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Diversity or Perversity?
Investigating Queer Narratives, Resistance, and Representation in
Aotearoa / New Zealand, 1948-2000

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to the burgeoning field of the history of sexuality in New Zealand and seeks to distill the more theorised and reflexive understanding of the subjectively understood queer male identity since 1948.

Emerging from the disciplines of History and English, this project draws from a range of narratological materials: parliamentary debates contained in *Hansard*, and novels and short stories written by men with publicly avowed queer identities.

This thesis explores how both ‘normative’ identity and the category of ‘the homosexual’ were constructed and mobilised in the public domain, in this case, the House of Representatives. It shows that members of the House have engaged with an extensive tradition of defining and excluding; a process by which state and public discourses have constructed largely unified, negative and othering narratives of ‘the homosexual’. This constitutes an overarching narrative of queer experience which, until the mid-1990s, excluded queer subjects from its construction.

At the same time, fictional narratives offer an adjacent body of knowledge and thought for queer men and women. This thesis posits literature’s position as an important and productive space for queer resistance and critique. Such texts typically engage with and subvert ‘dominant’ or ‘normative’ understandings of sexuality and disturb efforts to apprehend precise or linear histories of ‘gay liberation’ and ‘gay consciousness’.

Drawing from the works of Frank Sargeson, James Courage, Bill Pearson, Noel Virtue, Stevan Eldred-Grigg, and Peter Wells, this thesis argues for a revaluing of fictional narratives as active texts from which historians can construct a matrix of cultural experience, while allowing for, and explaining, the determining role such narratives play in the discursively constructed understandings of gender and sexuality in New Zealand.

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Introduction

Norman Jones, a New Zealand parliamentarian, claimed to represent the views of the ‘average’ New Zealander when he characterised (male) ‘homosexuality’ as ‘anathema to most human beings’ during the debate surrounding the *Homosexual Law Reform (HLR) Bill* in 1985.¹ Jones identified two indices for normative behaviour. These revolved around the biological and cultural imperatives of procreation for married, opposite-sex spouses, and the continued maintenance of the nuclear family unit. He believed that the Bill was repellent since it sought to decriminalise ‘sodomy’, and therefore, ‘abnormal sex between males’.² ‘The homosexual’ was without history or place in society. Homosexual communities represented a ‘new vogue and subculture’, and, through their reclamation of the term ‘gay’, had engaged in ‘the worst travesty of a decent word that was ever bastardised’.³ In spite of ‘spurious talk about human rights’, homosexuals remained part of a ‘[w]ay-out sexual orientation’ that favoured indiscriminate acts of violation and carnal lust.⁴

However, in 1957, almost three decades earlier, an alternative view of ‘homosexuality’ was raised by author James Courage. Courage’s novel, *A Way of Love*, represents New Zealand’s earliest story of explicitly romantic love between men. Written by a man who was himself ‘homosexual’, *A Way of Love* couches notions of same-sex desire as beneficial and positive. It therefore displaces many of the conventional readings of ‘homosexual’ persons asserted through ‘official’ discourses like those embodied by Jones’s diatribe some twenty-eight years later. Courage’s story calls into question the marginal status of homosexuality. The novel’s protagonist, Bruce, insists on the presence of a diverse and dynamic queer community: ‘what I might call without exaggeration our immense league’.⁵ Bruce’s

¹ Norman Jones, 8 March 1985, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 461, p. 3523. I use the abbreviation *NZPD* hereafter.

² Jones, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3522.

³ Jones, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, pp. 3522-3.

⁴ Jones, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3523.

⁵ James Courage, *A Way of Love* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1959), p. 145.

method of sexual expression rejects contemporary imputations of ‘deviance’ that represent ‘homosexual’ bodies and sexual practices as transgressive and ‘abnormal’. He instead suggests that same-sex desire constitutes ‘neither a crime nor an unjustified indulgence’.⁶ Bruce’s story is a ‘little history’ used to preserve a complex and subjective set of emotional and sexual parameters that factored in the lives of queer men: a narrative that rejects ideas of ‘repentance’ and celebrates ‘gratification’ in the widest possible sense.⁷

These clearly contrasting views underscore divergences evident between bodies of knowledge used to define the parameters of queer identity in New Zealand. This thesis contends that, within a New Zealand context, parliamentary debates in the twentieth century constructed largely unified, negative and othering narratives of ‘the homosexual’. These constructed and partial narratives present an overarching and ‘official’ narrative of queer experience which, until recently, quite literally excluded the queer subject from its construction. Along with historians like Steven Maynard, I suggest that political regulation, governance and, on occasion statistics, transformed, through language, ‘the diverse sexual experiences of men’ into a ‘limited number of legal [and cultural] categories’.⁸

In contrast, a reading of New Zealand fiction provides a central means by which historians might assert the multiplicity of experience available at a given time. Borrowing a model used by cultural historian Judith R. Walkowitz, this thesis asks how and in what ways queer personages were empowered through text to disturb ‘official’ meanings of ‘homosexuality’ and, in addition, seeks to understand how such ‘moments’ of critical agency were determined, or at least influenced, by their material and discursive environments.⁹ This thesis therefore acknowledges the

⁶ Courage, *A Way of Love*, p. 36.

⁷ Courage, *A Way of Love*, pp. 251, 254.

⁸ Steven Maynard, ‘Through a Hole in the Lavatory Wall: Homosexual Subcultures, Police Surveillance and the Dialectics of Discovery, Toronto, 1890-1930’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 5 (1994), p. 229.

⁹ In *City of Dreadful Delight* Walkowitz re-reads a series of narratives surrounding the Whitechapel murders in Victorian England and their reductive depictions of women. Walkowitz exposes a multiplicity of possible social experiences using a series of ‘adjacent’ or ‘parallel’ texts. These

conceivably complex ways in which society and text intersect in mutually constitutive and multiple ways.

New Zealand historians have only recently engaged with notions of a queer 'national' past. In comparison to Australian contexts, for example, where a productive vein of historiography began to emerge from the mid-1980s, New Zealand contributions remained sparse until the mid-to-late 1990s, and have peaked only in the last few years.¹⁰ Such texts have at times either been mediated by focuses other than the reconstitution of same-sex histories or offer historical accounts in modes of analysis outside the 'ordinary' purview of the academy.¹¹ The body of work that constitutes the categories of academic and explicitly queer history is therefore small and remains a major aspect of New Zealand historiography yet to be fully explored.¹² Other general histories, such as Michael King's and James Belich's, survey 'homosexual' personages and their respective

alternate stories demonstrate how women contested their dominant representations in 'official discourses'. She finds that women 'reshape[d] cultural meanings within certain parameters'. See Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992), p. 9.

¹⁰ For analyses of Australian contexts see Robert Reynolds, 'Gay History, in *The Oxford Companion To Australian History*, eds., Graeme Davison, John Hirst, Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 278-9. A detailed list of historiography is also available online. See Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives, 'Australian Lesbian and Gay History: A Bibliography', *Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives* [online], 09 October 2006, available URL: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~alga/docs/bibliography.htm>.

¹¹ For examples see Stevan Eldred-Grigg, *Pleasures of the Flesh: Sex and Drugs in Colonial New Zealand, 1840-1915* (Wellington: Reed, 1984); Nigel Gearing, *Emerging Tribe: Gay Culture in New Zealand in the 1990s* (Auckland: Penguin, 1997); Heather Worth, *Gay Men, Sex and HIV* (Palmerston North: Dunmore, 2003).

¹² I draw on many of these in my reading of queer history in Chapter One. For key examples see Phil Parkinson, 'Sexual Law Reform', *Sites: A Journal for Radical Perspectives on Culture*, 19 (Spring 1989), pp. 7-19; Phil Parkinson, 'Lesbian and Gay Archives in New Zealand: A Minority Gathers Its Own History', *Archifacts: Journal of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand*, 4 (1984), pp. 7-13; Justin William McNab, 'A Social Historical Overview: Male Homosexuality in New Zealand', (MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1993); Laurie Guy, *Worlds in Collision: The Gay Debate in New Zealand, 1960-1986* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2002); Chris Brickell, 'Same-Sex Desire and the Asylum: A Colonial Experience', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 39, 2 (2005), pp. 158-178; Chris Brickell, 'The Emergence of a Gay Identity', in *Sexuality Down Under: Social and Historical Perspectives*, eds., Allison Kirkman and Pat Moloney (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2005), Alison J. Laurie, "'Filthiness" Became a Theory: An Overview of Homosexual and Lesbian Organising from Nineteenth Europe to Seventies New Zealand', in *Outlines: Lesbian and Gay Histories of Aotearoa*, eds., Alison J. Laurie and Linda Evans (Wellington, NZ: Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand, 2003), pp. 10-19; Alison J. Laurie, 'Lady Husbands and Kamp Ladies: Pre-1970 Lesbian Life in Aotearoa/ New Zealand' (PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2003).

contributions to the schema of New Zealand history.¹³ Such texts, however, have not been informed by robust theoretical or conceptual frameworks, and have instead promoted a monochromatic view of sexual difference that is largely unaffected by considerations of class, ethnicity, or time period.

A similar dearth of critical scholarship exists in regard to queer literary enterprise in New Zealand. Peter Wells' 'Introduction' to *Best Mates*, New Zealand's first and only anthology of queer literature and criticism, represents an exception in this case, although in more consciously 'literary' than historical contexts.¹⁴ Remaining scholarship has been confined to theses on the expatriate writer James Courage and a few references to Courage, Frank Sargeson, and Bill Pearson, in Belich's and King's national surveys.¹⁵ Some limited scholarship has also considered Sargeson's role as a 'homosexual' writer, though seldom in socio-historical contexts or at any length.¹⁶ Such scholarship has typically resisted the reading of an explicitly 'homosexual' presence in Sargeson's work and has instead promoted suggestions of 'latent' traces of homosexuality. Such brevity contrasts with the richness and

¹³ Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin, 2003), pp. 376-80; James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of New Zealanders, From the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Auckland: Penguin, 2001), pp. 511-4.

¹⁴ For his critical overview of gay male literature in New Zealand see Peter Wells, 'Introduction: Modest Achievements', in *Best Mates: Gay Writing in Aotearoa New Zealand*, eds., Peter Wells and Rex Pilgrim (Auckland: Reed, 1997), pp. 7-31.

¹⁵ For theses on Courage see Grant Richard Harris, 'A Reading of the Novels of James Courage' (MA thesis, Massey University, 1993); John Lee, "'A Private History": Towards a Biography of James Courage, Expatriate New Zealand Writer' (MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2001). A Master of Library and Information Studies thesis by Sabine Berendse is also of interest. Berendse surveys New Zealand novels that contain gay characters or thematic concerns. It should be noted, however, that such preoccupations do not necessarily signal a queer orientation on the part of the authors. See Berendse, 'Gay and Lesbian Characters and Themes in New Zealand Novels' (MLIS thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1999). For references to queer authors in general histories see Belich, pp. 332, 335, 337, 513; King, pp. 379-80. King also explores Sargeson's queer sexual orientation in *Frank Sargeson: A Life* (Auckland: Viking, 1995).

¹⁶ See Kai Jensen, 'Not Diminished in my Stature as a Man', in *Whole Men: The Masculine Tradition in New Zealand Literature* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1996), pp. 107-126; Kai Jensen 'Holes, Wholeness and Holiness in Frank Sargeson's Writing, *Landfall*, 173 (March 1990), pp. 33-44; Mark Houlahan, 'Outings With Frank: New Aspects of Frank Sargeson's Life and Texts', *Span*, 44 (April 1997), pp. 69-78; John Newton, 'Homophobia and the Social Pattern: Sargeson's Queer Nation', *Landfall*, 199 (2000), pp. 91-107.

diversity of literary materials in New Zealand and the presence of traditions that celebrate analogous British, European, and North American contexts.¹⁷

Analyses explaining parliament's lengthy involvement in policing sexual deviance in New Zealand have also been mostly absent.¹⁸ Academic conceptions of queer pasts have mainly engaged with a mode of historical analysis broadly described as gay social history; studies that prioritise experience, testimony and collective identity as the central considerations for the recuperation of a 'gay' history.¹⁹ Such views favour '[i]ndividual experience recounted by ordinary people' as the most 'authoritative, authentic and irreducible form of evidence' and the means by which 'lesbians' and 'gay men' are 'given their voice back and ... their worldview better understood'.²⁰ Thus, while, a 'queer-focused' history remains a relatively unexplored field, the New Zealand experience offers even less in regard to cultural history approaches to the past and its concerns for the part language and representation plays in mediating and constructing subjective lives.

¹⁷ For examples, see Byrne R. S. Fone, *A Road to Stonewall: Male Homosexuality and Homophobia in England and America Literature, 1750-1969* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Paul Hammond, *Love Between Men in English Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1996); Paul Hammond, *Figuring Sex Between Men From Shakespeare To Rochester* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Mark Lily, *Gay Men's Literature in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1996); Joseph Bristow, ed., *Sexual Sameness: Textual Differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992); Joseph Bristow, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing After 1885* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); David Bergman, *Gaiety Transfigured: Gay Self-representation in American Literature* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Patricia Juliana Smith, *The Queer Sixties* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Christopher Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink: Male and Female Homosexuality in Twentieth-century French Literature* (London: Cassell, 1995); Lawrence R. Schehr, *French Gay Modernism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

¹⁸ For exceptions see Cameron Pritchard, 'The Discourses of the Homosexual Law Reform', in *Sexuality Down Under: Social and Historical Perspectives*, eds., Allison Kirkman and Pat Moloney (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2005), pp. 79-96; Timothy McCreanor, "'Why Strengthen The Wall When The Enemy Has Poisoned The Well?': An Essay of Anti-Homosexual Discourse in New Zealand", *Journal of Homosexuality*, 31, 4 (1996), pp. 75-105; Chris Atmore, 'Drawing The Line: Issues of Boundary and the Homosexual Law Reform Bill Campaign in New Zealand (Aotearoa), 1985-86', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 30, 1 (1995), pp. 23-39.

¹⁹ H. G. Cocks and Matt Houlbrook, eds., 'Introduction', in *The Modern History of Sexuality* (London: Palgrave, 2006), p. 5.

²⁰ Cocks and Houlbrook, p. 5.

Therefore, while some academics, like Chris Brickell, have explored social constructivist accounts of the past in describing culturally contingent categories like 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual',²¹ few, if any, have taken up the challenge presented by queer theory: a mode of cultural analysis viewed by some as antagonistic to the recuperative endeavours of gay social history.²² The body of literature on queer theory, however, is vast and has enjoyed success in the fields of literature and feminist studies.²³ Queer theorists assert that specific and sexual identity constructions, such as 'homosexual' and 'gay', are not merely culturally contingent, but inherently 'arbitrary, unstable and exclusive'.²⁴ Proponents promote a view of identity that is emphatically denaturalised and unfixed. Thus, British historian Sean Brady suggests that 'identity' is 'permanently open and mutable', so that individual and subjective experience challenges the meaning of collective constructs.²⁵ Seidman suggests that since 'identities are always multiple' there remains 'literally an infinite number of ways in which 'identity-components', like sexual orientation, race, and class, can 'intersect and combine'.²⁶

²¹ Brickell, 'Same-Sex Desire and the Asylum', pp. 158-9; Brickell, 'The Emergence of a Gay Identity', p. 80.

²² This reticence may in fact reflect a 'global' shift. H. G. Cocks in 2004, followed by Sean Brady in 2006, have both suggested that many new 'gay' histories have been less theoretically-charged. They have instead favoured more descriptive and neo-empiricist bases for investigation. See Cocks, 'The Growing Pains of History of Sexuality', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39, 4 (2004), pp. 657-66; Brady, 'All About Eve? Queer Theory and History', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41, 1 (2006), pp. 185-195. For a critical overview of social constructivism in this area see Steven Seidman, *The Social Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Norton, 2003).

²³ Steven Seidman, ed., 'Introduction', in *Queer Theory/Sociology* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), p. 11. For further examples see Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996); Michael Warner, ed., 'Introduction', in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. vii-xxxi; Thomas Foster, Carol Sigel and Ellen E. Berry, eds., *The Gay '90s: Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Formations in Queer Studies* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1997); Donald E. Hall, *Queer Theories* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Iain Morland and Annabelle Willox, eds., *Queer Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Joseph A. Boone, ed., *Queer Frontiers: Millennial Geographies, Genders, and Generations* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000); Robert J. Corber and Stephen Valocchi, eds., *Queer Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (Melbourne: Blackwell, 2003). For an instructive New Zealand-specific account in human geography see Lynda Johnston, *Queering Tourism: Paradoxical Performances at Gay Pride Parades* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

²⁴ Brady, p. 186.

²⁵ Brady, p. 186.

²⁶ Seidman, p. 11.

This depth of scope has led some to suggest that, given queer theory's 'commitment to denaturalization', 'queer' can have 'neither a foundational logic nor a consistent set of characteristics' and is thus itself resistant to overly reductive definitions.²⁷

Michael Warner, however, suggests that '[q]ueer' addresses more fully the disaffecting and potentially marginalising tropes of 'gay' and 'homosexual'.²⁸ The conscious use of 'queer' as an inclusive term undercuts 'traditional' categories mobilised around sex partner choice. It conceives of a relatively wide ambit of sexual difference that includes otherwise 'marginalised' personages and allows for individual and subjective difference between social actors. Warner holds that such capacities reject 'minoritizing logic' in favour of a 'more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal' and a 'way of basing politics in the personal *without* acceding to ... pressure to clean up personal identity'.²⁹

Several academics have raised possibilities for integrating queer theory as an effective mode of historical scholarship. Judith Butler, for example, has called for the conscious use of 'queer' as 'a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings' which in 'the present' is 'never fully owned'.³⁰ This, she suggests is 'always and only redeployed, twisted, queered' from a 'prior usage' and in the direction of 'urgent and expanding political purposes'.³¹ Heather K. Love, a literary commentator, explains that the naming of 'queer studies' indicates a 'commitment' among scholars to the 'difficulties of the queer past'.³² It represents a pursuit that extends beyond the 'affirmative mode of historiography', which, during gay liberation, had

²⁷ Jagose, *Queer Theory*, p. 96, citing David M. Halperin's *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*.

²⁸ Warner, pp. xxvi-iii.

²⁹ Warner, pp. xxvi-xxvii (author's emphasis). See also Suzanna Danuta Walters, 'From Queer to Here: Radical Feminism, Postmodernism, and Lesbian Menace', in *Queer Theory*, eds., Iain Morland and Annabelle Willox (New York: Palgrave, 2005), p. 11; Robert J. Corber and Stephen Valocchi, eds., 'Introduction', in *Queer Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), p. 9.

³⁰ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On The Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 223.

³¹ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, pp. 223, 228.

