

Allen Curnow  
Simply by Sailing  
in a New Direction

*A Biography*



Terry Sturm

Edited by Linda Cassells

*Simply by sailing in a new direction  
You could enlarge the world.*  
– ‘Landfall in Unknown Seas’

*hang on to your hands  
anything can happen*  
– ‘Two Pedestrians with One Thought’

Allen Curnow (1911–2001) is widely recognised as one of the most distinguished poets writing in English in the second half of the twentieth century. From *Valley of Decision* (1933) to *The Bells of Saint Babel’s* (2001) he defined and redefined how poetry might discover the possibilities of a world seen afresh. Through relationships with writers from Dylan Thomas to C. K. Stead he influenced the changing shape of modern poetry. And in criticism and anthologies like the *Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* he helped identify the distinctive imaginative preoccupations that made New Zealand’s writing and culture different from elsewhere. By the time of his death at the age of ninety, he had completed a body of work unique in this country and increasingly recognised internationally.

This major biography introduces readers to Allen Curnow’s life and work: from a childhood in a Christchurch vicarage, through theological training, journalism and university life, marriages and children, and on to an international career as a writer of poetry, plays, satire and criticism. The book lucidly identifies the shifting textures of Curnow’s writing and unravels the intersections between life and words. The result of over a decade’s research and writing, *Simply by Sailing in a New Direction* offers deep insight into the development of New Zealand literature and culture.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Terry Sturm** (1941–2009) was editor of the *Oxford History of New Zealand Literature* (1991, 1998), professor of English at University of Auckland and an authority on New Zealand popular fiction. He was author of *An Unsettled Spirit: The Life and Frontier Fiction of Edith Lyttleton* (AUP, 2003) and editor of a selection of Curnow’s verse written under his pseudonym Whim Wham, *Whim Wham’s New Zealand: The Best of Whim Wham 1937–1988* (Random House, 2005). **Linda Cassells** has a doctorate in Linguistics from the University of Bath and over 25 years’ experience in book publishing.



ALLEN CURNOW

drawing by Rita Cook

Sketch by Rita Angus (Cook) of a 30-year-old Curnow, in a very Yeatsian, dandified pose. Rita stayed with the Curnows after Wystan was born, assisting in the house and doing sketches in exchange for meals and accommodation. This sketch was included in Glover's fifth issue of *Book*. (Book 5, *Christchurch, The Caxton Press, 1942*)

## Chapter Sixteen

# United States, February–April 1950



*If the psychologists have taught us anything, it is that opposites combine in a single state of mind. America is today expressing that doubleness, ambivalence of mind. Destruction on a sufficiently huge scale fascinates them: it is the obverse of their passionate admiration (and achievement) of construction on the grand scale. And they have not the heart they once had for construction.<sup>1</sup>*

### Last weeks in London

When Curnow arrived back in London from his trip to Cornwall he had less than a month left before his departure for New York. The two Cornish poems, 'Sea Tryst' and 'A Walk', were written quickly, and when Curnow sent them to Brasch a week before the end of January he mentioned that they had already been accepted for the *Cornish Review* by Denys Val Baker,<sup>2</sup> who edited the quarterly from Penzance. To Schroder he wrote that it was 'one of the freshest & most interesting of the more regional reviews . . . gaining much from the sense of place – place to look in upon, & place to look out from'.<sup>3</sup>

Soon after he got back to London he also sent off to Ronald Lewin, head of talks for the BBC Third Programme, a slightly revised version of the 30-minute script he had written at W. R. Rodgers' suggestion six months earlier, and was delighted to hear, this time very quickly, that it had been accepted. He had actually done very little to it, beyond giving it a fancier title, 'Poets of the S. Pacific: A New Zealand Cultural Study'. To Schroder he described the talk as 'almost



... a radio adaptation of my anthology *Intro*. He included complete poems by Fairburn, Mason, Glover and Baxter which the BBC was hoping to get Dylan Thomas to read, though Thomas was himself frantically busy preparing for his US trip and turned out to be unavailable. Curnow described the making of the recording itself – completed less than a week before his departure, and due to be broadcast in April – to Betty, in the last of his letters to her from London:

