any act of procreative "reproduction". Of course, for the implied reader the repetition of the "Mabel" name is simply Mulgan's cleverly "careless" assertion of the banal interchangeability of married women. A barb whose "comedic" misogyny acquires further smirking camouflage from Mulgan's ostensibly "careless" repetition, elsewhere in the narrative, of a further handful of *male* names. But these ostensibly "accidental" repetitions all bear further scrutiny.

Mulgan uses the name "Sam" twice. His first "Sam" is the covertly sceptical townie who is the disingenuously credulous audience for farmer Tom Blakeway's fury at the thwarting of his Waikato land speculation. "Sam" has "a face lined with trouble and a twisted, drooping mouth" (Mulgan, 11). This description registers that however down in the mouth Sam feels about Tom Blakeway's avarice, he is powerless to voice any direct challenge to it. His name then borderlinks him with another "Sam", the "little Maori car-driver" who conveys Johnson to his first farm job in the Waikato. This Sam's conspicuous autonomy sees him "smoking green Three Castle and driving with one hand" (Mulgan, severally, 18). These devil-may-care gestures make a pointed contrast with the impotence of his earlier namesake. In particular, Sam the driver's carefree "smoking" registers as a symbolically homoerotic aspect of his self-confidence – intimating that being tangata whenua he can draw on cultural precedents that treat his implied takatapui status as benevolent rather than transgressive.

Shortly after the impotent Sam's stifled exchange with farmer "Tom Blakeway" the latter is nominated as Johnson's mean Waikato employer. There will later follow a startling echo of the name Tom Blakeway in that of the riverboat shipmate Johnson works beside in the north. This character is the "half-caste Maori cook" (Mulgan, 34) identified as "Tom Blake" (Mulgan, 36), a man who, when it comes to election time, doesn't vote because "he couldn't write and didn't know where his home was" (Mulgan, 36). In this *unheimlich* (but for the implied reader comical) uncertainty of identity, it is as if 'Tom *Blake*" has lost his *way* – the erosion of his indigenous identity being represented quite literally here in the implicit truncation of his European patronymic. As a "half-caste", Tom Blake has suffered social diminishment and accompanying loss of his turangawaewae. His legal and symbolic *illegitimacy* implicitly attributable to the predatory colonising impulses – both sexual and economic – of his near namesake, the Waikato farmer Tom Blake*way*.

But stereotypical Maori fecklessness is nonetheless invoked in relation to "Tom Blake", when the boat crew disbands: "Tom Blake got off at Whangaruru to settle down and grow melons and make bad drink from tree bark" (Mulgan, 37). By alluding to a remote "native" location and an indigenous lifestyle centred on the notorious tropes of "[water]melons" and "bad drink", Mulgan supplies the implied reader with an "amusingly" throw-away race-based taunt which also invites their sanctimony.
But subtextually the comedy here comes not at the expense of "Tom Blake" but from Mulgan's sly dig at the implied reader's unselfconscious condescension. The gratuitous insult directed

here at Tom Blake exemplifies the treacherous *Blake "way"* in which self-entitled Pakeha – who are directly responsible for Maori disenfranchisement, homelessness, language loss and illiteracy – have conspired to make an indigenous man like Tom Blake~~[way]~~ "illegitimate" in his own country.

Mulgan also repeats the name "Thompson". This forms a borderlink between the war-traumatised macho isolation of "death valley" Thompson (with whom Scott and Johnson attempt an unsuccessful farming partnership) and "Ern Thompson" – the socially accomplished but sexually ambiguous "unknown other" barber-mechanic. This name repetition comes immediately after Johnson's exit from the Kaimanawa and works to cue the reader's registry of yet another implicit link – that which connects the nameless "Old Sky-Father" Johnson meets in the boxcar, during his earlier escape from Auckland, with the nameless "foreign" gardening "Earth-Mother & Son" he encounters on his emergence from the Kaimanawa Forest. The matrixial significance of the symbolically familial re-connection of these three characters was discussed earlier in "The Not-Enough Earth-Mother & Son and the Old Sky-Father".

And finally as previously mentioned there is the paternal *bad "Pop"/ good "Pop"* borderlink between *Bill* Stenning and *Bill* Crawley.

Each of Mulgan's disparate group of "namesake" characters, however fleetingly present, is distinctively individualised. Their "relations without relating" (Ettinger, 2006a, 71.2) are brought about via Johnson's brief contacts with each of them as his "unknown others", and suggest the near-identical names of these characters as offering the reader textual access to yet another transsubjective web of matrixial affect.

However in the phallocentric domain such connections go unrecognised "for lack of terms to render them intelligible" (Ettinger, 2010a, 218). Thus for the implied reader these recurrences simply register as unconscious aesthetic discrepancies on Mulgan's part. His supposed "carelessness" in naming these characters is indexed to their objectified insignificance.

