"WHAT THESE ITHACAS MEAN"

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February 2019

THE *NOSTOS* MOTIF IN SEA FICTION

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ABSTRACT

In its introduction, this exegesis surveys ideas about creative writing and research, suggesting that the novel 'Bound' draws on considerable research *for* creative writing and is, itself, an example of practice-led research or research *through* creative writing. The main body of the exegesis is research *into* creative writing—an examination of the *nostos* motif that is at the heart of 'Bound' and that is central to sea fiction in general.

Sea fiction is "an enduring, international form of modern fiction which spans from the beginning of the eighteenth century to our present" (Cohen 1). The genre is traditionally recognisable by three common elements: the sea, the sailor, and the ship (Bender 6). The *nostos* motif is an archetype of voyage narrative (Foulke 10). It functions as a structuring thought offering narrative and thematic possibilities (Alexopoulou vii), and its basic structure—a long and difficult voyage culminating in a return—recurs in Western sea fiction, providing an apt, powerful and intriguing metaphoric vehicle within which character transformation might occur.

The body of the exegesis begins by offering a detailed framework of components comprising *nostos*, proposing that five common characteristics constitute the motif and four representative features underlie it. It proceeds to examine the operation of that framework in two recent sea fictions—Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* and Julian Barnes' "The Survivor". The final chapter discusses the ways in which 'Bound' adopts and adapts the characteristics and features of *nostos* for use in a contemporary world, explaining, among other things, the relevance and importance of the novel's new models of heroism.

DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Ursula Horlock   Date: / 02 / 2019

PREFACE

This exegesis begins with a survey of ideas about creative writing and research, suggesting that the novel, 'Bound', draws on considerable research *for* creative writing and is, itself, an example of practice-led research or research *through* creative writing. The main body of the exegesis is research *into* creative writing—an examination of the *nostos* motif that is at the heart of 'Bound' and that is central to sea fiction in general.

The Introductory Chapter situates the work of both the novel, 'Bound', and exegesis, 'The *Nostos* Motif in Sea Fiction', within current debate about practice-led research in the field of creative writing. Chapter One defines terms and proposes that five common characteristics constitute the *nostos* motif and four representative features underlie it. The motif's construction is then exemplified through detailed analysis of individual components. Chapter Two analyses two contemporary sea fiction texts, evidencing the motif's construction. Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* is a linear *nostos* journey, whilst "The Survivor" in Julian Barnes' *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* is a narrative in which traditional return is eschewed. Chapter Three provides textual analysis of the creative work, 'Bound', and, in light of the motif's construction, considers how elements are appropriated to re-imagine the sea fiction mission, the genre's narrative arc, and the protagonist's heroism in the context of twenty-first century social and cultural concerns. The Conclusion discusses the usefulness of the *nostos* framework as both methodology and theory for writers and researchers, and highlights areas of future research potential.

In its examination of sea fiction, the exegesis follows on from the work of a small number of contributors to what is still a relatively small and specialised field of theory. Robert Foulke, commenting on this in 1997, noted that:

> there is a great disparity between the huge volume of writing about voyages and the trickle of scholarship devoted to those voyage accounts and stories as narratives belonging to a coherent genre. To be sure, maritime history is an established discipline...but treatment of the history of sea literature has been minuscule and the study of voyage narratives in generic terms is just emerging from its infancy. (194-195)

Oceanic studies (Hester Blum; Charlotte Mathieson et al), the "new thalassology" movement (Steve Mentz "Toward a Blue Cultural Studies: The Sea, Maritime Culture, and Early Modern English Literature" 997 and *At the Bottom Of Shakespeare's Ocean* xi) and the subsequent "larger turn towards an ocean-inflected 'blue humanities' in literary and cultural criticism" (Mentz and Rojas 1), ensures additional sea fiction scholarship has materialised. For example, there is the 2017 publication of *The Sea and Nineteenth-Century Anglophone Literary Culture* and the 2015 doctoral dissertations, Leonidas Papadopoulous' *Sea Journeys in Ancient Greek Tragedy* and Alexandra Phillips' *In the Wake of Conrad: Ships and Sailors in Early Twentieth-Century Maritime Fiction*. However, the older work of a small cluster of established sea fiction theorists such as Foulke, Bert Bender, Margaret Cohen and Jonathan Raban, as well as Alain Corbin, Philip Edwards, Thomas Philbrick, Joanna Rostek, and Mentz remains of seminal importance. The subject matter of this exegesis seeks to offer a useful contribution to the field.

In comparison with the number of sea fiction texts authored by men, there is a discernible paucity of both contemporary and historical maritime fiction authored by women. Of the eighty-seven entries in Foulke's chronology (which includes important

maritime events and the publication of notable maritime nonfiction and fictional texts between 750 BCE and 1992) a single entry contains a female name (xxi-xxv). This unique exception is Katherine Anne Porter, whose novel, *The Ship of Fools*, was published in 1945. Similarly, of Cohen's four-part bibliography, the "Literature" section comprises sixty-eight author names, seven of which are female but of these seven entries not all relate to sea fiction novels (276-280).

      'Bound' seeks to redress this paucity. In this narrative, Bailey, Odysseus the epic hero, and a remnant of Scott of the Antarctic, the colonial hero, circumnavigate the island of Tasmania aboard the yacht, the *Argus*. As they voyage, they navigate failure, love and heroism, for each is embarked on a different mission: Bailey flees from the responsibilities of care; Scott is haunted by past failures; and Odysseus, endlessly distracted by novelty, is on a mission from Pallas Athene (goddess of truth, justice, moral values and heroic endeavour) to rescue the listing Ship of State and redress construction of the sea fence. 'Bound' therefore offers a unique contribution to the genre and the creative writing field, being a female-authored, contemporary sea fiction novel featuring a contemporary female protagonist, the depiction of a circular, as opposed to the more common linear, *nostos* journey, and positing a sea fiction heroism that consciously reflects *nostos*' inherent ambiguity.

CREATIVE WRITING AND RESEARCH

This Introduction surveys a number of influential texts about creative writing research. A brief snapshot of debate from the previous twenty years is presented, followed by a discussion of creative writing and research now. I employ as focus Jen Webb's categories, transposed from the work of Richard Frayling, of research into creative writing, research through creative writing, and research for creative writing (13). These categories are applied to the novel, 'Bound' and the exegesis, "The *Nostos* Motif in Sea Fiction', in order to locate these works within this context.

Debates about whether and how creative writing might be seen as research have a history dating back to Plato and Aristotle (Jen Webb and Donna Lee Brien 187). However, pressures within contemporary universities to justify what creative writers do has meant that the past two decades have produced substantial scholarship demonstrating that creative writing can and should be seen as research:

> the understanding of the discipline of creative writing has moved from that
>
> of a practical craft that could be taught as such, to a tertiary level discipline

framed by theory and methodology as well as a developing scholarly

literature. This includes demonstrating that, as a discipline, creative writing

is capable of combining conventional academic rigour with creative

thought, or producing research with utility as well as art (and artefacts) of

aesthetic value. (Webb and Brien 192)

Lelia Green summarises aspects of this movement plus key contributors in her article on research outputs in the creative arts (5-15).

Whilst creative writers associated with universities have produced a solid body of work about creative writing research, concurrent ideas about practice-led research from other areas of the creative arts such as dance, music and visual arts have been of influence. Christopher Frayling's paper, "Research in Art and Design", provides a clear structure for categorising research: research into art and design; research through art and design; and research for art and design (5). Webb, applies this framework directly to creative writing (13), suggesting that the first of her categories, research *into* creative writing, "is usually understood as a mode of academic work that involves investigating the history, traditions and theoretical frameworks of the field of art, or particular form of art practice" (13). This approach has been important for my project and, in particular, for my exegesis, and will be discussed later.

The second transposed category, research *through* creative writing, equates with practice-led research which:

...begins with an idea, a context, a set of questions and a body of

knowledge. It does not begin in a vacuum, or merely at a moment of

inspiration: creative writers make work by relying on a set of creative

writing and/as research skills. These include imagination, technical training,

and a certain knowledge of the field – the rules or conventions of form,

what the content is likely to be, and what are the main discourses, including

the history and current trajectory of the field – that will necessarily inform

the creative work. (Webb and Brien 195)

The third transposed category, research *for* creative writing, overlaps with a kind of

research that has often been associated with discussions of creative writing as research:

Tess Brady's 'bowerbird technique', in which essential pieces of information are extracted

from a variety of disciplines in which one is not an authority and which requires the skills

of source discernment, speed, classification, and precision (Brady 1). Another commonly

discussed way of describing this technique is as 'bricolage' (Robyn Stewart; Matt Rogers;

Pamela Greet; et al.).

'Bound' required extensive 'bowerbird' activity: research into historic and

contemporary sailing vessels and techniques, navigation, meteorology, historical

shipwrecks, Tasmanian indigenous history, the topography of the sea floor of Bass Strait,

post-traumatic stress disorder, Antarctic exploration, Buddhist epistemology, humanistic

psychology research, epic and colonial heroism, the Hellenic pantheon, life in sixth to

eighth century B.C. Greece, and the concepts of 'koinonia' and 'xenia', alongside years of

research into gender and literary studies, and long-term reading about environmental issues

and contemporary politics.

As creative artefact, 'Bound' is a condensed representation of Camilla Nelson's

"ground of production" in which an experiential body of knowledge is forged through

practice and about process (1). Returning to Webb and Brien's summary of the skills

underpinning this form of practice-led research—imagination, technical training,

knowledge of the field including rules or conventions of form, content, discourses

(including the history and current trajectory of the field)—'Bound', as research through

creative writing, can be judged against these criteria. For example, the premise and

character choices of 'Bound' demonstrate inventiveness. Technical facility with regard to language and characterisation are apparent. The conventions of form as they relate to the novel are adhered to. Knowledge of the history of sea fiction is manifest in terms of use of the three foundational elements, yet genre conventions are subverted, exemplified by the foregrounding of failure. Discourse knowledge regarding the future of the genre is apparent, and extended with a novel that situates an explicitly alternate heroic performance in the danger zone that is the "edge of existing knowledge", the "foggy uncharted" sea of existing thought (Cohen 10-12), enabling 'Bound' to function as a useful, literary artefact for writers of this genre.

In introducing her bowerbird technique, Brady made it clear that she "needed to acquire a working rather than specialist knowledge" (1). In contrast, during my research into creative writing (Frayling's transposed first category), I developed specialised knowledge of a specific aspect of a genre—the *nostos* motif of sea fiction. This exegesis performs the work of identifying and amassing related *nostos* material from disparate fields: sea fiction; maritime and oceanic studies; English literature; literary theory; Greek literature; philology; and classical studies. Then, synthesising it and developing out of it an original, substantial and coherent explanatory, underpinning framework pertinent to the genre. This scholarship is presented in Chapter One.

While Frayling's typology is clear and useful, the reality of creative writing as research is less distinct. For example, Brien, in her article "Creative Practice as Research", shows how the twin practices of reading and writing can both be research, but also that they flow into each other. In the first place, she suggests that when a researcher reads, s/he does not read just as a researcher gathering the information necessary to write with the appropriate depth of knowledge and accuracy, but s/he also reads as a writer, "processing the same material in terms of its significance for the writing to be done" (56). Mike Harris

explicitly suggests writers read other fictional texts as "instruction manuals for technique, style, structure and thematic possibility" (4). The writing, itself, is a process of thinking, analysis, and research, and it takes place in dialogue with the research of reading. Brien indicates the interplay between these practices by describing the process as an "exploratory cycle of reading, writing, testing, reading, rewriting and retesting" which then prompts "a further series of research problems" (57). In the concluding chapter of this exegesis, I suggest that the cycle described by Brien could itself be represented by the similarly cyclical *nostos* voyage, and that the *nostos* framework developed through my research could function as both a metaphoric and utilitarian tool for writers to view and navigate the writing process.

The University of Adelaide has traditionally relied on the exegesis in a creative writing PhD to demonstrate that research of an appropriate level has been undertaken as part of the PhD project. One model has been an exegesis which explores a genre or an aspect of a genre, locates the creative work within that genre, and demonstrates how the creative work contributes to that genre. For example, Dennis McIntosh's memoir about working in a tunnel is accompanied by an exegesis exploring writing about work, which locates the creative work in relation to that genre. Similarly, Michelle Jager's PhD consists of a novel, *Irrelevant Bodies*, alongside an exegesis examining aspects of the female gothic, the genre to which the novel contributes. This exegesis follows that model, making a contribution to research into creative writing through its exploration of the *nostos* structure and explaining how the *nostos* framework and the creative artefact, 'Bound', make a specific contribution to the sea fiction genre and more generally a contribution to the field of creative writing.

CHAPTER ONE

ITHACA

Homer's Odysseus set out from Ithacan shores and, for twenty years, longed to return. In his poem of the same name (Appendix 1), C.P. Cavafy offers a compelling invitation to the generic sea fiction protagonist. Having detailed the wonders of a *nostos* journey he suggests voyagers not expect Ithaca to make them "rich" and that, having given them the "marvellous journey", Ithaca "has nothing left to give…". The final three lines extend a challenge to the sea fiction protagonist: "...If you find her poor, Ithaca won't have fooled you. / Wise as you will have become, so full of experience, / You will have understood by then what these Ithacas mean".

Hinting that return may not be what it quite appears, Cavafy suggests the hero will be transformed by the *nostos* journey, returning with a wisdom that is gifted through the experience of setting out, voyaging and return. The metamorphosis wrought via the *nostos* journey enables the protagonist to understand the purpose of the journey, and in so doing, comprehend the hidden, metaphoric meaning of home and homecoming. *Nostos* is clearly complex and potent, and potentially ambiguous regarding 'return' and 'home'.

In *The Faraway Nearby*, a text Marina Warner describes as "an imaginary map

of…inner homecoming" (1), author Rebecca Solnit declares, "all stories are really fragments of one story", that being "the metamorphosis" (79). Accordingly, the sea voyage provides an apt, powerful and intriguing metaphoric vehicle within which character transformation can occur. It is therefore unsurprising that the "dawn of Western narrative" might be seen in Homer's Odysseus setting sail (Cohen 1). Shakespeare has characters afloat on a "full sea" (108) and W.H. Auden, seeking, via close analysis of the theme of the sea, to understand Romanticism considers "the sea is the real situation and the voyage is the true condition of man" (23). In sea fiction, Herman Melville "voyages into the mind" (Bender 5) and James Fenimore Cooper, "rather than simply emphasising the uniqueness of the sailor, the ship and the ocean made the seaman the representative of all men and his environment...an analogue of all human existence" (Bender 20), leading Rostek to conclude that "the resemblance of a human life to a long and misdirected sea journey is...established" (33).

Sea voyages can be seen as a "natural vehicle for the human imagination exploring the unknown" (Foulke 10) and can entice writers to set characters afloat. Certainly, the significance of the sea voyage in classic literature was so strong because it was, at the time, the pre-eminent form of voyaging, but today in a world where many forms of voyage are possible, it remains a highly fruitful vehicle for the human imagination to contemplate the unknown. Indeed, Margaret Cohen argues that "sea fiction yearns for embodied, multidimensional human agency in an increasingly abstract and specialised world, dominated by vast forces of society and technology beyond the individual's comprehension and control" (10). Foulke suggests this is because, firstly, sea voyages "are freighted with metaphor as well as adventure" (10), secondly, cultural constructions of the sea (Gothic, Romantic and postmodern) mirror characteristics of human existence and the human psyche routinely explored in fiction: instability, groundlessness, vastness,

unpredictability, dangerousness and changeability; and thirdly, they suggest larger patterns of orientation because they have built-in directionality and purpose, an innate teleology (10). It is with the orientation and teleological specificities of 'return' that this exegesis particularly concerns itself.

First articulated in *The Odyssey*, *nostos*, synonymous with return yet exceeding the simplicity of that definition, is an archetype of voyage narrative (Foulke 10), one of a number of common literary paradigms—exploration, discovery, hunt, return, anatomy of society, initiation and immobilisation (Foulke 8-13)—underlying voyage narratives. Alexopoulou declares *nostos* a worldwide motif, a structuring thought offering narrative and thematic possibilities (vii), and its basic structure—a long and difficult voyage culminating in a return—recurs in Western sea fiction, evidenced, for example, in Melville's *Moby Dick*, Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* and Gabriel Garcia Márquez' *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor*. *Nostos*, as it pertains to contemporary sea fiction, however, is an overlooked domain. This thesis thus uses the work of Alexopoulou, Anna Bonifazi and Douglas Frame, steeped in linguistics and relating to Greek Epic, as a way of analysing the archetype within the modern sea fiction genre.

In the first lines of *The Odyssey*, the original sea fiction protagonist, Odysseus, is described as "the man of twists and turns" (Homer 77), hinting at the travails inherent in the *nostos* voyage. Who does not sympathise with the long-suffering protagonist, weeping on the shores of Ogygia or Scheria and longing for Ithaca, the gods seemingly against him yet again? As though homecoming is a birthright, a human inevitability, readers understand the weariness of his wandering, and hunger too for the long voyage ordeal to end and the peace of home to be found, as though reading their own lives a little closer to rest by virtue of textual lessons learned. But there is Odysseus, the prophecy of Tiresias outstanding, with still another journey to make, albeit an inland one. Yet one senses, as have others

before—Tennyson, Nikos Kazantzakis, Derek Walcott—that despite the prediction he will enjoy a peaceful old age "far from the sea" (Homer 253), and despite his fear of Poseidon, Odysseus just might not be content with a bucolic existence, bounded by the confines of island shores. The sea calls. Adventure calls. And so it is that a succession of invariably male maritime heroes—arguably never fully returned, never fully home—perpetuate Odysseus' textual legacy. *Nostos* is less straightforward than it appears.

