
Modernism or Exile? E. H. McCormick and *Letters and Art in New Zealand*

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Upon its publication in 1940 E. H. McCormick's *Letters and Art in New Zealand* immediately became a landmark in his country's cultural landscape. Indeed, the book remains one of the most significant ever written in New Zealand. This "lucid and invaluable"¹ text garnered only one negative review for over thirty years and remained in print for half a century, establishing the author as the first professional critic of New Zealand literature. McCormick's work provided a basis for both literary and cultural reflection on New Zealand, and has the added significance of being the chief accomplishment of the 1940 Centennial Celebrations. Written in a period of both local and global upheaval, and with governmental backing, *Letters and Art* contains a surfeit of information for literary historians interested in the institutional and aesthetic origins of New Zealand identity. Revealingly, the key to understanding the book lies in the author's exploration of what he believed was an ambiguous and troubling relationship between New Zealand and the outside world. Caught between the heady critical world of modernist Europe and exile in the South Pacific, McCormick posited that his situation was analogous to that of New Zealand culture generally. In doing so, he advanced a thesis that has yet to be resolved.

Perhaps surprisingly given his background, Eric McCormick found himself thrust into the centre of the European melting pot in 1931 when he moved to England to attend Cambridge University. The decade to follow would witness unprecedented social, economic and political turmoil: a global economic depression; the rise in Marxist and

Socialist ideology on the Left and Fascist tendencies on the Right; civil war in Spain; turmoil in the Soviet Union and China, and movements towards decolonization in various parts of the world. All of this was followed by the outbreak of World War Two in September 1939. To a world already rocked by an earlier devastating war and the onset of strange new forms of social and political expression, it seemed to many as if the modern age was to be eviscerated before it even got a chance to find its feet. Modernist artists expressed their anxiety through work that reflected their perception of a distressed and broken world, and many intellectuals began to demand ideological commitment as an antidote to cultural decay. An air of cynicism and fear pervaded much of the western world. Into such a climate was thrust our twenty-five year old antipodal scholar.

Eric Hall McCormick was born in Taihape on 17 June 1906, to an Irish bootmaker who had migrated to New Zealand in 1874 after being forced out of his home country, along with many of his compatriots, after the onset of the depression. Ironically, on arrival in New Zealand, his father found that the depression had migrated to the colonies with him, and he spent time walking country roads looking for work before moving to Taihape and starting his own business. McCormick's mother came from Canterbury, and used to proudly assert that her parents arrived at Lyttelton only "five years after the First Four Ships"² – an indication of both her colonial beginnings, and early Pakehas' continued adherence to English notions of class and position. In later years, McCormick still harboured a fascination with the social gradations that could be clearly discerned in Taihape, and even suspected that his subsequent interest in eighteenth-century England was a result of witnessing over and over again a group of women handing around tea beneath pictures of the royal family.³ The scene of his childhood appears at once working

class and genteel, structured and free, and in all of these contrasting features typical of life in many parts of New Zealand during the early twentieth century. The effect of this background on a developing intellectual is interesting to note: McCormick was capable of both balanced and impartial scholarship, and (at least on one occasion) quite questionable political attitudes. He suggested in a 1960 lecture at Auckland University that New Zealanders should move from gentility “to that state of democratic aristocracy which flourished here for centuries”;⁴ his belief being that monarchy represented a point of common interest between Maori and Pakeha that could be harnessed in a modern form of monarchical government. A reflection of his upbringing, perhaps, but also of a class consciousness that is often denied as being a part of New Zealand’s twentieth-century cultural heritage.

After growing up in Taihape and attending Wellington College on a scholarship, McCormick trained as a teacher and took a job at a school near Nelson.⁵ By 1929 he had gained an M.A. in English and Latin at Victoria University College through extra-mural studies.⁶ The following year he was awarded a travelling scholarship to Cambridge on the basis of his M.A. thesis “Literature in New Zealand”.⁷ On arriving at Cambridge in 1931 he undertook research on a Tudor book (*A Myrroure for Magistrates*) under the supervision of Enid Welsford, but eventually abandoned the thesis on the advice of the literary critic F. R. Leavis, who along with his wife Queenie became McCormick’s “chief friends and unofficial mentors”.⁸ It turned out to be an association of enduring significance for New Zealand’s intellectual history.