But such a dismissal is an act of repression and ignores the fact that repetition is its-self implicated in the construction of meaning. Freud linked repetition with the infant's repressed anxiety at the repeated absence and presence of the mother. Games of repetition in infancy are thus acknowledged psychoanalytically as markers of maternal-child bonding and separation. In Aotearoa New Zealand this Freudian insight with respect to repetition features in the official list of developmental milestones noted in every baby's health record – their caregiver is asked to record the date the infant first "plays peekaboo". Freud recognised the young child's engagement in the German form of this game, "Fort/Da" (in English "There/Gone"), as symbolically ameliorating the separation anxiety the child feels as they adjust to the intermittent absence and presence of the mother. Thus the child begins to recognise their personal subjectivity, with greater or lesser levels of anxiety, as being independent of hers. Though originally enacted to assuage the infant's sense of maternal loss, these "games" of repetition can be seen as leading to ongoing meaning creation:

> According to Fédida, these rhythms suggest repetition as the mother, so that meaning-creation is this repetition its-self [...

> This with the effect that the repressed sense of maternal loss eventually] finds incarnation in the aesthetic artobject, and induces the emergence and coming-into-subjective-existence of designified meaning (Ettinger, 2006, 158.8).

Of course the *designified meaning* of the artobject *Man Alone* can be understood by the implied reader as being simply a valorisation of the manly self-sufficiency of the “celibate subject” (Ettinger, 2006, 159.0). But at a subtextual level, the meanings created by the novel’s repetitions are actually an aesthetic compensation for the originary, repressed pain of maternal schizing. Any re-emergence of this repressed underlying trauma is usually experienced as an episode of unheimlich horror. Hence the implied reader’s obliviousness to the *peek a boo* repetitions of Mulgan’s minor character names – or, if they do notice them, their unease with his presumed “carelessness”.

But these name repetitions also make it possible to recognise certain transformative aesthetic and ethical affects founded on what Ettinger identifies matrixially as “the impossibility of not-sharing” (Ettinger, 2006, severally,159.0). In fact, in the *shared* names he uses Mulgan is actually signalling a matrixial heimlich -– a homely strangeness – in which the reader has the opportunity to make their own borderlinks between even the most minor and fleeting of the text’s “marginal” characters and their (near) namesakes. These borderlinks may then activate in the reader what Ettinger recognises as a co-poietic “zone of potential sharing with-in the trauma of the other”. They also serve as a precedent for the reader’s larger recognition that in *Man Alone* the ostensibly horrifying

"unknown otherness" of the homoerotic sensibility actually bespeaks a potential symbolic *reconnection* with the m/Other, in terms of the *homely strangeness* of the matrixial feminine. Such a possibility is no longer disrecognised as a return of the unheimlich repressed horror and fear, which in the phallocentric domain accompanied the trauma of originary maternal scission.

28. Tiresias

MAN ALONE has explicit links with T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*, with both addressing themes of sexual and social dislocations. Mulgan references these connections at the start of the Rangipo-Onetapu episode, when three times in the space of ten lines he characterises the squandered potential of this region - "a waste", its "forests wasted", and leaving it a "waste area" (Mulgan, severally,135). And like in Eliot's poem, there is an undercurrent of cultural despair in *Man Alone*.

This despair is made evident in *The Waste Land* through T.S. Eliot's appropriation of the narrative voice of Tiresias: "It is the Sophoclean Tiresias who crucially 'sees' why Thebes is blighted. It is a punishment, a direct result of Apollo's oracle that Oedipus shall kill his father and marry his mother" (Fuller, 2011, 195). Eliot's text is therefore voiced by Tiresias with what the critic John Fuller has called "a tone of rebuke to its analysis of sterility, spiritual death" and the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (Fuller, 2011, severally195).

This tone of cultural rebuke similarly pervades the initial scenes of *Man Alone*. Newly arrived in Auckland city, Johnson goes out for a drink and finds "There was a quietness and sickness over everything and over the other men in the bar" (Mulgan, 9). As closing time nears he observes that "The room was more noisy then, but not more cheerful. It was full of men talking loudly, but no one was listening to what they said" (Mulgan,10).

Here Mulgan, like Eliot, admonishes his society for its impoverishment of social relationships but also, in later scenes, for the traumatic effects of colonisation on the land its-self. Those European interests who had applied the scalpel of ethnic "cleansing" to tangata whenua via the land wars are now embarked on the razing of the forested lands confiscated from Maori so as to impose pastoral farming. Thus Johnson, on entering the Waikato for the first time, is described as "seeing a new country open out like the edges of a wound" (Mulgan,18).