Writers across genres concur: "Maybe home is somewhere I'm going and never have been before", muses Warsan Shire ("To Be Vulnerable and Fearless" interview), whilst James Baldwin wonders if "perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition" (133). Ursula Le Guin's Laia admits, "if you wanted to come home you had to keep going on, that was what she meant when she wrote 'true journey is return' but it had never been more than an intuition, and she was farther than ever now from being able to rationalise it" (291). Unsurprisingly, Mark Buchan, in *The Limits of Heroism* views *The Odyssey* as "less an epic of return and more an epic about the complicated mechanisms involved in the desire for a return" (4). There is clear suggestion, in all of this, of an ambiguity and incongruity associated with 'home', traces of which, this exegesis demonstrates, are clearly embedded within the *nostos* motif itself.

Robert Tally, in an essay on literary cartography, writes of the "disorientation and angst" associated with transcendental homelessness (114), a notion posited by György Lukács in the *The Theory of the Novel*, and of which, Lukács argues, the novel form itself is a representative expression. Tally notes movements in twentieth-century philosophy, history and literary theory exploring this state, this anxiety, aptly evidenced in Heidegger's profound sense of *nichts-zu-hause-sein*, being "not-at-home" (121). Disoriented, angst-ridden and homeless, however, are not the regular adjectival purview of the sea fiction hero who, given that sea fiction belongs within the larger adventure genre (Martin Green,

Cohen, Richard Phillips, et al.), is bound by the hero myth. And, according to Margery Hourihan, whose work deconstructs the hero, the hero myth is a story of "superiority, dominance and success" (1); the very shape of the hero narrative is an image of the hero's ambitions: "failure to achieve the goal would render his life itself a failure" (47). The sea fiction hero, constructed from the set of dualisms characteristic of adventure fiction, enacts the privileged pole of the binary pairs—male, successful, solitary, and so on—and accordingly perpetuates a limited and oppressive heroism, rooted as it is in an outmoded, patriarchal masculinity. In this dualistic schema, heroism is paired with cowardice, return with non-return. To not return is not heroic; mandated by hegemonic masculinity, the maritime hero must return home. Brian Finney, noting our "dependence on binary oppositions for our (false) sense of identity", claims "we choose not to deconstruct them" (58). An invitation therefore exists regarding the sea fiction protagonist—the deconstruction of that binary identity and consequently determining whether or not return remains essential.

Readers recognise textual remnants of the original maritime hero, Odysseus, in numerous sea fiction texts. Captain Ahab, Captain Hornblower and Captain Smollet have become literary icons. Others are less well known but are evidence of a persistent recurrence, such as the fictional John Franklin in Sven Nadolny's, *The Discovery of Slowness,* (a Franklin version also appears in *The Blue Water*), and Captain Aitken in Annamarie Jagose's *Slow Water*. Cohen suggests the sea-going version of the generic adventure hero is "modelled on the historical seamen of Western modernity" (3). Regardless of vintage or personality variation, their heroism appears, in no small part, predicated upon return. Yet, the ocean is a "corrosive force inimical to human desires for stability" (Mentz and Rojas 2), be that identity or outcome. Is it possible for a contemporary sea fiction protagonist to acknowledge and navigate the ambiguity and

incongruity embedded within *nostos*? What might this suggest about their heroism? Tally

lends encouragement to this endeavour through his suggestion the writer, cartographer-

like, is able to:

> project a figurative map that can, if not restore a sense of transcendental
>
> homeliness (assuming that were even desirable at this stage in historical
>
> development), at least allow one to become more accustomed to and
>
> familiar with the life in exile. (121)

Narrative, a mechanism through which understanding and meaning is created, is

well served, in sea fiction, by *nostos*, which, motif structure and content explicit, has the

potential to honestly convey the conundrum of 'home'; incorporating rather than ignoring

the ineluctable and paradoxical spectrum of homelessness, exile and homecoming that the

term contains. An 'unpacked' *nostos* enables writers to experiment with notions of what

might constitute metamorphosis, home and heroism for the twenty-first century sea fiction

hero, and the process by which the protagonist might achieve these.

SEA FICTION: DEFINITION

With Odysseus' historic push from the beach at Ithaca the genre of sea fiction was

launched and became "an enduring, international form of modern fiction…from the

beginning of the eighteenth century to our present" (Cohen 1). I adopt Cohen's term 'sea

fiction' for its modern currency, despite the genre being referred to by myriad identifiers:

sea literature and voyage narrative (Foulke xi), maritime fiction or sea adventure fiction

(Cohen 3), nautical literature (Charles Lewis preface) and sea writing and literature of the

sea (Raban xvii). In demarcating this genre from other fictional types, Cohen describes the

type of activities encountered by sea fiction's protagonists. They "battle life-threatening

storms, reefs, deadly clams, scurvy, shipwreck, barren coasts, sharks, whales, mutinies,

warring navies, cannibals and pirates—in short, they have adventures" (3). Lewis uses a variety of nautical elements as inclusive genre tropes: storm, shipwreck, rescue, kidnapping by pirates, voyage to another country, crew adventures and death, mutiny, marooning (3-8) while Foulke lists storm, fire, stranding, collision, falling from aloft or overboard, disease, starvation and sinking (11).

Bender identifies three common elements that are featured in traditional sea fiction: the sea, the sailor, and the ship (6). Given the potential for variety regarding the presentation of these three elements, and tropes, what ensures a text remains identifiable as a sea fiction narrative? By way of example, Peter Matthiessen's *Race Rock,* with no actual voyage in it, is not a traditional sea novel in Bender's view. Rather "it derives its sense of primal order from the sea in repeated scenes of ocean drownings that represent both loss and renewal" (201). Yet, instead of discounting the novel from the genre by virtue of this, Bender proceeds to name it as a "preliminary effort" by Matthiessen to "create his great sea book" (201). For some critics, one of the most influential texts of sea fiction, *Moby Dick*, "is not a sea story" (Clark Russell 118). Lincoln Colcord notes it is full of nautical improbabilities with "little of real nautical substance" (176). Whilst *Moby Dick* is centrally included in the canon of literary sea fiction, what is apparent is that nautical verisimilitude and/or the depiction of an actual sea voyage are not fixed, essential elements of sea fiction. Narratives can fall within the genre, despite not including an actual voyage, or via constructing a voyage that lacks nautical realism, as long as they principally engage in some manner with Bender's foundational elements. Not dissimilarly, Lewis includes in his compendium of sea fiction a wide range of narratives that contain, broadly, "the sea and sailors" (3). Some texts are considered limited due to the small number of nautical elements they contain, or doe their lack of nautical realism, yet they are included regardless. These, however, he contrasts to those "really great sea novel[s]...which

portrayed the characters of seamen with a fair degree of truthfulness and realism and at the same time fitted these characters into a nautical plot and setting" (5). What is clear is that whilst there is debate about the quality of sea fiction, particularly in relation to nautical realism, there is notable, uncontentious latitude as to what may be included within the genre as long as it remains "considerable of the sea and sailors" (Lewis 5).

Three main sea fiction corpora exist. Historical literary sea fiction is represented, for example, by authors and titles such as Cooper (*The Sea Lion; or, The Lost Sealers* 1849), Joseph Conrad (*The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* 1897), Herman Melville (*Billy Budd: Sailor* 1924), Ernest Hemingway (*The Old Man and the Sea* 1952) and William Golding (*Rites of Passage* 1980). Popular, historic sea fiction is represented by authors such as Jack London (*The Sea Wolf* 1904)*,* C.S. Forester (eleven book Horatio Hornblower series 1937-1967), Nicholas Monsarrat (*The Cruel Sea* 1951) and Patrick O'Brian (twenty-one book Aubrey-Maturin series 1969-2004). Popular contemporary authors include Sebastian Junger (*The Perfect Storm* 1997—a semi fictionalised account of a fictional event) and Julian Stockwin (*Kydd* 2001). Finally, there is a relatively large contemporary corpus of juvenile fiction related to sea voyaging. Popular examples include *Swallows and Amazons* (1930) by Arthur Ransome, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952) by C.S. Lewis, *Carry On, Mr. Bowditch* (1955) by Jean Lee Latham and more latterly, *The Raft* (2012) by S.A. Bodeen and *Adrift* (2015) by Paul Griffin. The focus of this exegesis is on late twentieth (specifically post 1985) and twenty-first century fiction featuring contemporary protagonists; as yet there has been little critical attention paid to these texts. Publications within this timeframe that might legitimately be included in the sea fiction genre include the following: Julian Barnes's *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (1989), Marina Warner's *Indigo or Mapping the Waters* (1992), Fred D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997), Matthew Kneale's *English Passengers* (2000), Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2001),

Sten Nadolny's *The Discovery of Slowness* (2003), Annamarie Jagose's *Slow Water* (2003), Douglas Glover's *Elle* (2007), Andrew McManus' *The Language of the Sea* (2010), Amitav Ghosh's Ibis trilogy—*Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011) and *Flood of Fire* (2015), Jesse Blackadder's *Chasing the Light* (2013), Andrew Miller's *The Crossing* (2015), Jennifer Livett's *Wild Island* (Part One) (2016) and Ian McGuire's *The North Water* (2016). It is useful to note that contemporary writers of sea fiction tend to favour the depiction of voyages less reliant on return to the port of departure and depict historical rather than contemporary characters. Of the above examples, only Martel's and Miller's texts concern themselves with contemporary characters. Given this trend and given that *The Odyssey* remains a seminal sea fiction and *nostos* text, and a fictional version of Odysseus appears in 'Bound', textual examples from *The Odyssey* are favoured in this analysis.

NOSTOS: DEFINITION AND CONSTRUCTION

Nostos is variously defined as return, return home, homecoming (Alexopoulou vii-3) and a quest to reach home (Francesca Schironi 342). However, Frame, in a study of linguistic traditions influencing Homer and thus meaning in *The Odyssey*, provides etymological evidence of the connection between the Greek words *noos* (mind) and *neomia* (return home) to argue that *nostos* originally signified "return from death and darkness to light and life" (28). Bonifazi, largely exploring Homeric and extra-Homeric texts, notes the semantic range and ambiguity of the term and its cognates:

> Meanings seem to range from directionally marked terms (coming back
> from Troy) to directionally unmarked terms (having a safe journey), from
> pointing at a process (going towards), to pointing at a result (reach
> successfully), and, finally, from geographical movements (homecoming) to

life-saving achievements (saving oneself). Throughout Western culture, the

term "return" ultimately summarises all these meanings and associations. (492)

Bonifazi identifies "surviving lethal dangers" as the core meaning of *nostos* (492) and

notes the multi-directionality within the term "sweeps away modern unidirectional

interpretations and conceptualisations" (506). Importantly, the motif can thus be examined

in the wide sense synonymous with voyage (regardless of port of departure, port of return,

indeed non return), and accommodates focus upon singular elements of the tripartite

structure—leaving, wandering and return—whilst Frame's definition lends itself to

fictional representation of character transformation whereby the return is psychic in nature

yet may also signify sociocultural transformation.

Given that "the nature of return...excludes the possibility of sameness" as "no

return is to the same place" (Alexopoulou 5), *nostos* becomes "from Antiquity to the

present a great metaphor for the concept of change" (Alexopoulou viii). In addition, *nostos*

is "never unproblematic or straightforward; on the contrary, it is beset by contradictions

and ambiguities" (Vayos Liapis iii). Edwards agrees: "smooth, agreeable voyages are not

worth writing about. Stories from the sea will tend to concentrate on crisis and

catastrophe" (13). This problematisation characterises both historical and contemporary sea

fiction, making *nostos* a truly apt vehicle for conveying both psychic and sociocultural

transformation and in so doing serving that end which David Foster-Wallace flags as

fiction's purpose, "comforting the disturbed and disturbing the comfortable" (Interview).

The idea of a perfect *nostos*, to return home without any incidents (Bonifazi 488), (seeming

in itself to be an oxymoron), is clearly inimical to sea fiction's purpose.

Alexopoulou names two reference points supporting conceptualisation of the *nostos*

motif in Homer—departure or absence, and return (4, 18). She also details a more complex

tripartite narrative structure—absence, wandering and return (18-19). This latter structure,

equally applicable to post-Homeric *nostos* stories, has been entrenched in contemporary Western thought via Carl Jung's work on archetypes whereby the hero's journey dramatises "the human being's inner development towards maturity and psychological wholeness" (Pearson and Pope 3) and Joseph Campbell's analysis of the hero's journey in myth, the archetypal stages of which are departure (49-94), initiation (97-192) and return (193-243). These frameworks continue to influence the construction and analysis of narrative in contemporary literature. Christopher Vogler references both to formulate a twelve-stage hero's journey commonly adopted by screenwriters and novelists in which absence, wandering and return phases are seminal (14). It is also worth noting that micro *nostos* stories can be embedded within a macro *nostos* tale, as evidenced in the stories of the return of Odysseus' Battle of Troy compatriots in *The Odyssey*.

This exegesis interrogates the tripartite structure of leaving, wandering and return, revealing that it comprises the following characteristics: compelled versus chosen leaving plus the paradox of voyage lure and dread (within departure); elemental mutability plus the longing to return (within wandering); and the myth of return (within return). As a result of this interrogation, underlying features become apparent which are manipulated in the text of 'Bound' as a means of ensuring that characters do what Finney suggests is routinely avoided—lessening reliance on binary oppositions for a sense of identity and, as a result, enabling new character and heroic identities to emerge.

DEPARTURE

In sea fiction the 'ordinary world' is represented by land. The protagonist leaves this known zone for myriad internal, external or combined reasons. War, colonial or state mission, commerce, quest, exile, misdemeanour, stagnation, dissatisfaction and loss are examples of common deployment. Or, from a writer's perspective, "...sometimes the way

back into the heart of the question begins by going outward and beyond" (Solnit 31).

Regardless of impetus, departure constitutes "a repeated moment of crisis" (Alexopoulou 4). Upon deciding to voyage, even prior to the act of embarking, the self is immediately destabilised in that leaving entails loss of the known and familiar—identity, other, habit, belief, law, comfort—and that which is to be foregone is further risked in the sense that the voyage outcome is uncertain. *Nostos* is not guaranteed; to leave is to risk associated dangers.

In addition to the inherent crisis of self-destabilisation within the process of leaving, the protagonist is set to imminently enter a perennially unstable space. The ship, sea and voyage, combined, constitute a trio of instability, a form of crisis. Their inherent nature cannot replace that which is to be foregone, nor offer future stabilisation. To embark on an ocean voyage involves a further micro zone of instability; in the step from land to boat. For a brief period the protagonist is neither fully land-bound nor fully ship-bound. In this liminal territory, the protagonist is literally and physically divided, unable to fully define the self in terms of land or ship identity, constituting the possibility of profound physical and psychic instability. Via these three mechanisms—loss, uncertainty, the commitment to future instability—to embark, in sea fiction narrative, represents loss, undermines remnant identity and stability, and assures further destabilisation.

In *nostos* stories, leaving constitutes rich narrative opportunity. The voyage, and the supporting elements of ship and sea, in their "fluid, mutable, dangerousness" (Leslie Eckel 130) clearly have the potential to fully annihilate the qualities or the assembly, indeed the very existence, of the embarking self; a self the construction of which the relative safety and stability of land has formulated, protected, maintained, and entrenched. Thus, in simply contemplating a voyage, the undoing of that self has begun; the self has already set sail.

Compelled or Chosen Voyaging?

In the departure aspect of the *nostos* motif in Greek epic, heroes were obliged to leave to fulfil civic duty, or to maintain or build power, prestige and masculine identity, but also because their heroic potential or status required it. People rarely travelled for pleasure; those who did were motivated by philosophical, religious or touristic ends. Regarding classical tales, Auden (using this term loosely, for here he includes Shakespeare) makes an interesting observation that the wanderer never chooses to depart; the ocean voyage is "never voluntarily entered upon" (22), suggesting that to depart on a voyage is a compulsion. More latterly, protagonists like Maud in *The Crossing* may be compelled to go to sea or may appear to choose departure as does Kath in Barnes' "The Survivor". However, even the choosing has a degree of fait accompli to it for the land, compared to the sea, is too stable and the protagonist undertakes the voyage, as Auden describes it, as an antidote to the ennui of life on shore (67). The voyage thus promotes a necessary movement that heralds psychic change. Clearly, whether chosen or compelled, there is a degree of inevitability to departure in the *nostos* motif that equates to a form of compulsion, and this is inherent in all quest, adventure and hero tales. Auden maintains that "to leave the land and the city is the desire of every man [sic] of sensibility and honour" (23). The contemporary hero of the *nostos* tale who is, arguably, civically and financially freer to choose whether to voyage or not, is still clearly bound by similar desire or compulsion to make the crossing.

Yet, if *nostos* departure has the nature of crisis, why desire uncertainty, instability and ambiguity? The notion here, returning to a point made earlier, is that "shore life is always trivial" and the "voyage is the true condition of man [sic]" (Auden 23). The physical fact that, by weight, the average female and male human body are approximately forty-eight to fifty-eight percent water might suggest an internal affinity with liquidity and

fluidity; by nature we cellularly voyage. If "literary fiction speaks for the repressed self" (Guat Ngoi 609) then with regard to mind in sea fiction, by nature we are compelled to cross, to voyage, in order to seek reconciliation and union of the self with the repressed or potential self. The voyage in sea fiction, therefore, "is a necessary evil, a crossing of that which separates or estranges" (Auden 19). Raban summarises it by suggesting it is "the mariner's fate, not his [sic] desire, to return to the sea" (2).

In literature, the psyche of the protagonist cannot remain stable or unchanged (unless to highlight non-change, should the author decree it). "The putting to sea...is never voluntarily entered upon as a pleasure. It is a pain which must be accepted as cure, the death that leads to rebirth" (Auden 22). Thus, in 'deciding' to leave, the protagonist is, effectively, giving up all, risking all and inviting change. To depart, therefore, is to be destined to change.