³² Heather K. Love, 'Spoiled Identity': Stephen Gordon's Loneliness and the Difficulties of Queer History, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (2001), p. 492.

sought to distill examples of ‘same-sex love’ as models for ‘gay and lesbian life in the present’.³³ Love instead notes queer scholarship’s determination to engage in analyses of ‘antihomophobic inquiry’ that acknowledge the discursive construction of ‘gender melancholia, heterosexual identification, shame, stigma, and disidentification’ in their understandings of subjective complexities.³⁴ Such conceptualisations acknowledge the potentially fraught composition of queer identities and consider some of the marginalising pressures experienced by queer bodies when traversing worlds conventionally prefigured as heteronormative.³⁵

Steven Maynard proposes perhaps the most sophisticated historical model for creating queer histories. In his article ‘Respect Your Elders, Know Your Past’, Maynard urges practitioners to develop a productive middle-ground that would synthesise gay social history and queer theory approaches. He posits a revised mode of historical inquiry that combines the level of theorisation and reflexivity evident in queer studies with the ‘accessible stories’ and mode of analysis favoured by social history.³⁶ Such analyses would unite the ‘discursive’ and the ‘material’ conceptions of the past. He suggests that investigations of the text or text(s) should be placed alongside their broader ‘material and historical context(s)’ so as to better distill their possible ‘origins, implications, and effects’.³⁷ Maynard recommends the adoption of the term ‘queered history’ which could refer to a critical stance, rather than the historian’s ‘object of study’.³⁸ A queer history, he suggests, must ‘recognize if not resolve the messy historical issues of the subject’s self-consciousness and self-identities’.³⁹

³³ Love, p. 492.

³⁴ Love, pp. 491-2.

³⁵ This has been acknowledged by cultural geographer, Lynda Johnston, who writes that ‘[q]ueer theory provides a framework from which to draw on critical social theories which challenge heteronormative discourses’. See Johnston, p. 26.

³⁶ Maynard, “‘Respect Your Elders, Know Your Past’: History and the Queer Theorists’, *Radical History Review*, 75 (1999), p. 59.

³⁷ Maynard, ‘History and the Queer Theorists’, p. 72.

³⁸ Maynard, ‘History and the Queer Theorists’, p. 72.

³⁹ Maynard, ‘History and the Queer Theorists’, p. 73.

This thesis sits within this nexus of emerging historiographical development. It borrows social history motifs, that include an interest in ‘experience’ and the material past, and places this within the cultural history framework offered by queer studies. This study is thus also preoccupied by notions of ‘narrative’, representation, and the conceptualisation of identities, both ‘normative’ and ‘non-normative’.

The source materials used for this thesis, parliamentary debates taken from the *Records to the House of Representatives*, and fiction written by queer male authors, both demonstrate lengthy contributions to the discursive construction of sexuality and gender in the New Zealand. The period between 1948 to 2000 is a rich site in which to locate this investigation. The discursive movement evident in public discourse regarding same-sex desire marks a transition from its status as deviant and, in the case of sexual intercourse between men, criminal, to decades of increased (if troubled) integration and assimilation in an environment where the state’s coercive power is no longer used to stifle visible signs of queerness. However, fictional texts do not sit as passive bodies of knowledge. By placing these texts alongside the construction of ‘homosexual’ identities evident in parliamentary debates, my research apprehends an uneasy dialectical opposition between contemporary understandings of same-sex desire. Their composition takes into account the broader backdrop of material and historical contexts as well as the potentially complicating notions of ‘identity’ construction that research of this kind necessitates.

In considering the context of the HLR campaign of the 1980s Chris Atmore has suggested that images of ‘the homosexual’ structure the rhetoric and dialogue between members of parliament. Their use has been described by Atmore as intrinsic to the policing of cultural boundaries. This, she suggests, was a territorial war which involved the ‘manipulation of symbols and competing discourses’.⁴⁰ Such materials point to ways in which discourses surrounding ‘homosexuality’, social deviance and standards of morality were conflated and framed by

⁴⁰ Atmore, p. 24.

associations of deviance and social decay more broadly. New Zealand's parliamentary debates are preoccupied both by the status of 'homosexuality' and the status of 'normative identity'. Thus, not only does *Hansard* present many of the definitional and reductive properties placed upon the queer subject within 'official' discourses, it also offers a means for capturing the historically contingent boundaries of what might constitute society's prescriptive moral standards. Such a process is arguably intrinsic to the enterprise of queer history and the application of queer theory more generally.⁴¹

Hansard forms a productive area for reading cultures of representation since propriety often prevented contemporary media from reporting on 'homosexual' subcultures in the past.⁴² In contrast, the House is called to bear on issues of sexual identity and 'the normative' with surprising regularity. Following Michel Foucault, historians have argued that ideas about sexuality were not stable, and shifts over time resulted partly from the mechanisations of parliament.⁴³ The 'homosexual' was 'not simply regulated by the legal system but was also produced by it'.⁴⁴ However, historians have at times used *Hansard* as a cultural barometer, a tool to 'gauge' public opinion or attitudes towards deviant behaviour. This kind of history has been characterised by essentialist tendencies, with rhetoric taken as

⁴¹ Seidman explains, for example, that '[q]ueer theory' is not 'the study of homosexuality' as a 'minority' but the 'knowledges and social practices that organise "society"' as a whole by sexualising 'heterosexual' or 'homosexual' 'bodies, desires ... identities ... and social institutions'. See Seidman, pp. 12-13.

⁴² Certain mainstream newspapers in 1963, for example, refused to even print the word 'homosexual'. See Hugh Young, 'A Chronicle of Homosexuality in New Zealand: Part 1', *Queer Resources Aotearoa New Zealand: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Resources* [online], 08 October 2006, available URL: <http://gaynz.net.nz/history/Part1.html>.

⁴³ See Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans., Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 36-40, 43. See Chapter One of this thesis for further analyses of Foucault's views of the law and its production of homosexuality, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁴ Matt Cook, 'Law', in *The Modern History of Sexuality*, eds., H. G. Cocks and Matt Houlbrook (London: Palgrave, 2006), p. 65. A notable example of this view has been put forward by H. G. Cocks in his recent study of England between 1780 and 1850. He notes that the largest expansion of prosecutions for 'homosexual offences produced a corresponding shift in the status and representation of homosexual desire'. Cocks suggests that the later Labouchere Amendment of 1884 constituted a continuing process of definition and regulation of ideas surrounding normative and non-normative sexuality. Such ideas were circulating, he suggests, since the 1780s, and as early as the mid-sixteenth century. See Cocks, *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Tauris, 2003), pp. 8, 17-8.

representative of a cohesive and stable collective consciousness.⁴⁵ Taken at face value, parliamentary debates present an accurate reference point both for individual attitudes, and thus members' 'true' feelings, but also reveal a more broadly espoused societal reaction to ideas surrounding 'homosexuality'.

Yet, parliamentary debates must be treated more reflexively and considered in increasingly theoretical contexts. Analyses should take into account the complex and discursive relationships between text, discourse and performance which characterise the record. Since *Hansard* records parliamentary debates, historians access performative and adversarial textual representations. Understandings surrounding sexuality mobilised within a particular environment; a spatial economy of shifting power dynamics and bodily or gestural signals, not usually recorded in textual accounts, and thus, outside the historian's ability to interrogate. These narratives are themselves structured by external events, within or without the House, or interruptions caused to debate by abuse or contestation. It is therefore important to acknowledge the information or emotional textures for which scholars cannot account.

This loss of 'immediacy' and 'tangibility' causes problems in conveying the level of antagonism and oppositionality which characterise debates. This is complicated still more by the linguistic status of parliamentary materials themselves. Rather than being emblematic of a singular or universal 'truth', parliamentary materials expose a multiplicity of potential meanings. I suggest that documents such as *Hansard* do not bear out an objective 'reality', but, borrowing from the poststructuralist vocabulary established by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, deploy, through language, systems of signs and signifiers with, potentially, several co-existing and culturally contingent referentials.

⁴⁵ An unfortunate end result of this is to construct queer individuals and communities outside of a 'mainstream' or normative public consciousness and thus re-inscribe 'homosexuals' as an unrecognisable 'other'.

I employ a narratological approach to address some of these concerns. This mode views apparent statements of fact as a ‘series of stories’, distilling ‘the metaphors and other literary devices’ and ‘highlighting the constructed character of the historical record’.⁴⁶ Further, I interrogate the linguistic process itself, highlighting the ways in which political regulation, governance, and statistics reduced men’s experience to a composite ‘reality’ embodied by the phrase ‘the homosexual’.⁴⁷ When placed alongside each other, these statements elucidate ‘repeated rhetorical strategies’ and narrative forms.⁴⁸ This is not, therefore, a legal history in any conventional sense, but a clarification as to some of the key narratological and definitional properties mapped against queer bodies in New Zealand since 1948.

Along with extant queer scholarship, my work acknowledges the performative composition which underlies identity constructs that have been variously described by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler. In her seminal work *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick identified a range of cultural inconsistencies evident in defining an increasingly indefinable ‘homosexual’ identity, emphasising the constructed and performative space embodied by such slippages, and the ‘unexpectedly plural, varied, and contradictory historical understandings’ that characterise ‘homosexual’ lives.⁴⁹ Butler, perhaps, is the most emphatic in her book *Gender Trouble*, suggesting that ‘[g]ender’ constitutes ‘the stylization of the body’, through ‘repeated acts behind a highly rigid regulatory frame ... congeal[ed] over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being’.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Maynard, ‘“Horrible Temptations”: Sex, Men and Working-Class Male Youth in Urban Ontario, 1890-1935’, *Canadian Historical Review*, 76, no. 2 (1997), p. 198.

⁴⁷ Maynard. ‘Through a Hole in the Lavatory Wall’, p. 229.

⁴⁸ Maynard, ‘Through a Hole in the Lavatory Wall’, p. 229.

⁴⁹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990) p. 48. Cocks and Houlbrook provide some close analysis of Sedgwick’s critique. They suggest that ‘categories in use to describe sexuality in the past should not be taken as literal descriptions of individual desire’. They argue that ‘we should be aware of contradictions inherent in constructing schemes of identity, sexual or otherwise’ that undermine ‘complex forms of individuality, history and culture’. See Cocks and Houlbrook, p. 10.

⁵⁰ Judith Butler further asserts that gender is ‘an ongoing discursive practice ... open to intervention and resignification’. This denaturalises gender and sexuality, calling into question feminist and gay liberationist assumptions of collectivity and commonality. See Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 31, 33.

Such considerations mean that there can be no singular view of ‘homosexuality’ derived from a reading of New Zealand fiction, nor, indeed, a reading of New Zealand history more generally. In this context, although the authors considered in this thesis share a sexual or emotional attraction for men, their sexual identities are cross-hatched by an ever-expanding list of variables. This includes, though is not limited to, considerations of time and space, class and age, and ethnic and religious background, all of which problematise the ‘fixed’ view of any arbitrary descriptive category.⁵¹ Thus, while I have been careful to select members of New Zealand’s literary establishment with well-known ‘credentials’ as either ‘gay’ or ‘homosexual’,⁵² the use of ‘queer’ is used consciously to acknowledge the potential fluidity and ambivalence of human sexual expression explored earlier in my synthesis of queer studies.⁵³

My analysis includes published short stories and novels written by Frank Sargeson, James Courage, Bill Pearson, Noel Virtue, Peter Wells, Stevan Eldred-Grigg, and Witi Ihimaera.⁵⁴ When gathered in such a way, they represent New Zealand’s most vocal and high profile queer male voices. The representations evident in New Zealand short stories and novels embody the imaginative ‘cultural repertoire’ available to queer personages during historical moments.⁵⁵ They demonstrate and reflect ways in which individuals were enabled and empowered, through text, to

⁵¹ Brady, p. 186.

⁵² All have acknowledged publicly queer identities, whether early on in life, or later, and with a certain sense of ambivalence.

⁵³ I follow, in part, Craig Young’s definition. He argues that ‘queer’ refers to the ‘dialogue and negotiated relationships between lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people, who have diverse gender, ethnic, class, and sexual identities’. For the purposes of this thesis, ‘queer’ also includes persons traditionally excluded by traditional and fixed identifiers, like ‘homosexual’ and ‘heterosexual’, as well as Western conceptions of sexual identity. See Young, ‘Queer Versus The New Zealand Christian Right, 1985-1998’, in *Queer in Aotearoa New Zealand*, eds., Lynne Alice and Lynne Star (Palmerston North: Dunmore, 2004), p. 47.

⁵⁴ This thesis primarily considers Frank Sargeson’s *I Saw In My Dream* (1949), *The Hangover* (1967), *Sunset Village* (Auckland: Reed, 1976); James Courage’s *The Young Have Secrets* (1954); *A Way of Love* (1959), *A Visit To Penmorten* (1961); Bill Pearson’s *Coal Flat* (1963); Noel Virtue’s, *In The Country of Salvation* (1990), *The Transfiguration of Martha Friend* (1996), Peter Wells’, *Dangerous Desires* (1991), *The Duration of A Kiss* (1994), *Boy Overboard* (1997); and Witi Ihimaera’s *Nights In The Gardens of Spain* (1995), and *The Uncle’s Story* (2000).

⁵⁵ Walkowitz, p. 9.

‘reshape cultural meanings within certain parameters’.⁵⁶ Fiction, when considered in its cultural contexts, both spatial and temporal, provides historians with the ‘conditions of [queer] possibility’ which might exist in given historical episodes.⁵⁷ By placing ‘cultural expressions’ and representations within what Walkowitz calls the ‘historically situated authorial consciousness’, such texts suggest how queer writers ‘mobilized existing cultural tools’ within societal constraints.⁵⁸ The appraisal of multiple texts raises diverse queer experience: a rich matrix of cultural practices and representation which subverted, questioned, or undercut normative cultural scripts.

Of the authors considered for this thesis, all have enjoyed, or continue to enjoy, widespread, and usually critically-acclaimed success. This is important in respect to the ‘status’ this bestows upon their stories. These narratives do not constitute peripheral or ‘underground’ contestations to ‘official’ views of ‘normative’ identities, but inform at least a substantial part of the discursively constructed public discourses surrounding sexuality and gender in New Zealand.⁵⁹ My reading involves the re-appraisal of significant texts within ‘queered’ paradigms, as well as the integration, re-interpretation, and acknowledgement of ‘queer’ priorities and meanings given to certain stories; narratives which, might otherwise be ‘merely’ consigned to the ‘mainstream’ and heteronormative register of New Zealand literature.

Such an enterprise represents a necessary starting point for revised claims of queer intellectualism. While many of these early texts fulfilled important roles in establishing a thriving ‘national’ (and ‘mainstream’) literary culture, they have, for the most part, remained unrecognised as valuable ‘foundation stories’ of male queerness in New Zealand. This thesis operates alongside other texts, such as Peter

⁵⁶ Walkowitz, p. 10.

⁵⁷ Walkowitz, p. 10.

⁵⁸ Walkowitz, p. 10.

⁵⁹ This ‘status’ also serves to disrupt and problematise the arbitrary distinction made between ‘mainstream’ and ‘minority’ voices.

Wells and Rex Pilgrim's *Best Mates* anthology, in apprehending and celebrating 'imaginary ancestors' in fiction.⁶⁰

This thesis presents its arguments within a thematic structure. A non-linear sequence distances analysis from the naïve whiggishness of queer utopianism: unreflexive statements relating to 'gay liberation' and the 'evolution' of an 'emerging' 'gay consciousness' that tend to view decades prior to decriminalisation as uniformly repressive and static. This mode of reading ensures that overriding notions of 'period' do not elide the subjective 'realities' of 'communities' and individual lives. I argue that such provisionality is particularly necessary where scholars engage in assembling histories related to 'minority' groups. Such histories involve the consideration of 'identity' as it is comprised from the varied tectonics of both 'normative life' and the subjective experiences of 'subculture' and exclusion.

Non-chronological analysis is arguably better suited for more sophisticated historiographical accounts. In assessing *Hansard*, for example, a non-linear framework affects the ready consideration of patterns and systems of meaning evident between otherwise discrete bodies of text. It gestures toward dynamic shifts in understandings between periods, as well as the emergence or progression of particular discourses at particular times.

A similar 'measuring' quotient is possible in considering literary materials. By assessing the growth or emphases of themes between texts and authors, such frameworks provide more sophisticated composites of literary output. Such a framework also ensures that precise modes of protest are contextualised by the material and discursive conditions present and influential during their inception. Furthermore, a discursive framework more readily recognises the dynamic fashioning of literary sources between men. As I suggest in Chapter Three, far from working in isolation from one another, considerable evidence exists of informal networks between writers, as well as artists, academics and cultural commentators

⁶⁰ Wells, 'Introduction: Modest Achievements', p. 1.

more generally. For these reasons, texts are not discreet cultural moments, but part of a wider and dynamic fermentation of queer dissent and agitation that lives alongside multiple communities and bodies of knowledge.

This thesis begins with a chapter that discusses the discursive conditions of queer possibility apparent in a reading of New Zealand history. It engages with available historiography to assess the impact of certain cultural conditions upon the formation of subjective queer psyches and identities. It establishes a material and discursive sense of the past that enables more sophisticated claims in subsequent chapters. Chapter One proposes that ‘mainstream’ New Zealand history must be restructured to better integrate diverse queer personages and communities.

Chapter Two sets out to distill the cultural topology of representation and discourse evident in parliamentary debates. It offers a select reading of key episodes intrinsic to the ongoing process of defining ‘homosexual’ identities through shifting emphases of discourses, themes and archetypes. It also considers the emerging dialectic evident *within* the House, which saw negativised associations of ‘homosexuality’ increasingly challenged and disturbed from the 1980s onwards.

Chapter Three indicates how queer male writers engaged and critiqued ‘official’ discourses present in parliamentary debates (and elsewhere) long before the decriminalisation of male homosexuality in 1986. It demonstrates ways in which fictional texts operate as cultural contests to the hegemony of heteronormative relations, and considers how queer personages activate historically (and personally) contingent forms of resistance using existing cultural tools. This analysis comprises a dual focus that acknowledges the writers’s interest, throughout this period, in depictions of physical and lived experience, as well as the role played by language and the interior.

Taken together, these chapters initiate an 'opening out' of New Zealand historiography and provide for the increasingly complex understanding of queer's position in New Zealand's material and discursive culture since 1948.

Chapter One: Queering the Past: Revising New Zealand's Social and Cultural Histories

This chapter engages in a significant re-reading of much of New Zealand's past and disturbs claims made about queer's marginal or periphery status in society. My analysis is foregrounded in a thematic and non-linear framework and considers a range of diverse, though interrelated, themes. They include: queer visibility and spaces, cultural contexts and assumptions, cultural negotiations and symbologies, colonial and Maori contexts, law, crime and legality, religion and theological views, liberation movements and the challenge to the heteronormative, international influences and New Zealand contexts, and reform and the impact of AIDS. Here, I argue for and offer an increasingly complicating view of the past, and use disjunctures of time and space to better promote the holistic appraisal of New Zealand history. This chapter considers New Zealand in the context of international fermentation and debate, but also within its own set of unique geographies, emphases and specificities. Such considerations articulate more fully the legal, social and cultural pressures mapped against queer bodies and provide greater depth to the historically contingent meanings given to gender and sexuality in New Zealand.