In subversion of this "stenning", Johnson's Oedipally retributive relationship with Rua goes on to indict New Zealand society for its colonising racism and misogyny – and subtextually for its gratuitous waste of the creative potential of the homoerotic sensibility.

But the "sickness" of Depression-era Auckland and the anarchy of the later Queen Street riot are not the only evidence given in *Man Alone* of the unhealthy social aura that permeated New Zealand's largest city. Its malaise was also personalised in terms of the contaminated heterosexuality of Rose. Despite the "mates'" warning later given against her by the men Johnson meets at the pub, the threat posed to him by this conventionally

transgressive character is more apparent than real. In fact via the matrixial heimlich of her compassionate hospitality towards Johnson, Rose has already revealed that her heterosexuality is no more of a threat to the protagonist than his homoerotic sensibility represents a threat to her.

Due to Rose's matter-of-fact compassion, Mulgan foresees a time when his protagonist's covertly expressed homoerotic sensibility might be openly acknowledged and accepted – an authorial perspective analogous to Tiresias' divinely bestowed gift of future-telling. But in the present day of the novel, any such assertion would bring catastrophe for both the text and its writer. Therefore whereas T. S. Eliot's notes to *The Waste Land* make his narrator's bisexuality explicit, Mulgan relies on a guarded subtext for Johnson's. This caution has as precedent Tiresias' fear that if he reveals the reason for his city's afflictions, it is he who will be punished. Equally, on account of the danger in which Johnson and the narrator will be placed if the implied reader ever recognises the sexually transgressive "truth-telling" of *Man Alone*, Mulgan's symbolism and its calculated challenge to Oedipal orthodoxies is as cryptic as any of the veiled warnings Tiresias gives his king.

In both texts the main character's bisexuality is involuntary. Tiresias' sex change is a punishment the gods impose on him for his interruption of an authorised sexual relationship between two [animal] "others" – namely two copulating snakes, which he arbitrarily separates. His ensuing coerced experience of femininity is unutterably demeaning to him, so he is delighted to eventually stumble on a successful strategy by which to engineer his reversion to masculinity. He achieves this quite

simply when he sees the same snakes together seven years later and leaves them undisturbed.

Johnson's echoing imposition of himself into what is a patriarchally sanctioned sexual relationship between Rua and Stenning brings upon the protagonist the subtextual punishment of a reversal of his own preferred homo[sexual] social orientation. Like Tiresias, he quickly tires of his exclusive immersion in an/other sexual identity. And thus he can be seen as symbolically sloughing off his heteronormative skin when he "burrowed" (Mulgan,136) snake-like – with what is yet another echo of Tiresias – in and out of the pumice sands of Onetapu. Johnson then reverts to his former persona via his chrysalis-like gestation in the Kaimanawa Forest – a restorative that culminates in his wrenching labour to re-emerge into the world with the safe camouflage of his "homosocial" coloration fully renewed.

But in Johnson's bisexuality Mulgan additionally takes account of the dominant culture's "othering" of indigeneity, so offering a parallel between Johnson's status as a sexual "half-caste" and Rua's status as an ethnic one. Yet the implied reader assumes that Rua is privileged in her marriage to Stenning and at being able to "pass" as European. Therefore her continued adherence to Maori social and cultural mores earns Sayers' contempt and Stenning's outrage, for what they demonise as her "bad" behaviour. The implied reader endorses this condemnation. But subtextually all such indignation is exposed as at best ignorant and at worst hypocritically self-serving due to Johnson's own refusal to accept that he should be grateful to "pass" as heterosexual.

And finally Mulgan borrows from the myth of Tiresias the trope of punishing blindness. This was inflicted on the seer by the gods when Tiresias' foreknowledge of disaster and his unwelcome predictions of it drew their ire: "It is [he] who is instrumental in compelling King Oedipus to his fatal investigations into the reason for the city being laid waste by famine and plague" (Fuller, 2011, 195).

Equally Mulgan subtextually offers the reader of *Man Alone* his own transgressive estimation that it is misogynist crimes against the homoerotic sensibility that are a major cause of his society's emotional and cultural impoverishment. Yet the implied reader, dazzled by the "beauty effect" of Johnson's impending military self-sacrifice, remains blind to the homoerotic subtext. This hero-worship of Johnson as a macho warrior is actually the *token of repression*, paradoxically pointing to *the thing* it is designed to conceal. In this case the suffering and death wrought by those who warmonger.

But by recognising the matrixial Eros of Johnson and his stranger narrator, the reader may share in Mulgan's resistance to his society's hegemonic perpetuation of militarism, misogyny and racism. And thus on the brink of conflict stand with Mulgan in self-fragilised wit(h)ness of his act of unilateral textual disarmament.