Voyage departure constitutes crisis in that, similar to the ambiguous liminality represented in the space that is the step between shore and ship, the protagonist is caught in the ambiguity of the voyage pain/pleasure dichotomy. To stay is painful and maintains non-life; to leave is painful but provides the opportunity for life and growth. Yet that very growth/life will not be achieved without further crisis—for the voyage is instability defined. Physical loss and physical death are possibilities, psychic death a certainty. Departure in *nostos* tales is therefore paradoxical, painful yet necessary. Loss necessarily precedes gain. Seemingly containing an element of choice, departure is, at heart, the compelled and necessary requirement of evolving consciousness.

Voyage Lure and Dread

Foulke maintains that to understand the sea fiction genre one must understand human attitudes towards the sea as they "generate the most striking features of sea voyage narratives" (1). This is a task as mammoth as the sea itself, so varied are the descriptions

and the breadth of attitudes. Certainly, sea literature can represent the sea as a place of access to the sublime, a site of fascination, and a location of communion with the natural world. However, literature about the sea routinely makes use of its darker possibilities. Foulke writes that sea fiction typically offers a vision of "cold, misery, and loneliness in an environment devoid of human comfort set against renewed wanderlust and the urge to sail, tempered by justifiable fear" (7). If the sea remains something of a "terrifying domain of uncontained nature" (Cohen 116), then it is understandable that how human beings feel about it is a "combined lure and dread", an equivocal relationship of love and hate (Foulke 7). This combination of fear and dread accompanies both the contemplation of a voyage and the act of leaving in *nostos*. The pain/pleasure dichotomy underpinning psychic transformation noted above is one obvious reason for this. However, a cluster of other factors also attach themselves to this aspect of the motif.

In terms of lure, the voyage is representative of adventure. Inherent within this term are a number of positive enticements—possibility, newness, momentum and change. As noted above, the protagonist, on a fundamental level, aspires to these as a necessary aspect of the evolution of consciousness. These enticements have the potential to be pleasurable in and of themselves as states or experiences; they afford the growth and development necessary for the hero. Lure, in this sense, is equated to the cultivation or possibility of enjoyment and pleasure. It is the promise of future pleasure (be that material gain or character development, for example) that entices the protagonist to endure crisis; namely to risk loss, leave the known to enter the unknown and engage with the travails (a marked and particular feature of the *nostos* archetype) inherent in any sea voyage.

Given dualisms comprise the basis of Western thought, the lure of pleasure necessarily contains within it the possibility of pain. The protagonist's desire to avoid pain is made manifest in voyage dread, represented by a number of repellents which encapsulate

crisis—uncertainty, the unknown, loss, and a mortality spectrum comprising discomfort, challenge, threat, danger and possible loss of life. Auden summarises the voyage: "to try to cross [the sea] betrays a rashness bordering on hubris" (21). Experienced mariners are well aware of just how rash they are in undertaking a sea journey. Even for non-mariners contemplating a voyage, the fearful nature of the sea and the fragility of sea craft in the face of ferocious weather and other associated dangers is embedded in popular culture and the vernacular—Noah's ark, Jonah and the whale, Moby Dick, Robinson Crusoe; voyage experience or specific narrative detail is not required. Thus, for both mariner and non-mariner protagonists, each is aware from the outset of the gargantuan nature of the voyage and is simultaneously beset by voyage lure and dread.

WANDERING

That sea fiction falls within the adventure genre is agreed upon by theorists such as Green, Cohen, Phillips, and Paul Zweig. Outlining a seven-tier taxonomy of adventure narratives grouped according to the character of the protagonist, Green also notes that stories can be elementally grouped—land, air and sea adventures (21). Three narratives within that seven-tier taxonomy ably represent sea fiction's protagonist, however, the *nostos* tale is naturally aligned with the Wanderer Story—characterised by its sense of movement and sense of geography and a protagonist with strength of character and courage (Green 146).

"The hero, for a period of time, dissociates himself from the social group of which he is a member" (Alexopoulou 20) and the crisis, begun with the thought of departure, deepens for the hero in this phase, traditionally characterised as it is by length, difficulty and the unknown. Wandering largely takes place upon the sea, though at times it is interspersed with sojourns on land as evidenced by, for example, Odysseus' interludes with Calypso and Circe.

In the tripartite structure of *nostos*, wandering is a divided act, situated within, and reliant upon, two bookmarking reference points: departure and return. To wander is to be 'in between', and is characterised, aptly in the context of sea fiction, by groundlessness. This groundlessness is both literal and figurative—the hero's time away from the known world (land and home) is a time of marked transition, ambiguity and loss of identity. "He is an ambiguous figure," Alexopoulou definitively concludes (20) whilst Charles Segal notes of the wandering phase, "there is no firm, clear point of reference either for victory or for defeat" (62). The *nostos* assault on egoic identity continues; the hero is liminally, and thus uncomfortably and precariously, positioned within two binary opposites (victory and defeat), the former crucial, the latter antithetical, to heroic identity.

Whilst being in the doldrums is a common trope of sea fiction, a sea voyage is rarely static. Location, weather, boat movement—all is change and flux and representative of the internal process of the protagonist who is undergoing transformation made possible by her/his necessary removal from the known world. This character transformation is expedited by a particular feature of the wandering phase, the fact that voyages are beset by challenge and difficulty and characterised by suffering and travail. The voyage in sea fiction is never without discomfort, challenge or threat. Whilst the protagonist's quest to seek wholeness may be a reason to embark, usually it takes "a traumatic experience to shock the hero into seeking self-awareness, a process to which he [sic] might have otherwise been indifferent" (Teresa Carp 66). The tropes of sea fiction mentioned earlier provide these necessary, traumatic catalysts. In wandering, therefore, "the decisive events, the moments of external choice, of temptation, fall and redemption" occur; and the sea "becomes the place of purgatorial suffering: through separation and apparent loss...characters disordered by passion are brought to their senses" (Auden 22). Edwards summarises it in this way: "...deprivation was also revelation. The starkness of the

stripped-down existence...made philosophers...though it has to be said that sometimes the illumination was slight, and did not last long" (14).

It is the very in between-ness of the wandering phase, in all its crisis and flux, which provides a type of possibility that cannot exist on terra firma. The voyage, devoid of the proscribed rules and control of land, exposes the protagonist to newness; within that ambiguous terrain caused by the loss of departure—the space where identity, other, habit, belief, law, comfort existed—is a fertile space of possibility including possible new performances of the self. Unlike land, the sea voyage cannot provide stasis. The lack of groundedness, by definition, provides a particular momentum and in so doing, a counterbalancing agency (amidst the crisis) for the protagonist—that "sense of movement, the sense of geography, gives a sense of power" (Green 147). I suggest that the nature of this agency is a direct consequence of the "presentation of mutability" (Alexopoulou 4) within the *nostos* motif.

Elemental Mutability

The contradiction and ambiguity, the inherent crisis and catastrophe within the *nostos* motif, are anchored in what Alexopoulou terms "the presentation of mutability" (4). The *nostos* motif and the wandering phase, in particular, rely heavily upon this characteristic. The presentation of mutability in sea fiction is potent due to the genre's lens of liquidity and flux, which is particularly evidenced in three ways, and is, I suggest, directly related to, and a consequence of Bender's definitional genre elements. Firstly, there are regular descriptions and referencing of sea movement. Secondly, in relation to the ever-changing sea, the element of ship is commonly described in terms of vessel movement. Thirdly, the two genre elements of sea and ship are regularly referenced in terms of weather movement (wind, cloud, wave, light, precipitation); what is common is a respondent movement of protagonist emotion. For example, "East and South Winds clashed...roiled heaving

breakers up and Odysseus' knees quaked, his spirits too...a terrific onslaught spinning his craft round and round" (Homer 161-162).

The representation of the three foundational elements of sea, ship and sailor as being inherently mutable or in flux is further heightened by depicting binary contrasts with land, representing non-flux or stability. The representation of what I collectively term 'elemental mutability' in these ways, in sea fiction, lends itself to an almost seamless metaphoric deployment of the *nostos* motif generally, and the wandering phase in particular, as being synonymous with character transformation.

Etymological investigation of the term further supports its deployment in the work of metamorphosis. "Mutable" derives from the Latin "mutabilis", "changeable," and "mutare", "to change". The Proto-Indo-European root is mei "to change, go, move". Its cognates include: methati- (Sanskrit) "changes, alternates, joins, meets"; mutai- (Hittite) "be changed into"; meare (Latin) "to go, pass"; migrare "to move from one place to another". Its derivatives refer to the exchange of goods and services as regulated by custom or law—Latin "mutuus", "done in exchange" and "munus", "service performed for the community, duty, work". To go, pass (as in exceed oneself), change, meet, and join—this sequence of verbs and their meaning beautifully encapsulates, literally and figuratively, the nature, process and purpose of *nostos* as it relates to character transformation, predicated as it is on notions of liquidity, fluidity, flux.

In summary, the capacity of the wandering phase to induce change is predicated upon *nostos*' mutability, particularly reflected via element mutability, ensuring the motif, according to Alexopoulou, is a "fit subject for literature" (4).

Longing to Return

Whether chosen or compelled, throughout the voyage "the tension between the lure of new experience and the desire to get home mark every stage" (Foulke 10). This is a not

dissimilar paradox to that of voyage lure and dread. Where the promise of future pleasure

entices the protagonist to endure the travails of the voyage is the feature of that former

paradox in the departure stage, in the wandering phase the pleasures of the voyage are

diminished by, and compete with, the longing to return. Surrounded by the very adventure

s/he initially craved (represented by newness, possibility, momentum and change), these

enticements are soured or diminished by the longing to return— for example, to that which

is known or perceived as fixed. Foulke notes that there exists a polarity between "the urge

to explore unknown seas and the longing to return home" (6). In terms of dualisms, the

longing to return home is encapsulated by binary pairings such as new/old,

unknown/known, foreign/local, land/sea, each representing a critical, anxious dichotomy

for the protagonist.

What is clear for the protagonist is that no phase of the voyage is free of some form

of awkward, competing desire, a type of emotional entrapment. It is possible therefore,

that, as the voyage progresses a crescendo of anxiety is induced not just by the voyage

travails but also by these paradoxes. Added to this is the momentum afforded by

mutability, which, altogether, assist character transformation and finally help propel the

protagonist homeward. Lure and dread, and love and hate, characterise seafarers' attitudes

toward the unstable ocean. Yet, as Foulke notes, "living at this interface always holds out

the possibility of extraordinary experience" (7).

RETURN

Myth of Return

"The action of returning, both in life and literature, is associated with a variety of meanings

such as the maintenance of the political and/or social status...the preservation of one's

identity [and] the difficulty or impossibility of return" (Alexopoulou 1). Alexopoulou

argues that an "ideal return is impossible." I extend this to assert that the preservation of one's identity is not possible in *nostos* and neither is return—to the point that return is mythical for the hero. Firstly, "no return is return to the same place" and secondly, the hero "is not the same man [sic] as he was when he was first separated from his environment" (Alexopoulou 4-5). The very construction of the tripartite *nostos* archetype across its three phases implies a type of continuity via its inbuilt mandate to return to that which was left. However, it is not physically possible for the hero (the one who left) to return (to the place of departure), for in her/his absence, the hero has transformed and home has transformed via, at minimum, the process of time and experience. Neither is home the same manifest entity it was at the moment of departure when metamorphosis begins. Simply on a physical level, for example, materials have weathered, vegetation has grown, people and attendant relationships (understandings, norms, cultures) have changed. In this sense, return is an impossibility; read on one level, the hero's return is a non-return. (Clearly, beyond literature, a person, as opposed to the theoretical heroic protagonist of sea fiction, can depart a location and return later to recognise it as such, retaining their identification with, and experience of, place. On such a level, homecoming is both possible and can be experienced as enjoyable. Even then, though, neither traveller nor home will be exactly what they were.)

This "notion of the return to the same, that is not exactly the same, is what makes the nature of the return tragic" (Alexopoulou 5). Not only is the hero's mortality brought to the fore by her/his being forced to acknowledge the passage of time, but the great success, the final achievement—having survived and successfully navigated the long and arduous voyage to completion, that is, having returned home—is, in fact, a type of futile achievement, a corrupted success. Whilst voyage success via return is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a failure, it is not what it was purported to be. As well, the great,

galvanising catalyst for change, the voyage, which has bequeathed (or heightened as in the case of Odysseus, for example) the hero's heroic status, no longer exists except via artefact, memory or recount. It too, like the place originally left, is now a product of time past, of history, and so, in some sense, is also gone. "Neither the Odysseus who returns nor the world to which he returns bears much resemblance to the memories that fuel the desire to return"; homecoming is experienced, Susan Winnet suggests, as a crisis (13-14). Clearly, return is problematic for the sea fiction hero. Ambivalence and nebulousness ensure the final stage of the *nostos* motif, like the first two stages, is also characterised by loss, ambiguity, transition and crisis.

The loss and ambiguity of return are clearly evidenced above. Transition is evidenced through the process of the hero having to identify critical aspects of the new environment and norms, as well as critical changes within her/himself, and ascertain how to meld these into a harmonious and integrated new life. However, the sea fiction protagonist "does not always succeed in adjusting to the normal life of the community" (Alexopoulou 4), exemplified by both Tennyson's and Arturo Graf's ("Last Voyage of Ulysses") protagonists. Clearly, in sea fiction (as in the overall quest/hero's journey framework), the transition that is return does not always occur smoothly. Winnett notes:

> If, as Jankélévitch claims, *The Odyssey* is the 'narrative of a return that was supposed to be the infallible cure of nostalgia', its narrative yield juxtaposes the processes of accommodation that *nostos* demands and the incommensurabilities that remain when these processes have taken place. (14)

Indeed, the challenges of transition combined with the stasis of land, singly or in combination, can often re-invoke the 'voyage lure' aspect of departure, and the return crisis of the protagonist is further heightened. The space, newness and exoticism experienced during the voyage, the comparatively unconstrained and lawless nature of ship

culture, the momentum, indeed the freedom arising from the mutability associated with the *nostos* voyage are, on return, recalled from the vantage of stasis and discomfort/crisis. The attraction of this comparison is further heightened in the sense that negative aspects of the voyage (dread, loss, deprivation, hardship, for example) are no longer recalled with visceral accuracy; they are easily romanticised. From this place of anxiety and stasis precipitated by return, land life is characterised by lack, with the only viable solution being return to the sea. A critical aspect of return thus manifests in that the further conflicted sea fiction hero, having just returned to that which s/he has longed for—home—paradoxically longs to voyage again; indeed, appears to be in thrall to voyaging. This notion is beautifully conveyed in Jessica Fisher's poem, "The Promise of Nostos": "The sea is not bent on circularity... / they do not leave for home. They do not leave to return, / despite their promises. They leave to leave..." (23).

This voyage addiction, born out of crisis, lends further weight to Auden's earlier quoted assertion that voyaging is the "true condition of man" (3), and is evidenced not only in sea fiction texts where the protagonist, for example, Ahab, sets out again but also in writers authoring metapoetic texts which have sea fiction heroes, as in the fictional John Franklin in both *Wild Island* and *The North Water*, but most notably in Odysseus, who continues to roam seas from which he does not return or from which he does not want to return. Tennyson's "Ulysses" and Kazantzakis' *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel,* for example, depict the genre's most emblematic hero (or altered versions of him) perennially adventuring, and thus dispute the myth of a finite, fully satisfying return. Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin's "The Second Voyage" succinctly encapsulates it: "but the profound unfenced valleys of the ocean still held [Odysseus]" (26).

This situation begs the question: is non-return a viable *nostos* option? (This concept also appears somewhat oxymoronic.) Alexopoulou asserts that "one who chooses not to

return home sinks into oblivion" (3)—the crisis of the protagonist cannot be averted by not returning. If we revisit her point that the action of returning is associated with a variety of meanings including the preservation of one's identity, to not return equates to a loss of identity; one's personal identity is no longer validated by association with place and people, and entails, for the sea fiction hero, a concurrent and consequential loss of heroic identity. To not return is to have a failed *nostos*, one that is unheroic. The maritime hero needs the community from which s/he departed to recall that event upon her return and in so doing validate hero status.

I contend that the non-return, the impossibility of return, outlined above, casts the sea fiction hero into an internal form of oblivion. "As for me I am still lost", Odysseus says to Eumaeus, despite his physical return to Ithaca; Emily Wilson describes this as, the "ultimate form of suffering" (57). Physical return might be fêted and the voyage efforts lauded but the internal psyche retains a sense of in-betweenness, of being unmoored between binaries (departure and return, defeat and victory, oblivion and identity) that relegates the hero to a ceaseless desire for a return that feels complete. The whirlpool of restless desire into which the sea fiction hero of the *nostos* plummets on (non) return might be described thus: feeling unfulfilled one desires to depart but also does not wish to leave safety and the known; one leaves but longs to return; one returns home but never fully arrives (the *nostos* is incomplete and neither voyage nor return has fully satisfied). So, one wishes to depart yet does not. One does not wish to depart yet desires to; one leaves but longs for return... The incomplete *nostos* clearly leaves the hero ultimately dissatisfied. However, to continue to voyage to satisfy this incomplete urge is counterproductive since the longed-for complete return is not possible. The maritime hero is thus tethered to an unachievable quest that compounds the crisis, and suffering, of non-return. Therefore, there is not just 'no return' for the sea fiction hero, there is no rest, no respite from crisis.