McCormick attended Cambridge during “The Golden Age of Cambridge English” (1928-1936)⁹ when lecturers like Leavis, I. A. Richards, and Mansfield Forbes began to

integrate philosophical and psychological insights into literary criticism. This was, of course, the period in which “English Studies” was institutionalized as an academic discipline¹⁰ and the notion of “Culture” came to hold prominence as an interpretative tool.¹¹ On approaching Leavis at one of his weekly tea parties for students, McCormick was urged to complete his honours thesis on New Zealand literature, taking an “anthropological”¹² approach that would account for cultural and historical forces. For the following two years McCormick attended lectures at Cambridge in English literature and returned to study on his earlier thesis, titling it “Literature in New Zealand: An Essay in Cultural Criticism”.¹³ Under the influence of Leavis, his purpose became at once literary, historical and social. As he put it, it was “most convenient to select certain of the more significant works or groups of works belonging to each of the well defined stages of New Zealand’s history and to consider them in connection with the relevant facts of the country’s history and social development”.¹⁴ From the outset of his career as a scholar, McCormick was interested in relating New Zealand’s literature to broader patterns of social and historical development, and considering that there was no consensus as to whether New Zealand actually possessed a “literature” at all, this was an unusual choice of subject-matter. Most commentators felt that a nation had to be respectably ancient before it could label its literary heritage a literature, but McCormick and others in New Zealand felt that this was beside the point. On the contrary, they believed that the identification of a local literary canon could enhance, and indeed define, a sense of national identity.

Feeling that he had absorbed everything that England had to offer, McCormick returned to New Zealand before he had completed his Cambridge thesis, settling in

Dunedin and working at the Dunedin Public Library before becoming Hocken Librarian in 1936 and assistant to the Dominion Archivist in Wellington the following year. In 1937 he was also made secretary to the National Centennial Historical Committee, which was to oversee the historical elements in the upcoming Centennial celebrations planned for 1940.¹⁵ It was in this capacity that he extended his Cambridge M.Litt. thesis into *Letters and Art in New Zealand*, utilizing many of the skills he had acquired overseas, while rejecting ideas that he felt had no relevance to the local setting. The story that follows is one of local innovation augmented by a smattering of carefully chosen perspectives from overseas.

A Centennial branch of the Department of Internal Affairs had been established in 1936 to oversee the planned celebrations for 1940, from an exhibition in Wellington to essay competitions and government sponsored architecture by Edmund Anscombe.¹⁶ This was to be the first major foray of a New Zealand government into patronage of the arts, and a great deal of planning went into the event. Posters were drawn up, a magazine specifically oriented towards the Centennial was established, and cultural events were organized throughout the country. The central theme was of an integrated, united country bred on sunshine, good food and the rigours of outdoor living. And clearly the publicity worked: the Centennial Exhibition in Wellington alone attracted 2,641,031 visitors over a twelve-month period (one million more than the entire population at the time).¹⁷ New Zealanders obviously relished the opportunity to celebrate their nation and its achievements.

To social commentators like Denis Glover, however, it appeared as if the national reverie threatened to blot out all sense of perspective:

In the year of centennial splendours
 There were fireworks and decorated cars
 And punga drooping from the verandas

– But no one remembered our failures.

The politicians like bubbles from a marsh
 Rose to the platform, hanging in every place
 Their comfortable platitudes like plush