29. *"Peace is not in dialogue with war"*

AT THE START of *Man Alone* Johnson expresses the idea that although war is bad, at least it's not hypocritical: "I could tell you worse things about the peace" (Mulgan, Introduction). He

says this because for Johnson the straitjacket of social restraint imposed by civil society on his expression of his homoerotic sensibility is worse than the open conflict of front-line combat.

But he nevertheless feels deep ambivalence about his "choice" to re-enter life in the military and fight "legitimately" against Fascism in Spain. His feelings are revealed in the series of cryptic remarks he offers the reader while in the company of the loyal friend who facilitates his enlistment.

Jack O'Reilly reassures Johnson that in this instance there is genuine cause to take up arms. The hero meets this assertion with excoriating cynicism: "'Sure, we'll go out and burn some churches and rape some nuns,' said Johnson, grinning" (Mulgan, 204).

Johnson's assumption here is that the moral justifications for the Spanish civil conflict advanced in anti-fascist rhetoric at this time, will inevitably be rendered hollow. This point is reinforced by his bitingly ironic musing about the craven attitudes of his own family, who have induced him to re-enlist. The reader eavesdrops on these observations over the course of an evening Johnson spends at the pub with O'Reilly as they prepare for the International Brigade interview:

> "It's O.K., Jack," he said, "I know which side I'm on."
> "It's better than the London winter," he said.
> "My brother'll be pleased," he said, later in the evening. "He won't know, but if he did know he'd be very pleased. So'll Mabel, she'll be very pleased"(Mulgan. 1960, 204).

In this series of wisecracks the repeated phrase "he said" denotes Johnson as making these remarks in his friend's

presence. But this is not conversational dialogue. Rather, in the absence of any direct replies, these lines have a resonance of disinhibited whisky truth, with Johnson in fact talking intermittently out loud to himself as his intoxication increases.

At face value his assertion that he knows “which side” he is on alludes to his part in the overt left vs right political conflict in Spain. But it also suggests that in terms of the four seasons Johnson knows on “which side” of the globe he prefers to live. For after his experience of the “invert” seasons of the Antipodes, “the London winter” in December now seems perverse.

However this is not the only “side” Johnson takes here. For it is implicit in these remarks that as somebody with a homoerotic sensibility he has also had to choose “which side” he is on in terms of his culture’s homophobic attitude towards sexual “inversion”. This “scientific” term used in *The Well of Loneliness* was appropriated by Radclyffe Hall from the writing of the pioneering sexologist Krafft-Ebing, and was used to signify that Hall’s protagonist’s homoerotic sensibility was a biological predisposition of unimpeachable scientific authenticity and in no way a voluntary affectation.

But Mulgan’s breezy re-contextualisation of “inversion” in terms of the anticipated sunniness of Spain during “the London winter” resists the term’s pathologising undertow. In this Johnson’s dogged enjoyment of “the side” of the sexual “invert” is equated with the simple legitimacy of his preference for a summery antipodean December. And though such “inversions” may appear queer to others, here Mulgan asserts his protagonist’s sexual orientation as just as “natural” and immutable as any geographical orientation. His implication is

that to require the norms of the alleged "centre" of the sexual empire to apply to its supposed "margins" is as ridiculous as expecting the weather in Aotearoa New Zealand or Spain to conform to the climate of England. This reframing attempts to destabilise the reader's perceptions of "marginality" vs "centrality'. And it rejects the assumed inferiority or superiority of a given sexual orientation as firmly as it abjures any element of colonial cultural cringe.

In this Johnson affirms his own sexual orientation in implicitly antipodean terms. This is because since his re-immersion in the English class system he has been forced to rein in the "homosociality" of his colonially acquired egalitarianism. Of course there is a risk of unwittingly overstepping a sexual boundary anywhere, but in England this is coldly compounded by upper-class suspicion towards those of Johnson's lower-"working-class" status: "The eyes passed over him without friendliness. Johnson worked there on sufferance, a good farmhand. He did not touch his hat as he should have done" (Mulgan, 194). His withholding of class deference towards his "betters" was yet another reason why for Johnson – a "man alone" lacking the heterosexual camouflage of a nuclear family – "The peace is more dangerous".

> "I've been in wars. There's nothing in them. The peace is more dangerous. […] I haven't got a wife," Johnson said. "I haven't got any girls. I'll come if you're going" (Mulgan, 204).

In this scene with O'Reilly, Johnson's thoughts about the setting in which he feels most at home (heimlich) then segue to his

own family's repudiation of him – deeming him criminally *unheimlich*. There is a hint of drunk maudlinism in Johnson's bleak anticipation of Mabel and Jim's pleasure at being spared any further endangerment by association, and this is sharpened to black comedy by his recognition that they (ever so politely) wish he were dead.