Does that mean that a voyage undertaken is always a failed *nostos*? Not in the conventional sense: the sea fiction hero has endured voyage travails, has enacted altered behaviours, is transformed in some manner and has returned to the place of departure; aspects of Bonifazi's and Frame's definitions hold. S/he has clearly made a successful *nostos*. However, the relegation of the sea fiction hero to perpetual discomfort and unfulfilment, her/his direct experience of the limitation of binary construction and experience and the inability to transcend this, provide fertile context for an author to explore new forms of heroism that surpass these. Can the return aspect of *nostos* be manipulated such that the maritime hero does not drown in the whirlpool of voyage desire/anxiety but (ad)ventures into new psychic territory? Is rest from crisis possible for a contemporary maritime hero? What has become evident, through exploration of the five characteristics within the three stages of *nostos*, is that four common features underlie the *nostos* voyage: crisis, paradox, mutability and loss /death. That these four features are emblematic of *nostos* voyages in sea fiction, albeit in unique form, is confirmed in the textual analyses of Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, using 'Bound' as example, I demonstrate that these, paradoxically, provide fertile means by which metamorphosis is wrought. However, for this to occur at a fundamental level, the protagonist is required to become conscious that crisis is the basic nature of her/his existence. Chapter Three details the authorial process by which the quartet are mobilised to re-imagine the sea fiction hero, the hero's mission and the genre's narrative arc in the context of contemporary concerns, thus ensuring a narrative of relevance to readers navigating the turbulent seas of twenty-first century life.

CONTEMPORARY DEPLOYMENT OF THE *NOSTOS* MOTIF

Through the lens of *nostos*' five characteristics, this chapter examines the deployment of the motif in two contemporary sea fiction texts featuring contemporary protagonists. The texts are analysed in light of the theoretical framework, demonstrating adoption yet unique deployment by each author. The analysis of these texts supports the earlier claim that the *nostos* motif is indeed a powerful vehicle through which character metamorphosis is wrought, and that it is the characteristics and underpinning features of the motif which potently evince not only this type of change but also support evocation of non-traditional heroisms. In addition, close study of both texts clearly validates Tally's contention that writers can support varied homecomings and/or familiarise exile.

LIFE OF PI

In this novel Yann Martel produces a linear sea narrative steeped in transformation. The protagonist, Pi, a precocious dilettante versed in the practices and doctrines of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity is, through voyage travails, stripped bare of religious theory. The five characteristics of the *nostos* motif and the standard tropes of sea fiction are deployed in tandem to produce a forceful process of self-evolution in which Pi is stripped of the

selves associated with the known world of land and forced into painful relationship with taboo selves by virtue of the ocean journey. This "self-shattering" (3) process results in a return that is synonymous with a deep understanding of the impermanence of life (6), a hard-won mysticism, and the understanding that the human heart is a paradox in which love and suffering necessarily coexist (6).

Martel explores the role of words and storytelling in the creation of meaning. Binary opposites—truth and invention, fact and fiction—are pitted against each other in his "selective transforming of reality" (x). Regardless of which version, in the final pages of *Life of Pi*, is the 'true' one—that Pi was on a lifeboat with a spotted hyena, a zebra, an orang-utan and a Bengali tiger (ending up ultimately in the company of Richard Parker, the tiger) or that he was on a lifeboat with the *Tsimtsum's* cook, his mother and the young Chinese sailor—his "sea journey serves as an epitome of human life and the [vessel] offers a microcosmic representation of society" (Rostek 329). Whilst I do not disagree with Rostek's summation of the novel, if one takes into consideration Bonifazi's definition of *nostos*, particularly the foci of 'reaching successfully' and 'saving oneself', the world of the lifeboat and raft with its human and animal cargo can also be read as a microcosmic representation of the human psyche comprised of myriad selves. In Pi's case, having left and lost the "paradise on earth" that was the zoo in Pondicherry (14), his equivalent to the Christian 'fall' is the fall from ship's deck to lifeboat where an onboard battle ensues between binary selves: rational and intuitive, scientific and religious, civilised and barbaric. His experience at sea is an experience of the swinging pendulum of his mind (217) within and between these binary identities, culminating in a returned, expanded self at ease with its own widened spectrum of performance.

In *Life of Pi*, the *nostos* motif is deployed in relative textbook fashion. The impulse for departure is "that measure of madness that moves life in strange but saving ways" (85).

Pi's departure is compelled rather than chosen when the "New India split to pieces and collapsed in Father's mind" (79) and with departure plans taking well over a year, the life of the Patel family radically reassembles itself from the moment the decision to leave is made (88-90). Martel goes to the root of the *nostos* departure:

> Why do people move? What makes them uproot and leave everything
>
> they've known for a great unknown beyond the horizon? ...The answer is
>
> the same the world over: people move in the hope of a better life...because
>
> of the impression that the future is blocked up. (77-79)

The family's future is impeded by the failed New India, and Pi himself, despite his youth, must leave to unblock, to grow and to find "a new life" (88). The loss inherent within Pi's leaving is beautifully exemplified not just by the sale of the zoo animals (the family's life and livelihood) but in Pi's mother querying if they should buy Indian, Gold Flake cigarettes prior to departure. The narrator goes on to list brands, signifiers of home, familiarity and the culturally familiar, that may be forever lost: Arun ice-cream, Hero bicycles, Onidas televisions and Higginbothams bookshops (91). Multiple departures occur in the novel (the narrative structure 'housing' the inner journey); there are 'micro' compelled departures: from India to ship, from ship's deck to lifeboat, from lifeboat to raft (and back again), from island to lifeboat, and from lifeboat to land.

Voyage lure and dread is evidenced when Pi reports himself "thunderstruck" at the prospect of leaving, specifically at the 'otherness' of the destination: "we did not want to go" (88). However, by the time of departure he reports himself "terribly excited" (91) and as they voyage between Madras and Manila, Pi "loved every minute of it...it was a thrill to be on a ship" (100). The possibility, newness and adventure promised by a voyage are exemplified in his marking their daily position on a map of the world he has specifically purchased for the journey. Momentum, and the strength engendered by momentum, is

shown via the ship pushing on "bullishly indifferent" to whatever the sea put in its path (100). However, in the *nostos* motif, voyage pleasure contains within it the seed of pain. Pi views the sea as "impressive and forbidding, beautiful and dangerous" (102), and the apt pairing of 'terribly' and 'excited' in relation to departure are immediately followed by the sentence, "Things didn't turn out the way they were supposed to..." (91). Voyage excitement is extinguished when the "large and impressive" ship (90), which moves "with the slow, massive confidence of a continent" (100), sinks. Stasis of land, beautifully and paradoxically represented by the ship as continent, is thereby dramatically undercut. "Tell me I'm still in my bunk on the *Tsimtsum* and I'm tossing and turning and soon I'll wake up from this nightmare. Tell me I'm still happy" (97), Pi laments. The travails and suffering of his wandering stage have begun.

While departure and return are treated with relative brevity in *Life of Pi*, true to genre form, the wandering phase of the *nostos* motif is written at length. Pi's sea voyage is not straightforward. Rather, it is beset by requisite contradictions and ambiguities. Crisis is an understatement when describing his predicament. Apart from a brief sojourn on a carnivorous island and a boat-to-boat encounter with a blind castaway, Pi and Richard Parker are depicted as traditionally groundless (literally and figuratively), confined as they are to the lifeboat and raft: "I had no means of controlling where I was going" (193). The transition characterised in wandering, is, for the protagonist, a two hundred and twenty seven-day epic in which crisis, paradox, ambiguity, mutability and loss of identity feature strongly: "every single thing I value in life has been destroyed" (98); "opposites often take place at the same moment" (216); "winds and currents decided where I went" (193); "then normal sank" (316).

The throwing together of boy and tiger into a situation of crisis and flux, represented by an aqueous terrain so foreign to them both ("winds and current were a

mystery" to him (193)) supports Pi encountering aspects of himself not possible on land. Martel hints at the necessity of the voyage and its underlying mutability in the task of undoing the self: "What do you know about the sea? Nothing...Come aboard if your destination is oblivion" (111). So it is that, via the inherent features of the *nostos* motif, Pi, can descend "to a level of savagery I never imagined possible" (197).

The tropes of sea fiction are well represented: sinking (97-103, 228), seasickness (121), starvation (143, 169), thirst (137, 139, 169, 187), sharks (124) and storm (225-227). These are the traumatic catalysts for the protagonist's metamorphosis, (as is Richard Parker, a creature of the land not sea, but a necessary representative of otherness and wildness). Pi describes his second night at sea as one of "exceptional suffering" (123-124) and his misery continues unabated thereafter in varying guises—anxiety (147), despair ("a hell beyond expression" (164, 209)), giving up (148), desolation and weariness (209) and terror (225). After the island, "the rest of this story is nothing but grief, ache and endurance" (283). Martel's Pacific Ocean and the voyage upon it clearly replicate Auden's "purgatorial suffering" by which the protagonist is "brought to his senses" (Auden 22).

With the self placed under duress by hallmark *nostos* features—mutability, crisis, paradox and loss/death—the lack of land rules support new performances of the self, particularly taboo selves regardless of whichever story version, with or without animals (317), is the chosen reading. In addition to the feeling states listed above, Pi is variously violent (185), predatory (195), savage (197), and ruthless and cannibalistic (256, 311). He describes his lifeboat existence as being "caught up in grim and exhausting opposites" (216). This psychic array, these binary extremes of the self, and the subsequent reclamation of the repressed and taboo, manifest in moments of wholeness and clarity. Edwards' mariner philosopher and Foulke's mariner meditation, indicative of metamorphosis in process, are exemplified in Pi's numerous, often nocturnal, contemplations of the sky and

sea. For example:

> for the first time I noticed—as I would notice repeatedly during my ordeal,
> between one throe of agony and the next—that my suffering was taking
> place in a grand setting. I saw my suffering for what it was, finite and
> insignificant, and I was still. My suffering did not fit anywhere I realised.
> And I could accept this. (177)

Given Pi does not remain on the *Tsimtsum* making the anticipated voyage and given that the sinking occurred just four days into the journey, the aspect of 'longing to return' manifests in various unique forms. It is most evidenced via the recall of signifiers of 'home' or the ordinary world: representations include food (143, 211, 243-245), Pi's delight in "the manufactured good, the man-made device" (141, 144-145), and Pi's acknowledgment that the life of the lifeboat is not 'real life' when he expects the passing tanker to rescue him: "People, food, a bed. Life is ours once again" (234).

The presentation of elemental mutability that supports character transformation in sea fiction features centrally in Part Two (The Pacific Ocean). Sea movement, vessel movement and weather movement are consistent features of the text; these are invariably associated with the emotional state of the protagonist and exemplify his internal transformation. For example, whilst the Pacific may at times be lethargic (187) and quiet (177), it is rarely still; Pi speaks of its "constant" (174) and "ceaseless" (198) motion. Martel's ocean hisses, coils and tosses (157), its "furtive fingers" reach for Pi through cracks in the raft (156). It exhibits the commotion of a city (175-176). By virtue of its quick and radical changes, it is not perceived as one ocean but multiple: "I was now on a different ocean" (159).

Likewise, the two vessels in Part Two, lifeboat and raft, are rarely still (121, 128, 134, 151, 154, 225, 228, 284). At the conclusion of a three-page description of lifeboat

movements due to storm, the passage concludes, "For the rest of that day and into the night, we went up and down, up and down, up and down, until terror became monotonous and was replaced by numbness and complete giving up" (227). Similarly, weather movements are a constant feature of the text (110, 128, 134, 156, 215). "The clouds looked as if they were stumbling along before the wind, frightened" (225). The text powerfully evinces the mutable nature of the *nostos* voyage and subsequent character metamorphosis through the mobile dynamic of sea, vessel and weather.

Referring to those etymological roots of mutability outlined in Chapter One, in *Life of Pi* the presentation of mutability (reliant as it is on liquidity, fluidity, flux) textually supports the protagonist's metamorphosis, enabling him, by the conclusion of Part Two, to meet, accept, join and ultimately exceed repressed or taboo aspects of his own psyche. This evolution is eventually sufficient to enable the physical return of the protagonist.

Pi reaches Mexican shores and in doing so saves himself. Bonifazi's definitions of 'reach successfully' and 'saving oneself' are evoked. Port of departure and port of return are different yet Pi successfully completes the *nostos* journey. However, the myth of return is suggested; the Mexican landfall is described as "difficult", with Pi barely having the strength "to be happy about it" (184). Lying on the beach he realises he is "truly alone" (185), the realisation and pain of being orphaned returns in stark fashion now that the norms of land are re-established, and the priority of sea survival recedes. Indeed, Pi has become so 'other' to land-based norms, so familiar with being in the company of an animal and so comfortable with his own basic instincts and identity, that being discovered by "a member of my own species" (185) he weeps:

> not because I was overcome by having survived my ordeal, though I was.
>
> Nor was it the presence of my brothers and sisters, though that was very
>
> moving. I was weeping because Richard Parker had left me so

unceremoniously...It's important to conclude things properly. Only then can

you let go. Otherwise you are left with words you should have said but

never did, and your heart is heavy with remorse. That bungled goodbye

hurts me to this day. (285)

Here Pi laments the loss of those aspects of himself that will now, necessarily, be less

prominent on land and in the everyday world.

Clearly, Pi's return to land is not unambiguous and defined. There is no clear

demarcation between voyage and non-voyage despite the lifeboat "hissing to a halt" on the

sand (184)—Martel's choice of the word 'hiss' at such an important juncture hints at the

dangers and difficulties of return. Suffering does not cease with return to land, oppositional

binaries (stasis/voyage, landfall/sea) clash, and incompatible identities and forgotten norms

destabilise Pi's post-landfall life: the "noisy, wasteful, superabundant gush" of a tap causes

him to collapse (7). He has fits of uncontrollable laughing and crying (7), thinks he will

never stop being hungry (286), hoards food whilst in the infirmary to the discomfort of

those around him and has enough food "to last the siege of Leningrad" in his Canadian

house (25). He carries ongoing body scars (7) and his "suffering [has] left [him] sad and

gloomy" (6) as he seeks to establish a life in Toronto where, despite "loving" Canada, he

"still misses" India. However, he has "nothing to go home to" there (6).

This final stage of the *nostos* journey, return, is, for Pi, characterised by those

features which underpin the motif—crisis, paradox, mutability and loss/death. In *Life of Pi*,

the myth of return is thus powerfully borne out. The fictional author within the text

observes that, "memory is an ocean" and Pi still "bobs on its surface" (42). The

protagonist, in one sense, has not come home. When asked by Mr. Okamoto, "What will

you be doing now?", Pi replies, "I guess I'll go to Canada." "Not back to India?" his

interviewer asks. "No. There's nothing there for me now" (318). Pi is unable to

unambiguously return, and his perennial post-voyage nightmares (6) are emblematic of the crisis return of the sea fiction protagonist.

However, the perennial 'voyage lure' is not re-invoked for Pi in the traditional sense. His land life, with time, does become balanced and enjoyable by virtue of the deep transformation that the voyage afforded him. In this, Frame's *nostos* definition, return from death and darkness (241, for example) to light and life (269, for example), is evoked. Yet a form of voyage addiction bears out internally and metaphorically in Martel's text via Pi's ongoing "mindful practice of religion ...I have kept up what some people would consider my strange religious practices" (3). Now that substantial metamorphosis is wrought, the text seems to suggest, voyages do not need to be physically on the sea but continue in the mind and heart alone. Pi thus does not need to look "directly into the bottomless depths" (154) of a physical sea accompanied by the galvanising and alchemical duress of physical and mental suffering. Rather, it is the fathomless sea of consciousness that is continuously explored, supporting Auden's assertion that the voyage is the "true condition of man" (23). In this way, Pi saves himself from the internal oblivion of non-return that faces some maritime protagonists who look to the outer, physical ocean for meaning and resolution to counteract the void of unsatisfactory return.

Return, in this contemporary *nostos* tale, is thus not to the port of departure, nor to the text's metaphoric Garden of Eden. Rather, Pi's successful *nostos* culminates in his capacity to live a balanced and integrated life in the 'new' ordinary world of Toronto where his "nightmares are tinged with love" (6). The certain, aspirational boy, disassembled by the voyage, integrates the competing selves in the lifeboat so that the adult Pi, living in Canada, no longer "believes in death" and experientially knows that "life leaps over oblivion lightly, losing only a thing or two of no importance, and gloom is but the passing shadow of a cloud" (5-6). The sea voyage transforms religious theory into hard

won, dynamic realisation. Having integrated and made peace with both the light and dark, the demonic and angelic aspects of his own psyche—"it was not a question of him or me, but of him *and* me" (164)—Pi is able to "go on loving" (209). The return home is thus not that of a renowned hero to the port of departure (Madras) but the return of a radically transformed self, one that has transformed youthful and naive religious doctrine into integrated experience.

With regard to heroism, Pi is described by his Japanese interviewers using traditional hero signifiers. He is "very tough, very bright" (318). In their report on the fate of the *Tsimtsum*, they acknowledge that his is an "astounding story of courage and endurance in the face of extraordinarily difficult and tragic circumstances" (319). Martel hints at the genre's adventure and heroism template: "I gripped the railing and faced the elements. This was adventure" (102). Yet, according to the protagonist he is saved not by his own actions, but by turning to God in the throes of unrelenting suffering (283-284). Never once does Pi reflect on his own actions or mindset in heroic terms. His remains a stunningly factual account of both the ups and downs of voyage life. His heroism, in addition to surviving the journey, lies in his realisation that to be cast upon an ocean that endlessly exhibits movement between binary extremes is to not just be "caught on a point perpetually at the centre of a circle" (215) but "caught in a harrowing ballet of circles" characterised by struggle with "fear, rage, madness, hopelessness, apathy" (216). In this, "life on a lifeboat isn't much of a life" (217). The paradox, crisis, mutability and loss/death that underpin the *nostos* motif are here starkly rendered by Martel, who seems to suggest they are inherent within every life; it is the ambiguity of *nostos*, with its paradox of home, its myth of return, which are encapsulated in Pi's "harrowing ballet of circles" that constitute the human existence. Yet Pi's acceptance of the paradox, the suffering and impermanence of existence, his capacity to confront fear, particularly the fear of death—

"you must fight hard to shine the light of words upon it" (162)—his reclamation and integration of repressed and taboo selves (which potentially include, dependent on reading, murderer and cannibal), and his capacity to continue to embody his transcendental knowledge once returned—he lives a fulfilling life in Toronto having found "peace, purpose, I dare say even wholeness" (162)—combine to constitute a relevant and rich form of contemporary heroism.