– Without one word of our failures.¹⁸

What many New Zealanders attending the Centennial Celebrations may not have realized (and Glover obviously did) was that the entire event had become enmeshed in wartime politics. Spurred by World War Two, the New Zealand government was eager to bolster a sense of national identity in order to rally the country to arms. W. E. Parry, the Minister of Internal Affairs, made a direct link between the Centennial Celebrations and World War Two when he wrote in 1941 that “[i]t can be fairly stated that Germany’s challenge to the British Commonwealth increased the importance of the Centennial celebrations, which must have strengthened the sense of nationhood throughout the country”. He went on to encourage the further development “of a spiritual organism which [would] live on for the permanent benefit of New Zealand”.¹⁹ The solidification of New Zealanders’ sense of identity was thus viewed as a legitimate means of furthering the war effort, and the national reverie engendered by the Centennial Celebrations encouraged exactly this. Glover and other Left-leaning intellectuals in New Zealand were concerned about what they perceived to be an uncanny (and to them, disturbing) consonance between the nationalistic fervour of the celebrations and that of the totalitarian regimes they were meant to be fighting. They were fully aware that acts of parliament created in the wartime atmosphere had given the government scope to manipulate proceedings; especially under

the Censorship and Publicity Emergency Regulations (1939) and the Public Safety Emergency Regulations (1940), which were already being used to silence *Tomorrow* magazine. Critics knew that although the Centennial was designed to celebrate the nation's cultural heritage, it was to be along acceptable party lines.

In line with other elements of the Centennial, the literary celebrations were also politically inspired. The initial idea for a series of works celebrating New Zealand's intellectual heritage was conceived by J. W. A. Heenan, Under-Secretary of Internal Affairs in the Labour government. Heenan approached McCormick in his capacity as Secretary to the National Centennial Historical Committee over the possibility of editing the entire series, which was to have a much broader base than literature alone. In order to convey the wide range of intellectual interests in New Zealand the series included works on discovery (J. C. Beaglehole), exploration (W. G. McClymont), settlement (James Cowan), farming (G. T. Alley), administration (L. C. Webb), social services (W. B. Sutch), external relations (Fred Wood), education (C. E. Beeby), science (S. H. Jenkinson), women (Helen Simpson), art, literature and language (McCormick), Maori (Apirana Ngata) and Pakeha (Oliver Duff).²⁰ Several of the works were never completed, or changed in scope prior to publication.²¹ Moreover, in keeping with the close governmental involvement, McCormick was required at the very least to ensure that the series would "be national in scope; authoritative, yet suitable for the general public; moderate in length – some 30,000 words; and uniform in design".²² In terms of literature as an institution *Letters and Art* is a classic example of state-inspired literary nationalism.²³ It is significant that Heenan and the Labour government recognized the political and cultural gains to be made from such an exercise. Previous private initiatives

(such as *Phoenix, Tomorrow* and the Caxton Press) had proven to them the utility of cultural, rather than merely economic and social development.

Even if the exigencies of wartime politics are put aside, however, the reasons for such overt patronage are not surprising. As McCormick noted, at the time of publication, critical writing on New Zealand literature was “small in bulk and almost invariably poor in quality”.²⁴ Various works of limited scope such as E. M. Smith’s *A History of New Zealand Fiction* (1939) were present by the time *Letters and Art* was published, but there had been no systematic study of literature in its entirety outside of McCormick’s own theses. The same inherent shallowness could be said of the other areas of study outlined for the series. Government patronage of the Centennial Surveys aimed at reversing this trend by establishing a corpus of quality local scholarship that could harness and enhance a sense of cultural identity.²⁵ In addition to this, the Centennial Celebrations injected much needed capital into the local intellectual and cultural scenes, providing institutional support for the nascent trends that had been developing since the nineteen thirties. Private initiatives simply could not provide the financial backing necessary to undertake a major appraisal of New Zealand’s intellectual past as well as prompting further growth on a significant scale.

With all these distinctly local origins, it is easy to forget that *Letters and Art in New Zealand* was actually started when McCormick was overseas at Cambridge University. Indeed, in some ways the work reflected the developing conception of literary criticism propounded by F. R. and Q. D. Leavis in England as much as any peculiarly New Zealand sensibility. The Leavisite movement was integral to the development of literary criticism into a practically oriented critique of society during the early twentieth

century.²⁶ Works such as Q. D. Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932) and F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson's *Culture and Environment* (1933) were central to critiques of literature and culture worldwide. Specifically, Leavisite ideology pointed out "the standardization and debasement of popular culture",²⁷ suggesting that a worldwide crisis of culture was impending because of the advent of mass cultural forms symbolised by Hollywood films and American comics. New Zealand literary nationalists eventually began to integrate such thoughts into critiques of New Zealand culture that pointed out the prevalence of materialism, conformity and stagnation.