Citing Joan Scott, Steven Maynard argues that historians must 'understand *how* people lived out their discursively constructed identities' in their materially specific pasts.¹ Such a process is certainly necessary for this thesis and its aims for integrating social and cultural history approaches. The articulation of historical and material contexts ensures that later critical interpretations of discursive change and queer critique are contextualised and explained through the shifting social and cultural backdrop of New Zealand history more generally. This places potentially esoteric interpretations of theory alongside the more 'substantive' considerations of culture and place: the environments under which systems of sexual possibilities are

¹ Steven Maynard, "'Respect Your Elders, Know Your Past': History and the Queer Theorists", *Radical History Review*, 75 (1999), p. 65 (emphasis added).

formed. Maynard asserts that the enterprise of material mapping must be considered alongside textual considerations of discourses and the discursive meanings evident during a given historical period. This provides for the more holistic interrogation of ‘origins’ and ‘implications’ of cultures and histories.²

Therefore, this chapter engages a critical framework which traces the outlines of ideological and historical conditions present in given periods and the possibilities of discursive change between such epochs.³ It maps the historical conditions of queer possibility, as well as the impact of certain cultural conditions upon the formation of subjective queer psyches and identities. Preoccupations with aspects of historical and cultural context are crucial for facilitating an understanding of the ‘shifting pattern of cultural and social perspectives’, as well as the systems of meaning articulated by ‘social actors’: the cultural fabric which constitutes the ‘conditions of possibility’ and the discursive outline of ‘social and sexual relations’.⁴ An historical context gives impetus to more nuanced understandings of society and the shifting boundaries of social attitudes and beliefs. Such analysis therefore helps to ‘explain’ why certain discussions of queerness emerge at particular times, or in particular systems of rhetoric and discourse.

Queer Visibility, Spaces and Urban Experience

The 1980s is configured as a marker of significant social and economic change in most accounts of New Zealand history.⁵ The decade is often narrativised by using the tropes of ‘experimentation’ and ‘revolution’; a period under which exacting

² Maynard, ‘History and the Queer Theorists’, pp. 71-3.

³ P. J. Gibbons coins the phrase ‘the climate of opinion’ in a similar analytical framework used in the second edition of *The Oxford History of New Zealand*. Gibbons gestures toward the outlines of discursive change between the 1890s and 1940 and avoids an exhaustive analysis of the period. Instead he makes select linkages to important signifiers of social and cultural thinking, such as the arts and literature, which embody the climate or quality of New Zealand thought. For further explanation see Gibbons, ‘The Climate of Opinion’, in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, second edition, ed., Geoffrey W. Rice (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 308-336.

⁴ Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992), p. 10.

⁵ For example, Geoffrey W. Rice in the second edition of the *Oxford History of New Zealand* suggests that it was a time in which a ‘revolution of social policy’ occurred. See Rice, ‘A Revolution of Social Policy, 1981-1991’, in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, second edition, ed., Geoffrey W. Rice (Auckland: Oxford UP, 1992), pp. 482-497.

‘traditional’ standards of governance and foreign policy were loosened, with the country undergoing large-scale reform.

The 1980s is also invoked as a key moment in the ‘development’ of gender equality and ‘gay liberation’ in New Zealand. Social historians have suggested that for gay men the period of the mid-1980s is significant as the site of legislative reform commissioned under the *Homosexual Law Reform (HLR) Act* 1986. While in legal terms this amended the *Crimes Act* 1961 by ‘removing criminal sanctions between males’ and the law ‘relating to consensual anal intercourse’ for ‘homosexuals’, the reform also had wider importance.⁶ A psychological and emotional resonance is argued by Nigel Gearing, who writes that the *HLR* ‘made the act of love legal between ... adult men’ and ended the state’s ability to incarcerate ‘consenting, loving adult gay men for five to seven years in New Zealand’.⁷ However, the wholesale appraisal of the 1980s as an epochal moment of queer deliverance risks obscuring previous experiences of ‘queerness’ beneath a blanket assumption of silence and repression.

Even a basic survey of extant secondary materials goes some way to contest repressive assumptions. James Belich, in *Paradise Reforged*, cites evidence ranging in period and place to suggest the presence of a lengthy history of ‘homosexual subculture’ in New Zealand. Sexual and emotional negotiations, he suggests, occurred at the ‘wharves, bars and cafes in Auckland, Wellington and Lyttelton’.⁸ While, on the one hand, this suggests an ‘underground’, and necessarily concealed subculture of sexual difference, on the other, scholars have gestured towards substantial indications of a public, if muted, ‘homosexual’ visibility, evident at least by the 1950s. Alison Laurie, for example, places this culture at the heart of New Zealand urban life. She explains that ‘discretion and caution’ would have been essential for ‘homosexual men and lesbians’, as a plethora of assaults, sometimes

⁶ *Homosexual Law Reform Act* 1986. Long Title.

⁷ Nigel Gearing, *Emerging Tribe: Gay Culture in New Zealand in the 1990s* (Auckland: Penguin, 1997), p. 9.

⁸ James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of New Zealanders, From the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Auckland: Penguin, 2001), pp. 511-4.

even murders, created a set of cultural and legal conditions under which ‘homosexual men and lesbians might be beaten and killed with impunity’.⁹

Despite this, ‘mainstream’ publications, including the *New Zealand Pictorial* and the *New Zealand Truth*, featured articles which reported the presence of ‘gangs of homosexuals’ present in Auckland in 1955, assembling ‘for the sake of perversion’. Later reports added that the ‘capital’s other sex’ congregated in coffee houses where ‘women danced intimately with each other’ and the city’s ‘homosexuals and deviants’ performed in strangely ‘bizarre costumes’.¹⁰ Such displays can be reinterpreted along cultural history lines. While they go some way to suggest the social economy of the day, adding cafes and night clubs to other urban environments, such as wharves and bars, present specific spaces left ‘open’ to limited queer appropriation and disruption. Further, their use also hints at moments of cultural display and violence directed against the careful boundaries of the heteronormative.¹¹ Certain spaces clearly lent themselves to flagrant and possibly deliberately flamboyant displays of ‘homosexuality’ despite the threat of violence.

Lee Wallace has considered the relationship between sexuality and the New Zealand cultural context. ‘[H]omosexuality’, he suggests, emerges ‘not only with private formations of the self’ but within the ‘spatial formations of public culture’; constructs which include ‘the city, the nation, and the global metropolis’.¹² Furthermore, the ‘forms taken by homosexuality in the last one hundred years’ are in part fed by ‘new bodily activities enabled and required’ by the ‘phenomenon of

⁹ Alison J. Laurie, “‘Filthiness’ Became a Theory: An Overview of Homosexual and Lesbian Organising from Nineteenth Europe to Seventies New Zealand”, in *Outlines: Lesbian and Gay Histories of Aotearoa*, eds., Alison J. Laurie and Linda Evans (Wellington: Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand, 2003), p. 13

¹⁰ Laurie, “‘Filthiness’ Became a Theory”, p. 13.

¹¹ ‘Heteronormative’ is defined as ‘the tendency in the contemporary Western sex-gender system to view heterosexual relations as the norm, and all other forms of sexual behaviour as deviations from the norm’. See Tasmin Spargo, *Foucault and Queer Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Icon, 1999), p. 73.

¹² Lee Wallace, ‘Queer, Here: Sexuality and Space’, in *Cultural Studies in Aotearoa New Zealand: Identity, Space and Place*, eds., Claudia Bell and Steve Matthewman (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 66, 71.

city life'.¹³ Taken to its fullest extent, these spaces present a 'queer underside' which exists alongside, and in some cases, intersects with the 'mainstream' and 'normative'.¹⁴ For early homosexual networks and communities, usually referred to as kamp or camp, coffee bars and private gatherings were probably important social spaces from which queer linkages and communality were formed.¹⁵

The culture of 'camp', however, was almost certainly a transnational one.¹⁶ This mode of being, which may or may not have included aspects of cross dressing and other gender inversions, as well as 'camp humour', helped men 'undermine the social categories of gender and sexuality', and, for 'gay men', represented 'a critical perspective on the world'.¹⁷ Exaggerated gender displays played out on at least two levels: they allowed men and women to express their 'anger at marginalisation', and recognised and parodied the highly artificial nature of gender roles: the 'cultural contingency and "unnaturalness" of the social order'.¹⁸ Thus camp and queer spaces functioned as significant sites of cultural liminality and resistance. Spaces such as coffee houses in 1950s New Zealand attracted a wide cross section of the marginalised and politically subversive. This included "'bohemians", students, artists, and kamp men and women', and ensured a highly visible presence of gender transgression in many of New Zealand's cities.¹⁹

¹³ Wallace, p. 66.

¹⁴ Wallace, pp. 66, 71, 73.

¹⁵ Alison Laurie, "'Filthiness" Became a Theory', p. 14. Further urban spaces to add to this cultural repertoire include streets and alleyways, movie theatres and mass transport systems, parks and piers, boarding houses and movie theatres, as well as a range of private homes and properties. See George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994), p. 176.

¹⁶ Considering New York in the 1920s, George Chauncey has argued that 'campness' and the category of 'camp' was 'at once a cultural style and a cultural strategy'. See Chauncey, pp. 290-1.

¹⁷ Chauncey describes camp humour as a kind of witty, often performatively effeminate quipping device. It is described by Mark Booth as a lived 'parody' which targets the 'traditionally feminine' in an 'exhibition of the stylised effeminate', placing, amongst other things, an 'ironical light' upon 'the abstract concept of the sexual stereotype'. See Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. 291; Mark Booth, 'Campe-toil!: On the Origins and Definitions of Camp', in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, ed., Fabio Cleto (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 69.

¹⁸ Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. 291

¹⁹ Alison Laurie, "'Filthiness" Became a Theory', p. 14. Such suggestions also figure in many literary accounts considered in this thesis. See my comments about space, the city and liberation in Chapter Three, pp. 97-100.

Cultural Contexts and Assumptions

Such representations contradict depictions of 1950s New Zealand as an age of conformity and repression. Yet, while there seems ample evidence of queer visibility, scholars have also increasingly identified the period as one in which the normative boundaries were hardened and re-entrenched.

Deborah Montgomerie explains that while '[n]ot all men became soldiers [and] ... nor did all women become mothers', the 'idealisation' of such roles during and after World War II was 'important in quietening social fears about the consequences of wartime mobilisation'.²⁰ The home and 'the family' supplied the means by which a 'society disrupted by war could be knitted back together': dynamics that were inherently bound up in notions of 'heterosexual coupling' and nuclear family formation.²¹ Bronwyn Labrum suggests that the conventional view of the 'period from 1950 to 1967' was a carefully idealised one: a set of social and cultural conditions under which the nuclear family 'triumphed' and the 'New Zealand dream' of owning a 'family home in the suburbs' became the motivation for 'government policy'.²² These constructs supplied a central cultural space in which normative notions of 'masculinity and femininity' could be seen to 'interact' and return to ideal 'equilibrium'.²³ It was under these conditions that certain normative characteristics became heightened. For men, this amplified the 'martial aspects of masculinity' and, for women, the 'nurturing aspects of femininity'.²⁴

²⁰ Deborah Montgomerie, 'Sweethearts, Soldiers, Happy Families: Gender and the Second World War', in *The Gendered Kiwi*, eds., Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999), p. 186.

²¹ Montgomerie, p. 185.

²² Bronwyn Labrum, 'Persistent Needs and Expanding Desires: Pakeha Families and State Welfare in the Years of Prosperity', in *Fragments: New Zealand Social and Cultural History*, eds., Bronwyn Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000), pp. 188-9.

²³ Montgomerie, p. 185.

²⁴ Montgomerie, p. 185. For discussions of post-war constructions of masculinity in New Zealand see Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country?: The Image of the Pakeha Male, a History* (Auckland: Penguin, 1996); Frazer Andrews 'The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit: White-Collar Masculinity in Post-War New Zealand', in *The Gendered Kiwi*, eds., Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999), pp. 191-212.

A number of New Zealand writers responded to these notions by suggesting their centrality to New Zealand's composition as a puritanical society. In 1954 Robert Chapman argued that New Zealand's 'social pattern' arose out of Calvinist and puritanical values of 'work, thrift, [and] abstinence of all kinds'.²⁵ This code of morality acquired a cultural fixity over time that was as 'rigid as the law'.²⁶ Chapman suggests that New Zealand was a homogenous culture that contained no 'acknowledged place' for those outside the normative conceptions of masculinity and the established patriarchy.²⁷ Bill Pearson argued that puritanism represented a repressive ideology intrinsic to people's continued conformity to the status-quo.²⁸ It demanded the mutual policing of moral standards enacted at a local level and the adherence of a conservative morality not always in keeping with contemporary and human needs.²⁹ The policing of cultural norms, he suggests, demonstrated a 'contempt for love, a sour spit, a denial of life itself'.³⁰ Pearson argued that such cultural strictures ensured the rigid formulation of gendered identity and the confinement of New Zealand men and women to familial spaces based around the nuclear and procreative models.³¹

Cultural Negotiations and Symbologies

Despite these conditions, a series of revisionist histories have recast the period as fractured by 'contradictions, tensions, and ambiguities'; cultural 'realities' that, in life, were 'experienced differently by groups and individuals'.³² The hardening of certain normative boundaries did not necessarily equate to wholesale repression of

²⁵ Robert Chapman, 'Fiction and the Social Pattern', *Landfall*, 7, 1 (March 1953), pp. 35, 40.

²⁶ Chapman, p. 40.

²⁷ Chapman, pp. 31, 39. Chapman suggests that '[i]f the writer without a place was to be like other exceptions' he would 'drop through the scaffolding of the pattern into the basement of national life'. See Chapman, p. 31.

²⁸ For a more fully realised discussion of authors' reactions to puritanism in New Zealand's early literature see Kirstine E. Moffat, 'The Puritan Paradox: The Puritan Legacy in the Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life of New Zealand, Focusing Primarily On the Works of Novelists Writing Between 1862 and 1940' (PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1999).

²⁹ Bill Pearson, 'Fretful Sleepers', in *Fretful Sleepers and Other Essays* (Auckland: Heinemann, 1974), p. 26.

³⁰ Pearson, 'Fretful Sleepers', p. 27. Chapman foreshadows this decades earlier in his suggestion that the 'social pattern' induced an 'unsatisfied bitterness' through its imposition of conformity and normativity. See Chapman, p. 53.

³¹ Pearson, 'Fretful Sleepers', pp. 15-7.

³² Labrum, pp. 188-9.

‘alternative’ sexualities. As I demonstrate in Chapter Three, not only were there visible displays of ‘homosexuality’ in several of New Zealand’s cities, but resistance to the ‘norm’ was also manifested itself in New Zealand’s bookshops and libraries. Literature written by ‘homosexual’ men became a major site of cultural exploration and resistance. This included works by writers such as Frank Sargeson and Bill Pearson, as well as the historian E. H. McCormick. As Peter Wells has suggested, ‘[a] broad generation of men and women, among them homosexuals, began pushing the boundaries of New Zealand culture forward’.³³ Such texts provide valuable correctives, both to the unified and apparently fixed views of ‘the homosexual’ espoused in public discourses, but also to the writings of much extant New Zealand gay social history.³⁴

A further body of recent scholarship suggests that many men and women successfully negotiated attempts to monitor and curtail ‘homosexual practices’.³⁵ A series of coded gestures or symbols were used to ‘signal’ sexual appetites or affiliations. Other signifiers designated certain spaces as safe for use. Historians, such as Belich, thus speculate that men and women were usually able to avoid detection and ‘conviction’ by using ‘agreed signs and meeting places’.³⁶ Matt Houlbrook writes that men living in London from 1918 to 1957 generated ‘spaces

³³ Peter Wells, ‘Introduction: Modest Achievements’, in *Best Mates: Gay Writing in Aotearoa New Zealand*, eds., Peter Wells and Rex Pilgrim (Auckland: Reed, 1997), pp. 8-9.

³⁴ Such writing tends to minimise queer possibilities prior to ‘liberation’ if not deny them categorically. Nigel Gearing, for example, argues that ‘New Zealand’ of the 1950s and 1960s was a ‘morally conservative country with a narrow sense of manhood’ and that, quite definitively, ‘[h]omophobia was the norm right through every level of society, church, state, media, family, school’. William McNab similarly writes that ‘1950s New Zealand society was not particularly tolerant of any kind of difference or deviation from the dominant cultural ‘norms’’ and that ‘[t]hose that felt they were different often remained invisible, isolated and unable to talk about their experience’. See Gearing, p. 15; Justin William McNab, ‘A Social Historical Overview: Male Homosexuality in New Zealand’ (MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1993), p. 67.

³⁵ Belich, p. 513. Australian examples also prove instructive. Garry Wotherspoon has indicated that far from being universally repressive, the 1940s and 1950s supplied men with tremendous sexual and emotional opportunities. For his discussion of ‘homosexual’ relationships formed during World War II and into civilian life see Garry Wotherspoon, ‘Comrades-in-arms: World War II and Male Homosexuality in Australia’, in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, eds., Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 205-222. For an autobiographical account of same-sex sexual encounters and intimacies between men see Roderic Anderson, *Free Radical: A Memoir of an Australian Gay Political Activist* (Sydney: Lulu, 2006).

³⁶ Belich, p. 512

of sociability and sexual encounter' in which the city was encoded as a 'series of related but discrete sites of interaction, danger, and pleasure'.³⁷ Queer men 'forged worlds' within their own 'geographies and temporal rhythms, histories and cultures, styles of behaviour and language, ways of being, and modes of understanding which were, nonetheless, deeply embedded within the broader metropolitan landscape'.³⁸ Cultural processes such as these thus allowed men both to escape detection from the coercive powers of the state and created powerful community linkages with other men of differing class, ethnicities, and masculinities.

Colonial and Maori Contexts

Circulating narratives of queerness were present early in New Zealand's history. Scandal involving the British missionary William Yate and local Maori, for example, inform part of the founding mythology of New Zealand culture and became a major preoccupation for later historians.³⁹

Whether the accusations leveled at Yate were true or not are, for the purposes of this study, beside the point. What they do demonstrate is the very real way in which relationships between men could be viewed with alarm when deviating from accepted lines of 'mateship' and camaraderie. Yate's relationship with Edwin Dennison, for example, was characterised as a 'constant association' and 'marked intimacy', possibly 'far closer than they would admit'.⁴⁰ The implication is that in such circumstances relationships between men risked slipping from the homosocial to the homosexual. Judith Binney explains that witnesses cited 'hand-clasping, giggling, unseemly tickling, and a preference to sleep together at night' as evidence

³⁷ Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1981-1957* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 41.

³⁸ Houlbrook, p. 264.

³⁹ William Yate was accused of improper conduct with upwards of 100 youths. He was also suspected of an 'improper' relationship with a European, Edwin Dennison. See Judith Binney, 'Yate, William 1802-1877', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* [online], updated 7 April 2006, URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>. For further exploration of Yate's experience see Belich, p. 511-2; Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin, 2003), p. 146. For reflections in literature see Frank Sargeson, 'An Imaginary Conversation', *Landfall*, 20, 1 (Dec 1966), pp. 349-57; Annamarie Jagose, *Slow Water* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2003).