However what seem to be Johnson's unguarded reflections are actually a series of calculated ambiguities, subtextually pointing to the hero's continued entrapment in the homophobic sanctions of the dominant culture. Intoxicated or not, Johnson can never let his guard down and say directly what he thinks.

The implied reader assumes that Johnson is simply on the "side" of the political anti-fascist, but his affirming response to Jack O'Reilly's heroic assertion that "You got to fight fascism [...] wherever it is" actually carries a subversive subtext: "Sure, I know, Spain or here, you got to fight it" (Mulgan, severally 204). This registers that fascists are being fought not only in Spain and "here" in London, but also "here" in the sexual subtext of *Man Alone*. It thus becomes possible to read Johnson's assertion in the novel's introduction that "I could tell you worse things about the peace" as positioning the novel itself as Mulgan's act of personal resistance to sexual fascism.

In terms of Johnson's covert refusal of enforced heterosexuality, the attempts to kill him that take place in actual military battles – "He was at Jarama, [...] at Brunete, he was at Teruel and on the Ebro. He was at Calaceite and on the Aragon front" (Mulgan, Epilogue) – are therefore implied as a veritable respite compared with the insidious and/or explicit torture of the orchestrated attacks "civilised" society perpetrates against

anybody with his sexual sensibilities. Radclyffe Hall had used in *The Well of Loneliness* the precise military analogy Mulgan echoes here when she said: “bombs do not trouble the nerves of the invert, but rather that terrible silent bombardment from the batteries of God’s good people” (Hall, 2008, 306-307). In his reiteration of this trope Mulgan reveals the remorselessness of his protagonist’s existential suffering as being even more intense because in *Man Alone* it must remain entirely invisible to the implied reader.

During the immediate post World War I period in which Radclyffe Hall wrote her novel, she had presumed that having her openly “invert” heroine Stephen operate as an ambulance driver decorated for courage at the front would procure social legitimacy for her own homoerotic sensibility. However, despite Hall offering her protagonist’s conspicuous military contribution as reassurance that “invert” status represents no challenge to patriarchal mores, *The Well of Loneliness* was banned.

Therefore in *Man Alone* Mulgan pointedly assumes that despite his protagonist being doubly a war hero, his novel will be even less able to reach a public accommodation with patriarchy than Hall’s. At the time of its publication in the period of scrambling remilitarisation just before World War Two, the personal consequences for Mulgan of any taint of “effeminacy” would have been catastrophic. It would have seen him dishonourably barred from the war effort, and if the experience of his contemporaries serves as any indication – for example the Enigma code breaker Alan Turing – it would have continued to taint him with homophobic suspicion of his “criminality” for all the decades of the Cold War that followed:

> Turing was considered to be the father of modern computer science and was most famous for his work in helping to create the "bombe" that cracked messages enciphered with the German Enigma machines. He was convicted of gross indecency in 1952 after admitting a sexual relationship with a man. He was given experimental chemical castration as a "treatment". His [concurrent] criminal record resulted in the loss of his security clearance and meant he was no longer able to work for Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), where he had been employed following service at Bletchley Park during the war. He died of cyanide poisoning in 1954, aged 41.[…] Gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell said [Turing's] Royal pardon was long overdue, but also due to another "50,000-plus men who were also convicted of consenting, victimless homosexual relationships during the 20th century" (Davies, 2013).

Turing's "Royal pardon" was announced 59 years after his 1954 suicide, which in turn came six years after Mulgan's own suicide by intentional morphine overdose.

John Mulgan's biographer Vincent O'Sullivan represents his subject as "[an] outstanding soldier and officer" who therefore received a "recommendation for a military cross". Yet O'Sullivan also notes that once victory was in sight Mulgan was assessed in the forward planning undertaken by his British army superiors as being unsuitable for promotion: "Major Mulgan. Regimental duty or civilian employment" (O'Sullivan, 2011, severally, 313).

Whatever the substance of Mulgan's perceived deficiencies, in *Man Alone* Johnson's military superiors remain as oblivious as the implied reader to the fact that *private* Johnson's performance of "staunch" machismo is subversively nuanced. Specifically,

in the novel's epilogue Mulgan's narrator receives reports of Johnson's cool comment to the group of men with whom he has become lost in a mountain storm on the way into battle: "'This is nothing,' Johnson said, not cheerfully, but as a matter of fact" (Mulgan, 206). For the implied reader this is Johnson's gruffly understated nod to his months in the geographical wilderness of the Rangipo-Kaimanawa. But in fact subtextually the comparison here is to the lifetime he has endured in the wastelands of homophobia.