Martel alludes to both a performance of heroism and the ambiguities of *nostos*, when Pi says, "I saw my suffering for what it was, finite and insignificant, and I was still" (177). The finite return, the peace and stillness of home, which the sea fiction protagonist seeks, seems manifest in this moment. Yet it is only a moment, an isolated and fragmented slice of time, in which stillness, representative of successful *nostos*, occurs. For Martel, true *nostos* appears simply that—momentary and fleeting.

In Life of Pi, Martel deploys the *nostos* motif with commanding effect. Each characteristic of the *nostos* framework is evident in the text, the underlying features of which culminate to produce a powerful, contemporary internal metamorphosis of the protagonist. Pi's heroism is not just in having survived the rigours of his linear *nostos* journey but in the self-knowledge that allows him a measure of vanquishment over death and the subsequent ability to live with love.

"THE SURVIVOR"

"The Survivor" from Julian Barnes' *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* depicts a journey in which return is eschewed. The novel comprises eleven stories devoid of narrative chronology, told in a variety of narrative voices, yet containing repetitive phrases, motifs and themes which link the work as a whole. In it, human life and history are voyages, experience is an afflictive storm, and vessels convey the notion of shelter. Central

to the text is the motif of boat as "refuge-cum-prison" (Finney 60) but at which the woodworm is invisibly at work, eroding safety. The structure and content of the novel allow Barnes to question the construction of history, viewing it as an assembly that has "neither more nor less claim to legitimacy than any other text or story" (Alexandra Mitrea 48). He does this by problematising "the relationship between history and fiction as well as the nature of historical discourse by investigating the process of narrativisation" (48).

The novel's fourth narrative, "The Survivor", details a sea voyage featuring a contemporary female protagonist, Kathleen Ferris, who left the north and travelled south pursued by "the war" (107), finally taking to the sea as a means of survival. Like *Life of Pi*, the narrative works on two levels with the reader unsure which is the truer version. Either Kath is on a yacht in the Arafura Sea, accompanied by two cats, Linda and Paul, fleeing a perceived Chernobyl-like nuclear incident and experiencing aspects of the delusions common to lone sailors in heat distress, or following a break up with the misogynistic and violent Greg, she is receiving treatment in hospital and the voyage is an hallucination. The patriarchal voice (either in her head or that of a medico) describes her experience as a "fabulation", "you keep a few facts and spin a new story round them" (110). What follows is a feminist reading of the text; the narrative concerns itself with a dystopic vision of civilisation built upon exploitation of the less privileged binary pair—earth, women, animals—by patriarchal masculinity, the "men in suits" (89, 90, 93) who confidently reassure that they will "sort something out" (89).

Kath's departure is compelled in order to escape the disaster, but also to escape oppression—be it the hegemonic expression which caused the environmental disaster or the personal expression evidenced in the relationship with Greg. The place from which Kath leaves is emblematic of this subjugation; a rubbish-ridden place of exploitation where "they make children pay to see the fish eat. Nowadays even fish are exploited, she thought.

Exploited, and then poisoned. The ocean out there is filling up with poison" (91). Kath is not nostalgic for that which is being left because she has no intention of returning to the known world. In this, "The Survivor" directly engages with the ambiguity of the *nostos* motif in sea fiction, both maintaining and deviating from the conventional structure to achieve its metaphoric and thematic ends.

Kath intends to not just temporarily but permanently dissociate herself from the social group—"she left the world behind" (90). True to template, the voyage outcome for Kath is thus radically uncertain, and, perhaps given the threat she faces of nuclear toxicity, more uncertain than for other sea fiction protagonists who invariably intend to return. With no intention of return to the place of departure, and having "abandoned land" (94), Kath's future is one of perennial instability. Indeed, the reader is not certain, until halfway through the narrative, whether she intends to remain perpetually boat-bound or is, at some point in the future, intent on land at all. In this, Barnes seems to be suggesting, not just in this chapter but in the novel as a whole, that in the face of environmental disaster and other myriad instabilities of a modern life (summarised by Finney as "the late twentieth-century sense of dislocation in human life and history" (54)), that voyaging, representative of ultimate instability, is indeed, as Auden suggests, the "true condition" of humanity (23).

The unstable space that Kath is set to enter is both outer (sea) and inner (mind). Consequently, not long after setting sail, dreams begin which turn into "bad dreams", then nightmares (92, 94). However, leaving is Kath's duty: "I don't know what will happen to me, but I know it's the duty of those of us who care about the planet to go on living" (107). Kath is not so much inviting change through departure, she is enabling survival, despite the mental anguish that ensues. However one reads the story, to stay would literally equate to the non-life caused by the disaster, or to the repressed life that is both the relationship with Paul and life as a woman in a patriarchal society. In departing, she repudiates the

dysfunctional status quo—"he was out there knocking back another beer, saying how those fellows up there would sort something out, and in the meantime why don't you come and sit on my knee, darling?" (90)—and seeks a new order. In this, the paradox of wishing to stay but longing to go that besets many sea fiction protagonists does not beset Kath. Her duty to survival provides her with an unambiguous clarity and singularity of purpose— "she knew what she was doing" (92). Similarly, for Kath, voyage lure is neither representative of adventure or pleasure but of pure survival. The combination of fear and dread traditionally accompanying the contemplation of a voyage and the act of leaving, is not evidenced, perhaps due to the overriding clarity of purpose or subsumed within, and outweighed by, the very real prospect of annihilation.

The wandering phase of Kath's journey is at first characterised by the typical movement and geography that bequeath a sea fiction protagonist power and agency. She sails "past Melville Island, through Dundas Strait, and out into the Arafura Sea" (91). But then "after that she let the wind govern her direction" (91). This is not a giving up or lack of skill but a reversion to those preferred natural ways devalued by the men in suits—an alternate heroic activism: "We're going to give ourselves back to nature now" (97). Kath muses, contrary to the blueprint of rationality and confidence that makes the adventure hero, that her "expectations were not high" and humorously discounts any belief in the standard tropes of island fiction materialising, a deft repudiation of the patriarchal adventure template and a signifier that her heroism is alternatively sourced. She does not expect, therefore, an undamaged island, coral reef, palm tree, the ability to easily grow food, and the appearance of a good-looking rescuer (92), and notes the idiocy of the traditional castaway hero immediately building a dwelling when the landfall has not been adequately explored to verify suitability (99). Rather, "she just thought you had to try it, whatever the results. It was your duty" (92).

The wandering phase is typically long, though the reader is unsure of length since Kath does not measure time—"that's the old sort of thinking" (93)—and it represents a repudiation of the men in grey suits who use such an approach. Typical of the wandering phase the voyage is also difficult. Kath experiences sun exposure, passes out, has minimal food intake, is parched, develops fever, has nightmares, suffers skin rashes and her hair falls out.

In the wandering phase, Kath is clearly awash in the unknown, evidenced by a mind growing more erratic and seemingly delusional. She has left the patriarchal paradigm, the duplicitous stability of which was ultimately oppressive, yet has not metaphorically arrived at any new type of freedom. Thus, there is nothing to replace that which has been abandoned. Interestingly, on land, her critique of the status quo was more narrowly focussed on Greg and the nuclear incident in the north (and its effect on the reindeer) but increasingly expands, on the sea, to include the whole of patriarchal history with its "names, dates and achievements" (99):

> They say I don't understand things. They say I'm not making the right
> connections. Listen to them, listen to them and their connections. This
> happened, they say, and as a consequence that happened. There was a battle
> here, a war there, a king was deposed, famous men–always famous men,
> I'm sick of famous men–made events happen. Maybe I've been out in the
> sun too long but I can't see their connections. I look at the history of the
> world, which they don't seem to realise is coming to an end and I don't see
> what they see. All I see is the old connections, the ones we don't take any
> notice of anymore because that makes it easier to poison... Who made that
> happen? Which famous man will claim credit for that? (97)

It is the removal from the known world, the groundlessness provided by the wandering

phase, which supports Kath to reflect on her land experience with clarity and a strengthening commitment to live alternatively. Indeed, the very pointed critique of hegemonic masculinity Kath provides may support some readers settling on a reading of the narrative as the deluded and confused thinking of a misguided woman, mirroring the criticism of Greg ("politics is men's business and [she] did not know what [she] was talking about" (88), and the men in her head who suggest to her, "there's a lot of denial in your life, isn't there?" (108).

The groundlessness and instability of the wandering phase of this voyage support Barnes' depiction of a fluid mind, further amplified in the narrative through a trope of sea fiction commonly found in the castaway story—extended sun exposure and lack of water. Exacerbated by sun and thirst, what start as dreams become nightmares that don't stop even when Kath has awoken (94-96).

Common to the *nostos* template, the voyage is interrupted by a sojourn on land. After seeing a first island and the wind carrying the boat away prior to landfall, Kath "allows the winds to guide and guard her" (96) to a second island. She holds to the belief that landfall (the 'reaching successfully" of the *nostos* definition) will equate with a form of stability, evidenced by thinking "that landing on the island would make the nightmares stop" (99). What is somewhat atypical in "The Survivor" is that the hallucinations continue even when Kath is on the island. In *Life of Pi* they cease. For Kath, the relative chaos of the voyage maintains itself in that the nightmares continue. In this, land and sea become conflated in "The Survivor". Whilst an island sojourn is a typical trope of the wandering phase of a *nostos* journey, Barnes, using what can be read as underlying features of the *nostos* motif (namely paradox and mutability), blurs the standard dichotomy of ocean flux and land stability. Distinctions between here and there, voyage and landfall, departure and arrival are thus not clear, and are emblematic of the authorial juxtapositions, ironies and

contrasts Barnes favours to suggest history and life, at heart, lack order and coherence.

The entire stay on the island, itself a place of 'other' compared to the mainland, is thus marked, for Kath, by ambiguity, loss of identity and transition. Yet it is only through leaving and rejection of the old order that it becomes possible for her to arrive at a new performance of self in which she feels happiness and hope (111). This is achieved when Kath makes the decision to not respond to the men in her mind and the nightmares begin to abate (110). Ultimately, she determines the cognitive disturbance was "all about her mind being afraid of its own death" (111) and reiterates her desire to "look at things as they are" in comparison to the "fooling" of themselves that most people did: "We can't rely on fabulation any more" (111). The new performance of self, wrought through abandonment of an old order (including the willingness to let go of former egoic identity), rigorous, thoughtful self and societal analysis, honesty, and a willingness to confront death, is symbolised by the birth of kittens and Kath feeling "such love" (111).

With regard to the elemental mutability of the wandering phase, "The Survivor" is uncommon in that movement is relatively languid or restrained in this narrative. Kath lets the wind direct the yacht. There is little description of actual vessel movement; focus is more on the elements and sailor movement. Whilst at sea, there are descriptions of (mushroom) clouds, shifting of light and rumbling noises indicative of storm (91). Fish fly past the boat (94), winds circle the planet, there is the sound of the waves against the hull (93), and "bad" winds are alluded to (107, 111). The greatest mutability, however, is evidenced in the protagonist's emotions, the movements of which are enabled and heightened via the sea journey.

In "The Survivor", return is purposely eschewed and the ambiguity of *nosto*s is fore-grounded. Kath does not pay detailed heed to where her boat is headed since "you only followed where you were going if you wanted to get back to where you started from,

and she knew that was impossible" (91). The convention, longing to return, fails to standardly appear within the text, for Kath does not wish to return to either the geographic place or oppressive state that equates to the known world. And in terms of the nuclear threat, no place can ever, now, equate to the safety of home since there is no 'normal' life to long for, or return to. The complete lack of an intention to return to the place of departure, lack of clear signalling of definite landfall for which she is headed, lack of physical return, the absence of a place equating to a safe home and no clear psychic return to her original senses when the nightmares abate, all ensure the myth of return is potently evinced in the narrative.

With regard to metamorphosis, it is a new state of mind that Kath gains. She achieves this by refuting the man in her head's accusation: "you deny a lot of things in your life don't you" (111); also through her decision not to speak to the men again (110), being willing to die if she had to (110), realising her suffering stemmed from "her mind being afraid of its own death" and evoking a commitment to stop fooling herself and "look at things as they are" (111). In this, the boat of Kath metaphorically ceases to go "round in circles" (109). Thus, the return crisis of the protagonist does not occur. Despite this, there does exist an alternate harking back within the text, a metaphoric longing to return. This is to "the old connections, the ones we don't have anymore" (97), a longing for a world or experience of existence in which "everything is connected, even the parts we don't like" (84).

Clearly, Kath's *nostos* is paradoxical. While there is no actual return, there is a longing to return to a state of being that is past. A new evolution is posited as being possible but it is dependent upon breaking "the cycle". "Begin at the beginning. People said you couldn't turn the clock back, but you could. The future was in the past" (104). In "The Survivor", Barnes presents the reader with the paradox that lies at the heart of the *nostos* motif—the impossibility of return. And one senses that after the initial joy and hope

at their birth, and as the kittens grow, it is only then that Kath will face the realities of building and embodying that which she envisages is possible, and in this, voyage lure reasserts itself. Here, too, Alexopoulou's earlier assertion that "one who chooses not to return home sinks into oblivion" (3) is, whilst not directly validated, hinted at. Clearly, the return conundrum of the protagonist cannot be averted by simply not returning. Meanwhile, what allows Barnes to so successfully convey these complexities and nuances inherent within the *nostos* motif (in what is, structurally and thematically, an ambiguous and paradoxical narrative), is a deft authorial manipulation of the features of mutability, paradox, crisis and loss/death that underscore it. Not least evidenced by the narrative being readable on an emotional/psychic (delusional) level, begging the ultimate question which (for some readers) remains unanswered, does Kath arrive safely 'home'?

In the end, Kath's *nostos* is not dependent on place. Rather, it is convergent with Frame's definition, a "return from death and darkness to light and life". Bonifazi's "having a safe journey", "reach[ing] successfully" and "saving oneself" all confirm and confer her successful *nostos*, albeit an unusual one in the context of the sea fiction genre.

What, then, does "The Survivor's" particular expression of *nostos* convey about Kath's heroic performance? That which Greg condescendingly would have referred to as Kath's little venture, ("whenever she had a plan of any sort–especially something that did not involve him–he would always refer to it as her little venture" (92)) is in stark contrast to the sea fiction hero's adventure. The protagonist of "The Survivor" does not wish to be rescued (96). She seeks to personally gain nothing from her voyage, bar survival. There is no glory, acquisition, fame, no colonising enterprise. Ironically, as a result, she is accused by the men in her head of "running away" (109). What elevates Kath's journey to that of an heroic one is not only her willingness to risk, to be self-reliant, to evaluate with clarity, to navigate the elements (all as per the traditional template) but that she undertakes the

voyage for something greater than herself. This is directly symbolised, in the text, by the cats for whom she demonstrates numerous instances of concern and care (88, 96, 99, 111): "Still tins for me whilst the cats grow plump" (93). There is also Kath's commitment to survival in which her concern expands to the welfare of all via enacting her 'duty'. This underlying motive is alluded to in a telling passage, when, upon seeing another ship, Kath laments the fact that there is no longer a "lookout":

> In the old days there was always someone up in the crow's nest or on the bridge, watching for trouble. But nowadays the big ships didn't have a lookout any more, or at least the lookout was just a man staring from time to time at a screen with a lot of blips on it. In the old days if you were lost at sea...there was a pretty good chance of being rescued...Nowadays you can drift in the ocean for weeks, and a supertanker finally comes along, and it goes right past...That's what's wrong with the world, she thought. We've given up having lookouts. We don't think about saving other people, we just sail on by relying on our machines. (95)

Kath's humanity serves as humanity's lookout as the men in suits exploit the weak, poison the earth and other species, ignore reality and 'go round in circles'. Barnes' view of history is one in which "fabulation" rules and in which "certain patterns of human interaction reappear" (Finney 62). These destructive "repetitive aspects of human nature" (62), which Kath acutely observes, articulates, and seeks to distance herself from, are emblematic of the superiority, dominance and success characteristics upon which the hero story, central to our culture (Hourihan 1-2), is built and perpetuates. However, Mitrea asserts that, via the foregrounding of love in his narratives (evidenced in "The Survivor" via Kath's concern for humanity, earth and non-human species), Barnes differs from the postmodern writers with whom he is usually categorised. The underlying message of the novel, Mitrea

concludes, is that:

> beyond the comments on the connection between history and truth, history
> and myth, history and stories, beyond the interrogation of how history is
> constructed, Barnes points to how the absence of love, empathy and
> understanding can and will lead to destruction. (49)

In eschewing physical return, Kath voices a new cry, one emblematic, perhaps, of the contemporary sea fiction hero: "Abandon ship, that was the old cry. Now it's abandon land. There's danger everywhere but more on land" (94). Kath is not suggesting an endless voyage, I argue, rather a rejection of the oppressive, hegemonic order that constituted her land-based experience. In abandoning "land", this sea fiction protagonist is, on behalf of the reader, willing to experience an oppositional fluidity out of which new, equitable possibilities might arise. A refrain from the text thus becomes a clarion call to future sea fiction protagonists and the reader: "In fourteen hundred and ninety two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue. And then what?" (83, 88-89). Through Kath, Barnes suggests that the colonising mission embedded within both purpose and outcome of the historic sea fiction voyage, might be transformed. What it might take, Kath surmises, is a new approach summarised as "good behaviour" (104): "Maybe the world had to earn the spring and autumn back by good behaviour over many centuries" (104). Return, as written in "The Survivor", is clearly a long journey.