⁴⁰ Judith Binney, 'Whatever Happened to Poor Mr Yate? An Exercise in Voyeurism', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 9, 2 (1975), pp. 115, 117.

of a sexual relationship.⁴¹ While this did not result in a legal action, the social and professional consequences for Yate were severe.⁴²

Although historians have begun to flesh out a clearer notion of male Pakeha experiences in the nineteenth century⁴³ the status of Maori sexual practices prior to European arrival is less advanced. As Pat Moloney maintains, the '[d]ocumentation of same-sex relations' is 'sparse', with often '[i]ts very existence' contested.⁴⁴ Despite this, she highlights evidence that missionaries in the Pacific did 'set out to destroy indigenous sexual and gendered behaviours' deemed 'incompatible' with Christian morality.⁴⁵ She argues that the invisibility of same-sex desire in ethnographic records of Maori is 'surprising' given the 'prevalence and acceptance of same-sex roles in other Polynesian societies' in past and contemporary times.⁴⁶ Moloney highlights a revisional impulse present amongst some modern-day Maori commentators. She notes that:

Ngahua Te Awekotuku has sought (by reinterpreting and retranslating Maori oral traditions, like the story of Hinemoa), to reconstruct a tradition of same-sex desire – *takatapui* – within Maori culture. She has blamed 'the crusading heterosexism of the missionary ethic' for obscuring this aspect of Maori society.⁴⁷

For Ngahua Te Awekotuku, the identification of a Maori same-sex tradition has become associated with a vital political impulse with clear benefits for current and later generations of *takatapui*. Te Awekotuku, argues that 'we are reclaiming it back,

⁴¹ Binney, 'Whatever Happened to Poor Mr Yate?', p. 118.

⁴² Binney argues that Yate found himself in an 'intolerable' position, not 'faced with any charges, but for many years prohibited by the Bishop of London from practicing ... as a clergyman'. See Binney, 'Whatever Happened to Poor Mr Yate', p. 111.

⁴³ Chris Brickell is the first New Zealand historian to track the construction of male same-sex desire at any length and provides a more theorised basis for Pakeha experience than was previously available. See Chris Brickell, 'Same-Sex Desire and the Asylum: A Colonial Experience', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 39, 2 (2005), pp. 158-178. Also see Stevan Eldred-Grigg's *Pleasures of the Flesh: Sex and Drugs in Colonial New Zealand, 1840-1915* (Wellington: Reed, 1984).

⁴⁴ Pat Moloney, 'Shameless Tahitians and Modest Maori: Constructing the Sexuality of Pacific Peoples', in *Sexuality Down Under: Social and Historical Perspectives*, eds., Allison Kirkman and Pat Moloney (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2005), p. 44.

⁴⁵ Moloney, pp. 44-5.

⁴⁶ Moloney, p. 44.

⁴⁷ Moloney, p. 44.

for it has always ... been there ... [w]e will find them, and celebrate them, as survivors'.⁴⁸

Other cultural commentators, such as Peter Wells, have lamented that we 'may never know the actual state of polymorphous sexuality which existed in pre-European Maori society'.⁴⁹ Wells suggests that the process of colonisation changed the 'troubling naked sexuality' of Maori into a 'fully clothed compulsory heterosexuality'.⁵⁰ Despite this, historian Chris Brickell has used evidence taken from early Maori material culture to conjecture that such relationships existed 'beyond doubt'.⁵¹ He asserts that:

A number of carvings spirited away to overseas museums in the nineteenth century feature male figures intimately entwined or engaged in sexual activity (and female figures are depicted similarly). Several chants also allude to affectionate relationships between those of the same sex. At least one Christian missionary reported that in the early nineteenth century intimate same-sex relationships appeared to be an integral part of Maori life at the time.⁵²

Such widespread prevalence would certainly suggest that Maori same-sex practices formed part of the normative fabric of pre-colonial Aotearoa.⁵³ Whether or not this can be said with any certainty is beside the point. Its possibility emphasises that same-sex intimacies could be articulated and experienced outside the conventional understandings of 'homosexual' and 'gay' subcultural discourses in New Zealand. Kahaleole Chang Hall and J. Kehaulani Kauanui argue that the 'discrete analytical categories of "homosexuality" and ... "sexuality"' are themselves a 'colonial

⁴⁸ Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, 'He Reka Ano – Same-sex Lust and Loving in the Ancient Maori World', in *Outlines: Lesbian and Gay Histories of Aotearoa*, eds., Alison J. Laurie and Linda Evans (Wellington: Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand, 2003), p. 9. For further explanations of takatapui see Te Awekotuku, 'Hinemoa: Retelling a Famous Romance', in *Lesbian Studies in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (New York: Harrington Press, 2001), pp. 1-12; *Ruahine: Mythic Women* (Wellington: Huia, 2003).

⁴⁹ Wells, 'Introduction: Modest Achievements', p. 12

⁵⁰ Wells, 'Introduction: Modest Achievements', p. 12

⁵¹ Chris Brickell, 'The Emergence of a Gay Identity', in *Sexuality Down Under: Social and Historical Perspectives*, eds., Allison Kirkman and Pat Moloney (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2005), p. 64.

⁵² Brickell, 'The Emergence of a Gay Identity', p. 64.

⁵³ Brickell, 'The Emergence of a Gay Identity', p. 64.

imposition' that addresses only a minority of Pacific people who have 'sexual and love relationships with members of their own sex'.⁵⁴ This alternative articulation stresses a fundamental argument: those conceptions of sexuality which appear in twentieth century discourses in New Zealand are, for the most part, Western in origin.⁵⁵

Law, Crime and Legality

Brickell suggests that 'the homosexual' as an identifier relating to an 'inner', and thus knowable, 'homosexual "nature"', was a relatively recent phenomena and coalesced in New Zealand over the course of the first six decades of the twentieth-century.⁵⁶ He argues that prior to this a more universalist view prevailed; knowledge (though not necessarily equating to 'acceptance') that 'renegade sexual practices might be indulged in by any man [or woman] who gave in to his [or her] natural curiosity or temptation'.⁵⁷

Certain discourses and discursive shifts in society were responsible for such movement. The law, encompassing, the legislative, judicial, and policing branches of government, formed a powerful discourse which, as Foucault argued, shaped understandings of sex and desire.⁵⁸ Matt Cook maintains that this 'propagate[d] a

⁵⁴ Lisa Kahaleole Chang Hall and J. Kehaulani Kauanui, 'Same-Sex Sexuality in Pacific Literature', in *Asian American Sexualities: Dimensions of Gay and Lesbian Experience*, ed., Russell Leong (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 113-118. Such matters have also been raised in North-American and indigenous contexts in regard to the conceptualisation of 'two-spirit' customs; an observance of a 'third gender' common throughout many Native American and Canadian First Nations peoples. For further information on 'two-spirit' identity categories see Sabine Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1998); Richard C. Trexler, *Sex and Conquest: Gendered Violence, Political Order, and the European Conquest of the Americas* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995); Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas and Sabine Lang, eds., *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* (Urbana-Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

⁵⁵ This reinforces the constructed 'reality' behind any attempt to describe and categorise complex and subjective human behaviour.

⁵⁶ Brickell, 'Same-Sex Desire and the Asylum', p. 158.

⁵⁷ Brickell, 'Same-Sex Desire and the Asylum', pp. 158-9.

⁵⁸ Foucault suggests that by the nineteenth century 'the homosexual' had become a 'personage, a past, a case history, ... a species'. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans., Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 36-40, 43. For incisive interpretation of Foucault's argument see David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 16-33; David M. Halperin, 'Forgetting Foucault: Acts,

series of apparently incontestable ‘norms’ and encouraged their internalisation.⁵⁹ The legal system, then, was a system of power, as well as a symbol of ‘the historicity of sexuality’ in which ‘shifts in experiences and understandings over time resulted partly from the machinations of the legislature and the courtroom’.⁶⁰

This meant that ‘the homosexual’ was both regulated and produced by the legal system. Brickell has again argued that few men were ‘committed into New Zealand asylums for their attraction to other men’.⁶¹ Rather the ‘penal system catered for those unlucky enough to be convicted of “buggery”’.⁶² In Britain the law relating to ‘homosexual acts’ – usually acts of anal intercourse, but extended to include all forms of sexual expression – was captured by Henry Labouchere’s infamous amendment to the *Criminal Law Act* of 1885. This stipulated the imprisonment and the possibility of ‘hard labour’ for any ‘male person’ found guilty of any ‘act of gross indecency with another male’.⁶³ This Act was significant in so far as it represented a statutory category ‘wholly independent of ecclesiastical connotations’ and defined male sexual actors ‘against a normative standard that deified the “purity” of the middle-class “household”’.⁶⁴

This formed the central legal mediation between British male-male relationships and the law up until 1967⁶⁵ and, as a British Colony, was extended to New Zealand in 1840.⁶⁶ Stevan Eldred-Grigg states that British law was eventually superseded in

Identities, and the History of Sexuality’, *Representations*, 63 (Summer 1998), pp. 93-120; Didier Eribon, ‘Michel Foucault’s Histories of Sexuality’, trans., Michael Lancey, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 7 (2001), pp. 31-86.

⁵⁹ Matt Cook, ‘Law’, in *The Modern History of Sexuality*, eds., H. G. Cocks and Matt Houlbrook (London: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 64-86.

⁶⁰ Cook, p. 65.

⁶¹ Brickell, ‘Same-Sex Desire and the Asylum’, p. 158

⁶² Brickell, ‘Same-Sex Desire and the Asylum’, p. 158

⁶³ *Criminal Law Amendment Act (UK) 1885*, Clause 11.

⁶⁴ Ed Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side: Toward a Genealogy of a Discourse on Male Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 118-9.

⁶⁵ Walkowitz, p. 82. Other historians such as Sean Brady have argued that in fact the 1885 Amendment did *not* supersede the early Buggery Act of 1533, legislation with an ecclesiastical rather than secular law basis. See Sean Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861-1913* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 85-118.

⁶⁶ Peter Spiller, Jeremy Finn and Richard Boast, *A New Zealand Legal History* (Wellington: Brooker’s, 1998), p. 54.

1867 when New Zealand passed an *Offences Against the Person Act*. This led to the court's promotion of 'all erotic acts between males' as "assault" and a further law of 1867 making 'sodomy' grounds for divorce.⁶⁷ This was augmented by the *Criminal Code Act* of 1893, legislation influenced in part by the Labouchere Amendment, but with new provisions made for flogging by 'cat-o-nine-tails' alongside hard labour and imprisonment.⁶⁸ New Zealand again reconstituted its criminal code in 1900 and 1908 and retained the 1893 penalties. Phil Parkinson suggests that punishment was 'reduced by the removal of flogging and hard labour provisions' and the substitution for life imprisonment for 'sodomy'.⁶⁹ This was retained until 1961.⁷⁰

Religion

Judeo-Christian belief systems form a further intersection at which queer bodies were policed. Despite significant variations during the last two thousand years,⁷¹ Christianity's stance on homosexuality has remained mostly prohibitive during much of New Zealand's history.⁷² The categories of 'sodomy' and buggery', used in criminal law to describe sexual relations between men, were themselves initially

⁶⁷ Eldred-Grigg, *Pleasures of the Flesh*, pp. 48-9. Eldred Grigg also argues that early formations of 'sodomy' and sexual indecency were often conflated with relations between men and animals. See Eldred-Grigg, *Pleasures of the Flesh*, p. 51.

⁶⁸ Eldred-Grigg states that the courts continued to define 'indecent assault' as 'any contact between the penis of a male and the hand or mouth of another, whether the contact was voluntary or not'. He suggests that 'a total of 1, 350 separate blows might be given to punish a man for a single sexual act'. See Eldred-Grigg, *Pleasures of the Flesh*, pp. 170-1.

⁶⁹ Phil Parkinson, 'Sexual Law Reform', *Sites: A Journal for Radical Perspectives on Culture*, 19 (Spring 1989), p. 9.

⁷⁰ Parkinson, p. 9. Both McNab and Brickell have indicated that psychologists and criminologists in Europe and North America had begun to construct sexual deviance within medical discourses at this time. However, Brickell argues that the New Zealand state was slow to acknowledge this opinion and continued to view 'homosexuality' as a criminal act rather than a mental illness. See McNab, p. 36; Brickell, 'The Emergence of a Gay Identity', p. 66.

⁷¹ For examples of Christianity's various views on homosexuality, including indications of cultural celebration and tolerance see James Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); James Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (New York: Vintage, 1994); Mathew Kuefler, ed., *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); William Naphy, *Born to Be Gay: A History of Homosexuality* (New York: Tempus, 2006).

⁷² Belich, pp. 514-5; Laurie Guy, *Worlds in Collision: The Gay Debate in New Zealand, 1960-1986* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2002), p. 60.

defined through Christian theologies.⁷³ Such ‘traditional’ views of Christianity were intrinsic to the regulation of desire and sexual practices and helped to ‘set the parameters for controlling homosexuality’.⁷⁴ Christian beliefs heightened notions of ‘bodily control’ and ‘renunciation’, and ‘produced a dominant sexual culture’ that ‘declared illicit all acts and desires’ that fall outside the socially-sanctioned relationship of man and wife.⁷⁵ Literal interpretations of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament offered, for some Christians, an ‘authentic’ basis of homosexuality’s inferior status and as contrary to the will of God.

Materials taken from the HLR period, for example, demonstrate the conflation of a ‘natural’ gender construction and a religious evangelism antagonistic towards ‘queerness’. In 1985 The Reformed Churches of New Zealand expressed that ‘[t]here is no doubt that the Bible sees homosexuality as a gross evil behaviour pattern which is worthy of criminal sanctions, and yet can be broken by the power of God’.⁷⁶ They concluded that ‘homosexuality’ was an ‘unnatural’ and ‘unmitigated evil’ that represented an ‘offence against God and man’; an ‘alien system of morality’ in marked contrast to ‘[Christian] principles of life ... [,] nationhood ... [,] public institutions, and the very fabric of society’.⁷⁷ These ideas were also apparent in the Mazengarb Report of 1954, a document that connected moral delinquency, teenage sexual indiscretions, and suggestions of ‘homosexuality’ with a culture made degenerate by its disengagement from

⁷³ For further explanation see Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁷⁴ Garry Wotherspoon, *‘City of the Plain’: History of a Gay Sub-Culture* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1991), p. 21.

⁷⁵ Kim M. Phillips and Barry Reay, ‘Introduction’, in *Sexualities in History: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 10. Jeffrey Weeks suggests that such values originate in a moral code established during the Victorian age. See Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (New York: Longman, 1981), p. 22.

⁷⁶ Richard Flinn and John Steenhof, *Homosexuality and the Law: Freedom at Last? – A Submission by the Political Contact Committee, Reformed Churches of New Zealand* (Auckland: Reformed Churches of New Zealand, 1985), p. 26-9.

⁷⁷ Flinn and John Steenhof, pp. 25-6. Such views reinforce the prevailing assumptions apparent in puritanical ideologies that re-inscribed notions of normative gender identity within the procreative foundations of the nuclear family unit.

Christian teachings.⁷⁸ Such examples demonstrate the ways in which religion actively shaped official discourses surrounding sexuality.

Despite this, certain denominations remained active supporters of queer law reform. The Methodist Church became the first Christian denomination in New Zealand to support decriminalisation in 1961.⁷⁹ New Zealand clergy also ranked among some of the earliest members of the New Zealand Homosexual Law Reform Society (NZHLRS). In 1968, NZHLRS members conceded that the ‘traditional’ Christian stance on ‘homosexuality’ was antagonistic and insisted that ‘distinction[s]’ made between ‘homosexuality’ and ‘homosexual acts’ were ‘inadequate’ for a ‘growing minority’ of churches.⁸⁰ The Church of England in New Zealand made more sophisticated claims, noting in their 1969 report that ‘a special obligation’ existed amongst Christians. This included a ‘compassionate approach to the homosexual’ and the promotion of a constructive discussion regarding ‘homosexuality’ in society.⁸¹ The Church suggested that Christians must display a ‘willingness to help’ rather than condemn and argued that homosexuals must be allowed to ‘come to terms with their own nature’ if they were to lead ‘useful and happy lives’ in a society where they ‘were not excluded as an irredeemable group’.⁸²

Such views reflect Laurie Guy’s claims of the increasing emphasis placed by some ‘liberal’ Christians on the ‘immanent human’ rather than the ‘transcendent divine’.⁸³ This emphasised ‘love for others’ and an increased ‘self-affirmation’ that included homosexuals.⁸⁴ Such precepts stood in contrast to the more conservative

⁷⁸ ‘The Report of the Special Committee on Moral Delinquency in Children and Adolescents’, *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives of New Zealand*, 1954, H-47, pp. 7-8, 63, 65.

⁷⁹ Guy, p. 56.

⁸⁰ New Zealand Homosexual Law Reform Society, *50/50: Fifty Questions and Answers About Homosexuality and the Law* (Wellington: New Zealand Homosexual Law Reform Society, 1968), p. 4.

⁸¹ Church of England in New Zealand, *Homosexuality: A Report by the Provincial Committee in Public and Social Affairs* (1969), p. 4.

⁸² Church of England in New Zealand, p. 4.

⁸³ Guy, p. 64.

⁸⁴ Guy, pp. 64-5.

teachings of the Christian Right; the ‘loose network’ of churches that included conservative Catholics and evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants.⁸⁵

Liberation Movements and the Challenge to the Heteronormative

Negotiations surrounding, or challenges to, the status of gender and sexuality in New Zealand society emerged alongside the counter-culture movement of the 1960s.⁸⁶ This period saw increased discussion about ‘the repression of sexuality’ and challenges to normative assumptions.⁸⁷ Michael King states that by 1972 around 20 women’s liberation groups operated in New Zealand, which, like the wider counter-culture movement, played a part in ‘changing attitudes of mainstream New Zealand society’ in regard to ‘sex roles, equality of opportunity and equal pay’.⁸⁸

Women’s groups played a key role in the legal reforms surrounding ‘homosexual acts’ in New Zealand. While there was never complete consensus between various organisations, both ‘gay’ and ‘straight’ women, Maori and Pakeha, were active in the organisations.⁸⁹ Social and legal reform became a fight for ‘gays and lesbians’ but also for ‘feminists’ more generally who, Charlotte Macdonald argues, jointly sought to ‘reshape sexual and family relationships and institutions’.⁹⁰

The political rhetoric of the 1960s and 1970s sought to disrupt and ultimately ‘slough off’ the ‘shackles’ of repressive patriarchy.⁹¹ In doing so, the women’s

⁸⁵ Craig Young, ‘Queer Versus The New Zealand Christian Right, 1985-1998’, in *Queer in Aotearoa New Zealand*, eds., Lynne Alice and Lynne Star (Palmerston North: Dunmore, 2004), p. 47.

⁸⁶ Bronwyn Dalley and Gavin McLean, for example, suggest that the introduction of the contraceptive pill, and ‘new patterns of sexuality’ of the 1970s, allowed more women the ability ‘to control their bodies and their own sexuality’. See Bronwyn Dalley and Gavin McLean, eds., *Frontier of Dreams: The Story of New Zealand* (Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 2005), pp. 350-51.

⁸⁷ Dalley and McLean, p. 351.

⁸⁸ Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin, 2003), pp. 461-63.

Belich contends that more than one hundred women’s organisations were formed during the course of the 1970s. See Belich, p. 497.

⁸⁹ King, p. 462.