... I had more compliments upon my voice & delivery than I've ever had in my life, or ever expected. The irony of it is that if this script had got into the right hands from the start, *Third P.* wld have had other jobs to offer me – using my voice, that is. Never mind. I've taught myself quite a lot about broadcasting, or the *talking* side of it. *Third P.* is of course, unlike any other service in the world; the only one, I suppose, where you can take for granted a certain level of interest & intelligence in your listeners.<sup>4</sup>

It was an upbeat note on which to leave London. He'd been able to add the fee of 30 guineas to the money he sent back to New Zealand. In the busy last few weeks he had also seen quite a lot of Jock [W.S.] Graham, a Scottish poet and close friend of Sven Berlin, as well as Stephen Spender and George Barker. He had visited Zwemmer's, the art bookshop, and sent off to New Zealand a carton of book purchases from his time in England. He had made a last visit to the *News Chronicle* to say farewell to Noel Joseph and Geoffrey Cox, and other colleagues there. The painful shadow over his departure, however, was leaving Vie Lee. Later in life, he commented that at the time he believed he was in love with her, and that she was 'pretty fond' of him too, and in different circumstances might have asked her to marry him. However, nothing was ever discussed, because of the tacit understanding that such a future was impossible.<sup>5</sup> He began working on a number of love poems, including 'When the Hulk of the World', exploring the intense sense of loss he felt.

Whether Curnow's departure was quite the painful event for Vie that it was for Curnow is not so clear. She was a good friend of Tony and Ursula (especially Ursula), and also of Pocock, belonging to a circle of friends who socialised at Peel Street, Notting Hill Gate, and later at Doughty Street, Bloomsbury, where Tony and Ursula shifted in 1951. Certainly, after Curnow's departure she did not disappear from the Peel Street scene, and the following year (1951) she went with Ursula to the Edinburgh Festival. Pocock wrote matter-of-factly to Curnow about her presence in the 'Doughty Street colony' that year. He had taken her to hear Dylan Thomas read, in London, and not been especially impressed by the reading, and she had offered to type up his Cambridge thesis for him:

As I certainly don't mean to sacrifice twenty pounds to my offended dignity, I shall no doubt be calling there when the thing is ready for treatment. You have probably heard

of the grotesque tangle of personal relationships which developed there some months ago. I have nothing whatever to say about it.<sup>6</sup>

Quite what the 'grotesque tangle of personal relationships' was, is unclear. At all events it hardly suggests that Lee retreated into her shell in the wake of Curnow's departure, and a little later Curnow heard from Tony that she had remarried.

Curnow had said nothing to Betty about Vie Lee in his letters, and the fact that he felt so strongly about her during the period leading up to his departure would have produced difficult emotional conflicts within him. 'His real life', Brasch commented astutely on first seeing Curnow after his return to New Zealand, 'must go on deep inside him, carefully hidden from other people.'<sup>7</sup> Vie Lee's presence in London, and his feeling that he was abandoning her, clearly affected his feelings about leaving the place, though it was also the sense of doors opening, of small but significant literary achievement, which had at last made him feel a little more at home there: 'I'm sad, very sad, to leave London', he concluded his last London letter to Betty, 'a dirty, shapeless, wicked, & very loveable place. I'll write next from New York.'<sup>8</sup>

## New York and the United States

Curnow sailed from Southampton on the *Queen Mary* on 8 February 1950 on what turned out to be a stormy transatlantic trip, arriving a day late in New York around 14 February, where he was based throughout his United States stay at Midston House, a hotel on Madison Ave at East 38th Street. Apart from the rough weather the trip was uneventful, though he received his first taste of the McCarthyite era in the USA when he was specifically interrogated by the immigration official as to whether he had any Communist Party affiliations.<sup>9</sup>

He had formal letters of introduction from the Carnegie Corporation, which had made a number of contacts for him, and from Professor Henry Seidel Canby of Yale University's English Department (whom he had interviewed in New Zealand during Canby's lecture tour in 1945), and planned to spend the greater part of his two-and-a-half-month stay in New York, with a scheduled visit to Boston and Harvard for a week in late February and early March, and to Washington in early April. Later, in April, he would spend the last couple of weeks travelling west through Chicago to San Francisco, thence to Vancouver by 27 April for his passage back to Auckland.

Soon after his arrival he contacted J.M. Brinnin, at the YMHA (Young Men's Hebrew Association) Poetry Center, whose address Dylan Thomas had given him. They discussed the literary furore over the award of the Bollingen Prize to

Ezra Pound for *The Pisan Cantos* – a topic of controversy throughout Curnow's stay – but Brinnin was more concerned about Thomas's impending reading tour, which he was sponsoring, and 'full of anxiety',<sup>10</sup> in the wake of exaggerated hearsay and gossip about Thomas's life, that he was 'buying trouble'.