The capacity of the *nostos* motif with regard to character metamorphosis is an enticing tool for writers. Martel and Barnes realise that potential, deploying the motif in similar yet differing ways with unique and potent effect.

Martel's use of the *nostos* archetype enables his protagonist to encounter and assimilate selves impossible and incomprehensible within terrestrial existence. He depicts,

by virtue of the motif's characteristics, a detailed personal evolution of Pi, whose once theoretical ideas regarding love and god become tangible, resulting in a grounded and rounded returnee. Barnes, eschewing return, symbolically points at the impossibility of return to outmoded selves and to the perpetual evolution of the psyche. Symbolic of a more collective metamorphosis, Kath evolves from victim of hegemonic masculinity to radical architect of an alternate future. These differing depictions both rely upon, and are evinced by, the core components of the motif, and demonstrate the efficacy of the framework in evolving the sea fiction mission, the genre's narrative arc, and the protagonist's expression of heroism. The metamorphoses of Pi and Kath speak to the ambiguity of home for the contemporary sea fiction protagonist. Yet both authors utilise the underlying paradox of the motif, albeit in varied manner, to return their character, and so their reader, 'home', and in doing so, offer thoughtful, new performances of heroism for the sea fiction hero.

METAMORPHOSIS, HOME AND HEROISM IN 'BOUND'

Mentz and Rojas, championing blue humanities scholarship, see the ocean as "a theatre of current economic, political and human dramas…a subject of cultural enquiry that will eventually require coming to grips with contemporary concerns" ("The Hungry Ocean" 4). David Whyte, alluding to the crisis-ridden, fluid, and connected nature of contemporary life, suggests:

> we are living at a time when much of the way we see and describe ourselves
> is under immense strain from the currents of change that swirl around us.
> Our old fixed, terrestrial ideas and the language to describe those ideas do
> not seem terribly well adapted to the fluidity of the new ocean world. We
> are each being impacted in enormous, far-reaching ways by the tides of
> ecological and technological change and the sudden realisation we inhabit a
> much more complex, intimate universe than we imagined. We intuit that we
> are about to cross a great expanse to a new place, but our maritime abilities,
> our sense of captaincy, our courage, our responsiveness – individually and
> collectively – are under severe test. (59-60)

Contemporary sea fictions can usefully respond to these invitations.

'Bound' attempts to do just this. It duly fictionalises a number of contemporary socio-political and cultural concerns: migration and refugee issues (the sea fence and *xenia*), lack of constructive political leadership (wayward Ship of State), corruption fuelled by a drive for financial gain (the Chairman), the tension between development and preservation of natural spaces, environmental degradation (developments at Olympus, developments in national parks, removal of Antarctic minerals), technological distraction (Odysseus and the tablet), bureaucratisation (Olympian administrators), and the absence of high-profile contributors to the collective good (the Chorus' lack of heroes). This list is summarised in the notion of the Ship of State having lost its way.

In response to these challenges, and in an attempt to cross the expanse to which Whyte alludes, 'Bound' intentionally harnesses the power of change intrinsic to the *nostos* motif. By virtue of the metamorphosis-inducing potential inherent within the underlying features of the template—mutability, paradox, crisis and loss/death—the novel's response to the issues it showcases is, ultimately, an optimistic one. These features are deployed as mechanisms by which a metamorphosis, from preoccupation with self to promoting the wellbeing of the other, occurs in Bailey, the sea fiction protagonist, and other characters. These same features also support the metamorphosis of heroism itself; the responsiveness of the entire *Argus* crew is heightened to more relevantly and congruently address twenty-first century concerns.

These metamorphoses in the text have two particular foci. Firstly, the text seeks to suggest the usefulness of the sea fiction hero being consciously cognisant of, and comfortable with, the four underlying features of the *nostos* motif. Crisis, paradox, mutability and loss/death are, I suggest, not simply representative of twenty-first century life, they constitute the experience of contemporary life, evidenced in the fictionalised

issues of the novel. An acceptance of, and capacity to skilfully navigate, these states is a baseline requirement of the twenty-first century hero. There is, therefore, intentional foregrounding of crisis, paradox, mutability and loss/death for the crew of the *Argus*, with the direct inference that the life voyage comprises these.

Secondly, in and of themselves, the *nostos* features provide suggestive ways in which Bailey as protagonist and, by extension, sea fiction heroism, might evolve to more aptly, indeed more competently, address twenty-first century concerns. The traditional template of the sea fiction hero relies upon an isolated, outcome-oriented individual, skewed to individual success—characteristics arguably causative of aspects of various twenty-first century challenges. 'Bound' suggests a metamorphosis reliant upon, indeed embracing of, crisis, paradox, loss/death, and mutability, culminating in the embrace of multiple, contextual heroisms rooted in altruism.

METAMORPHOSIS

In fiction, character identity routinely shifts. Persephone summarises this process: "no one in the history of voyaging, of journeying, gets home unharmed…and not without giving something up" (87). For metamorphosis to occur, old identities must first be relinquished. Each feature of the *nostos* motif is an agent of such change, a destabiliser, an invitation. Each has a specific purpose to play with regard to character identity: crisis provides predisposing conditions which threaten identity; mutability undermines notions of fixed identity; paradox blurs the apparent clarity of binary identities; and loss/death necessitates an existing identity be relinquished. In these ways, and combined, the four features of the *nostos* motif powerfully support the process of character metamorphosis.

Crisis

Crisis is prolific in 'Bound', and, intentionally, in a contemporising move, the traditional

tropes of sea fiction, whilst present, are less relied on to provide critical incidents. Crisis examples include: the critical health of Bailey's grandfather resulting in career and life upheaval for her; Scott's exposure to the verdict of history leading to personal decimation of his heroic identity; Odysseus being confronted with the lack of recognition afforded him by the modern world. Scott's remnant personal identity (the mask) decays. Thelma battles addiction. The Chorus grapples with loss of role and meaningful purpose (and, by extension, society has lost its teller of educative stories related to collective metamorphosis).

Smaller crises abound: Odysseus imperils the *Argus* in Banks Strait; the yacht runs aground on a sandbar; the discipline and order of boat life is made chaotic by the presence of the "crack whore"; Scott resigns. Even the gods are not immune. The tension between the gods and administrators suggests the pantheon is both losing power and struggling for relevance. This superimposition of crisis into godly realms suggests crisis is all-pervasive; crisis is life. And indeed, further afield there are environmental (development in national parks) and ethical (the sea fence) crises, warranting the motif of the Ship of State to be used.

In sea fiction, crisis would usually result in the hero's victory (Hourihan 46). In 'Bound' they intentionally do not, allowing the protagonists to engage with the traditional hero's nemesis—failure. Bailey's plan to rid the boat of Odysseus and Thelma fails; Odysseus' strategy to sail to the sea fence is quashed; Bailey does not solve the riddle of the X. What crisis in and of itself allows, and more potently when it is coupled with failure, is the contestation of identity. Crisis thus becomes an effective tool by which metamorphosis is wrought. For example, Bailey, in grappling with the unresolved question of what might be her role in any future care of her grandfather is forced to confront the past, with its associated unpalatable feelings, something she has long avoided. Odysseus is

"fragmented" in the chaotic modern world, forced to question his own identity without the bolstering of recognition and reputation (42).

Thematically, two overarching crises emerge. First, the text suggests that some form of fundamental lack of individual and collective self-knowledge is prevalent, and that this underlies and contributes to the issues society is facing: Thelma observes that "what I know is you don't tell the truth. To yourself" (115). The Ship of State (whose navigators were to chart a course for good but who were viewed by the collective as "mere impractical stargazers" (65)), has inevitably lost its way. The Chorus describes the resulting poverty as a "coarsening of a life":

> ...the debasement of a life lacking voice, lacking poetry, lacking ritual,
>
> lacking gods. Of the poverty of a life without spontaneity, curiosity, truth,
>
> generosity, kindness. Of a life without heart. (66)

This lack of heart is manifested in the socio-political and environmental issues—environmental degradation, mineral exploitation, corruption, the marginalisation of indigenous peoples—with which the novel engages.

The second thematic strain suggests that heroism itself is in crisis, demonstrated in the Chorus' observation that there was a "lamentable lack of heroes to match the job" (65). Throughout the circumnavigation, crew members question and contest displays and notions of heroism (23, 63, 65, 67, 68, 90, 128, 136, 165), intimating the fragility of any overarching heroic notion as well as hinting at the existence of individual and thus multiple heroisms.

Together, both themes, lack of self-knowledge and the absence of a relevant hero, coupled with the contestation of identity provided by crisis and failure, suggest an expression of collective 'homelessness'; without certainty of identity within oneself it is difficult to aspire to heroic identity. This homelessness is symbolised by Odysseus' "spiral of endless wandering" (90). Scott is perplexed by Bailey's "endless expedition with no

purpose" (46), Odysseus notes (incongruously) that the modern world is "intent on a destination even [they] have forgotten" (48), and the Ship of State cannot be specifically located. 'Bound', through the concerted deployment of crisis, reflects a sense of misplacement within the self, and of personal, collective and heroic identity.

Paradox

In 'Bound', paradox manifests within characters, contexts, plot, and theme, and is a significant feature of the text. By combining contradictory features or qualities, paradox powerfully questions clarity of identity. For example, Scott observes that life is:

> not characterised by a single, glorious achievement…but more a series of terrible and beautiful errors. Perhaps even a perpetual error. And the greatest error…was perhaps to think otherwise! To think as History did. It was a comfort of sorts, this knowledge. A paradoxical relief. (146-147)

Odysseus reflects on the paradoxical, solitary nature of homecoming (200) and readers are left, throughout the text, with unsettling questions about previous certainties—history, overarching heroic narratives, purpose and meaning, the notion of home.

There is intentional emphasis, within the text, on depicting oppositional binary identities manifest within a single individual. For example, Scott, whilst depicted as embodying characteristics representative of a traditional late nineteenth century hero such as discipline, fortitude and stoicism, is also shown actively displaying opposing, even subversive, qualities. He admits to loneliness and failure (30, 35, 46) and chooses to abdicate command (133). Odysseus is an unsettling mixture of qualities, and, like Homer's protagonist, cannot be defined unambiguously. 'Bound' seems to anticipate, in this, Wilson's very recent, now famous, translation of him as "complicated" (105): "He was

confounding, Bailey thought. One minute annoying, the next delightful. One minute useless, then suddenly indispensable" (77). Odysseus, the most ancient of the five major characters, enthusiastically embraces, and readily adopts, contemporary technology (51, 61, 68). The deployment of paradox in 'Bound' intentionally implies that characters inhabit a performance spectrum (not necessarily linear), the currently known outer margins of which are represented by opposing binary pairs. Paradox demonstrates it is possible to simultaneously inhabit multiple and therefore differing locations on that spectrum. Such performance range and movement strongly infer the possibility of change, of metamorphosis, including movement beyond the currently known outer ends of binary identity. Paradox, in this way, in 'Bound', strongly reflects and supports the possibility of character evolution, and, by inference, the evolution of heroism.

The actual heroic mission itself is paradoxical, too. The understanding of Expedition tasks are themselves different for Scott and Odysseus; effectively they are on different journeys. Neither Odysseus, Scott nor Bailey knows how to get themselves 'home', yet each seeks to lead and control the voyage. Thematically, the nature of return in 'Bound' and, by association, heroism too, is paradoxical. There are multiple textual references to the need for the task and journey to be a solitary one (139, 141, 165) yet there is also Peter's exhortation that "you can't do it without help" (165). Heroism is defined in direct opposition to the patriarchal heroic template in this manner—it is not a lone hero who brings about success; the effort required is collective. Similarly, Aunty's heroic formula, being the equal embrace of failure and love, is paradoxical in its non-conformity with, indeed contradiction of, the standard template.

Mutability

Mutability is engineered in 'Bound' in two specific ways. The trope-driven device of elemental mutability is relatively self-evident (14, 18, 51-52, 145-146, 178-180, 190-191).

Mutability is deployed more generally, however, to undermine notions of fixed identity; the characteristics of being liable or tending to change, of flux, are thus exploited to support metamorphosis. For example, Odysseus' paradoxical nature ensures frequent emotional state and behaviour changes. Odysseus possesses an inherent type of character mutability which both supports transformation and, paradoxically, also limits it. He is simultaneously radically changed by the novel's end yet, in core ways, has changed little in his commitment to endlessly wander.

Mutability as it relates to transformation is powerfully evidenced in Scott, buried deep within the ice and glad of perpetual stillness. But then, "encased within the berg he had drifted, taken on the currents. Pieces of berg shearing off and melting; his belongings, his body, leaving him piece by piece" (22). Represented by a decaying mask, and passed from head to head, location to location, the metamorphic movement of this character is one of overt degeneration which paradoxically allows other qualities, less permissible within the heroic template, to powerfully emerge. For example, as a result of his underwater sojourn, in which degeneration is enhanced, Scott admits to loneliness, "it had been lonely, his self-imposed exile into silence as he waited for a joy that hadn't arrived" (35). Thelma, propelled by the tempestuous flux that is addiction, comes clean.

Of all characters, Bailey presents as the least mutable. Her lifestyle and mindset are relatively entrenched. Scott can easily list what appear to be sustained qualities. A lack of discernment, discipline, valour, and self-indulgence (45). Bailey is portrayed as emotionally armoured, and, despite her relative youth, her predispositions are written, paradoxically, as being more entrenched than the older characters. Intentionally, and in support of narrative variation, mutability is less relied on for her construction. Rather, deconstruction is the primary agent of her metamorphosis.

Loss/Death

The *nostos* feature of loss/death necessitates that an existing identity be relinquished, and it is this feature that is closely associated with Bailey. Loss is her companion in a similar manner that loss, in Homer's *Odyssey*, is Odysseus' companion—it is near to constant. Representative of her overall unwillingness to change, Bailey is depicted as not voluntarily able to relinquish cherished states or items. For example, she stubbornly retains her freedom (9, 19), attempts to keep the photograph (87) and gives only that which is not cherished—for example, the staff by way of support to Thelma in the dinghy (165). Thus, to encourage identity shift, things must be taken from her. Accordingly, Bailey, ever busy, loses her grandfather to illness and so the opportunity to "re-find" him (159). She is forced to relinquish the job she loves, at which she excels and from which she gains core identity. Her plan to travel north alone is derailed by Scott and Odysseus. Her vessel is 'commandeered' in service of the heroic mission. The nautilus, which she cherishes, is crushed by Thelma. Her opportunity for sexual encounter in Stanley is ruined by Odysseus. Scott, whom she holds dear, is lost (sea depths, skip bin) and then irretrievably lost through Odysseus posting him. These involuntary losses compound, ultimately serving to fracture a rigid and unyielding identity, culminating in Bailey experiencing momentary selflessness as a result of her vigil for Thelma (168-169). Indicative of a growing metamorphosis, Bailey is then able to properly gift the staff to Thelma, generously acknowledging her earning of it (188-189). It is unclear, at the novel's conclusion, whether or not Bailey will remain in port and elect to have involvement with her grandfather's care, thus ultimately giving of herself. Yet her long and painful metamorphosis has been such that readers believe that this option is now possible.

External loss, similar to crisis, is also prevalent in the narrative: 'History', in the guise of text, is thrown away by Odysseus. Scott loses his sense of his former heroic

identity by virtue of post-mortem, academic analysis. Odysseus is largely unrecognised as a hero. Environmental loss compounds as the circumnavigation unfolds. Thematically, the novel suggests that in loss is life and that the sea fiction hero must, over time, learn to voluntarily surrender to, rather than fight, this process. In this manner, the protagonist, symptomatic of metamorphosis, proceeds from the darkness of death to the light of new life—Frame's *nostos* definition is elegantly borne out.

In suggesting that the very nature of human existence is a form of continuous crisis (paradox, impermanence, death) and that heroism is, in a foundational sense, an ease with that, 'Bound' invokes a concerted process of identity breakdown. A subtle and sustained movement thus occurs throughout the novel, as, page by page, sea mile by sea mile, not just via, but in and around, plot events, incremental micro changes accumulate. Combined, these changes are the process by which identity is loosened, foregone and replaced. Accumulated, their outcome is metamorphosis.

HOME

In her landmark study of nostalgia, Svetlana Boym suggests the modern world laments "the impossibility of mythical return" (*The Future of Nostalgia* 8). This sense of loss is not limited to "personal history". The mourning of "displacement and temporal irreversibility is at the very core of the modern condition" ("Nostalgia and Its Discontents" 10,12). 'Bound', whilst not seeking to address temporal irreversibility, celebrates, rather than ignores or erroneously seeks to counter, the myth of return, and reclaims, via naturalisation and reframe, the dilemma and discomfort of displacement.

The myth, the impossibility, of return is evidenced in 'Bound'. Odysseus remains, literally, homeless. And the novel eschews the traditional unambiguous denouement, signifying the hero's success, usually associated with the hero story. Yes, the home port is

reached but return is momentary and transient, quickly followed by the text, "finally, the capacity to sail. So necessary now that she had returned, now that port and anchor, and all those other oceans, so close to home, awaited" (201). The open denouement reflects that knowledge acquired on the voyage is necessarily partial, necessitating re-voyaging. Bailey's decision remains unrevealed, and, at minimum, readers believe she has extended the range of choices available to her by the acquisition of knowledge and lived experience acquired as a result of the voyage.

Congruent with Cavafy's belief that it is the experience of the journey itself that provides wisdom, the reader observes Bailey incrementally 'returned', on the heart-shaped circumnavigation, by virtue of occurrences which strip away self-imposed or learned behaviours (distances) that have kept her (employing Jung's theory of individuation) exiled from the home of herself. As Aunty notes, "only will they truly arrive home" when they have managed to navigate the tightening and loosening of friendship bonds, accepted failure and learned to love (90). The return, or homecoming in the novel, therefore, is to a new self, one that has incorporated lessons inherent within these three tasks. Yet, in keeping with the idea that contemporary sea fiction be suited to a twenty-first century context, 'Bound' seeks to surpass this relatively standard paradigm of character evolution in two primary ways.