⁹⁰ Charlotte MacDonald, *The Vote, The Pill and the Demon Drink: A History of Feminist Writing in New Zealand* (Wellington: Bridget Williams, 1993), pp. 208-9. For further discussion see McNab, p. 133.

⁹¹ Sue Kedgley, *The Sexual Wilderness: Men and Women in New Zealand* (Auckland: Reed, 1985), p. 6.

movement increasingly fractured the apparently ‘solid reality’ upon which the bedrock of heteronormativity rested.⁹² McNab states that:

Both movements [gay and feminist] can be seen as a reaction ... to different areas of wider societal sexuality/morality concerns - the concern with women’s sexuality and ‘deviant’ sexuality respectively. Because these spheres of concern are closely related to each other through wider societal, political, economic and historical forces ... then resistance movements to these spheres also have relevance to each other.⁹³

It is alongside an apparent movement in the discourses surrounding gender and sexuality that greater queer political visibility began to emerge. New Zealand’s first organisation for homosexual men, the Dorian Society, opened in Wellington in 1961. The Gay Liberation movement itself was formed in 1972, the Sisters for Homophile Equality emerged in 1973, and New Zealand’s first lesbian magazine, *Circle*, was first published in the same year.⁹⁴ As Heather Worth suggests, while the ‘primary claim’ of gay liberation was sexual freedom, it was also ‘intensely political’.⁹⁵ Calls for reform were not necessarily made out of perceived ‘notions of sexual “essence”’ or sexual difference but through an ‘oppositional relation to the discourses of medicine, the law, education, housing and welfare policy’.⁹⁶ Commentators, such as Worth, therefore stress both the existence of groups antecedent to the gay liberationists of the 1980s as well as reform efforts prior to the passing of the successful *HLR Act* of 1986, as early as the 1960s.⁹⁷

International Influences and New Zealand Contexts

The New Zealand gay and lesbian political groups assembled (or already active) in the 1980s (and before) were powerfully influenced by successive waves of

⁹² As Kedgley argued in *The Sexual Wilderness*, early feminists ‘asked women to question their conditioning, and especially the inner chant they had sung since childhood: that a woman was nothing without a man; that a woman lived and breathed and found meaning in life and her place in the universe by marrying and thereafter serving and dedicating her life to a man’. See Kedgley, p. 6.

⁹³ McNab, p. 133.

⁹⁴ Dalley and McLean, p. 352.

⁹⁵ Heather Worth, *Gay Men, Sex and HIV* (Palmerston North: Dunmore, 2003), pp. 20-1.

⁹⁶ Worth, p. 21.

⁹⁷ Worth, p. 21.

international politicisation. This included the emergence of the homophile movement, gay liberation, and lesbian feminism in the United States.⁹⁸ Each movement carried a particular terminology and membership composition, articulated particular claims about sexuality, and had specific reform goals in mind.

The homophile movement was not, like later groups, a mass movement, but was created to provide educational programmes and more modest political reform.⁹⁹ In contrast, supporters of gay liberation were influenced by New Left social movements and critiqued the perceived structures and values of heterosexual dominance. Activists promoted a mode of protest – ‘liberationists discourse’ – which aimed to undermine the ‘dominant formulations of sex and gender categories’ and their related institutions.¹⁰⁰ Such categories would be ‘eradicated’, they argued, by gay men and lesbians who, ‘refusing their subaltern status, would destroy the system through literal and symbolic acts of violence’.¹⁰¹ Liberationists suggested this would be achieved through a public ‘coming out’, challenging ‘natural’ sex and gender roles, and the promotion of the notion that ‘gay is good’.¹⁰² However, the gay liberation movement ultimately settled on a less oppositional middle-ground. The purely liberationist mode gave way to the ‘ethnic model’ of gay identity that sought to establish ‘a legitimate minority group, whose official recognition would secure citizenship rights for lesbian and gay subjects’.¹⁰³ Under

⁹⁸ Barry D. Adam has suggested that this influence grew partly out of the ‘postwar hegemony of the United States’ which impacted upon ‘the social organisation of homosexuality and the development of a political movement’ elsewhere. While he allows for ‘national traditions and varying arrays of social preconditions’, he argues that a shared language, cultural diffusion, as well as ‘socioeconomic factors and political possibilities’ meant that New Zealand’s experience largely paralleled that of the United States. I problematise this below. See Barry D. Adam, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement* (Boston: Twayne, 1985), p. 85.

⁹⁹ Annamarie Jagose argues that the capacity to mobilise campaigns along such lines only became possible in the early to mid-twentieth-century as an apparently identifiable ‘homosexual’ identity (and arguably, a ‘heterosexual’ identity too) began to crystallise. See Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), p. 22.

¹⁰⁰ Jagose, p. 100.

¹⁰¹ Jagose, p. 37. Such discourses typically rejected previous ‘authoritative’ medical views surrounding ‘homosexuality’ – which tended to ‘pathologise’ queer expressions of selfhood, often accepted by homophile modes of understanding – and instead advocated the creation of a public and political ‘gay’ identity.

¹⁰² Jagose, p. 37.

¹⁰³ Jagose, p. 61.

this model, queer citizens would be ‘equal but different’ to their ‘heterosexual’ counterparts: a ‘coherent community, united by a collective ... identity’.¹⁰⁴

These international developments help to contextualise New Zealand’s political experience and demonstrate ways in which local dissent was tied to evolving Western conceptualisations surrounding same-sex desire. The Dorian Society and the Sisters for Homophile Equality, for example, began their political existence within a homophile-influenced framework. Established in 1963, the stated aim of the Dorian Society’s legal subcommittee was both educational and legal: hallmarks of homophile thinking. The committee sought to ‘educate the public on aspects of homosexuality’, to ‘work with others for the removal of legal restrictions on consenting adult males’, and to ‘advise and assist members on legal and social matters’.¹⁰⁵ Several members of this committee went on to found the NZHLRS, demonstrating that, in reality, the schema of a particular affiliation might grow, or expand, as particular conceptualisations and theories developed around ideas of sexual discourses.

The reform period of the 1980s, in which a fixed and knowable ‘homosexual’ minority emerged, is best understood as a reflection of both the cultural shift towards ‘ethnic’ modes of sexuality within gay liberation groups, and the deepening binary between the ‘universal’ categories of ‘heterosexual’ and ‘homosexual’ more generally. Interestingly though, when faced by an opposition that equated homosexual behaviour with promiscuity and the spread of disease, liberationists, such as the Gay Task Force (GTF), claimed that the queer community was so diverse as to make any general supposition about ‘behaviour’ impossible. In this sense, there exists an intriguing ambivalence in gay reform rhetoric in New Zealand

¹⁰⁴ Jagose, pp. 61-2. Arguably, the fixity of social notions of gay identity also meant (and means) ongoing marginalisation of those individuals, groupings and communities which did not fit within the narrowed (and supposedly universalistic) conception of ‘gay’.

¹⁰⁵ Guy, p. 67.

from which alternating claims about the universal *or* subjective status of ‘gayness’ could be mobilised.¹⁰⁶

Given New Zealand’s geographical and cultural position, any ‘national’ experience is likely to be inflected by events and developments in nations to which New Zealand has close historical ties – especially Great Britain, the United States, and Australia. Of significance for New Zealand activists, for example, was the British Wolfenden Report of 1957. Composed by various representatives of the ‘establishment’, such as a consultant psychiatrist, a Scottish Presbyterian minister, and a High Court judge, the report recommended that ‘homosexual behavior between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence’.¹⁰⁷ The committee undermined much of the received knowledge regarding ‘homosexuality’ that circulated in public and official discourses.¹⁰⁸

This was influential for New Zealand’s emergent queer dissent. As Nigel Gearing explains, the NZHLRS was composed partly due to the Report’s findings. It began, he argues, as an ‘embryonic group of homosexual men and their friends and supporters’, initially called ‘the Wolfenden Association’ and styled upon ‘the English version’ of the group.¹⁰⁹ It therefore aimed at getting ‘amenable MPs on-side and operating like a progressive public opinion organisation’.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ As I discuss in Chapter Two, this ambivalence between discourses of gay selfhood is also present in a reading of the *Hansard*. Proponents of reform utilised notions of a collective ‘gay’ identity in order to operationalise ‘rights speak’ and notions of civil rights, more generally. Simultaneously, reformists also refuted ideas surrounding homosexual degeneracy, promiscuity, and mental illness, and argued that diverse human behaviour defied summary and simplistic generalisation. See Chapter Two, pp. 67-77.

¹⁰⁷ *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution*, Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department and Secretary of State For Scotland by Command of Her Majesty (London: September 1957), p. 115.

¹⁰⁸ The committee argued, for example, that ‘homosexuality cannot legitimately be regarded as a disease’ since it was often ‘compatible with full mental health in other respects’. It suggested that the law’s function was to ‘preserve public order and decency’ and to ‘protect the citizen from what is offensive or injurious, and to provide sufficient safeguards against exploitation and corruption of others’. The Report concluded that the law must not ‘intervene in the private life of citizens, or to seek to enforce any particular pattern of behaviour’. See *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ Gearing, p. 15.

¹¹⁰ Gearing, p. 15.

Other scholars have pointed to the Stonewall Riots as the specific point of cultural rupture during which queer minorities began to agitate actively, even violently, for change.¹¹¹ According to this ‘logic’, Stonewall was of global significance: a ‘date which mark[ed] the constitution of lesbian and gay identities as a political force’, and a ‘significant if mythological’ international date for the ‘origin of the gay liberation movement’.¹¹² Such statements are often invoked within utopian and naive liberationist discourses as a singular and universal moment of queer awakening.¹¹³

While Guy carefully avoids such a stance, he acknowledges that the American experience was influential in New Zealand gay and lesbian mobilisation. Auckland, for example, held marches to commemorate ‘the catalyst’ represented by the Stonewall Riots.¹¹⁴ However, while significant ‘linkages and continuities’ can be made, Guy adds that one ‘cannot assume that the New Zealand ... was simply an American clone’.¹¹⁵ He warns that the ‘social context of America’, the size and level of ‘American gay communities’, and the ‘political linkages and *modus operandi* of American gay liberation’, all caution against the assumption that the New Zealand experience was identical.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ The Stonewall Riots occurred in New York on the 27th of June 1969. For a recent monograph written in the mode that celebrates Stonewall’s significance as a moment of global liberation see Nicholas C. Edsall, *Toward Stonewall: Homosexuality and Society in the Modern Western World* (Virginia, University Press of Virginia, 2006).

¹¹² Jagose, p. 30. Ronald J. Hunt claims that ‘[p]erhaps more than any other term’ Stonewall ‘has come to symbolise the spirit of the contemporary gay and lesbian liberation movement’. See Ronald J. Hunt, *Historical Dictionary of The Gay Liberation Movement: Gay Men and the Quest for Social Justice* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1999), pp. 169-70.

¹¹³ Martin Duberman is emblematic of this stance. He suggests that men responded with violent protest to negative representations of homosexuality immediately subsequent to Stonewall. He maintains that ‘homosexuals themselves’ were newly determined to ‘challenge these hoary stereotypes’ and turned to militant action. See Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Penguin, 1994), p. 215.

¹¹⁴ Guy, p. 90.

¹¹⁵ Guy, p. 90.

¹¹⁶ Guy, pp. 90-1.

It is therefore important to return to the specificity of the New Zealand context.¹¹⁷ Stonewall was certainly not ‘the’ defining moment in the New Zealand reform experience. As I have already demonstrated, the Wolfenden Report played an equal, if not larger, part in the schema of New Zealand political agitation. Alongside this, historians must contend with other local foci for queer activism in New Zealand. Most scholars date the ‘birth’ for ‘gay liberation’ in New Zealand at 1972. Laurie argues that ‘[g]ay liberation’ began in that year when a group of ‘lesbians and gay men at Auckland University’ met to protest that ‘Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, a radical lesbian and feminist activist, had been refused a visa to the United States’ because of her sexuality.¹¹⁸ McNab adds that the formation of Auckland Gay Liberation became the bases for a range of political viewpoints and perspectives.¹¹⁹ It also became the centre for further politicisation associated with the organisation.¹²⁰ Its formation triggered the inception of similar radical organizations in centres around New Zealand that supported reform and ‘radical’ gay liberationist ideology.¹²¹ Gay liberation in New Zealand was therefore triggered locally and maintained through a national, though centralised, body that was specific to New Zealand geographies and communities.

Liberation and the Impact of AIDS

Given the relatively late period of reform in New Zealand, the impact of AIDS and HIV was also highly influential in the discourses of liberation. Historians elsewhere have also articulated the capacity for change which the epidemic generated. John D’Emilio attests that ‘[a]lthough AIDS was an unparalleled tragedy for the gay community’ in the United States ‘it also fostered a heightened level of political

¹¹⁷ Adams, for example, has conceded that ‘national traditions and varying arrays of social preconditions’ exist within the unique experience of each community. See Adams, p. 85.

¹¹⁸ Laurie, p. 15.

¹¹⁹ McNab, p. 136.

¹²⁰ McNab suggests that the Auckland group had ‘diverse members and hence the central co-ordinating committee had various smaller arms or cells’. This included ‘a street theatre arm, a graphics arm and an arm involved in political action’. See McNab, p. 136.

¹²¹ Branches operated in Wellington, Christchurch, and Hamilton, as well as smaller centres, such as the Manuawatu Gay Rights Organisation. Alison J. Laurie, ‘The Aotearoa/ New Zealand Homosexual Law Reform Campaign, 1985-1986’, in *Queer in Aotearoa in New Zealand*, eds., Lynne Alice and Lynne Star (Palmerston North: Dunmore, 2004), p. 19.

organization'. By the mid-1980s, and thus the precise moment at which law reform occurred in New Zealand, he suggests that 'AIDS was pushing gay issues toward the center [sic] of public debate'.¹²² Laurie holds that in New Zealand:

AIDS and the AIDS foundation were important during the campaign. The virus was used both by anti- and pro-Bill activists. Anti-Bill supporters warned that decriminalization would bring about massive increases in homosexual infections, while [gay activists] insisted that public education campaigns on safe sex could not be undertaken while homosexuality remained illegal.¹²³

An exploration of materials taken from the HLR period in New Zealand certainly reflects this driving capacity. Parliamentary debates, which I explore in the following chapter, are instructive as to public fears at the time. These conjectured that, if left unchecked, the virus might 'cross over' into mainstream society. During the introduction of the *HLR Bill* in 1985, Fran Wilde raised concerns that, while HIV was not an inherently 'homosexual disease', the continued persecution of homosexual men risked its unmitigated spread into the wider community. She suggested that the 'large proportion of homosexual men' were 'married, living as heterosexuals' and expressed their 'homosexual orientation only occasionally, through casual sexual contacts with strangers'.¹²⁴ Reform was an absolute necessity, Wilde argued, in order to diagnose the virus at its 'most infectious' and to 'combat the spread of AIDS in New Zealand'.¹²⁵

Such rhetoric was persuasive. Worth, suggests that 'gay citizenship', HLR, and HIV were more than just a 'coincidence' and helped stimulate social, cultural, and legal changes.¹²⁶ They promoted new models of equity and 'individual responsibility' as well as a revised mode of 'sexual governance and conduct' amongst men.¹²⁷

¹²² John D'Emilio, 'Gay Politics and Community in San Francisco Since World War II', in *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, eds., Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey Jr. (New York: Meridian, 1989), 456-473 (p. 472).

¹²³ Laurie, 'The Aotearoa/ New Zealand Homosexual Law Reform Campaign', p. 27.

¹²⁴ Fran Wilde, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3517.

¹²⁵ Wilde, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3517.

¹²⁶ Worth, p. 22.

¹²⁷ Worth, p. 23.

However, unlike other jurisdictions that underwent legal reforms much earlier, HIV and AIDS formed a major of context of New Zealand's reform debates. As I demonstrate in Chapter Two, this encouraged the conflation of homosexuality and disease, but also, as indicated here by Wilde, a 'reality' that disturbed linkages between homo- and heterosexual communities that had been resisted in the past.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the existence of a visible and lengthy queer presence throughout much of New Zealand's past. It has shown that queer men and women created vital communities and methods of cultural negotiation that were resistant to the state's coercive powers. Such developments did not occur separately from the rest of New Zealand society. Rather, a 'queer underside' existed alongside and, often, intersected with 'mainstream' and 'normative' histories and spaces. Such realities present cogent grounds for the integration of queer histories alongside the framework of 'mainstream' New Zealand history and raises the possibilities for queer 'liberation' much earlier than the more conventional dates of the 1970s and 1980s given in much of New Zealand's historiography.

This chapter has offered a reading of key discourses and institutional bodies involved in the formation of subjective identities and has argued that attitudes and beliefs surrounding sexuality remained fluidic and shifting throughout New Zealand's history. Systems of knowledge, such as the law and religion, were often, though, not always, at variance with emergent claims of queer selfhood. New Zealand was certainly influenced by the formation of international queer organisations and major social and cultural events. However, New Zealand's experiences were often unique and 'nationally' contingent. Queer organisations and social agents responded more often than not to local conditions and contexts for dissent.

These conclusions reinforce the need to 're-centre' local historiography in New Zealand-specific paradigms. Chapters Two and Three contribute to this imperative

by looking more closely at some of the public discourses mobilised around 'queerness' since 1948. They re-invigorate New Zealand specificities and conceive the actions of queer agents against the social and cultural backdrop set out in this chapter.

Chapter Two:

Reading *Hansard*: Constructing ‘The Homosexual’ from the Records of New Zealand’s House of Representatives

State representatives gave official recognition to the threat posed by ‘the homosexual’ to ‘natural’ conceptions of gender and identity in comments recorded in *Hansard* in 1974. Mr O’Flynn, the member for Kapiti, argued that ‘in no circumstances’ was it possible to describe homosexual ‘conduct’ as ‘normal for mankind’.¹ There existed, he suggests, a ‘self evident’ biological reality in ‘man’s sexual urge’.² The Hon. Sir John Marshall and member for Karori agreed. He suggested that ‘the human body is made for sexual relations between a man and a woman, and not between a man and another man’.³ Such rhetoric reinforced the ‘natural’ composition of opposite-sex couplings, a ‘reality’ that was confirmed by both scientific and cultural precedent. It strengthened a fixed continuum of human identity and expression that simultaneously promoted the state-sanctioned ideal of ‘heterosexuality’ and reinscribed the composite representation of ‘the homosexual’ as alien, non-normative, and sexually deviant.

Such accounts demonstrate connections between moral standards and sexual deviance in public discourse and the minds of those individuals active within national governance. ‘Homosexuality’, more than any other behaviour, represented a total moral failure, both on the part of the community and the individual. This chapter sets out to describe and interrogate the cultural topology of representation and discourse, and demonstrates the reductive capacity of ‘official’ representations of ‘homosexuality’. Following Timothy McCreanor I suggest that debates such as these were mobilised through a series of discourses. I demonstrate how the

¹ Mr O’Flynn, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2783. My reading of *Hansard* is comprised from contributions made by numerous members of the House. These debates represent the fullest extent of political perspectives, affiliations and roles in government. However, as I am mostly preoccupied by notions of narrative and representation, this chapter does not, for the most part, set out to identify a member’s party membership or their connection to specific regions in New Zealand. Wherever possible I identify the full name and title of individuals as set out in the parliamentary record.