Lay readers could be forgiven for misunderstanding this pessimistic attitude towards the modern world. Today, the modernist revolution in art and literature is frequently lauded as a triumphant flowering of new political, social and aesthetic outlooks; a time when people began to question received knowledge and assert the importance of art and philosophy as revolutionary tools. As scholars like Chris Baldick have pointed out, however, critics like the Leavises could not avoid the fact that many of the great writers involved in literary modernism were actually trumpeting the exact opposite; they were pointing out the absurdity of modern living, and the encroachment of the technological age into every aspect of their lives. Critics like the Leavises felt that their role was to confront their readers with the "real" lessons of modernity, and destroy any middle-class complacency that appeared to be luxuriating in the presence of a new aesthetic without heeding its central message. The "Golden Age" sweeping Cambridge during McCormick's residence was in large part provoked by a desire to educate readers in the darker messages of literary modernism. In order to understand why McCormick felt that their message had to be toned down for his New Zealander readers, it is necessary to

delve a little deeper into the writing of the period.

Literary modernism can be simply divided into three parallel but quite different movements: technological, aesthetic and surrealist. All three strains implicitly argued that art had the power to redefine the modern world, but all three also put forward a dark vision of dislocation and decay. Technologists like H. G. Wells and Aldous Huxley wrote very well-received science fiction works that warned against technological advances overtaking human ethics. *The Time Machine* (1895) and *Brave New World* (1932) posited futures where discrepancies in access to technology would result in either endemic violence or totalitarian repression: these were books that appealed to youngsters and adults alike, but contained thinly disguised warnings to a society revelling in the mass production of both luxury items and killing machines. Aesthetic modernists like T. S. Eliot and James Joyce took a different attitude to their work. They were concerned to avoid what they believed to be a decline in intellectual and moral standards. *The Wasteland* (1922) and *Ulysses* (1936) are almost impenetrable without a vast array of explanatory material that can point the reader to allusions to a wide range of Western intellectual and philosophical traditions. Eliot and Joyce aimed to balance the complicated modern world around them with an equally complicated aesthetic. At the same time, they focussed on the internal psychological states of their characters, using a “stream of consciousness” technique that presented a candid view of middle-class banality. Surrealists took the psychological angle one step further, and blended it with the pessimistic vision put forward by the technologists. In *The Trial* (1925), Franz Kafka narrated the bizarre story of a man transported into what can be described as a parallel universe of the mind, where he is put on trial for incomprehensible crimes and subjected

to an illogical and quite terrifying legal system. It is hardly necessary to reiterate that the imaginary world of literary modernism could be a lonely and bizarre place.

McCormick's attitude to all of this is instructive. Specifically, he was never entirely comfortable with the details of literary modernism and Leavisite ideology, and seems to have used his status as an outsider at Cambridge to retain a certain degree of intellectual independence from the scene. In his opinion, New Zealand literature and society simply did not have the depth necessary for the modernist message, publicized by the likes of Leavis, to gain any ground. New Zealand culture was too undeveloped to prompt any intellectually sophisticated work like that produced by the literary modernists: not only was there nothing remotely approaching the standard of the work under review by Leavis and his followers, but there didn't appear to be any likelihood that there would be anything like it to come in the near future. The world of Huxley and Eliot was separated from the average New Zealand reader by 12,000 miles, and it seemed highly unlikely that their meditations held much relevance for the New Zealand literary tradition. Moreover, there was important work to be done in the ongoing attempt to build a culture back in New Zealand – all of this intellectual and philosophical gloss would have to wait. The intellectual scene McCormick found himself in during his time at Cambridge was undoubtedly exciting and revitalizing, but for practical reasons he appears to have retained what can only be described as a colonial reserve.