Curnow tried to reassure him, but also had his own increasingly busy schedule of events and meetings, many of which he reports on in detail in a notebook covering different periods of his American stay. In addition to Canby he met Howard Moss, poetry editor of the *New Yorker*, R. Linscott, director of the publishing firm of Random House, and John Finch, 'formerly of Harvard University (a student of F.O. Matthiessen), teacher at Dartmouth, and also director of a summer school of European students at Salzburg',<sup>11</sup> who introduced himself to Curnow when he saw him reading *The Pisan Cantos* in the Midston House bar. He also met the poet and anthologist Oscar Williams, and William Rose Benét, 'the man', according to Canby, 'who knows all the poets'.<sup>12</sup>

Eliot's *Cocktail Party*, which had been much better received in New York than in London – perhaps, Curnow astutely commented, because Broadway audiences were more likely to be impressed by a central character (played by Alec Guinness) who represented 'something between a priest and a psychologist' – was a major literary topic of conversation, alongside the Bollingen Prize controversy. Curnow's reservations about the play meant that he often found himself 'one of a dissident minority when the play was being discussed – chiefly at literary cocktail parties where it was impossible to avoid discussing it'.<sup>13</sup> During the first fortnight he was also finding his way around wintry New York, visiting galleries and bookshops, planning later meetings, and working at poems, and did not warm to the city:

My distaste for NY grows; it is a crude, shallow city; the good things all belong elsewhere; the indigenous are the vulgarities. The good people know this. For its size & its power one must have a special respect, but this need not inhibit other responses. It is an object lesson against a certain kind of urban planning: the effects in NY are mathematical, mechanical, characterless. There is dehumanized comfort; the apparatus of comfort is generalized, and becomes a common denominator, like money.<sup>14</sup>

A week after his arrival Brinnin telephoned him from the twenty-third floor of the Beekman Tower Hotel, and put him on to Thomas, who had just arrived after a rough seventeen-hour transatlantic flight and suffered badly from vertigo high up in the glass-walled hotel. Curnow went round and Brinnin took them to Greenwich Village for the evening. They dined at the Gran Ticino restaurant, not far from Washington Square (where they were joined by Howard Moss and a young poet protégé of Brinnin's, David Boland, who wished to meet Thomas), then drank at the San Remo bar before moving to Moss's Village apartment.

Thomas and Curnow left Moss and Brinnin at the apartment and went back to the San Remo until it closed at 4 a.m. (sending Boland on his way about 3 a.m.), then on to the back room of a small restaurant (where they could continue drinking) until 5 a.m., when Curnow arranged a taxi to take both of them back to their mid-city hotels.

Curnow was at pains, in the narrative he drafted for William Latham, to correct Brinnin's later sensationalised and inaccurate account of this and other occasions at which Curnow was present. In Curnow's account of this first evening, Thomas was tired but excited, went out of his way to accommodate his host, spoke kindly and encouragingly to Boland about poetry, decided to try to stay up all night in New York but eventually, not drunk but exhausted after drinking a great deal, fell asleep, when Curnow saw that he got home safely.<sup>15</sup> Hardly the stuff for a sensationalised account of his first night in New York, which Brinnin presents as if it was a sign of things to come.

Two days later, on 23 February, Thomas gave his first reading to an audience of a thousand at the Teresa Kaufmann Auditorium in the YMHA Poetry Center, the first of many superb, but completely exhausting, performances. As, white-faced and distressed, he was being mobbed by a hundred or more admirers after he left the stage, Curnow believed he 'read his thought plainly'. 'Don't you think he's had enough of this?' he commented to Brinnin and Moss, who then moved in to rescue him.

The next day Thomas rang Curnow in distress from the Beekman Tower ('Allen, I'm in a terrible fix'), which he needed to vacate at short notice because of a double-booking. Curnow arranged for him to be transferred to a room next to his own on the ninth floor of Midston House. He was not well, suffering from exhaustion and fatigue, and both Curnow and Oscar Williams (who arranged for his doctor to attend) regularly kept him company as he prepared for the next stage of his reading tour. Curnow was due to leave for Boston and Harvard for a week on the following day (25 February), where he had arranged to see F.O. Matthiessen and John Sweeney (in charge of the Woodberry Poetry Room at Harvard's Lamont Library). Brinnin arranged for him to stay with the poet Richard Eberhart and his wife Betty, then living at Cambridge, and also asked him to meet Thomas (who would be on his own) off the train at Boston a few days later, where Matthiessen was hosting his reading at Harvard.