² O’Flynn, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2783.

³ Hon. Sir John Marshall, 4 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2825.

discursive construction of what it meant to be ‘homosexual’, occurred through the application of certain discourses, namely those of nature, science, religion and the law, either separately, or in combination with each other.⁴ These narrative boundaries exclude up to a certain point the contributions of those they chiefly concern: ‘homosexuals’ themselves. However, this is only true up to a certain point. My analysis also looks at an emerging dialectic from within the House, the ways in which overarching discourses were at first questioned by (apparently) non-queer parliamentarians and then, from the mid-1990s onwards, how these discourses were themselves questioned, disturbed and reshaped by politicians with publicly avowed queer identities.⁵

As argued in the Introduction to this thesis, a non-linear framework is key to the effective consideration of patterns and systems of meaning and the reading of dynamic shifts in understanding between periods. I acknowledge, however, that discussions do emerge at specific instances, and in specific contexts. Certain discourses, such as ‘homosexuality’ as unnatural or abnormal were made with relative consistency from the 1950s onwards. Others remained relatively inert until the early 1970s when they were used to augment ‘older’ arguments predicated around religion and other sources of cultural knowledge. Still other discourses, such as those that conflate ‘homosexuality’ with disease began much earlier, but are exaggerated during the 1980s due to the increased incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) amongst men who have sex with men (MSM).⁶

⁴ McCreanor’s model is instructive in this area and I have adapted it accordingly. However, while McCreanor identified seven discourses, I offer a reading of the four main definitional tropes. See Timothy McCreanor’s, “‘Why Strengthen The Wall When The Enemy Has Poisoned The Well?’: An Essay of Anti-Homosexual Discourse in New Zealand”, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 31, 4 (1996), pp. 75-105.

⁵ I focus on three MPs active in the New Zealand Labour Party: Chris Carter, Tim Barnett, and Georgina Beyer. All three begin their political lives with maiden speeches which explain and defend a public queerness.

⁶ MSM is a behaviourally-based, rather than identity-based, category, developed by epidemiologists involved in AIDS prevention. It has been in clinical and professional use at least since the early 1990s and was proffered as a more suitable analytical concept to identify groups most ‘at risk’ of developing HIV and AIDS. For further discussions see Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2001); Steven Seidman, ‘AIDS and the Discursive Construction of Homosexuality’, in *Sexualities in History: A Reader*, eds., Barry Reay and Kim M. Phillips (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 365-386; Heather Worth, *Gay Men, Sex and HIV* (Palmerston North: Dunmore, 2003).

Regardless of their frequency and time period, debates typically revolved around disputed boundaries of sexual identity, highlighted tensions between the articulations of sexuality, either as a ‘minority’ or ‘universal’ experience, and touched off anxieties surrounding normative identity. This chapter in no way attempts an exhaustive synthesis of all of these discursive moments, nor does it offer an attempt to ‘test’ claims made for accuracy or rhetorical merit. Instead I offer a select reading of key episodes intrinsic to the ongoing process of defining ‘homosexual’ identities.

Normality and the ‘Natural’ Ideal

In defining what constituted a ‘natural’ human state, members of the House placed clear delimits to sexual expression and sexual identity. The logical end point of such debate situated ‘homosexuality’ and ‘homosexual behaviour’ as outside the realm of ‘respectable’ human practices and reinforced a set of apparently ‘heterosexual’ characteristics in binary opposition to ‘deviant’ mentalities. Certain members made continual reference to scientific or self-evident biological ‘realities’ in clarifying what constituted an acceptable ‘heterosexual’ continuum. In 1974 Mr Laney argued along similar lines to O’Flynn. Laney cited ‘the facts of life’ which included the ‘knowledge of the processes of reproduction’; notions that ‘living things are equipped with organs especially designed for [procreation], male and female, different but complimentary’.⁷ It followed that ‘normal behaviour’ was ‘based on the correct use’ of bodily functions, whereas, ‘homosexuality’ constituted ignorance of these ‘realities’ and thus ‘abuse or a deviation’.⁸

Such suggestions were not confined to the reform debates of the 1970s. Mr McTigue argued in 1985 that ‘[i]t is not a matter of persecuting homosexuals’ but of ‘dealing with a physical fact’.⁹ Procreation, he suggested, is ‘one of the strongest emotions and ‘normal sexual behaviour’ the ‘fulfilment of that emotion’.¹⁰ While

⁷ Mr Laney, 4 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2809.

⁸ Laney, 4 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2809.

⁹ Mr McTigue, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7606.

¹⁰ McTigue, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7604.

homosexuality was an aberration, and thus outside of normative life, members such as McTigue believed that '[t]he perpetuation of the species is instilled' in a procreative instinct that 'goes back many thousands of years, and has meant that the species has been able to sustain all kinds of shocks'.¹¹ Ian Peters suggested in 1993 that 'the animal world' does not demonstrate 'homosexual tendencies' and thus 'man' could be considered 'worst even in the animal world'.¹² He mobilised the 'the physiology of the body' as 'proof enough' that 'the homosexual act is wrong'.¹³ Such diatribes thus occur within specific linguistic contexts; they confer a set of instructive parameters and transgressive warnings about 'normative' states of being which only the 'heterosexual' inhabited.

In contrast, it was not always clear what kinds of practices or sets of behaviour a 'homosexual' predisposition exhibited. The precise parameters of the 'homosexual' subject shifted according to historical pressures and the subjective views of individual members. However, many parliamentary representatives cited practices which contravened the biological and instructive parameters established above. This included the act of 'anal intercourse'; a clear violation of biological and moral norms throughout this period, and confined almost entirely, it was suggested, to 'homosexual' subcultures. The Hon. Peter Tapsell cited two forms of 'homosexual manifestations' in 1993: the 'fairy', with a harmless, effeminate attitude and 'mincing walk', and the sodomite, a much more threatening 'homosexual' archetype.¹⁴ Tapsell argued that the 'sodomite' practiced sexual acts not 'seen even among the beasts of the field'.¹⁵ It followed that the 'person who thrusts' his 'penis into the anal passage of another person' was 'without a doubt a sexual deviant'.¹⁶

Earlier episodes, such as those of the 1970s, made more veiled references to anal intercourse. Some suggested that sexual 'acts' between men 'destroy[ed] human

¹¹ McTigue, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7604.

¹² Ian Peters, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16925.

¹³ Peters, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16925.

¹⁴ Hon. Peter Tapsell, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16923.

¹⁵ Tapsell, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16923.

¹⁶ Tapsell, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16923.

dignity', thus making it a 'threat to society and to the individual'.¹⁷ Anal sex constituted for others an 'unnatural habit' which necessarily called for 'medical treatment, not a change in the law'.¹⁸ According to this view, 'homosexual acts', or the act of 'sodomy', demanded 'years of study by experts' with 'the result of their studies being passed on to anybody involved in the welfare of humanity'.¹⁹ Members like Mr Comber feared that the absence of such studies, along with the collapse of coercive laws, would 'encourage or condone a move towards' the 'acceptance of homosexuality' and, in doing so, give 'people who are torn between homosexuality and heterosexuality the easy way, as it were, to adopt the *homosexual trait*'.²⁰

Thus debates usually indicated a predisposition amongst 'homosexual' men towards behaviour variously described, or, suggestively hinted at, as 'anal sex', 'sodomy' or 'buggery'. In doing so politicians factored the 'homosexual' as inherently sexualised and outside the traditional boundaries of procreative love-making. This reductive tendency followed a parallel assumption that 'homosexual' relationships were devoid of 'higher' emotional or ennobling qualities. Instead debates promoted discussions of unreasoned carnal desire which underscored deviant social behaviour.

Significant deliberations, particularly in the 1980s, revolved around the ultimate clarification of these behavioural traits. Some members suggested that 'homosexuals' were unusually promiscuous, thus explaining the increased transmission rate of HIV and AIDS amongst male 'homosexual' communities.²¹ Proponents for the status-quo cited 'objective', usually 'scientifically-derived', sources as verifiable bases for 'authentic' knowledge regarding supposed 'homosexual' sexual practices. This is exemplified by a series of comments made by Mrs T. W. M. Tirikatene-Sullivan during the second reading of the *Homosexual*

¹⁷ David Thompson, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2774.

¹⁸ Hon. Michael Connelly, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3167.

¹⁹ Mr Blanchfield, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3167.

²⁰ Mr Comber, 4 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2825 (emphasis added).

²¹ I discuss this in greater depth below when referring to 'homosexuality' and discourses of disease and medicine below.

Law Reform Bill in 1985. She cited ‘sodomy, oral anal sex (sic), rimming, and scating’ as major ‘homosexual’ pastimes and noted that ‘major surgery’ might be needed to address injuries ‘sustained from anal sex using one’s fist’.²² Other diseases, she suggested, might also be contracted through ‘the ingestion of semen and urine’, said to be ‘common in homosexual practices’.²³

These views were sustained by a series of similar if less extreme claims made by other members.²⁴ Such comments highlighted the centrality of science and science-based conclusions for anti-reform pundits. The combined weight of scientific data provided a grounded and robust body of socially-sanctioned literature to reinforce and guide personal attitudes towards ‘homosexuality’. Much of this data was used to reflect on whether ‘homosexuality’ was biologically determined or a learned behaviour. Scientifically-reliant analysis factored in arguments in any of at least three ways: it borrowed ‘scientific’ vocabularies or tonal qualities that stressed ‘reputable’ conclusions and ‘commonsense’; provided excerpts taken from ‘expert’ analysis; or cited specific, usually international, scientific studies.

The Hon. L. R. Adams-Schneider argued in 1974, for example, that ‘[t]here is much evidence ... to rebut an old idea that homosexuals are born that way’.²⁵

‘Homosexuals’, he suggested, are conditioned by ‘events, environment, and example’, thus borrowing a sociological framework of rhetoric.²⁶ Mr Blanchfield cited specific medical authorities who agreed with the continued criminalisation of ‘homosexual acts’; sentiments which took for granted that ‘homosexuality’ was inherently abnormal and ‘contrary to accepted standards of sexual morality’.²⁷

²² Mrs T. W. M. Tirikatene-Sullivan, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, pp. 7275-6.

²³ Tirikatene-Sullivan, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, pp. 7275-6. Mr Lee makes similar comments. He suggests that the ‘myriad of sex practices’ indulged in by homosexuals undermined ‘every normal property and habit of the body’ and called for the ‘abnormal to be made normal’. See Lee, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7269.

²⁴ For examples see Mr Townshend, 16 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7423; Mr Burdon, 16 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, pp. 7428-9; Mr Peters, 16 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, pp. 7442-5.

²⁵ Hon. L. R. Adams-Schneider, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3167.

²⁶ Adams-Schneider, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3167.

²⁷ Mr Blanchfield, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2772.

Tirikatene-Sullivan quoted scientific studies by Dr Mesmar to support the view that ‘97 percent of homosexuals who have been sexually counselled out of their ... orientation had a much greater sense of being male’ and that ‘88 percent felt they had more self-respect’.²⁸ Where relative scientific authority was lacking, members referred to this absence of medical data. Members called instead for more systematic scientific investigations into the ‘homosexual’ condition before embarking on extensive legal reform.²⁹

‘Homosexuality’ and Medicine

While Dr Finlay made use of medical discourses in his discussion of ‘homosexuality’ in 1968, members began aggressively exploiting rhetorical strategies which factored ‘homosexual’ bodies as diseased or socially harmful from the mid-1970s.³⁰ Yet a close reading of materials indicates fundamental disjunctions between the 1970s and the debate that followed. ‘Homosexuality’ overwhelmingly factored as a ‘psychological’ illness for members who argued against reform in the 1970s: a debilitating condition of the mind, requiring counselling or professional psychiatric intervention.³¹

By the 1980s, however, medical understandings placed greater emphases upon bodily disease and the ever-increasing risk of contamination posed for the wider

²⁸ Tirikatene-Sullivan, 15 December 1992, *NZPD*, Vol. 532, p. 13215.

²⁹ This implies a rebuttable presumption of homosexuality’s conditioning properties in the absence of suitable evidence to prove contrary biological bases. For examples see Blanchfield, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2774; Lee, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3525. However, as I will consider later in this chapter, the supposedly ‘objective’ claims of science could be mobilised from varying perspectives and might just as easily serve the interests of those supporting reform. Despite the claims of various members of parliament, science was not a platform for truth and objective conviction.

³⁰ It is significant that a medical doctor was the first to argue strongly for a medicalised view of ‘homosexuality’. Dr Finlay held that ‘homosexuality’ was ‘a symptom of a sickness ... but there is little room for debate that we in this country have insufficient psychiatric talent and experience to diagnose, let alone treat, all the cases that require it’. It is interesting to note, however, that Finlay used this model not to vilify ‘homosexual’ subjects but to establish the reality that ‘homosexuality’ was ‘neither an abstract phenomenon nor a deliberately and perversely chosen way of life’. See Finlay, 8 November 1968, *NZPD*, Vol. 358, p. 2983.

³¹ For examples see Hon. L. W. Gandar, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, pp. 3162-3; Mr Christie, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3169; Mr Venn Young, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2764; Hon. David Thompson, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2775; Hon. Michael Connelly, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, pp. 2779-80; Hon. D. A. Highet, 4 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, pp. 2815-6.

‘heterosexual’ community. This movement is in part explained through the proliferation of HIV and AIDS, particular in North America, which conflated already pre-existing views of ‘homosexual’ male subcultures. Rhetoric often combined ‘knowledge’ of disease with the ‘reality’ of ‘homosexuality’s’ moral malignancy. Mr Angus, for example, stressed that ‘[h]omosexual behaviour’ led to ‘problems far beyond the circles of homosexuals themselves’.³² ‘Homosexuals’ were responsible for both ‘disease and crime’ well in ‘excess’ of their ‘percentage of the population’.³³ Angus stated that ‘[t]he connection between homosexuals and ill health’ was ‘underscored’ by the ‘rise of AIDS’, and that ‘[t]he medical community has long known the *medical facts* of homosexuality’.³⁴ Norman Jones argued along similar lines when he emphasised AIDS as a ‘homosexual’ illness. He cited the experience of San Francisco and other ‘other places’ with relatively high concentrations of ‘emancipated’ ‘homosexuals’ to suggest that a ‘vote to legalise homosexuality at 16’ would be a ‘vote to legalise the spread of AIDS through New Zealand’.³⁵ He stressed that decriminalisation would bring ‘homosexuality’ and its related illnesses ‘into the open’, making it ‘so acceptable that it will be apparent everywhere’.³⁶ He concluded that it was ‘spreading a disease to which there is no answer’.³⁷

³² Mr Angus, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7621.

³³ Angus, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7621.

³⁴ Angus, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7621 (emphasis added).

³⁵ Norman Jones, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3522.

³⁶ Jones, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3522.

³⁷ Jones, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3522. During the Bill’s second reading Jones’s further stated that ‘homosexuals’ ‘deliberately’ placed themselves ‘at risk’ to AIDS and suggested that ‘there is an internationally organised campaign amongst homosexuals in every country in the world’. These men were ‘killing themselves by the thousands’ and infecting ‘heterosexual’ communities in the knowledge that ‘no Government or major multinational corporation would spend millions of dollars ... on a homosexual disease’. He believed that ‘homosexual’ communities had ‘blamed heterosexuals for the complaint’ and had ‘deliberately spread the AIDS disease into the world’s blood banks’. See Jones, 7 November 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 467, p. 7811. For further debates that exploited understandings of ‘homosexuality’ as diseased see Mr Braybrooke, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3524-5; Lee, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3526; Mr Wallbank, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3530; Tirikatene-Sullivan, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7275; Townshend, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 16 October, p. 7423.

Definitional Slippages and Cultural Policing

Such anxieties continued into the 1980s and well into the 1990s.³⁸ Thus, from the 1970s onwards, politicians defined ‘homosexuality’ either through a series of sexual activities in perceived opposition to ‘heterosexual’ normative standards or as generally unhealthy according to science.

However, such truth claims were often fractured by definitional slippages or internal inconsistencies. Dr Wall, for example, imagined a continuum of ‘homosexuality’ in a definition which combined a range of sexual expressions. This extended from the ‘transsexual’ and men in ‘the wrong-sexed body’; homosexuals, who ‘know very well what sex they are’ but preferred sexual and emotional contact with men; and heterosexual men, the largest number, who, he suggested, could ‘easily be attracted to the homosexual lifestyle’.³⁹ Dr Finlay noted that attempts by gay rights organisations to include ‘a specific reference to sexual orientation’ in the *Human Rights Committee Bill* were flawed since natural ‘difficulties of definition and interpretation’ would arise ‘from such a clause’.⁴⁰ While, for Finlay, ‘heterosexuality’ was fixed and knowable, ‘homosexuality’ was essentially fluidic and resistant to accurate categorisation.⁴¹ Later comments made by Dr Bruce Gregory connected to similar concerns raised by Wall in the mid-1970s. Although he believed that ‘nature’ provided humanity with ‘a range of sexuality’, like Wall, Gregory conflated the ‘homosexual’ with a range of transgendered or transgressive embodiments.⁴²

³⁸ For examples see Paul East, 24 November 1987, *NZPD*, Vol. 484, pp. 1252-3; Katherine O’Regan, 24 November 1987, *NZPD*, Vol. 484, pp. 1248-50; Judy Keall, 2 December 1987, *NZPD*, Vol. 485, p. 1471; Warren Kyd, 5 December 1989, *NZPD*, Vol. 503, pp. 14041-2; Tirikatene-Sullivan, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, pp. 16926-8; Ron Mark, 19 May 1999, *NZPD*, Vol. 577, p. 16542. Many such examples utilised spatial metaphors, particularly the symbol of a ‘bridge’, which linked the ‘hetero-’ and ‘homosexual’ communities and thus ‘fed’ logistical understandings of ‘how’ the disease might spread. They also imagined hierarchies of moral worth. ‘Homosexuals’ were typically envisaged as inhabiting the bottommost rung. The safety of young heterosexual women remained parliament’s most pressing consideration.

³⁹ Mr Wall, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, pp. 2786-7.

⁴⁰ Finlay, 17 August 1977, *NZPD*, Vol. 412, p. 2294.

⁴¹ Finlay, 17 August 1977, *NZPD*, Vol. 412, p. 2294.