For instance, although F. R. Leavis did lend advice to McCormick, he was never an official supervisor. This role was taken by the historian of ideas Basil Willey (author of the well known *Seventeenth-Century Background*), who basically left the young scholar to his own devices.²⁸ McCormick did attend Leavis's lectures on English literature and

initially took his advice regarding the need for an “anthropological” approach to his thesis, but as one commentator has pointed out, McCormick felt that Leavis was after disciples and was not ready to jump on the bandwagon.²⁹ In line with his general thesis for the series, McCormick’s chief aim was to make explicit the relation between social changes in the years since European discovery, and the creation of a local body of creative expression.³⁰ In a letter accompanying a draft sent to Heenan, McCormick wrote that he had looked at all kinds of writing “irrespective of its nature and sometimes irrespective of its quality . . .”,³¹ so long as it had some bearing on what he termed the social development of New Zealand. It was simply not possible to throw the full apparatus of the modern literary-critical tradition at New Zealand literature; there would have been virtually nothing left.

The thematic link between McCormick’s voluminous material was to be a thesis of adaptation, rather than modernist polemic:

Now the “idea” which seems to me of fundamental importance in any consideration of New Zealand history is this; that one hundred years ago a sample of nineteenth century society and civilisation was transferred to New Zealand and has since been reshaped and adapted, with varying degrees of success, to conform to the conditions of a new environment
³²

And here is where the central feature of McCormick’s thought becomes apparent; an ambiguity and lack of ease with European cultural theory based on an overwhelming sense of exile and alienation in the South Pacific. Although weighty and powerful in themselves, the central tenets of literary modernism did not seem to apply in New Zealand, where the intellectual tradition was extremely shallow, and there did not seem to be any recognizable identity to dissolve in artistic angst in the first place. Indeed, throughout his career McCormick retained a mordant interest in the concept of both

personal and cultural exile. He was intrigued by the implications inherent in the transfer of a microcosm of Victorian society onto a few South Pacific islands that were not only devoid of European civilization, but already inhabited by Maori (his suggestion that New Zealand should develop an aristocratic tradition was one way in which he tried to resolve this dilemma). Monte Holcroft and other New Zealand intellectuals were similarly obsessed by this unavoidable aspect of cultural development in New Zealand. Holcroft managed to become so simplistic in his attempts to justify the European presence that he later proposed that:

While the countries of Europe and Asia felt the movement of tribes and the growth of nations; while the classic civilizations were tumultuously taking their shape in the Mediterranean basin . . . the islands of New Zealand were outside the mind of the world, intact and pure amid the flow of winds which brought only the sound and the distilled moisture of the sea.³³

Clearly, Maori and Pakeha had simply been exiled by fate to the same place: the unavoidable implication was that race relations could be smoothed over through a recognition of mutual exile. The argument is seductive, if reductive.

In *Letters and Art*, exile was a metaphor for the dilemma of existence in New Zealand. Starting in “The Nineties”, McCormick related the disappearance from New Zealand of William Pember Reeves. In “Between Two Hemispheres” this writer was joined by Alan Mulgan and Katherine Mansfield, the implication being that the trip “Home”³⁴ was taken by any writer who could afford it in order to avoid the loss of cultured society on the periphery of empire. There was an equal sense in McCormick’s use of the concept that even those that had left remained in exile; exile from an inadequate New Zealand. McCormick’s conception of exile was not as simple as mere physical distance from Europe (which he often pointed out was a matter of relativity).³⁵ The issue for him was

one of “spiritual”³⁶ exile, or exile from experience. McCormick viewed New Zealand in this period as suffering from a provincial malaise, meaning that in the process of differentiating from the mother country a measure of identity had been lost.³⁷ New Zealanders were no longer English, but in no true sense New Zealanders either³⁸ (the separation of Maori and Pakeha was evidence enough of this). The mood was typical of literary nationalists of the period. As Allen Curnow wrote: “Not I, some child, born in a marvellous year / Will learn the trick of standing upright here”.³⁹