This is also the point at which the narrator receives a last report of Johnson, describing his calm as he sits in a tunnel, wounded in the arm, very cold and hungry, in the midst of his side's military rout. He is but one among many, "with the roads jammed with half a million people outside". All are hoping, as they attempt to flee across the frontier, for a chance to evade the planes strafing indiscriminately from above. In this, the novel's penultimate scene, the sheer extremity of the conditions to which Johnson and his fellows are subject gives a sardonic undertow to the utter stoicism of the protagonist's courage under fire.

Once again the subtextual implication here is that for somebody with a homoerotic sensibility, the sexual subterfuge required of him or her in civilian life is exponentially worse than any forthright attack they might encounter in an official war. The epilogue's reiteration of this point, first made in the novel's introduction, suggests it as a truth to which the implied reader is assumed to be entirely impervious. Such a reader would prefer to accept at face value the "patriotically" romantic assertion of the protagonist's heroic warrior immortality. This sophistry

is conveyed to that reader by the fellow combatant, who gives the narrator a wildly optimistic final report on Johnson's fate: "There are some men, this fellow said, you can't kill" (Mulgan, Epilogue). However, subtextually this is also a *fairytale* assertion that despite contemporary patriarchal culture's aversion to it, the homoerotic sensibility persists. And in "some men" – such as the narrator, Scott, Johnson, and the stranger reporting on his fate – it will remain an ineradicable feature of the human condition no matter what society throws at them.

30. The Orpheic Gaze –The Eurydicean moment

MULGAN'S CHOICE of the name "Crawley" for the old hermit – who is matrixial midwife to the protagonist's emergence from the maternal Kaimanawa Forest, and who as saviour and counsellor readies him for his re-immersion in the dominant phallocentric discourses of patriarchal culture – honours the eighteenth century Oxford scholar Richard Crawley. Can it be entirely coincidence that Mulgan's own son came to be named Richard?

Richard Crawley translated the ancient Greek historian Thucydides' chronicle of the 5th century BC Peloponnesian War between Sparta and Athens. It subsequently became the standard version.

This text was explicitly drawn to Mulgan's attention in 1935 when in his then role as a reader and editor at the Oxford University Press he was required to evaluate the possibility of

a new edition of this work (O'Sullivan, 2011,154). This task was one he was well equipped for since as an undergraduate at Auckland University he had studied enough Greek to concentrate on both: "English and Greek for the final year of his BA" (O'Sullivan, 2011, 53).

The matter-of-fact tone revealed in Richard Crawley's translation of Thucydides would serve as an unimpeachable classical precedent for the unadorned, seemingly historiographical directness of the narrative voice Mulgan adopts in *Man Alone*. But Mulgan also follows Thucydides in deploying sardonic humour, though his stoic account is not of an intractable military conflict, but rather of an intractable sexual conflict. And like Thucydides he also makes a point, albeit subtextually, of "always seeing things from the other side" (Green, 2008). However he veers from Thucydides' signal lack of interest in women. For in fact the Spartan tone of *Man Alone* camouflages the fact that Mulgan's searing critique of his patriarchal culture's *stenning* of sexuality is made quite as much in terms of "femininity-effeminacy" as "masculinity".

A variety of critics have suggested that Mulgan's "bare realism" is also indebted to Hemingway – the critic Roger Robinson concludes that "Mulgan took the title of *Man Alone* from a remark in Ernest Hemingway's in *To Have and Have Not*, 'a man alone ain't got no bloody fucking chance' ". (Robinson, 2017) In one description of his novel Mulgan is himself self-deprecatingly complicit with this Hemingway association. But these claims of similarity privilege homosociality and platonic mateship on terms that accommodate the novel's implied reader.

Critical imputations of unadorned *machismo* to *Man Alone* simply serve to obstruct recognition of the novel's homoerotic

subtext. Other critics have rightly noted that “Mulgan’s prose has its own inner structures and rhythms, which are wholly unlike Hemingway’s” (Paul Day in D’Cruz & Ross, 2011, Note 35, 33).

In fact the guiding voice of the unnamed narrator, who shares the transgressive insights of *Man Alone* with the reader, is entirely complicit with the novel’s subversive subtext. His introductory remarks about Johnson also imply that after the two fell into conversation on a quayside in Brittany they shared a sexual encounter: “*and afterwards*, because we found that we both came from the same country, which was not England” [my emphasis] (Introduction, Mulgan). For the implied reader this remark is just a simple avowal of their joint colonial independence. But since the reader knows that Johnson, for one, was born in England and after returning there has only recently departed it to fight in Spain, the narrator’s assertion of the two men’s origins as being non-English can only be metaphorical. In fact this assertion subtextually recognises their joint nativity in the “foreign” country (m/Otherland) of the homoerotic sensibility, where both are perfectly *at home*. Mulgan’s sly implication here is that their sexual satisfaction with one another, however “queenly”, does not require them to *lie back and think of England*.

