



<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz>

ResearchSpace@Auckland

Copyright Statement

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

To request permissions please use the Feedback form on our webpage.

<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback>

General copyright and disclaimer

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the Library Thesis Consent Form.

"My Two Countries Firmly Under My Feet":

Explorations of Multicultural Identity in the Fiction of Amelia Batistich
and Yvonne du Fresne

by Nina Nola

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English
University of Auckland 2000

- ABSTRACT -

This thesis offers a detailed reading of the fiction of the Dalmatian New Zealand author Amelia Batistich and the Danish New Zealand author Yvonne du Fresne, from the perspective of multicultural literary criticism. It draws strongly, throughout, on interviews and discussions with the authors themselves, and on their personal papers. The Introduction explores the term "multicultural literary criticism", examines its significant development in theory and practice in Australia (especially in the writings of Sneja Gunew), and discusses the challenging issues raised by its use in a bicultural context, in New Zealand. The body of the thesis is organised into two parallel sections, the first (of five chapters) on Batistich and the second (of four chapters) on du Fresne. Each section begins with an introduction to the writing life of the author concerned, with particular reference to the forces shaping her sense of identity as a New Zealander from an ethnic minority community. Subsequent chapters then discuss chronologically the development of the author's work from short fiction and articles through to the later novels. Each author's struggle to find a fictional voice which expressed her identity as a hybrid New Zealander is highlighted. The role of editors and publishers in shaping the migrant voice of both authors is also explored, and the reception of both authors' works by critics often unwilling or unable to read for difference in a literary landscape dominated by the perception of New Zealand as socially homogeneous. The thesis argues - in an extended enquiry into the constructedness of identity - that both authors have struggled throughout their careers to find a place for both themselves and their characters in New Zealand literature. The bibliography contains a checklist of the published writings of both authors, primary and secondary material related to the field of ethnic minority writing, and a checklist of other migrant writings and creative multicultural works in New Zealand.

"No matter how far fate has blown the frail tree of my life across foreign lands, its roots have always sucked nourishment from that little barren clod of soil from which it sprung."

Ivan Meštrović (Dalmatian sculptor, 1883-1962.)

"The earth is our mother, wherever we find ourselves."

Amelia Batistich, The Olive and the Vine.

"Today a gap had closed; I felt my two countries firmly under my feet. Both equal."
Yvonne du Fresne, Motherland p. 205

My Two Countries

Here is the fern, the kauri sapling straight as a larch
Young, like my country, strong.

There is the olive, grey with dreams
Crouched over the stony land -
like a woman in childbirth.

Both gave me life -
the kauri and the olive.

Here my father ate the bread of exile.
There my grandfather ate the black bread of poverty -
By the blue Adriatic
But what matter now?

My grandfather sleeps in his own earth -
His bones have melded with his own soil -

Alien, my father sleeps on Hillsborough Hill
overlooking the Manukau.

But here was his work -
Here was his home.

Amelia Batistich (1985)

- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS -

This thesis, and the richness of the experience of researching and writing it, owes its existence to the generosity, enthusiasm and persistence of the two authors whose work it explores. Without the welcoming response from both Amelia Batistich and Yvonne du Fresne to each and every one of my countless requests, I would have settled for a less detailed account of the writer's lives, and not discovered the stories behind the stories. I am indebted beyond measure to the goodwill of these two remarkable women.

To Aorewa McLeod and Professor Terry Sturm I am also indebted for their encouragement, unflagging support, meticulous attention to details in my text, and above all, their faith in my passion for my research.

I would like to thank The Croatian Womens' League, Auckland, the Embassy of the Republic of Croatia, Canberra (and Tuga Tarle in particular), and the Federation of University Women, Auckland Branch, for fostering my work in various ways. I would also like to thank the network of the Dalmatian Genealogical and Historical Society, including Stephen Jelicich, for their support over the years of my research.

Further thanks go to Ross Davis of Premier Print who generously assisted with the production of this thesis.

And to my family, who have all been through this process with me, I can only hope to have passed on some of the enrichment which this project has brought to my life.

-CONTENTS -

Introduction.....1

Note on Presentation.....27

PART ONE

Chapter One: Amelia Batistich: The Making of a Writer
Northland Beginnings.....30

Chapter Two: The Two Collections
An Olive Tree in Dalmatia and Holy Terrors.....44

Chapter Three: Uncollected Short Fiction and Other Writings:
1948-1997.....80

Chapter Four: From Short Fiction to Novels
Sing Vila in the Mountain.....97

Chapter Five: The Making of an Aucklander
Another Mountain Another Song.....135

PART TWO

Chapter Six: Yvonne du Fresne: From Singer to Writer
Roots in the Manawatu.....168

Chapter Seven: The Short Stories
Farvel, The Growing of Astrid Westergaard, and
The Bear From the North.....187

PART TWO -ctd.

Chapter Eight: Astrid's Forebears
 The Book of Ester and Frederique.....233

Chapter Nine: Astrid Grows Up
 Motherland.....278

Afterword.....311

PART THREE

Bibliography: Primary Sources

1. Amelia Batistich: A Checklist

- A. Published Writings.....319
- B. Radio Broadcasts.....327
- C. From the Papers of Amelia Batistich.....328
- D. Letters to Nina Nola.....330

2. Yvonne du Fresne: A Checklist

- A. Published Writings.....331
- B. Radio Broadcasts.....335
- C. From the Papers of Yvonne du Fresne.....337
- D. Letters to Nina Nola.....338

Secondary Sources

- 1. Writings on Amelia Batistich.....339
- 2. Writings on Yvonne du Fresne.....344
- 3. Writings by Other Ethnic Minority Authors.....351
- 4. General Books and Articles.....354