And yet the content of *Letters and Art* belied McCormick’s pessimism. While the early twentieth century produced some poetry that is still described as “fanciful, cosy, decorative, and precious”,⁴⁰ and novels tended to be “restricted in setting, almost banal in plot . . .”⁴¹ the period fits well with a picture of a general upturn in creative output that peaked after the depression of the ’thirties. Novels set in pioneering days became popular out of nostalgia for simpler times. William Satchell’s novels, such as *The Toll of the Bush* (1905) and *The Greenstone Door* (1914), depicted frontier New Zealand with a complexity of concept and plot that represented an advance on earlier novels,⁴² and Jane Mander’s *The Story of a New Zealand River* (1920) was judged lacking by McCormick only in terms of what he saw as an “excessive emotionalism”.⁴³ Katherine Mansfield was broadly discussed by McCormick, as was Edith Searle Grossman. “Between Two Hemispheres” also pointed out the advances in scholarship made by S. Percy Smith, Elsdon Best and T. Lindsay Buick. H. Guthrie Smith’s *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station* (1921) was isolated for extensive praise. In poetry, Blanche Baughan, Eileen Duggan and Robin Hyde were noted for their appearance, but McCormick lamented an apparent inability on their part to fulfil their potential⁴⁴ (a

judgement that is now contested).⁴⁵

Despite this obvious development in creative output, and understandably given the tendency of his contemporaries to leave New Zealand in search of literary success, McCormick's narrative consistently depicted New Zealand writers as being susceptible both to flights of fancy and to dependence on English literature. The literary milieu was further degraded in his mind by an exodus of talent to Britain. No mention was made in the main text of *Letters and Art in New Zealand* to the popular (although admittedly hackneyed) book of poetry selected by Alexander and Currie, *A Treasury of New Zealand Verse* (1906) or the later selection by Quentin Pope, *Kowhai Gold: An Anthology of Contemporary New Zealand Verse* (1930).⁴⁶ Both are now recognized as important representative texts of the era despite their distinctly hollow appeal.⁴⁷ Mid-century literary nationalists like McCormick could often be negative about the tradition they inherited⁴⁸ (to the point of omission in this case, although the works do get a cursory mention in the "Note on Sources" in the interests of a fulsome treatment of the topic). One gets the sense that he was being careful in his appraisal of the state of New Zealand literature, unwilling to attribute success where there was only nascent development. McCormick was an ardent advocate for New Zealand literature, but fully aware of how short on tradition that literature actually was. He presents us with the twin perspectives of a practical New Zealand nationalist and a Cambridge-educated critic.

Letters and Art in New Zealand would have ended on a pessimistic note had the Depression of the nineteen thirties not given McCormick renewed hope for the future of New Zealand literature. His assertion that the Depression called into question New Zealand's right to plenty and prompted "a reorientation in outlook of major importance to

New Zealand's literature . . .”⁴⁹ stands as a major interpretative insight. It is a credit to McCormick that he recognized the development of literature in New Zealand during the 'thirties as significant, because writers like Frank Sargeson and Robin Hyde were not very well known at the time. Their reputations were aided a great deal by *Letters and Art*. To McCormick and his fellow critics, the writers of the depression proved that New Zealand could produce a local literature of quality. Robin Hyde's *Passport to Hell* (1936) and *Nor the Years Condemn* (1938) were praised by McCormick as “impressive works of fiction . . .”⁵⁰ and Sargeson's *Conversation With My Uncle* (1936) was viewed as an example “of a local tradition that has hitherto been inarticulate”.⁵¹ Sargeson was held to be the first New Zealand writer to capture the local vernacular on the page, creating “a literary form quite new in this country”.⁵² Similarly, A. R. D. Fairburn's *Dominion* (1938) and Allen Curnow's *Not in Narrow Seas* (1939) were seen as evidence of a new-found level of self-expression in poetry. Only R. A. K. Mason and Denis Glover were criticized for an inherent failure of vision.⁵³ Finally, the advent of *Phoenix* and *Tomorrow* magazines and the development of the Unicorn and Caxton Presses were noted by McCormick as infrastructural advances that would allow continued expansion. “Close of a Century” ended *Letters and Art in New Zealand* on a note of optimism. Although McCormick perceived the beginnings of a recent decline in artistic quality, the development of New Zealand literature gave him “signs, few but positive, of adult nationhood”.⁵⁴ In closing his seminal work, McCormick appeared ready to accept the future health of the New Zealand literary project.