The narrator goes on to disclose, at length, the exigencies of Johnson’s dealings with his equally transgressive sexual partners, Scott and Rua. Johnson’s account of his jouissant and traumatic relationships with these two is shared with the narrator over a leisurely dinner consumed in the bustling but paradoxically intimate setting of the “Café de Bordeaux”. At

the time Mulgan is writing, no public space in Aotearoa New Zealand is remotely like it.

In the writer's home country the serving of alcohol after 6pm is illegal, and therefore the consumption of food is never allowed to interfere with the imperative to get as drunk as possible by early closing. The *six o'clock swill* began in 1917 and did not end until 1967. In the male-only public bars of this period beer was de rigueur and any interest in wine carried a charge of transgressive "feminine-effeminacy". No "real" man, unless he was a hopeless alcoholic, would publically touch the sherry-wine made available in small quantities to "ladies". To this day some "Kiwi" breweries invoke this macho prejudice against wine in their product promotions.

Yet during the novel's introduction Johnson and the narrator order a couple of bottles of "cheap red wine" and drink it at their leisure while savouring courses of prawns and veal among the convivial hubbub of the European travelling public on their seaside excursions. This is an ironic rebuke to the "stenning" interference of New Zealand officialdom in culinary social intercourse – let alone sexual intercourse.

By recounting over the course of the novel his lengthy dinner conversation with Johnson, Mulgan's narrator also offers the reader a seat at their table. In this quite literal context of compassionate hospitality, the reader as "unknown other" and stranger, is invited into a limited severality with two men who share a private language entirely different from the French being spoken all around them. But the implied reader simply assumes that the language they have in common is English and so remains oblivious to the intimacies shared with the reader

in terms of the "foreign" language of the novel's homoerotic subtext.

Despite the informal public setting for this meeting, the fact that Johnson is on only a short leave from the front makes for an implicit assurance of his serious commitment to truth telling. The narrator's relaxed rapport with him therefore takes on an underlying historical gravitas, because both men recognise the likelihood of Johnson's imminent death in combat. At the same time the apparent ease with which the narrator has gained the complete confidence of a "hard" man like Johnson serves as a guarantee of the trustworthiness of his rendering of Johnson's tale.

By describing the dishes the two men consume, Mulgan also pointedly allies their dinner table encounter with Virginia Woolf's explicitly "feminine" resistance to patriarchal hegemony in *A Room of One's Own*. Mulgan is endorsing Woolf's observation that writers may mention "witty and wise talk" in their fiction "but they seldom spare a word for what was eaten. […A]s if soup and salmon and ducklings were of no importance whatsoever, […] I shall take the liberty to defy that convention" (Woolf, 1977, 12-18).

Woolf's remark comes immediately before her revelation of the differential quality of the food served to women at "Oxbridge" as compared with that given to men. Starting from this modest nutritional example, she then goes on to make her devastating critique of the institutionalised impoverishment to which "femininity" is subjected in patriarchy.

A Room of One's Own challenges the fact that while male fellows are sated with partridges and wine, the very few women

scholars who do get to “Oxbridge” are chased off the grass, routinely locked out of the libraries, and must expect to be satisfied with stringy beef, dry biscuits, prunes with custard, and water. The meagre rations – both nutritional and intellectual – that are on offer to even the most talented and privileged of women in the nation’s pre-eminent centres of learning exemplify for Woolf the systematised deprivation inflicted throughout society at large on anybody deemed “feminine”.

Mulgan’s personal endorsement of Woolf’s arguments against the culture of exclusive “Oxbridge” male entitlement, of which he was himself a privileged recipient, can be recognised in the economic independence he ultimately endows Rua with in *Man Alone*.

However, patriarchal academic privilege had not always gone Mulgan’s way. There is continuing controversy around his allegedly prejudicial exclusion from New Zealand’s Rhodes scholarships (O’Sullivan 2011, pp.52-53, 75-78). But ongoing critical puzzlement at Mulgan’s elimination barely registers that his sister Dorothea, a far more able student than he, was simply ineligible. No Rhodes was awarded to any New Zealand woman until 1977 (Otago Library, Rhodes Scholars in NZ). So Dorothea Mulgan – like Virginia Woolf, like “Shakespeare’s sister” – was denied the sexual, financial, scholarly, creative and personal independence granted to her brother. The obstruction of Dorothea’s access to post-graduate study would, to her great regret, *sten* her ability to further her music.

But in fact the repeated insistence on “manliness” in the Rhodes’ formal criteria was as much a dog-whistle refusal of “effeminacy” as it was an outright dismissal of women. Mulgan’s

personal consciousness of this insidious homophobic bias and the dangers of seeming to confront it must have played a significant part in his muted response to his eventual Rhodes rejection – whatever its cause. “When there was talk of a student protest to the board, Mulgan was against the gesture” (O’Sullivan, 2011, 77). Fortunately for him, his parents were able to raise the money to pay his Oxford fees privately.