Firstly, it demonstrates the relinquishing of an old self, the development of a new self and so on, as a continuous process of self-dissolution, ad infinitum. 'Bound' thereby seeks to demonstrate that no self can ever be held onto in a permanent way. Acknowledging that character evolution is a standard, defining hallmark of literature, and the idea that no self can be held onto in a permanent way is not revelatory, 'Bound' intentionally foregrounds this process to highlight the notion of continuous, unlimited metamorphosis—"the unfinished work of becoming", Solnit terms it (53). Or, more

poetically, "the great rampage of becoming that is also unbecoming" (79). The text's construction seeks to suggests that fluidity and dissolution are the base nature of life, gesturing to Eckel's "perpetual transformation that the sea presents" (130). This is potently materialised in the novel, through the deployment of crisis, paradox, mutability and loss/death.

'Bound' thus seeks to evolve the "old fixed, terrestrial ideas" that Whyte exposes, ideas which clearly limit the contemporary sea fiction protagonist whose binarily constructed identity is borne from such terrestriality. The novel suggests that in order to evolve, 'home' must necessarily be left again and again, and the return will never be to that which was left. But more than this, through normalising impermanence, fixed ideas of 'home' as conventionally conceived must also be foregone, to be replaced by a normalised, perennial state of homelessness. An underlying paradox becomes apparent here; the sea fiction protagonist is 'at home' in not being at home. Accordingly, s/he is no longer exiled from her/himself and the underlying process of her/his life; the "old and worn out" metaphor of exile (*The Future of Nostalgia* 256) is thus no longer required. This overall process is symbolised in the novel by means of the ouroboros, "the infinite cycle of creation and destruction. The eternal return" (192).

The *nostos* of each character in 'Bound' thus differs. Odysseus, eyes on Antarctica, continues to journey. Scott is unwillingly returned to his place of birth. Thelma returns to the island and to Aunty. The Chorus links his journey to Thelma's and so to newness.

Secondly, 'Bound' suggests the return home is a process of self-reclamation, the underlying logic of which is that the spectrum of self-performance (that is, all psychological terrain) is, in fact, the terrain of home. In this schema, antithetical to the binary worldview, there is no self on the performance spectrum that is out of bounds; all selves constitute legitimate self-expression. The terrain of home is thus necessarily vast and unlimited.

Character metamorphosis, demonstrated earlier to also be unlimited, necessarily requires the reclamation of qualities previously viewed, from a binary perspective, as other, or illegitimate, or taboo. The capacity to travel and inhabit increased spectrum terrain amounts to the development of a rounded, nuanced individual. The contemporary sea fiction protagonist is thus effectively 'at home' everywhere. All self-expression belongs within the country of home; one does not have to leave home to find home. By extension, to committedly remain home becomes a potent, expansive, subversive act, akin to a contemporary practise of heroism.

The core displacement that Boym sees as being at the heart of the human condition is transformed from pathology, Wilson's "ultimate suffering", to strength, by the sea fiction protagonist, via conscious utilisation of the *nostos* motif. This makes for a new hero, a figure I term a 'fluidophile'. It makes for a vast geography of home and a vast repertoire and capacity of available selves and identities that can be skilfully called up and deployed according to context. This process, in its unceasing continuity, results in a continuous relinquishment of self which manifests in a particular form of contemporary heroism—altruism.

FLUID HEROISM – CONNECTION, VULNERABILITY AND ALTRUISM

'Bound' seeks to extend the heroic performance repertoire available to the sea fiction protagonist, the foundations of which were laid when Odysseus left Ithaca for the Trojan War. Discussing the inadequacy of the heroic idea in Homer, Adam Nicolson maintains that "heroism disconnects" (142-143). I have suggested earlier that the litany of contemporary crises referenced in 'Bound' arise, in no small part, as a result of limited or rigid connection to self, other and earth, or disconnection from these, evidenced in the construction of the traditional adventure fiction protagonist. That lone, outcome-oriented, self-gaining hero perpetuates an outmoded terrestrial outlook and action. Mentz (in this

instance writing about matters ecological but whose thinking can be more widely extrapolated on) agrees: "the heroes we need...are swimmers and sailors, not warriors or conquerors" ("Heroism, Marine Ecology and Literary Culture").

The non-fluid, outmoded heroism of warriors and conquerors is simultaneously showcased yet also altered in 'Bound'. Odysseus and Scott serve as representatives of traditional modes. Demonstrating the limitations associated with epic heroism, Odysseus, on reaching the modern world, views it simply as "an arena" for even "greater heroic deeds" (36). Scott, a late nineteenth century hero, is (emotionally) frozen and alone in the ice. Yet both characters demonstrate an ability to change and evolve. 'Bound' redresses that overarching, disabling disconnection of heroism by supporting the protagonists in a variety of counteracting relationships, those "bonds" foreseen by Aunty. For example, Odysseus and Scott are subjected to the templates of their own construction through encountering history. Odysseus reads of himself in *The Odyssey* and in Tennyson's poem; his reading is uncritical. However, Scott, disappointed by his polar expedition's final outcome, and uncertain of how history will have judged him (given he did not succeed in terms of being first to the Pole and returning), encounters himself in the Evans text. This account is favourable, but Scott is then exposed to subsequent historical criticism. By virtue of this, he is thrust into a painful relationship with his past, and so, through this, to an honest confrontation with himself. He encounters the weight of expectation and performance limitations that are the old template, and as a result of feeling the weight and constraint of these, is forced into considering what it is he truly values and believes in. This then allows him to make alternate, expansive and subversive choices: for example, to considering 'capering', to do the unexpected, like relinquish duty, or to demonstrate care unashamedly; to "slacken off" (148). In understanding the cost exacted by the heroic template, and, as a result, being able to make choices that effectively expand his

performance repertoire, Scott is more returned to himself than at any other stage on the journey. And, paradoxically, by dint of the courage demonstrated in making such choices, and the fluidity required to action these, he is, in a contemporary reading, more heroic than ever.

The protagonists are also encouraged to engage in relationships with each other. In this, the boat becomes the common metaphorical 'prison' of sea fiction. The nuances of this interpersonal relating allow a number of powerful and paradigm-altering transformations to occur. For example, in relating to others, the self is challenged, mirrored and modelled. Self-insight can occur and new and nuanced self-performances adopted. This form of relationship and subsequent change is evidenced in Thelma, who, through exposure to Peter's 'softness', his "frightening innocence; his commitment to the truth, his belief that she could help" chooses to abstain from drugs (172). Characters incapable of self-insight are provided with insight by other crew members, either with gentleness or with reactive force. Peter challenges Bailey with "It's not always about you" (164) and Thelma tells Bailey, "what I know is you don't tell the truth…and if you can't do that then someone else has to help you" (115). Relating externally also invites acceptance, understanding and care of the other. For example, Odysseus generously and caringly seeks to convince Scott that Scott's worth is far more than the words and opinions of history (137). And Scott wishes to gift Bailey peace by assisting her to find the X on the chart (35).

Connections in 'Bound' result in understandings reflective of fluid heroism and assist characters to evolve beyond rigid and limited identities and transform lone egocentrism. The move from lone operator to interconnected relationship is symbolised when Odysseus dons a matching climbing tape wristband and advises Scott "we are joined" (50).

However, to fully realise the possibilities that connection bestows, and to enact a

more contemporary form of heroism, the modern hero is required to be conversant with the perennial displacement encapsulated within vulnerability. In 'Bound', vulnerability is symbolised by Aunty's exhortation to meld "failure" and "love" as the basis of heroism (90).

Vulnerability

The hero's nemesis is failure, and the term efficiently represents many of the non-privileged binary states. For the hero to embrace failure is to, effectively, counteract or annihilate himself as hero. Yet, the perennial dissolution that is metamorphosis, the fluidity required by the contemporary world, requires no less than this. Cavafy hints at a fraction of this task with his instruction to not carry the "Laestrygonians and Cyclops, Wild Poseidon" within. This is the radical turn of 'Bound', of which the old woman is well aware, to demand that the hero, rather than slay anything outer, slay not once but again and again, identities which risk becoming fixed and which impose limits. The unceasing invitation, then, is to fluidity. This is borne out not simply through personal metamorphosis but more complexly through a metamorphosis of the traditional heroic identity.

Failure (like crisis), both external and internal, therefore plagues the crew of the *Argus.* There are small and large failures: Bailey loses at cards; Peter's shyness means he fails to reveal his feelings for Thelma; Bailey does not find Scott in Wineglass Bay. Odysseus loses Scott and Scott fails to see the sandbar and the wreck. Initially, Thelma cannot beat her addiction despite a resolve to do so. Bailey fails in her duty of care to her crew.

Feelings resulting from relationship with failure—uncertainty, self-doubt, lack of clarity, fear, shame, obscurity—undermine the heroic persona. Boym's displacement is a formal descriptor for what is not fixed, for the attendant experience of shakiness, fluidity, vulnerability. The issue for the hero, having discarded the traditional template, is that there is then no blueprint from which to operate. *Who and what am I if I am not that*? A fluid

spontaneity, of movement, of flow, a dive into the currents of the unknown, is required. True choice, not that which is programmed by the historic template, becomes possible. This is the contemporary vulnerability that Aunty alludes to and is beautifully encapsulated in Scott's observation of Bailey:

> Bailey seemed uncertain, but in the best of ways; the uncertainty that necessarily preceded the possibility of any hard-won homecoming. Her sense of being at sea with herself was palpable. Her frustration, her feeling of failure that she still did not know what the X meant. Conflicted still, she did not know whether to leave or to stay. What was exploration and discovery, and what was running away, she seemed to be wondering. (129)

However, when the protagonist gives the self over to perennial fluidity, despite being counter intuitive and paradoxical for the traditional hero, displacement is transformed from liability to a contemporary strength. Within that unbound state lies freedom and possibility. In the novel, this is explicitly demonstrated by Thelma:

> Scott…looked at the wreck of Thelma. No longer appalled but with admiration. She hid nothing. Did not omit those words lying beneath the surface—defeat, failure, sadness, mistake—that others, himself included, could not place into the public account. For their presence undercut the whole show; named, myths and edifices came crashing down. How free, despite her indisposition, she seemed! (132)

It is Thelma's courageous commitment to overcoming internal constraint, her lack of fear in living out and revealing her myriad selves (the fullness of who she is, in both failure and strength) and her willingness to relinquish old identities and allow new ones, which suggest it is she who has truly earned the mantle of new hero. It is Thelma who recognises, "Luck's useless where I'm going. Heroes even more so,

spending their lives avoiding death" (165). Assuming self-responsibility, Thelma fully dies to her old identity (Scott and Odysseus insist on maintaining aspects of theirs) and, in doing so, embodies a more expanded self, one that enables her to resume writing as a form of service to society, and so earn the hero's staff.

This same capacity is embodied in the grandfather. Through the power of the storm he ceases to fight himself. He faces his vulnerability directly and in doing so views the uncontrolled complexity of his life circumstances with clarity and realism, to find a form of acceptance:

> When he could shout no more he leaned against the wheel, crumpled, crucified, and cried for the child and himself. For the whole watery, windy mess in all its power and promise. For the too little and too much. For the benevolence that in an instant turned to tyranny and terror. For the failures, losses and futility. For the tree trunk balanced for that single moment on its mighty wave, and the single rise of the child's chest, like an improbable flower blooming. The chance and risk of his own redemption. For all of it in its terrible, violent beauty. (184)

Multiple, Contextual Heroisms

A binary system of selves, compared with fluid metamorphosis, renders the sea fiction hero partial only and that partiality equates to a form of inadequacy. The patriarchal template, what Pearson and Pope call the macho hero, "represents in only an inadequate and distorted way the archetypal heroic ideal" (5). 'Bound' symbolically demonstrates this partiality via the fact that Odysseus and Scott cannot, alone or in tandem, deliver the heroic mission. They embody two different forms of heroism—epic and late nineteenth century. Placing them together on the *Argus* implies a spectrum of historic heroic performance. In

similar fashion to the fluid expansion of selves on the performance spectrum, the entire crew represent the idea of a multiplicity of competing and complementary heroic practices. This device is also suggestive of the heroic future—that a more expanded repertoire of multiple, varied and flexible heroisms are required to address contemporary concerns. (I have elsewhere argued the need for personalised and contextualised heroic practice in specific relation to the adventure hero of island fiction (Horlock 64, 109)).

The traditional template is encouraging of "warriors or conquerors". Where this fluidly morphs to incorporate Mentz's "swimmers and sailors", the heroic spectrum is vastly expanded, and allows for multiple, personalised and contextualised heroic practice, reflecting the fact that the relinquishment and adoption of selves and their subsequent enactment is a unique process. For example, for Bailey, the invitation is to stay. For a different character, the invitation may be to leave.

Contextualised practice requires matching response to the specifics of the environment; it is a nuanced process, vastly aided by the existence of a widened skills repertoire. Scott summarises it in this way: "holding on and letting go... [were] all a matter of judgement, of discernment" (129). And he carefully debates "when to speak, when to say silent, when to act, when to wait" (141).

Given the subtle variances that personalised and contextual practice requires, it seems an unfair and outmoded, if not unrealistic, expectation that a single hero should be responsible for, or capable of, solving multiple and varied problems. Such an expectation, coupled with his inadequacy, sets the traditional hero up for a form of failure. Realising the truth of this, Scott notes "how disconcerting it was to think of the great men of history...not wholly effectual, not wholly significant" (129). The fixed template of the sea fiction hero requires that, regardless of personality and predisposition, potential heroes fit within its parameters and adhere to its tenets. This results either in inadequate heroes who will not

fully succeed, or a host of potential heroes who remain unendorsed, their skills and abilities unused. Bailey, Thelma, the Chorus, Aunty and Persephone fit into this latter category. The list of crises in 'Bound' is long. It is clear from the text that there exists in these characters a significant unused resource that could be deployed in redress; everyone, potentially, has something to offer.

Odysseus, Scott and Bailey all centrally contribute, from a narrative perspective, to the main mission. At the same time, the minor characters add useful and apt tools foreign to the more stereotypical characters. For example, the Chorus contributes an overview of the socio-political condition (63-65) and understands the subjectivities of history (67-68). Thelma brings about Bailey's armistice with the past through telling the story of the storm the grandfather endured in the Strait, helping her to understand the depth of his sacrifice and care.

Altruism

A clear challenge is set by Pearson and Pope, namely to make the inadequate and distorted archetypal heroic idea human and humane (5). That patriarchal heroism to date has, in some way, failed or is severely limited, is made clear not only by theorists (Hourihan; Pearson and Pope; Stuller; Campbell; et al.) but also in 'Bound' by Aunty, the Chorus and Thelma. The fact that two of these characters are female suggests a heroism influenced by the feminine is required. However, 'Bound' seeks to formulate a contemporary expression of heroism that is not limited to, but surpasses, binary gender expression, evidenced by the inclusion of the Chorus, a 'less manly' man. The descriptors, 'human and humane' are thus clearly well suited to this endeavour.

In the novel, the heroic triad postulated by Aunty comprises connection, failure and love. The latter is not usually a word associated with the adventure hero, save for romantic expressions. However, the particular expression of love that 'Bound' focuses upon is

rooted in the experience and understanding of the value of connection, plus the experience

of vulnerability. Combined, the possible expression of these is, I suggest, altruistic

behaviour. Various theorists have explored the ethics of care (Gilligan; Manning; Held; et

al) and the need for care work to be considered part of the heroic spectrum (Erin Newcomb

et al). However, rather than 'care' (with its problematically gendered history), I use the

term 'altruism' for its fit with contemporary need; for its humaneness and humanity, and

the fact that it "does not refer to helping, even heroic helping" (Mathieu Ricard 123).

Rather, altruism is chosen for its emphasis on "a particular form of motivation...with the

ultimate goal [being to] increase another's welfare" (123) and because care is too easily

directed at or limited to those like the hero (his tribe), who represent the privileged binary.

Newcomb suggests "caring efforts speak ultimately to our survival as a species

rather than as isolated individuals" (97)—the point is particularly salient with regard to the

need for modernising the disconnected male hero. What 'Bound' suggests is that we can no

longer afford a hero who is programmed to benefit only a segment of the species; we

require heroes who understand and benefit the interconnected whole. (Similar terrain is

being explored in the emerging science of heroism, exemplified in the work of Patrick

Jones.) Altruism then, in its commitment to genuine concern for the wellbeing of others,

broadens the recipient list and directly challenges the traditional heroic template of

disconnection from others, outcome-orientation and self-gain. The vulnerability explored

in 'Bound' is key to this altruistic behaviour in that it enables two states: first, the capacity

to imagine, from one's own experience of vulnerability, the vulnerability, frailty and

suffering of another, and second, the realisation that suffering is a shared human condition

from which the sufferer seeks to escape. From this insight, the experience and

understanding of interconnectedness (with the potential to extend this beyond the solely

anthropocentric) is a logical by-product and holds within it the idea that, by association,

when suffering is alleviated not just the recipient, but the whole, benefits. Such insight feeds what Ricard describes as an innate desire to alleviate the suffering of others and in so doing be of benefit. Aspects of this process are experienced by Bailey:

> It was only now, prompted by the prospect of care of her grandfather, too late to thank him for the care which he had given her, that Bailey had insight into what it may have been like for him to have inherited her. To have had a child foisted upon him, and in the midst of his grief. Three had been taken the night in the Channel. Two of five returned. Did he ever resent her? Had he considered saying no? (12)

Indeed, much of the novel's focus is on the intersection between characters' frailties and learning how to accept these:

> Scott had come to cherish the big, exasperating bear of a man who strutted and posed and embellished his stories. Cherished him in the same way he, Scott, had, each in turn, learned to love and care for his men in their idiosyncratic frailties. (128)

It is important to note, here, that aspects of altruistic behaviour are an existing aspect of Scott and Odysseus' performance repertoire; no particular type of heroism has a monopoly on this. Bailey reflects on Odysseus: "how generous [he] had been. How accepting he was of her moods and her temper" (165). Of Scott she notes, "how solicitous, how like her grandfather he was in his care and instruction of her" (165). There is also the Chorus' "vigil of care" for Thelma (141). Clearly, hero and non-hero embody this altruistic capacity, affirming Ricard's claim it is "not the exclusive province of the hero or the saint" (124). However, 'Bound' goes further to suggest that altruism becomes the foundational template for a contemporary hero, intimating that the existing template must alter to incorporate the notion of service.