Modern literary critics might cringe at the thought of having to undertake a project like *Letters and Art in New Zealand*; especially on the urging of as dominant a figure as

F. R. Leavis. Not only were the available texts frequently suspect in their quality, but there was no real consensus that New Zealand had the right to refer to its own literature at all; this was an honour bestowed upon the old countries of the world. Moreover, McCormick had been “home” and studied at Cambridge with some of the guiding lights of the modernist critical revolution, and was painfully aware that their critical precepts could not be applied to New Zealand literature without risking pedantry and anachronism. Ironically, however, he appears to have solved these problems in his meditations upon the theme of personal and cultural exile, and in doing so tapped a vein of support within New Zealand from like-minded intellectuals who felt that his articulation of alienation spoke to their central concerns as New Zealanders. *Letters and Art in New Zealand* prompted a wave of explorations into New Zealand’s literary and cultural heritage, and McCormick’s work has influenced an entire generation of New Zealand critics. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, his identification of the exile theme has yet to be fully resolved. Even today, New Zealanders seem vaguely perturbed by their position on the globe, and all too willing to snatch the best from overseas while suggesting that their own culture remains derivative and shallow.⁵⁵ There are few New Zealand books that have exerted such an influence over the imaginations of our artists, writers and academics as *Letters and Art in New Zealand*. That this is often forgotten is merely further evidence of McCormick’s ingenious accomplishment.

NOTES

¹ James Bertram, *Flight of the Phoenix*, Wellington: Victoria UP, 1985, p.86.

² E. H. McCormick, “Beginnings”, *Islands* 22, 6,4 (1977), 381.

³ Vincent O’Sullivan, “Portrait of E. H. McCormick”, *NZ Listener*, 18 July 1981, p, 20.

⁴ E. H. McCormick, “Last, Loneliest, Most Loyal”, in Keith Sinclair, ed., *Distance Looks Our Way: The Effects of Remoteness on New Zealand*, Auckland: Paul’s Book Arcade for the University of Auckland, 1962, p. 118