Cecil Rhodes’ insistence on the conspicuous “manliness” of the recipients of his largesse also brings into further ironic focus the meal shared by Johnson and the narrator. The casual deliciousness of their repast is Mulgan’s implicit defiance of the repulsive rations on which Oscar Wilde’s narrator was famously made to subsist in *The Ballad of Reading Jail*. Thirty-two years after Wilde’s poetic indictment of the brackish water and chalk-limed bread (5, v.8, l.1-4) with which Her Majesty’s Prisons punished those found guilty of “effeminacy”, Virginia Woolf had extended Wilde’s revelation with her theorisation in *A Room of One’s Own*, of women’s institutional beggary at Oxbridge, revealing this as symptomatic of the misogynist basis of patriarchal society at large.

It is therefore an act of implicit solidarity with both Wilde and Woolf that has John Mulgan sitting the conspicuously working class Johnson down with his fellow “alien” narrator to a very decent dinner. This meal represents Mulgan’s symbolic democratisation and disbursement to “others” of the cloistered nutritional and [homo]sexual privileges that were freely available to him as an “Oxford” man.

Wilde’s *The Ballad of Reading Jail* first appeared anonymously in 1897. But the scandal of its writer’s prosecution

and sentencing for "gross indecencies" had been widely reported throughout the British Empire and therefore also in Aotearoa New Zealand. This notoriety meant that the poem soon became commercially successful under Wilde's own name. It contained his fearless revelation of the inhumanity of his sentence for the "crime" of engaging in consensual sex with a person of his own gender – two years of penal servitude with hard labour. This sentence was imposed by the English court as a warning that no man was immune to criminal prosecution for homosexuality, however high his social rank.

The meal the narrator shares with Johnson in *Man Alone* therefore takes place in France, the country of Wilde's post-imprisonment exile. In England he was persona non grata: a social pariah. Thus the two men's restaurant exchange set so comfortably in this "foreign" land, contextualises Johnson's tale as an act of material and symbolic sexual restitution. Mulgan's nurturance of the homoerotic sensibility in this encounter treats it as being civilised, jouissant and resurgent.

He is in no way histrionic in these assertions. He simply implies that to deny to "others" the rightful pleasures of their alternative sexualities is as self-evidently absurd as it is to deny the pleasures of café-style dining and drinking to the people of his homeland.

However, the narrator's revelations about the hero are not limited to the material Johnson shares with him in their dinner-table tête-*à-tête*. For in the novel's epilogue the narrator also offers the reader reports of Johnson given to him by two "other" men on whom the protagonist has made an equally profound impression. Yet the narrator's troubling admission that he is

unable to verify their stories suggests that he himself is only temporarily at liberty behind ever-shifting battle lines. This has the disconcerting effect of placing the ultimate responsibility for the verification and survival of Johnson's tale on the reader.

All these fighters – Johnson and his mates – face a conflict that can be understood as something "other" than the geopolitical clash of twentieth-century empires that is superficially addressed in the novel's introduction and epilogue for the benefit of the implied reader. For from "behind the lines" of *Man Alone* Mulgan speaks symbolically of the clandestine culture "wars" where there is always imminent danger that the matrixial heimlich of a homoerotic sensibility will be disrecognised as an unheimlich horror. In these terms, the novel reads as Mulgan's attempt to redress whatever of ignorance might contribute to such disrecognitions.

The narrator's last report on Johnson's fate is delivered with the seemingly dispassionate qualification of a combat rapporteur: "This fellow guessed he came through alive, but he didn't see him again" (Mulgan, Epilogue). However the stranger's recollection may also be read as Mulgan's final voicing of the Orpheic-Eurydicean dilemma (Ettinger, 2006, 201.2).

> Myself, he said, *looking back* and considering quietly a war that was not very satisfactory, all things quietly considered, myself I find one satisfaction knowing Johnson is still alive. There are some men, this fellow said, you can't kill [my emphasis] (Mulgan, Epilogue).

To *look back at* the text and register Johnson's homoerotic sensibility with a schizing Orpheic gaze will return both him and *Man Alone* to the perpetual shade of the (literary)

underworld. However "looking back" at Johnson can also become an occasion for "re-spect" – defined matrixially by Bracha Ettinger as "unarmed re-seeing" (Ettinger 2009a, 7). It will then be possible for the reader to say, in transsubjective besidedness with both the stranger and the narrator, that in the ever-suspended Eurydicean moment of Mulgan's fiction, "Johnson is still alive".

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