Given that altruism "scarcely has a place in a world governed by competition and individualism" (Ricard 10) and given that the competitive, individualistic world is a consequence, in part, of the competitive, individualistic hero, 'Bound' intentionally invites of characters something of Newcomb's definition of care work, which is defined "not by how much one can control but how much one can serve" (98). Such a notion radically undermines the template of the traditional adventure hero. 'Bound' explores the concept that altruism is a form of service and that service is not in opposition to power. Rather, power and courage, befitting of the hero, are requisites of service. Service, when performed for the benefit not of the protagonist but of the other, equates to a very radical, contemporary and much needed heroism. The choices and action of the grandfather encapsulates this, leading Aunty to denote his hero status, "such a fine man, a gentleman. Courageous. Now, if there was ever one who took their turn" (82).

'Bound' suggests the translation of the concept of service to the leadership of the Expedition, thereby taking altruism beyond the domestic and personal realms. In this way, rather than heroism being a glorified, power maintaining, solo effort, it becomes a divesting of power; power and influence are wielded in order to harness and empower collective energies which are deployed for collective benefit. Scott, out of any character, most embodies leadership as service, he "who had so arduously cared for each and every man to the last, sacrificing his own needs to take care of theirs" (45).

The characters of 'Bound' demonstrate a desire, a will, to surpass the limitations and constraints of the inherited heroic template. Recalling the derivatives of 'mutable' it seems the very root of the word which so aptly describes the sea and the nature of character metamorphosis also suggests that the organic way forward for the hero is altruism, borne of connection and metamorphosis. "Mutuus 'done in exchange'" and "munus 'service performed for the community, duty, work'" (Online Etymology

Dictionary). Perhaps there is nothing more unheroic, then, than not testing ourselves to the limits of kindness in a world (self, other, earth) that requires it? Unsurprising therefore that Scott warns Bailey when she considers not travelling to the X, the unknown place, "you'll live with doubt, a sense of never having fully tested yourself. And perhaps there is no greater tragedy than that?" (149).

Yet altruism exacts a cost—it is not work for the faint-hearted—making it a mission worthy of a hero. To practice it requires perpetual relationship with vulnerability, with uncertainty—"the terrible uncertainty of if, and how, to care? (182)—and the perpetual giving up of self. It is, therefore, a commitment to a mission that is, effectively, without end. Odysseus, as the home port nears, extends the altruistic challenge to Bailey, advising her to be the "unsame same to friend as to stranger" (200). Odysseus, despite an heroic reputation of mythic proportion, has not been able to consistently put into practice vital lessons learned: stability of mind and a balance of emotions through trying circumstances. The seemingly simple requirements underlying self-knowledge and altruism (above and beyond the basic process of metamorphosis) are clearly difficult to achieve. In this, Odysseus is representative, not necessarily of failed heroism, but of evolving heroism.

'Bound' concludes suggesting Bailey has been handed a new, untested heroic baton. As a result of the circumnavigation, readers are left with the sense that the potential now exists for her to elect to stay and care. What she will do remains uncertain. The construction of Bailey's metamorphosis, however, hints there is willingness and potential within the sea fiction protagonist to fulfil a changed heroic role.

It is through relationship with crisis, mutability, paradox and loss, ultimately represented by the vulnerability that underlies failure, that the characters of 'Bound' are enabled to relinquish old identities and exhibit new, more connected performances of self,

including the ability to act for the benefit of the other. As a result of unrelenting exposure to the characteristics that comprise the *nostos* motif, a major shift becomes possible for the sea fiction protagonist. Namely, that fixed ideas as they relate to identity must, ultimately, be foregone. This facilitates the subsequent understanding that the 'home' of self is necessarily abandoned again and again, and return will never be to that which was left. As a consequence and in parallel, the fixed, distorted terrestrial archetype that is traditional heroism is enabled to fluidly evolve, inviting more human and humane responses to the crises that constitute the novel's world.

CONCLUSION

In "Ithaca", Cavafy urges hope in the voyage being "a long one" so that its joys and pleasures might be savoured. It's clear through close analysis of the *nostos* motif that scrutiny and insight are also required to enable the voyager to understand "what these Ithacas mean" precisely because *nostos* itself is so enigmatic. In this, the unravelling of what, in a contemporary sense, constitutes 'home' and how one might arrive there becomes a fit and challenging mission for the modern sea fiction protagonist. In response to this challenge, this exegesis analyses the *nostos* motif for its usefulness to writers in reimagining both protagonist and their mission.

If the collective human psyche is viewed as the protagonist of an unfolding adventure of consciousness, we currently find ourselves deep in the wandering stage of *nostos*, seas turbulent, course uncertain, collectively unclear or differing in opinion as to what constitutes safe harbour. Sea borders are closed to those seeking asylum from the consequences of war and natural disaster, ocean and land are exploited or insensitively developed for commercial gain, acidification of the oceans threatens marine life and adversely influences weather patterns, the Ship of State, for some nations, is in the command of a dubious few. Not to know the nature of the sea on which we sail, the construction and capacity of the vessel in which we have embarked, the ultimate destination and the means by which to get there, is foolhardy at worst, remiss at best. In-depth exploration of the motif, with its capacity to support metamorphosis, suggests the ubiquitous lens of sea fiction's telescope be swung around such that the protagonist's focus

switches from 'out there' to 'in here'. 'Bound' does this, reflecting an expression of evolved heroism, steeped in self/selves understanding, and wrought through the motif's conscious deployment.

Cavafy understands the voyage challenges to be internal as well as external, and the world beyond the pages of poetry and sea fiction also hints that the products of self-knowledge are vital, that it is timely to intuit "what these Ithacas mean". Marilynne Robinson observes: "the planet is fragile, and peace among nations, where it exists, is also fragile. The greatest tests ever made of human wisdom and decency may very well come to this generation or the next one" (123). Ivan Klima, in *My Crazy Century: A Memoir* hints at the need for a differing form of heroism, one rooted in self-knowledge:

> I left behind me the brief period of my life when I believed the duty of each
> person who did not want to waste his [sic] own life was to try to save the
> world. The world did not need saving, humanity did not need the prophets
> who until recently, had led it to unimaginable heights. It needed decency,
> work, honour, humility. (415)

The traditional hero may be something of a redundant anachronism, yet apt heroism, in contemporary sea fiction and in the world beyond the pages, may well serve a useful purpose.

In general terms, the cohered *nostos* framework of this PhD constitutes a concrete working tool for writers. It can practically assist writers of sea fiction texts when contemplating and devising narrative structure. Moreover, the revelation of individual components and their detailed composition invites and supports informed manipulation of standard structural elements to achieve creative effect. As a writer, fully comprehending and understanding the base components of a genre trope supports skilful, accurate employment of components. And/or, artful re-engineering and redeployment in

contemporary settings and about contemporary concerns to achieve new artistic, political or intended creative effect. For example, detailed understanding of the *nostos* trope can support authors to successfully invert or subvert elements in attempts to push or contest genre boundaries, achieve particular thematic outcomes, or create new textual direction.

Similarly, writers of other genres who wish to understand and consider the metaphoric and transformational capacities inherent within voyaging might leverage and transplant understanding of the components of *nostos* into hybrid or new genre settings.

The exegetical discussion of 'home' and mythic return outline how 'Bound' seeks to surpass conventional paradigms of character evolution, offering writers new possibilities when contemplating character construction and arcs of transformation. This material, in its naturalising of displacement, may well be informative for writers, too, when considering denouement strategies.

More specifically, however, this PhD makes useful contributions to creative writing through its exegetical discussions of heroism. The traditional sea fiction hero, heroic origins philosophically terrestrial, is programmed to resist his own metamorphosis. Such a hero perceives the foundational flux of *nostos* as unstable and threatening to long-standing binary identity. The novel's title is suggestive of the limitations of this disconnected, self-serving, outcome-oriented figure. To be bound is to be "tied in knots". Yet the title also evokes possibility and freedom; to be bound is to be "destined" and "certain". These myriad meanings signpost what the novel, thematically, hopes to achieve, and reflect what the *nostos* motif, consciously deployed, can promote: to "be made fast, be under a moral obligation, destined, sure, determined or resolved, held within another element" (Dictionary.com). What is required in order to uphold the latter meanings, is to reframe the perceived instability of the *nostos* experience into a liberating fluidity by which old identities, personal and heroic, can be relinquished and new, relevant identities adopted.

'Bound' achieves this and, in doing so, affords the protagonists the sorts of flexible and contextual responses required of contemporary life, ensuring not only the hero's mission success but also the hero's continued relevance. Returning to *nostos* definitions, if the sea fiction protagonist can survive what Bonifazi sees as a lethal danger (in this case, the letting go of outmoded identities, which, paradoxically, requires a form of dying to self and willingness to evolve), or, can, as Frame suggests, return from the death and darkness of stagnated, rigid identity to the light and life of fluid embodiment, then s/he becomes capable of the qualities required to navigate twenty-first century seas.

In 'Bound's' case, the particular form that heroism takes is altruism, one new possibility of heroism amongst many. Heroism is now a serious, legitimate field of research across disciplines, propelled by modern re-theorizing and an attendant, parallel social movement (Zeno Franco et al 1-15). Literary studies has been voluble on the subject of literary heroes and heroism (Jeannine Blackwell; Green; Hourihan; Joseph Kestner; Phillips; et al.) but creative writing less so. Yet creative writers invent heroes and anti-heroes every day and give them life upon the page, a potent creative and political act. Creative writing could contribute much to interdisciplinary research about heroism through articulating the types of heroes writers choose to create, the mode of their assembly, mythologies (in the Bartheian sense) inherent within their making, and the authorial rationale motivating particular constructions. And in so doing, exemplify Hazel Smith and Roger Dean's iterative cyclic web, whereby practice-led research can complement "research-led practice" (7, 19-25) and vice versa.

This exegesis makes transparent both thought and technique underpinning creative choices and execution regarding heroism in 'Bound' and, moreover, links it out to the writer's power and potential to shape social discourse through their creative choices and output. As writers we are deeply and routinely conversant with heroic depiction. This

presents extraordinarily rich opportunity to not only make individual social and political contribution through our characters—to write "out of and into the maelstrom of culture" (Nelson 3)—but also provides scope to fulfil Harris' requirement of training writers, "who, above all, need to report back to society the truth as they see it, and to be able to weigh in their work, and in the world, what is good and bad" (11).

The *nostos* motif, when made transparent, enables sea fiction writers to more consciously manipulate its characteristics and features and so provides renewed scope to write the sea fiction protagonist, sea fiction heroism, and perhaps the genre itself, into new forms, creating innovative responses to the critical issues of the twenty-first century. This PhD research concerning the motif—in both the novel and the exegesis—could be considered as the type of knowledge that "will be of use in the creation of a more ethical, more democratically organised and more sustainable society" (Webb and Brien, 200).

It is, however, regarding the experience of making work that the *nostos* framework constitutes a particularly rich contribution to, as well future research opportunity for, creative writing theory. The *nostos* framework, in addition to being a detailed elucidation of a motif, functions as an apt paradigm which elegantly describes the experience of the writer writing.

Writers intuitively know writing to be a circular voyage of sorts, and an adventure in which the self cannot be avoided: "When I'm writing novels, I am making a voyage around, or into, myself… In the novel, I take all the risks of the traveller, or the explorer. And I get all the pleasures as well" (Julia Kristeva, quoted in Sutherland). Henry Miller maintains, "writing, like life itself, is a voyage of discovery" (19). Theorists such as Charlotte L. Doyle, examining the creative process in the writing of literary fiction, concur: "the creative process in fiction writing is a voyage of discovery" (1) and "fiction writers, like all creative people, are on voyages into the unknown" (35). Harris describes

composition as "a process that is both linear and recursive" (14).

And which writer, on beginning a creative work, does not blindly, yet with degrees of excitement and trepidation, depart into an unknown, intent on a destination (the finished work, the concrete manifestation of the urge, the resolution of an idea) yet acutely aware the voyage of creation may be a long one, beset with both pleasures and labours, and never guaranteed the port of completion will be reached? Whilst it is beyond the scope of this exegesis to explore, in depth, the parallels between the framework I have developed and the writing process, a few salient examples, replicating the framework structure and content, evidence fit, and suggest this as a topic for future creative writing research. Used in this manner, the framework underscores the relevance of Brien's exploratory cycle (of reading, writing, testing, reading, rewriting and retesting) which then prompts additional research questions.

Departure: commencing the writing voyage. Is the desire to write compelled or chosen? Does the commencement of a writing project evoke lure and/or dread? The writer may question why they would desire the uncertainty, instability and ambiguity that can come with the making of work.

Wandering: the making of the work. The writer may dissociate themselves from the group in order to complete their project. A fertile space of possibility may become apparent to them. They are navigating a sea of ideas, creative choices, words. The writer is between the known and unknown. Craft elements and outputs are in a state of flux. The writer may long to not be writing, to have the project finished with.

Return: 'completing' the project. The writer has completed the project and returns to a state of non-writing yet the preservation or reclamation of the writer's identity, as it was at the start of the project, is precluded. The work has been made and the writer is changed through the process of having written. There may be relief at having completed

the project, yet the lure of a new project may manifest. The writer may question if the work is actually finished, or have a sense that it is never truly finished despite the project being complete.

The *nostos* voyage provides a metaphoric parallel to the writing journey, for the framework mirrors the act of making work. I'm not suggesting this fit is perfect and caution against forcing it, yet it's a rich framework against which to explore and discuss process, craft, motivation, commitment, failure, identity. And from which to posit questions such as: What transformations are possible for the text and the writer in the writing process? What are the implication of non-return for the writer and their identity as a writer? Is there an heroic element to the narrative act, to the overall endeavour of writing? If so, how might this be articulated? While the ethics of writing are much debated (Enza Gandolfo, Stephanie Green, Rachel Robertson, Webb; et al.), as is the relationship between aesthetics and ethics (Stephen George et al.) and while the particularity of ethical consideration may vary according to genre, Anne Surma does suggest writers have ethical obligations to write to and about the 'other' "in more responsible and productive ways" (1). A question to add to this debate might therefore be, 'can writing be an altruistic act, and if so, how so?'

Cavafy clearly understood the application of the *nostos* motif to a life. Having detailed the wonders of a *nostos* journey Cavafy suggests voyagers not expect Ithaca to make them "rich" and that, having given them the "marvellous journey", Ithaca "has nothing left to give you now". His final three lines extend a challenge: "...If you find her poor, Ithaca won't have fooled you. / Wise as you will have become, so full of experience, / You will have understood by then what these Ithacas mean". In this, *Ithaca* offers a compelling invitation to not just the sea fiction protagonist but also to the writer.

Hinting that return (or project completion), may not be what it quite appears,

Cavafy suggests the hero (or writer) will be transformed by the (writing) journey, returning with a wisdom that is gifted through the experience of setting out, voyaging and return. The metamorphosis wrought via the *nostos* journey enables the hero-writer to understand the purpose of the journey, and in so doing, comprehend the hidden, metaphoric meaning of home and homecoming.

With its capacity for both generalised and specific contextual fits, and given *nostos* is the great metaphor for the "concept of change" (Alexopoulou viii), the framework itself might be adopted by creative writers to better understand the process and experience of making work. Plus, the transformations that are possible, both in the work and the writer, whilst writing.

It seems incumbent upon authors not just of sea fiction but of all types of fictional writing to imagine new textual meanings beyond current genre and knowledge boundaries. To write into the unknown, all the while trusting, despite its ambiguity, in new manifestations of safe return. This voyage—of writing, or conscious reading, or research—in which the protagonist (writer, character, reader, researcher) must set out, knowing they will inevitably be required to relinquish, adopt and again relinquish types of knowledge and types of selves, requires courage. The *nostos* motif provides a useful compass for this vital process of coming to understand "what these Ithacas mean". Cavafy's words provide a beacon for those moments when, deep in the wandering phase (of reading, writing, research, or for that matter, of living) seas are turbulent and the voyage end feels distant and paradoxical—"arriving there is what you are destined for".

Appendix 1

Ithaca

by C.P. Cavafy

As you set out for Ithaca

hope the voyage is a long one,

full of adventure, full of discovery.

Laestrygonians and Cyclops,

angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:

you'll never find things like that on your way

as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,

as long as a rare excitement

stirs your spirit and your body.

Laestrygonians and Cyclops,

wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them

unless you bring them along inside your soul,

unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope the voyage is a long one.

May there be many a summer morning when,

with what pleasure, what joy,

you come into harbours seen for the first time;

may you stop at Phoenician trading stations

to buy fine things,

mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,

sensual perfume of every kind—

as many sensual perfumes as you can;

and may you visit many Egyptian cities

to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.

Keep Ithaca always in your mind.

Arriving there is what you are destined for.

But do not hurry the journey at all.

Better if it lasts for years,

so you are old by the time you reach the island,

wealthy with all you have gained on the way,

not expecting Ithaca to make you rich.

Ithaca gave you the marvellous journey.

Without her you would not have set out.

She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaca won't have fooled you.

Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,

you will have understood by then what these Ithacas mean.

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