Curnow had a very busy week in Cambridge and Boston, travelling there in the company of John Finch. Eberhart and Betty (Eberhart was vice-president in the Butcher Wax Company, his wife's family business) became long-standing friends, and Eberhart – from this time on – became one of the earliest poets to profit from the burgeoning university phenomenon of visiting poetry professors, spending much of the rest of his life in various such positions attached to universities. At the



Eberharts' Curnow also met Jeanne Tufts, who later married Frank Cassidy, both active in the theatre world (she as a drama teacher) in New York and elsewhere and both, also, to become long-standing friends.

Curnow greatly enjoyed his meetings with Matthiessen, 'that fine scholar and critic, and good man',<sup>16</sup> dining with him in his Boston apartment on his second night in Cambridge. He was familiar with Matthiessen's work on Eliot (he was also preparing an Oxford anthology of American poetry and a book on Theodore Dreiser), and he was extremely interested in Matthiessen's socialist analyses of American society, his hatred of McCarthyism and the growing anti-communist hysteria, and his uneasiness about the conservative politics of Eliot, Pound and Yeats. Matthiessen had been accused the previous year of supporting communist-front organisations, and was deeply depressed about the international situation. Curnow was shocked, little more than a month later when he was in New York, to learn that Matthiessen had committed suicide, a casualty of the McCarthy era.

Eberhart was very hospitable ('the most charmingly easy household I've ever dropped into'),<sup>17</sup> showing Curnow around Cambridge and Boston, including its historic literary sights, and giving him a feel for New England culture and architecture. He introduced him to numerous Library of Congress recordings of American poets reading their own works. There was also considerable discussion of W.H. Auden, whom Eberhart had known very well when Auden first immigrated to the US, and on one evening Eberhart took Curnow to a 'poets' party at the home of the poet and translator John Ciardi in Boston':

[T]hese are all friends who now & then meet at each other's homes to read aloud any new poems they have, & criticize freely, over the usual stream of (in this case) Scotch & Bourbon & ice. . . . Eberhart, Richard Wilbur, John Holmes, May Sarton. Like all American poets except Cummings, they read their work atrociously with almost no regard for the form: two new sonnets of mine were admired, I think excessively, because in that company they sounded so much better as I read them.<sup>18</sup>

The sonnets, whatever they were, never survived. Curnow added a footnote to his letter to Betty: '[T]heir rule was that the work read out should be new. I took these sonnets along, R.E. [Eberhart] having determined that I should join in the game. I blush to look at them now, they are so bad.'<sup>19</sup>

Early in March, Curnow kept his appointment to meet Dylan Thomas at the South Station, Boston, accompanied by Jeanne Tufts and a young man officially appointed to meet him. Thomas was still recovering from his reading at Yale the evening before, and after the four-hour train trip had only two hours before his Harvard reading at 5 p.m.: he 'was in dread of formalities and fuss & wanted to



Above: Curnow and Glover, who was to become his longest-standing literary and personal friend. Curnow would miss their often daily meetings at the Caxton Press or in pubs after Glover joined the Royal Navy in 1941 and left Christchurch on war service. (*ATL, PAColl-7404-2-23-1*)

Below: From left, Curnow with his literary friends Denis Glover and Bob Lowry, and Captain Donald McWilliams, photographed in Christchurch in 1946 in front of a poster for a film. (*Betty Curnow, ATL, PAColl-2146-008*)

Opposite: On the *Empire Star* in March 1949, en route to England via the Panama Canal. The excitement at the prospect of seeing new places and people was palpable. 'Simply by sailing in a new direction / You could enlarge the world'. (*Privately held*)





sit over some beer'.<sup>20</sup> His schedule was to attend a faculty afternoon tea party before the reading, a post-reading party with invited guests between 6 and 7 p.m., dinner with guests at Matthiessen's apartment after that, followed by a post-dinner gathering at Richard Wilbur's apartment. First thing the following morning he had to depart on a journey of several hundred miles to Mt Holyoake for another reading. For Curnow, who was with Thomas for the whole time of his visit to Harvard, the punishing schedule epitomised the entirely unreal expectations of the tour's organisers – and the astonishing stamina and courtesy with which Thomas attempted to meet their requirements.