⁴² Dr Bruce Gregory, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16948. He stated that ‘[s]urgery is carried out these days on some people who want to change their sexuality ... We are talking about the

Individual members often transitioned between minoritising and universalising understandings of ‘homosexuality’.⁴³ Though pro-reform, Mr O’Brien suggested that notions of what constituted ‘natural or what is unnatural’ were ‘relative terms’.⁴⁴ It followed that if those who are ‘biologically homosexual are in a minority, their state is clearly, in logic, abnormal by the social measure of the norm’.⁴⁵ In 1987 Paul East argued that ‘homosexuals’ constituted one of several ‘sectional minority interests’ arrayed in defiant opposition to traditional Judeo-Christian understandings of law and morality.⁴⁶ It was these sections of society, he suggested, that ‘gave rise to the utterly unacceptable Homosexual Law Reform Act’.⁴⁷ Comments made by Ian Peters in the mid-1990s asserted that homosexuals represented the smallest of minorities. ‘Homosexuals’ operated within a ‘lifestyle’ in which individuals, weakened by ‘fractured or unhealthy homes’, chose to ‘embrace’ ‘deviance’ or were ‘conditioned’ to do so.⁴⁸ He added that the inclusion of ‘homosexuals’ with other ‘minority groups such as Maori or Samoan, old people, and those with infirmities’ was a gross ‘insult’ and carried ‘the argument [against hegemony] much too far’.⁴⁹

Yet, while ‘homosexuality’ was anathema for many members, some conceded that ‘homosexual behaviour’ was ‘natural’ in certain situations; specifically, where otherwise ‘heterosexual’ men were subject to certain forms of stress or were deprived of opposite-sex sexual partners. Certain spaces, such as the armed forces during times of conflict, or long term incarceration in penal systems, created for some men, a situational ‘homosexuality’. This was, however, a temporary state that

question of homosexuality. I believe that there is a certain bias in our society and in our own make-up towards others in our society we must examine’.

⁴³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is instructive in this area. See Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 82-6.

⁴⁴ Mr O’Brien, 4 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2806.

⁴⁵ O’Brien, 4 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2806.

⁴⁶ East, 24 September 1987, *NZPD*, Vol. 483, p. 99.

⁴⁷ East, 24 September 1987, *NZPD*, Vol. 483, p. 99.

⁴⁸ Peters, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16925.

⁴⁹ Peters, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16924.

would be remedied once individuals were re-introduced to the ‘natural’ and heteronormative environment of ‘balanced’ man-to-woman relations.⁵⁰

The definitional anxieties explored above, with their clear concentration from the 1970s onwards, raises interesting questions about similar notions posed at earlier moments. Members debating reform or aspects of cultural policing in the 1950s and 1960s were reluctant to engage in the kinds of explicit definitional analysis evident in later episodes. This reluctance, however, need not suggest an absence of cultural opposition. A reading of 1950s materials instead suggests several instances during which debate was carefully ‘contained’. This was exemplified during debate surrounding the *Crimes Bill* in 1959 and demonstrates the way in which homosexuality was referred to only obliquely.⁵¹ Prime Minister Walter Nash stated that:

It is reasonable for the Opposition to say it wishes to debate one of the subjects because of certain factors associated with it, but I consider *it would be better if the other subject be discussed in a place where proceedings are not broadcast*. I cannot speak about the crimes mentioned. I do not know about them. However, *there is one subject which would be better discussed in a committee* rather than in the House, and I trust we will follow that rule.⁵²

The perceived necessity for private discussion, and the way in which ‘homosexuality’ remains an ‘unnamed’ offence, hints at the culturally fraught process in which debate was activated in parliament. The conclusion, though coded, constructed ‘homosexuality’ as potentially incendiary; a topic indecent for public consumption. The reasons for this are complex. While the topic might be offensive to the ‘public’ at large, those members who supported reform risked being

⁵⁰ For admissions of homosexuality’s presence in the armed forces and other homosocial spaces see Thompson, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2776; Hon Allan McCready, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2789; East, 2 December 1987, Vol. 485, *NZPD*, pp. 1467-70; Braybrooke, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16963.

⁵¹ This bears out some of key conclusions reached by Bronwyn Dalley in her 2004 article in *Archifacts*. See Dalley, ‘Creeping In Sideways: Reading Sexuality in the Archives’, *Archifacts: Journal of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand* (April 2004), pp. 35-41.

⁵² Walter Nash, 23 September 1959, *NZPD*, Vol. 321, p. 2070 (emphasis added).

associated with ‘deviant’ behaviors and mentalities. The force of such association, or cultural contamination as it were, could impugn members’ reputations and their ability to stand for values considered ‘integral’ to the community.⁵³ This was well illustrated during the so called ‘Moyle Affair’ of 1975.⁵⁴

Where debate was recorded, however, 1950s rhetoric typically conflated ‘homosexuality’ with a range of other forms of social ‘deviance’. It could, for example, be read as part and parcel of ‘debased’ moral attitudes found in ‘unclean literature’, pulp fiction and comics books: materials which threatened to hasten the ‘grave social problem’ of teenage sexuality.⁵⁵ A perceived increase in ‘homosexual conduct’ was described as ‘sexual *misbehaviour* between members of the same sex’ in the Mazengarb Report, a parliamentary document which caused considerable concern for some members of parliament, particularly Mrs Ross, the Minister for the Welfare of Women and Children in 1954.⁵⁶ Statements implicated certain

⁵³ The Hon. H. G. R. Mason is a good example in this context. Although he was not publicly vilified or driven out of office, his promotion of what was, in reality, a very conservative reform gesture, attracted suspicion from members of the House and the imputation of personal sympathy for ‘homosexuals’. This was conceded in comments made by the Hon J. R. Marshall who suggested that Mason had been ‘unfairly accused of wishing to adopt the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report in England when such was not the case’. See Marshall, 19 July 1960, *NZPD*, Vol. 322, p. 660. Later reform leaders such as Venn Young and Fran Wilde were subject to similar hostilities. For comments Young made in his final speech to the House see Young, 6 September 1990, *NZPD*, Vol. 510, p. 4386.

⁵⁴ Colin Moyle, a Labour politician, was accused by Robert Muldoon of having been picked up by police for ‘homosexual activities’ during particularly intense debate surrounding Muldoon’s fiscal activities. Muldoon’s accusations prompted Moyle to create an elaborate story to explain his arrest the next day, though it ultimately failed to convince the public. For a brief overview see John E. Martin, *The House: New Zealand’s House of Representatives, 1854-2004* (Palmerston North: Dunmore, 2004), pp. 283-4. For key episodes in *Hansard* see Muldoon, 4 November 1976, *NZPD*, Vol. 407, pp. 3677-8; Moyle, 5 November 1976, *NZPD*, Vol. 407, pp. 3681-2.

⁵⁵ Hon. Mrs Ross, 13 July 1954, *NZPD*, Vol. 303, p. 377. Ross suggested that comic books were an ‘evil’ which fueled juvenile delinquency and weakened ‘moral standards’. Such literature, she felt, provided ‘powerful stimulants to sadism, and encouraged admiration of successful villainy, contempt for the law, and almost every other anti-social activity’. Their corruptive power signified a ‘national emergency’ and recognised a similar charge leveled at comic books by Frederic Wertham in his contemporaneous *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954). For Ross’s citation of Wertham see Ross, 13 July 1954, *NZPD*, Vol. 303, p. 379. For further information on Wertham see William W. Savage, Jr., *Comics, Cowboys, and Jungle Queens: Comic Books and America, 1945-1954* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1998); Bart Beaty, *Fredric Wertham and the Critique of Mass Culture* (Oxford, Miss: University of Mississippi Press, 2005).

⁵⁶ ‘The Report of the Special Committee on Moral Delinquency in Children and Adolescents’, *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives of New Zealand*, 1954, H-47, p. 20 (emphasis added).

trigger words which nonetheless evoked the kinds of transgressive terminologies employed by members in later debates. Notions of debasement and uncleanness, for example, suggested standards for measuring normative morality. The status of 'homosexuality' as 'sexual misbehaviour' also pointed to departures from a 'core' normativity: transgression beyond the characteristics considered 'natural' and most harmonious for cultural and personal equilibrium.⁵⁷

In contrast, parliamentary materials of the 1960s indicated some movement away from the tendency to 'shroud' discussions of 'homosexual' practices. Despite this, members remained largely reluctant to 'flesh out' the precise parameters of 'homosexuality'. Instead, the Hon. J. Rae, in a broadly representative comment, stated that sex between men constituted a 'revolting act in the minds of what we term normal people'.⁵⁸ Similarly, anecdotal evidence of 'homosexuals' otherwise abstaining from 'committing' 'offences', demonstrated, for Mr Grieve, that the law as it stood operated as an 'effective deterrent' to 'homosexuality'; an 'illegal, revolting, and unnatural behaviour'.⁵⁹

Religion

While certain considerations limited the public discussion of the 'unnatural' composition 'the homosexual' during key moments in the mid-twentieth century, religious discourses were mobilised with comparative frequency. Such rhetoric imagined a 'cultural tradition' that emphasised Judeo-Christian concepts of

⁵⁷ It is perhaps significant then that Mazengarb suggested that where 'ignorance persists' in children as to the biological 'realities' of sexual intercourse, a school could rightly employ a 'specialist' to 'remedy the *omission*'. Such an oversight constituted the 'failure of the *natural agencies*' at a most fundamental level. See 'The Report of the Special Committee on Moral Delinquency in Children and Adolescents', pp. 30-1 (emphasis added).

⁵⁸ Hon. J. Rae, 8 November 1968, *NZPD*, Vol. 358, p. 2984.

⁵⁹ Rae, 8 November 1968, *NZPD*, Vol. 358, pp. 2980-1. For further examples of such descriptors see comments made during the final phase of the *Crimes Bill*. Particularly note Mr Harker, 19 July 1960, *NZPD*, Vol. 322, p. 667; Hon. J. T. Watts, 19 July 1960, *NZPD*, Vol. 322, p. 669. Also of note are comments made by the Hon. R. M. Algie. He discusses the 'very awkward provisions regarding homosexual offences' and the notion that a 'number of men' during the committee stage were able to 'sit around the same table and hammer out their respective views' and mobilise a 'satisfactory compromise'. Such commentary suggests a rational and masculine image of normative vigilance ('satisfactory', 'hammer', 'number of men') that stands in opposition to 'homosexual' bodies which are encoded in debates as irrational, volatile and transgressive. See Algie, 19 July 1960, *NZPD*, Vol. 322, p. 665.

goodness, purity, and social responsibility. However, those who mobilised ‘tradition’ as precedent for criminalisation of ‘homosexual behaviour’ emphasised a very precise interpretation of Christian morality that typically drew from puritanical and Old Testament understandings of life and salvation.⁶⁰

For example, members cited religious precedent which prohibited ‘homosexual behaviour’, or, at the very least, offered the ‘correct’ path with which to live a ‘righteous’ Christian life. In response to Mason’s perceived loosening of the prohibition surrounding ‘homosexual’ conduct in the 1960 *Crimes Bill*, the Hon. J. T. Watts sought to remind the House that the Bible recorded the presence of ‘homosexuality’ amongst the ancients, but asserted that it was ‘not a practice among Jews’.⁶¹ He concluded that members ‘must set [their] faces very sternly against [deviance]’, because ‘the moral standards of society’, as exemplified by God’s word, ‘must be protected’.⁶² Noting his ‘disappointment’ with the support of several mainstream churches for reform, Mr Grieve, who also opposed Mason’s reform, was quick to point out that the ‘very Bible that’ the church ‘preach[es] from condemns immoral living’ and fiercely questioned the logical ‘justification for legalising homosexual acts and stating that they were not immoral’.⁶³ Oblique references to moral standards in 1954 also registered the need for spiritual intervention in ensuring the maintenance of suitable moral qualities. The Mazengarb Report explicitly connected an apparent decline in community morality with a ‘lack of [Christian] spiritual values in the community’, and stressed that ‘our codes of behaviour have, in fact, been based upon the Christian faith’.⁶⁴ The Committee argued that if this faith was ‘not generally accepted’ the ‘standard of conduct associated with it must deteriorate.’⁶⁵

⁶⁰ As I indicate in later passages, however, Judeo-Christian views were also mobilised in favour of decriminalisation, particularly in the context of social equality and universal human (and Christ-like) qualities of love. The views espoused by anti-reformists thus represent only one of many varying perspectives on ‘homosexuality’ within Christian contexts.

⁶¹ Hon. J. T. Watts, 19 July 1960, *NZPD*, Vol. 322, p. 669.

⁶² Watts, 19 July 1960, *NZPD*, Vol. 322, p. 669

⁶³ Mr Grieve, 8 November 1968, *NZPD*, Vol. 358, p. 2981.

⁶⁴ ‘The Report of the Special Committee on Moral Delinquency in Children and Adolescents’, p. 43.

⁶⁵ ‘The Report of the Special Committee on Moral Delinquency in Children and Adolescents’, p. 43.

The integral role played by Judeo-Christian belief systems in maintaining societal conceptions of morality were likewise apparent in the 1970s and again in the 1990s.⁶⁶ However, it was during the HLR period of the mid-1980s that religious doctrine was most strongly influenced arguments. For some, ‘homosexuality’ not only stood in opposition to the values embodied in the Bible but also New Zealand society in general. Braybrooke, for example, felt that a Private Member’s Bill was necessary to ‘facilitate a referendum throughout the nation’, since the ‘condoning of homosexuality affects every citizen’ and the ‘very basis of a Christian nation, which New Zealand purports to be’.⁶⁷ Others stated that the Bill itself was ‘repugnant’ on the basis that it offended ‘against God and man’ since ‘both the New and Old Testaments’ viewed such behaviour as an ‘abomination’.⁶⁸ In particular, ‘the New Testament’ stated clearly that ‘those people without natural affection have no place in the standards set by God’.⁶⁹ John Banks similarly argued that the Bible was New Zealand’s ultimate legal and moral code since its very ‘foundations’ were in the ‘teachings that have come down to us over thousands of years’; instruction that was not ‘severe, bigoted, or censorious’, but ‘fundamentally decent’.⁷⁰ For Banks, the ‘ignorance’ of such doctrine posed profoundly negative consequences for New Zealand. He stated that ‘[w]hen we deliberately allow [religious] laws’ to be ‘compromised or diminished’ the ‘fabric of society is weakened and undermined’.⁷¹

Such sentiments underscored evangelical and fundamentalist thought in ‘mainstream’ New Zealand politics. This trend was not confined to the New Zealand ‘experience’, but indicative of international patterns, particularly in the

⁶⁶ For examples see Adams-Schneider, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, pp. 3167-8; Mr D. M. J. Jones, 17 August 1977, *NZPD*, Vol. 412, p. 2307; M. T. Young, 6 September 1990, *NZPD*, Vol. 510, p. 4358; Braybrooke, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16934; Tirikatene-Sullivan, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16927.

⁶⁷ Braybrooke, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3525.

⁶⁸ Lee, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, pp. 3525-6.

⁶⁹ Lee, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, pp. 3525-6. Like Braybrooke, Lee also suggests that non-Christian ethics would contradict New Zealand’s national character. He argued that New Zealanders subscribed to the ‘Westminster system, which is founded on the Judaeo-Christian ethic’. He further argued that ‘[i]f we want to be consistent in anything we must say that that ethic governs the House, and therefore we must recognise the biblical teaching on the matter’.

⁷⁰ John Banks, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7265.

⁷¹ Banks, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7265.

United States, where comparatively high proportions of men and women attended fundamentalist-based churches. It is difficult to surmise which (if any) New Zealand members of Parliament adhered to what might be approximated as ‘fundamentalist’ beliefs.⁷² Whilst certainly not all members of the House were attracted to fundamentalist-based denominations, an analysis of parliamentary debates nonetheless reveals fundamentalist readings of biblical excerpts and Christian doctrine. For example, interpretation of the kind set out above draws its impetus from the natural or literal construction of Christian precedent. Further excerpts, such as those taken from Mr Wallbank’s debate, argued that ‘Christian teaching’ was ‘explicit in the matter of sodomy and personal behaviour’; what is ‘*written* in the Bible is the right and proper way to conduct and discipline one’s life, irrespective of whether or not one has religious inclinations’.⁷³

Truth claims based on Christian teachings nonetheless expressed anxieties at the potential deviation from the singular Christian norm embodied by biblical example. Such anxieties invoked combative language which insisted that the state, church and, especially, the nuclear family unit be protected from ‘liberal takeover’.⁷⁴ Tirikatene-Sullivan, for example, emphasised that, ‘[f]or the Christ-centred believer’, the ‘New Testament was clear’: ‘homosexuality’ represented a mere ‘vulgarisation of a philosophical anarchism’ that denied ‘the existence of nature and therefore the ability to discriminate between [its] use and abuse’.⁷⁵ Others felt that ‘[m]oorings that have historically been grounded in and associated with Judaeo-Christian ethics’ were ‘being systemically eroded’.⁷⁶ It followed that the increased rights of minority groups were contrary to national interests. They represented

⁷² Such an analysis would be wholly reductive and artificial, rendering politicians, and indeed, fundamentalist Christians, as a mouth-piece for unreflexive and uniform belief patterns without room for subjective or internal (though apparently reconcilable) self-contradiction. Further, any such reductive capacity would be complicated and disrupted by the diverse organisational makeup of Christian fundamentalism and the likely breadth of differing denominational representations and multiple belief systems present in the House.

⁷³ Wallbank, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3525 (emphasis added).

⁷⁴ Lionel Caplan, *Studies in Religious Fundamentalism* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 1. These sentiments, scholars suggest, represent a core anxiety for many fundamentalist Christian groups.

⁷⁵ Tirikatene-Sullivan, 13 November 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 467, p. 8051.

⁷⁶ Lee, 24 September 1987, *NZPD*, Vol. 483, p. 119.

inherently ‘humanist’ practices which the Government had actively embraced.⁷⁷ Later comments also posited tensions between minority and majority interests. The inclusion of ‘transvestites, homosexuals, and lesbians’ in governmental affairs, for example, would, according to Ross Meurant, be at ‘the expense of mainstream New Zealand’.⁷⁸ Engaging with puritanical and religious motifs, he stated that ‘we are making a rod for our backs.’⁷⁹

At its most extreme, religious rhetoric envisaged a future New Zealand as morally debased and connected ‘homosexuality’ with the fall of major civilisations. Some members referred to biblical scripture or the emblematic story of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁸⁰ Others sought to construct a ‘homosexual’ presence within ‘secular’ historical moments. Especially common were references to the decline of Hellenistic and Roman civilisations, with its apparently well recognised admiration of ‘homosexual lifestyles’. Such conclusions failed to problematise the subjective formation of past sexual identities. Instead contemporaneous views of twentieth-century ‘homosexuality’ were read against their perceived antecedents in ancient Europe. Mr Jones, for example, lambasted ‘[w]ay-out sexual orientation[s]’, suggesting that ‘[c]ivilisations that have allowed it – the Greeks, the Romans, and others’, have all ‘gone down the tube[s], and they have done so because of this so-called need to keep up with the subculture’.⁸¹ Mr W. R. Austin explained that ‘the climate for homosexual practices amongst deprived males is ripe for exploitation

⁷⁷ Lee, 24 September 1987, *NZPD*, Vol. 483, p. 119.

⁷⁸ Ross Meurant, 22 March 1988, *NZPD*, Vol. 487, p. 2998.

⁷⁹ Meurant, 22 March 1988, *NZPD*, Vol. 487, p. 2998.

