



The Lonely and the Alone: The Poetics of Isolation in New Zealand Fiction (Cross/Cultures)

Doreen D'Cruz, John C. Ross

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Aloneness, loneliness, isolation, the isolated consciousness, the many possible guises of outsider-status, alienation, and exclusion - these have especial potency in New Zealand life and literature. The prominence of the motif or topos of the man or woman alone has been widely recognized by literary historians and critics, but this work is the first book-length exploration of it, extended to encompass the broader theme of isolation. This study treats selected novels and short stories from the late-nineteenth century through to the early-twenty-first. Close readings of works by George Chamier, G.B. Lancaster, Katherine Mansfield, John Mulgan, Graham Billing, William Satchell, John A. Lee, Robin Hyde, Frank Sargeson, Fiona Kidman, Noel Hilliard, Patricia Grace, Witi Ihimaera, Keri Hulme, and Alan Duff take their place alongside more comprehensive chapters devoted to selected works by two major novelists, Janet Frame and Maurice Gee. Other literary works receive brief mention. This book invokes a number of foundational contexts, ranging from the physical landscape and historical circumstances to intellectual and cultural formations, for understanding the various permutations of aloneness, loneliness, and isolation in New Zealand fiction. The evolving aspects of isolation acquire their textual significance in this study through reading methodologies that draw on colonial, postcolonial, postmodern, feminist, and deconstructionist thinking, as well as on the illuminating insights of New Zealand's literary-critical traditions. The condition of isolation not only manifests itself in the expected terms connotative of exclusion and exile but also functions in certain contexts as the catalyst for productive transformations of the social or symbolic consensus. This raises the question of whether representations of isolation in New Zealand literature may also tap subtly into a national unconscious in ways that operate dynamically upon the dominant modes of consciousness.

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