Matthiessen's role was exemplary. He understood perfectly Thomas's wish *not* to be caught up in a round of tea-party socialising before his reading, found a quiet bar, and cancelled the event. The reading itself was 'first-rate', with Thomas 'in entire, composed command of his audience',<sup>21</sup> and the cocktail party afterwards – in which Thomas mingled with a hundred guests – was entirely without incident, except for his comment to a young woman with a low-cut dress wishing to talk to him about her poetry: 'I'd like to be suckled at those breasts.' Matthiessen's dinner for Thomas was a small affair – the only others there were John Sweeney and his wife, and Curnow – and after dinner some guests arrived: Richard Wilbur (then Literary Fellow at Harvard) and his wife, the Eberharts, and Archibald Macleish. The conversation was lively, and Thomas full of amusing anecdotes, and at midnight the guests departed, with Thomas, for Wilbur's apartment in Cambridge:

Here it was altogether more relaxed, a small party with drinks, like a hundred other small parties with drinks. There was a radiogram for music. Dyl, I remember distinctly, dancing a kind of sailor's hornpipe step up & down the room till his shirttails flapped loose. Everybody in good spirits, if tired, and nobody disagreeably 'plastered'. No roughhouse. No disorder. . . . The Eberharts & I guided Dyl to his sleeping quarters in Harvard Yard. By this time he did need a little support, & no wonder. . . . Betty Eberhart pulled down the bedclothes, & Dyl was rolled into bed.<sup>22</sup>

According to Brinnin, the upshot of the late night was that Thomas was late for a recording appointment the next morning, and had to be driven at breakneck pace to Mt Holyoake for his next reading – a drive, Thomas later told Curnow, which 'terrified him'.<sup>23</sup> Later Curnow made the simple point that Thomas 'was in the hands of his hosts, who were all having the time of their lives'.<sup>24</sup> 'I've barnstormed as I've never barnstormed before', he remarked to Curnow at one point.<sup>25</sup> Much later Curnow generalised that what Brinnin ('and, one must add, Dylan') attempted on such a scale was 'almost insanely reckless':



It had to end as it did. It was like a murder/suicide pact. Nobody understood that genius is not indestructible by public smothering; nor is understanding helped by a book like Brinnin's where the destructible poet becomes himself the destroyer.<sup>26</sup>

While he was still in Boston Curnow was interviewed by Cid Corman for WQXR radio station, and Corman later asked him if he would 'act as my contact to material in yr part of the Pacific' for a new magazine, *Origin*, which he was planning.<sup>27</sup> (At that time, early in 1951, Curnow was too preoccupied with starting a new academic career to undertake the job.) He also spent further time at the Woodberry Poetry Room at the Lamont Library at Harvard, where Sweeney asked him to autograph its copies of *Island and Time* and *Sailing or Drowning*, and he also donated a copy of *Jack Without Magic*.

On 3 March, a day or so after Thomas's Harvard reading, Curnow returned to New York with Oscar Williams, unfortunately missing his Boston train and as a result missing a meeting that afternoon with Allen Tate at the Princeton Club in New York. (It was not until 1961 that he met Tate.) For much of the rest of March he was based in New York, though he spent a week with Dr Harry Segal and his wife Evelyn at Rochester (NY). Evelyn had numerous literary contacts, including in New York, and on one evening took Curnow with Thomas to meet E.E. Cummings, one of the highlights of his American trip. Through William Rose Benét and John Hall Wheelock (an editor for Scribner) and his wife, who had been an early London friend of Ngaio Marsh – 'everyone seemed to be at their parties'<sup>28</sup> – he met 'Edmund Wilson, Delmore Schwarz & other Partisan Review boys',<sup>29</sup> and while Brinnin was accompanying Thomas on the Washington reading circuit Curnow took his class, on Gerard Manley Hopkins, at the YMHA Poetry Center.