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- ⁵ Dennis McEldowney, "Sole Charge", in Dennis McEldowney, ed., *An Absurd Ambition: Autobiographical Writings*, Auckland: Auckland UP, 1996, p. 71.
- ⁶ E. H. McCormick, *The Inland Eye: A Sketch in Visual Autobiography*, Auckland: Auckland Gallery Associates, 1959.
- ⁷ E. H. McCormick, *Literature in New Zealand*, M. A. Thesis, Victoria University College, Wellington, 1929.
- ⁸ E. H. McCormick, "In the 1930's: Cambridge to New Zealand", in Ian MacKillop and Richard Storer, eds, *F. R. Leavis: Essays and Documents*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995, p.232.
- ⁹ *ibid.*, p.38.
- ¹⁰ Chris Baldick, *Criticism and Literary Theory 1890 to the Present*, London and New York: Longman, 1996, p.1.
- ¹¹ *ibid.*, p.17.
- ¹² McCormick, "Cambridge to New Zealand", p.231.
- ¹³ E. H. McCormick, *Literature in New Zealand: An Essay in Cultural Criticism*, M. Litt. Thesis, Cambridge University, 1935.
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.1.
- ¹⁵ Ewan Johnston, *Representing the Pacific at International Exhibitions 1851-1940*, Ph. D. Thesis, Auckland University, 1999, p.322.
- ¹⁶ Hamish Keith, *A Lovely Day Tomorrow: New Zealand in the 1940s*, Auckland: Random Century, 1991, p.62.
- ¹⁷ *ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Denis Glover, "Centennial", in Denis Glover, *Denis Glover: Selected Poems*, ed. Bill Manhire Wellington: Victoria UP, 1995, p.37.
- ¹⁹ W. Parry, "National Importance of the Centennial", in *New Zealand Centennial News*, No.15, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1941.
- ²⁰ Anthony James Booker, *The Centennial Surveys of New Zealand, 1936-4*, B. A. (Hons) Research Exercise, Massey University, 1983, p.27.
- ²¹ Apirana Ngata's work on Maori was never completed and Sutch's work on social services was not accepted by the Prime Minister Peter Fraser. Keith Sinclair has suggested that Fraser was opposed to Sutch's left-wing views and that his refusal of the manuscript was part of a general repression of the left within the Labour party.
- ²² M. K. P. Sorrenson, "The Making of Letters and Art in New Zealand", in James Ross *et al.*, eds, *Writing a New Country: A Collection of Essays Presented to E. H. McCormick in his 88th Year*, Auckland, 1993, p.68.
- ²³ Stuart Murray, *Never a Soul at Home: New Zealand Literary Nationalism and the 1930s*, Wellington: Victoria UP, 1998, pp.20-47.
- ²⁴ E. H. McCormick, *Letters and Art in New Zealand*, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, p.199.
- ²⁵ Keith Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, Dunedin: Otago UP / OUP, 1976; repr. 1977, p.209.
- ²⁶ Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983, pp.162-95.
- ²⁷ Rachel Barrowman, *A Popular Vision: The Arts and the Left in New Zealand 1930-1950*, Wellington: Victoria UP, 1991, p.50.
- ²⁸ McCormick, "Cambridge", p.233.
- ²⁹ Donal Smith, "Eric McCormick's Cambridge", in Ross *et al.*, eds, *Writing a New Country*, p.46.
- ³⁰ McCormick, *Letters and Art*, p.vii.
- ³¹ E. H. McCormick, cited in Sorrenson, "The Making of Letters and Art", p.69.
- ³² E. H. McCormick, cited in Booker, *Centennial Surveys*, p.120.
- ³³ M. H. Holcroft, "The Memory of a Voyage", in M. H. Holcroft, *The Waiting Hills*, Wellington: The Progressive Publishing Society, 1943, p.59.
- ³⁴ McCormick, *Letters and Art*, p.161.
- ³⁵ McCormick, "Last, Loneliest, Most Loyal", p.97.
- ³⁶ McCormick, *Letters and Art*, p.161.
- ³⁷ *ibid.*, p.162.
- ³⁸ Michael King, "Not Quite One of the Boys", in Ross *et al.*, eds, *Writing a New Country*, p.19.

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- ³⁹ Allen Curnow, "The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch", in Vincent O'Sullivan, ed., *An Anthology of Twentieth Century New Zealand Poetry*, Wellington: OUP, 1976, p.120.
- ⁴⁰ Macd. P. Jackson and Elizabeth Caffin, "Poetry", in Terry Sturm, ed., *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, 2nd edn., Auckland: OUP, 1998, p.430.
- ⁴¹ McCormick, *Letters and Art*, p.126.
- ⁴² *ibid.*, p.144.
- ⁴³ *ibid.*, p.147.
- ⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.167.
- ⁴⁵ Michele Leggott, "Opening the Archive: Robin Hyde, Eileen Duggan and the Persistence of Record", in Mark Williams and Michele Leggott, eds, *Opening the Book: New Essays on New Zealand Writing*, Auckland: Auckland UP, 1995, pp.266-93.
- ⁴⁶ Quentin Pope, ed., *Kowhai Gold: An Anthology of Contemporary New Zealand Verse*, London: Dent, 1930.
- ⁴⁷ Jackson and Caffin, "Poetry", p.405ff.
- ⁴⁸ Mark Williams, "Repetitious Beginnings: New Zealand Literary History in the Late 1980s", *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 7 (1989), 81-2.
- ⁴⁹ McCormick, *Letters and Art*, p.169.
- ⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.175.
- ⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.182.
- ⁵² *ibid.*, p.181.
- ⁵³ *ibid.*, p.189.
- ⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.170.
- ⁵⁵ See J.C. Beaglehole, "The New Zealand Scholar", in Peter Munz, ed., *The Feel of Truth: Essays in New Zealand and Pacific History*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1969, pp.237-252.