It was through Reyenna Metz, a friend of Brinnin and Moss, that Curnow also met a youthful Allen Ginsberg, hardly recognisable, in Curnow's description of him as a nineteen-year-old in 1950, from the unconventional Beat figure he was a little later to become:

A trim little chap, dark suit, clean white collar & tie, crisp dark curly hair, talking about poetry (mostly) to anyone who would listen. . . . Young Allen was thoroughly 'house-broke' in the American sense, meaning his company manners could be counted on. . . . Another time Allen and a male friend (later famous for all I know) enticed me to Birdland on Times Sq., to hear an impressive group of piano, string bass & sax, more to their liking than mine.<sup>30</sup>

Curnow saw Thomas at Midston House after his return from his reading tour to Harvard and elsewhere, and again a week or so later, after Thomas's return to New York from Washington. On this occasion Thomas left a telephone message



for Curnow to call him immediately, 'whatever hour of the night it is'.<sup>31</sup> Curnow and Jeanne Tufts (staying overnight on the segregated women's floor of Midston House, because she'd missed a train) arrived at Thomas's Hotel Duane about 1 a.m. He could not sleep and simply wanted to talk about his Washington trip, which he had enjoyed greatly. He also insisted on providing Curnow with addresses of people to see:

He had done me more than one good turn in Washington, knowing I meant to go there. That is, he had spoken of me, and made welcomes which I could hardly have made for myself. I think of such kindnesses ('thoughtfulness' as we say) when he must have been at full stretch in the capital, & how ill they fit Brinnin's image of him.<sup>32</sup>

At this point Thomas embarked on a crowded six-week tour westwards, and Curnow did not see him again, except very briefly, when he was himself in San Francisco and Thomas was about to return to New York.

Curnow was due to travel to Washington on 2 April. A few days before (30 March), he travelled to Yale to meet Cleanth Brooks, an *academic* highlight (alongside his meeting with Matthiessen) of his American stay. He made substantial notes of their discussion, which touched at length on cultural differences between the North (New York / New England) and the South, on Brooks's detestation of commercialised New York culture, on Allen Tate's view of regionalism and provincialism, on William Faulkner and Lionel Trilling. Although Curnow never accepted the politics of the Deep South 'Fugitives' (an influential literary group based at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, to which Tate and Brooks were connected), he remained deeply interested in their cultural analysis of the commercial-industrial North, in their formalist poetics (though he was sceptical of its reductive, 'scientific' tendencies), and in the poetry of John Crowe Ransom, Tate and Robert Penn Warren.

Curnow's trip to Washington was relatively brief, and his main contacts there were Elizabeth Bishop, Poetry Consultant at the Library of Congress, and Robert Richman, director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), though he also met Katherine Biddle (the poet Katherine Garrison Chapin), then a Literary Fellow at the Library of Congress. The Richmans insisted that he stay with them, and they became close friends, meeting again when Curnow, on his first sabbatical leave from Auckland University College in 1961, was formally appointed to a fellowship at the ICA. Elizabeth Bishop, whose poetry Curnow admired, organised recording sessions at the Library of Congress, over two days, during which Curnow read his own poetry for the Congress archives. At the end of the first day, over a Chinese meal and drinks at a bar, Bishop talked at length about Ezra Pound, whom she saw regularly at St Elizabeth's psychiatric hospital

in Washington. He was, she said, 'usually v. nice to her',<sup>33</sup> though suffering from the delusion that she was about to arrange for his release to Italy.

Curnow's movements after his return to New York from Washington – during the three weeks prior to his departure from Vancouver on the final passage home on 27 April – are a little harder to trace. He visited Karl Shapiro, editor of *Poetry* (Chicago), whom he had met in New Zealand during the war and was now at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore; and spent time in Chicago during the long trip westwards across the continent to San Francisco, leaving Chicago on 19 April, travelling for two days and nights in a train which 'rocks like buggery',<sup>34</sup> and staying for three days there, until 25 April, before travelling (again, by means of a long train trip) to Vancouver.

He caught up with Thomas in San Francisco on 24 April, the day of Thomas's departure for New York, and his last memory of him was at the airport:

Found Dylan yesterday, unhappily only a few hours before his plane left for New York; but his hostess, a Mrs (Ruth) Witt-Diamant, an English professor (at State College) here, had us both to lunch & I saw him off at the airport. . . . [I was] sad to see the last of him, & the last (it seemed) of England flying away eastward.<sup>35</sup>

San Francisco was also Curnow's last stopping place, and Professor Ruth Witt-Diamant became another friend and colleague whom he was to meet on most of his later trips to the United States.

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