⁸⁰ See Jones, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3523; Peters, 16 October, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7442. For much of Christendom’s history Sodom and Gomorrah was believed to be synonymous with dire warnings of ‘homosexuality’. It signified God’s violent aversion to such behaviour and gave rise to the transgressive categories of ‘sodomy’ and ‘sodomite’. For their ‘unnatural vice’, it was argued that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by ‘brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven’, along with the two other cities, Admah and Zeboim, which belonged to the Vale of Siddim (Genesis 13:13; 18:20; 19:24, 29; Hosea 11:8). This traditional view has since been questioned by some modern commentators. For examples see John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Intolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); David Yegerlehner, ‘Genesis 19: Taking the Offensive’, *The Harvard Gay and Lesbian Review*, 3, 4 (Oct 31, 1996), pp. 19-28; Holly Joan Toensing, ‘Women of Sodom and Gomorrah: Collateral Damage in the Way Against Homosexuality’, *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 21, 2 (Fall 2005), pp. 61-76.

⁸¹ Jones, 8 March 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 461, p. 3523.

when that practice is approved'.⁸² Reflecting on 'history', he stated that 'one reads about early Greek and Roman empires' and 'finds that the seduction of young boys was widely known and practiced', thus connecting 'homosexual vices' with the practice of paedophilia.⁸³ Others warned that, historically, change had been profound, though often subtle. Citing the 'Ancient Greeks' and 'Italians', Peter Tapsell stressed that '[w]e can all see the hills in the distance, but none of us can see the ground just in front of us'.⁸⁴ He suggested that the 'morality of homosexuality' had fostered a 'lack of respect for the law' in New Zealand 'with murder, rape, beatings and bashings ... [,] the feminist movement, and the more violent activists in the Maori movement' all attributable to 'homosexuality'.⁸⁵

Such an argument was not confined to the 1980s, but was made, though at differing rates, with frequency throughout the period. While not as strongly articulated in the 1950s and 1960s, proponents did connect with similar claims as those articulated by Tapsell in 1985. Ross, for example, stated in 1954 that '[w]e cannot afford, spiritually and for our national welfare, any importations which will lower our morale and debase our youth'.⁸⁶ Similarly, commenting on the perceived loosening of prohibition on 'homosexuality' in the United Kingdom, J. T. Watts also stated in 1960 that 'I feel a great deal of uneasiness about the future of Western civilisation'.⁸⁷ Moral decay, he felt, arose 'out of the community's' increasingly sympathetic 'feeling towards' homosexual 'offences'.⁸⁸

Warnings which connected 'homosexuality' and the potential decline of New Zealand's culture were voiced with considerable force during the 1970s. Adams-Schneider stressed that 'homosexuality' represented a threat to family and

⁸² Mr W. R. Austin, 16 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7438.

⁸³ Austin, 16 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7438.

⁸⁴ Peter Tapsell, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7603.

⁸⁵ Tapsell, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7603.

⁸⁶ Ross, 13 July 1954, *NZPD*, Vol. 303, p. 378.

⁸⁷ While he conceded that the '[homosexual] offence may be prevalent here' he pointed out that it is 'very prevalent' in 'the Arab civilisation' and explained 'why that civilisation has not recovered the glories of its past, and is not a force in the world today'. See Watts, 19 July 1960, *NZPD*, Vol. 322, p. 669.

⁸⁸ Watts, 19 July 1960, *NZPD*, Vol. 322, p. 669.

civilisation. ‘Passing the Bill’, he suggested, ‘will not help to improve community standards and family life’.⁸⁹ He asserted that ‘history has demonstrated that the official recognition and encouragement of this practice has led to the eventual decay of great nations and civilisations’.⁹⁰ The Hon. H. L. J. May agreed, and stated that if ‘one reads the history of the world one cannot help noting that, throughout the ages, once a country drops its moral standards it ceases to exist as a nation’.⁹¹ Elsewhere Mr K. R. Allen pointed out that ‘[a]ny law which proposes to legalise acts’ considered ‘indecent, abnormal, and immoral’ was ‘nothing but the forerunner of the cancer that will destroy our community’.⁹²

‘The Homosexual’ as Corrosive

When considered in their totality, the overwhelming resolve of opposition members painted ‘homosexual’ personages as a uniquely corrosive element in the social and cultural milieu. ‘Homosexuals’ threatened the very core of familial life: the sacrosanct procreative purpose of the nuclear family and, through it, the integrity of both one’s culture and one’s species. The obvious effect of such an argument resulted in the hardening of normative boundaries and essentialised definitions, ensuring that ‘homosexuals’ were both excluded from normative understandings of ‘family life’ and ‘family values’. Certain members articulated powerful anxieties when noting the potential impact of homosexual reform. They argued that while tolerance might seem reasonable or even laudable on the surface, in reality, it would cause irreversible damage to New Zealand’s legal, familial, and moral structures.

In discussing literature aimed at adolescents in 1954, Mrs Ross stressed the connections between the degraded domestic space and the increased incidence of both crime and deviance; it was, after all, a ‘[t]errible laxity’ in wholesome and

⁸⁹ Adams-Schneider, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3167.

⁹⁰ Adams-Schneider, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3167.

⁹¹ Hon. H. L. J. May, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3174.

⁹² Allen, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3167.

spiritually balanced home-lives that had ‘produced the scandal’ in the first place.⁹³

Ross emphasised that:

As people think and desire, so will they act. If minds are fed with lustful images flowing from trashy magazines and unclean reading matter, then, as surely as night follows day, we may expect the degradation which the police statistics reveal.⁹⁴

The corrosive view of ‘homosexuality’ was strongly voiced in the mid-1990s despite homosexual reform having been passed several years before. According to the Hon. Graeme Lee, then Minister of Internal Affairs, ‘[f]or homosexuals to seek rights for themselves at the expense of the majority is reverse discrimination’.⁹⁵ ‘Homosexuals’, he claimed, were ‘declared to be anti-family’ and thus placed ‘[t]he family’ at ‘great risk’.⁹⁶ In the final reading of the *Human Rights Bill* Lee further emphasised that the ‘family unit has been’ seriously ‘challenged’, in that the Bill ‘takes away’, ‘compromises’, and ‘more specifically, it attacks’ the ‘integrity, the whole purpose, and the welfare of the family unit’.⁹⁷

Similar concern was raised at the prospect of allowing de facto and same-sex couples to be recognised under new property laws. Marriage, some members claimed, held a universally recognised and socially-sanctioned superiority: it maintained a ‘special meaning’ for members, ‘most New Zealanders’, as well as people ‘in most countries’.⁹⁸ Marriage was ‘a contract, a pledge, a vow to stay together in the interest of the family and in the interests of each other’ from which other groupings, such as ‘homosexuals’, were naturally excluded.⁹⁹ Richard Worth stressed similar points when he argued that all ‘relationships are not the same’ and

⁹³ Ross, 13 July 1954, *NZPD*, Vol. 303, p. 378.

⁹⁴ Ross, 13 July 1954, *NZPD*, Vol. 303, p. 377.

⁹⁵ Lee, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16929.

⁹⁶ Lee, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16929.

⁹⁷ Lee, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16968.

⁹⁸ Kyd, 21 November 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 588, p. 6738. The Hon. Marie Hasler argued along similar lines when she suggested that the Bill ‘will affect marriage’ and represented an attempt to ‘create a new world for homosexual relationships’ with ‘new rights and new requirements’. This, she feared, would create a ‘whole new order of existence’ which would affect ‘a majority of the population’. See Hasler, 31 May 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 584, p. 2736.

⁹⁹ Worth, 21 November 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 588, p. 6717

that any changes proposed to matrimonial laws were ‘convulsive and sweeping’.¹⁰⁰ He argued that ‘those responsible for the drafting of the Bill sought to degrade the institution of marriage’ and professed alarm at the lack of distinction between relationship categories.¹⁰¹ The removal of special privileges for ‘heterosexual’ couples threatened to overturn seemingly ‘natural’ hierarchies which, according to such claims, were assumed to be historically constant. For these members, this erosion represented an uninhibited and ill-advised disruption to the ‘rational’ workings of heteronormative life.

Such comments, however, dealt with a post-reform New Zealand culture and, thus, formed a symbolic ‘rear-guard’ action against further cultural encroachment. Earlier episodes, such as debates in the 1960s, on the other hand, mobilised the corrosive view of ‘homosexuality’ as significant grounds for continued criminalisation. Rhetoric emphasised the moral threat represented by the proposed reforms. Measures proposed under the *Crimes Bill* were perceived by some as a ‘softening’ of sanctions deemed appropriate and necessary against ‘homosexual’ ‘offences’. Marshall responded emphatically by saying that neither the Attorney General nor the government sought to ‘adopt the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report in England’, and that, in keeping with ‘common sense’, there could be ‘no mitigation’ on grounds of consent.¹⁰² Watts concurred, arguing that the House, as the nation’s moral ‘bulwark’, must oppose any attempt to further ‘erode moral standards.’¹⁰³ More cogent articulation of this idea was formulated in 1968 when representatives responded to a petition presented to parliament by the NZHLRS. Grieve stated that all members must ‘stand for certain moral principles’ and the ‘legalising of homosexuality’ would ‘indicate to society’ that New Zealand’s legislators no longer

¹⁰⁰ Richard Worth, 21 November 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 588, p. 6717.

¹⁰¹ Worth resented the alteration of ‘spouses, wives, and husbands’ into a single and inclusive term proposed under the category ‘partners’. This he feared was a potentially amorphous descriptor. For the purposes of the Act, such a term could conceivably conflate any number of relationships – marriage, de facto, or *same-sex* de facto – as analogous. See Worth, 21 November 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 588, p. 6717.

¹⁰² Marshall, 19 July 1960, *NZPD*, Vol. 322, p. 660.

¹⁰³ Watts, 19 July 1960, *NZPD*, Vol. 322, p. 670.

‘condemn[ed] homosexual behaviour’.¹⁰⁴ Mr Talbot followed a similar reasoning when he stated that ‘wide support’ existed for a ‘firm stand to be taken against any lowering of moral standards and codes’ as ‘homosexual practices’ were, in essence, ‘unnatural acts’ and thus antithetical to the ‘spiritual and moral fibre’ of New Zealand.¹⁰⁵

Such comments underscored the valuable ‘educative’ mechanism argued to reside within coercive legal structures. Allen, for example, stressed that Parliament, if stripped of its coercive powers, would give ‘licence not only to homosexuals’ but also to ‘perverts and the curious excitement hunters’.¹⁰⁶ The legal system would ‘encourage adult males to become interested in abnormal sexual practices’.¹⁰⁷ Members opposing the measures of the mid-1970s advocated the continued role of parliament in ‘establish[ing] ... norm[s], a standard for those who need protection against involving themselves in homosexual behaviour in the belief that it is an innocent activity that is unlikely to be damaging’.¹⁰⁸

A similar argument was put forward during the HLR period of the mid-1980s when Mr Burdon reasoned that, for ‘strictly health reasons’, society had an ‘educative role until the age of 20’.¹⁰⁹ This, Burdon said, was because ‘homosexual acts’ were ‘uniquely dangerous’.¹¹⁰ Politicians were justified in their use of legislative provisions in ‘*distinguishing* homosexual acts from heterosexual acts’, thus

¹⁰⁴ Allen, 8 November 1968, *NZPD*, Vol. 358, pp. 2980-1.

¹⁰⁵ Mr Talbot, 8 November 1968, *NZPD*, Vol. 358, p. 2982. Debates also showed a related correlation in their identification of criminal provisions as a being of positive deterrent effect. For examples see Grieve, 8 November 1968, *NZPD*, Vol. 358, p. 2981; Talbot, 8 November 1968, *NZPD*, Vol. 358, p. 2982; Rae, 8 November 1968, *NZPD*, Vol. 358, p. 2984.

¹⁰⁶ Allen, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2784.

¹⁰⁷ 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2784.

¹⁰⁸ Wall, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2788. Wall went on to argue that continued legal sanctions would ‘protect a section of our community not just from physical violation but from the distorted attitude of mind which promotes an outlook that ultimately will lead to voluntary association, with its disastrous consequences’. The legal system as it stood thus reinforced both ‘natural’ physical and ideological parameters ideal for a ‘healthy’ equilibrium.

¹⁰⁹ Mr Burdon, 16 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7429.

¹¹⁰ Burdon, 16 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7429.

emphasising the law's role in setting instructive cultural margins.¹¹¹ Austin similarly argued that 'boundaries, rules, limits, judgments, disciplines, and responsibilities' were all 'equally important' in maintaining 'safe' societal norms.¹¹² He reasoned that it was 'the duty' of members of parliament to 'set those parameters' for the protection of children, family, society, and, ultimately, for 'the survival of the country and its people.'¹¹³

Rhetoric of this kind persisted well into the 1990s and manifested itself strongly during debate regarding the outlawing of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Some members felt that such a move would undermine the remaining 'educative' safeguards in New Zealand's legal coda and would instead promote potentially 'damaging lifestyles.'¹¹⁴ The maintenance of boundaries and 'safe limits' of sexual expression reinscribed 'homosexuals' as disruptive to society's normative 'safeguards'. Such discourses conflated with religious rhetoric that emphasised the essentially 'profane' nature of 'homosexual' sexual unions, both in terms of their consensual violation of each other's bodies and their apparent propensity for the recruitment of children and the socially vulnerable.¹¹⁵ Parliamentary debates thus highlighted a 'reality' in which, far from adhering to time-honoured 'traditional' normative parameters, queer bodies penetrated the

¹¹¹ Burdon, 16 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7429. Burdon used this reasoning to advocate for a more 'realistic' age of consent for 'homosexual acts' to be set at 20. This provided 'legitimate' grounds for setting the standard at a later age than that already in place for opposite-sex sexual relations.

¹¹² Austin, 16 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7264.

¹¹³ Austin, 16 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7264.

¹¹⁴ For examples see Grant Thomas, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, pp. 16930-1; Banks, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16916; Tirikatene-Sullivan, 27 July 1993, *NZPD*, Vol. 537, p. 16926.

¹¹⁵ Numerous parliamentary debates equated 'homosexuality' with child molestation and pedophilia. Due to the Peter Ellis and Civic Creche affair, this was especially pronounced in public discourses during the 1990s. Such associations also reinforced the perceived 'homosexual' opposition to 'procreative' and 'nurturing' roles in society, since they were depicted as inherently sexualised and threatening to familial safety. Lianne Dalziel responded to this linkage when she asserted in parliament that the 'fact that Peter Ellis described himself as bisexual has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the offences that he committed'. See Dalziel, 15 December 1992, *NZPD*, Vol. 532, p. 13215. For more information on the cultural impact of the Ellis trial see Michael Hill, 'The "Satanism Scare" In New Zealand: The Christchurch Civic Creche Case', in *Sexuality Down Under: Social and Historical Perspectives*, eds., Allison Kirkman and Pat Moloney (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2005), pp. 97-113.

celebrated inner-sanctum of heteronormative life, contaminating, and then corrupting, society beyond all recognition.

Supporting Reform

However, negative renderings of ‘homosexuality’ did not go unchallenged. Certain members subjected othering narratives to rigorous critique. These articulations nevertheless did not emerge en masse until well into the 1970s; meaning that, at least until the later part of the twentieth century, the reductive depiction of ‘the homosexual’ went largely uncontested.¹¹⁶

Significant opposition had built up against reductive understandings of ‘homosexuality’ by the time parliament debated Venn Young’s *Crimes Amendment Bill* in 1974. Young himself employed what he termed ‘new knowledge’ to displace some of the discourses traditionally used to discredit calls for reform. He believed that reform would bring New Zealand’s ‘legislation into line’ with that of ‘other Western countries’.¹¹⁷ He refuted claims that homosexuality was a changeable experience, stating that ‘the homosexual’ ‘is either born one or is made one, probably during the early months of his life’.¹¹⁸ Finlay also supported the reform. The proliferation of such legislation overseas, he believed, meant that New Zealand was badly out of step with legal and cultural responses elsewhere. In defending his stance, Finlay called into question both discourses relating to natural and religious standards of behaviour.¹¹⁹ Dr Basset likewise argued for a pluralistic understanding of morality and argued against pathological views of ‘homosexuality’. To ‘change

¹¹⁶ Although I suggested that Dr Finlay was one of the first in the New Zealand context to advocate a medical view of ‘homosexuality’, he was also one of the first to articulate pro-reform sentiment, or, at the very least, to do so publicly. Finlay pressed for a universal understanding of ‘homosexuality’, reasoning that it was ‘generally accepted ... in medical and scientific circles ... that every one of us has some latent homosexuality in him’. This, he believed, extended ‘even to those who are loudest and most vehement in their protestations of revulsion and abhorrence’. See Finlay, 8 November 1968, *NZPD*, Vol. 358, p. 2983.

¹¹⁷ Young, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3156. Young asserted that international reform should ‘challenge us to examine the reasoning behind their moves and consider whether that reasoning does not apply equally to us’.

¹¹⁸ Young, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3156.

¹¹⁹ Young, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3159.

the homosexual's preference for his own sex', he believed, was 'virtually impossible'.¹²⁰

However, almost all such comments were amended by qualifications or rhetoric which distanced the individual from any close association with the 'unsavoury' preconceptions that dogged 'homosexuality' in public discourses. Young, for example, conceded that reform made it necessary to strengthen sanctions against child molestation. The maximum penalty for this offence he equated with rape, though he admitted that pedophilia was an entirely 'different category' to that of 'the homosexual.'¹²¹ Finlay also engaged with normativising terminologies. He asserted that, at least according to most definitions, 'homosexuality' remained 'an unnatural offence' and was broadly analogous to other negative human traits, such as greed and lust.¹²² He continued to promote medical discourses of 'homosexuality', suggesting that, those who lived as 'homosexuals' were 'afflicted' with 'weakness, deviation and aberration'.¹²³ These persons, he believed, were likely to be married, with wives and children, and thus of potential harm to the family unit.¹²⁴

Pro-reform comments of the 1980s and 1990s were less prone to such qualification. Politicians who supported reform cited human rights as the basis for decriminalisation with almost complete unanimity. Fran Wilde, the sponsor for the *HLR Bill*, claimed that 'New Zealand is more sensitive to discrimination against gays and lesbians than it has ever been'.¹²⁵ She reminded the House that '[m]any New Zealanders' were 'relying on Parliament' to provide their 'basic human rights' and emphasised that 'members' with queer friends and family 'should consider very carefully the impact' on those people if the Bill failed.¹²⁶ Jim Anderton believed

¹²⁰ Young, 3 July 1975, *NZPD*, Vol. 399, p. 2769.

¹²¹ Young, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3158.

¹²² Finlay, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3159.

¹²³ Finlay, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3159.

¹²⁴ Finlay, 24 July 1974, *NZPD*, Vol. 392, p. 3160.

¹²⁵ Fran Wilde, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7257.

¹²⁶ Wilde, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7257.

that the Bill would ‘foster equality before the law for all New Zealanders’.¹²⁷ He argued that, as a secular state, there could be ‘few moral issues’ that amounted to ‘substantial agreement’.¹²⁸ Since, as Anderton held, ‘goodness’ could not be ‘enshrined in legislation’, political representatives could only ‘ensure that there [was] a legal framework within which the common good [could be] protected and individual rights ... exercised’.¹²⁹

The deployment of rights-based language effectively undercut the binary articulation made between ‘hetero-’ and ‘homosexual’ behaviour. ‘Homosexuals’ were instead reintegrated as ‘human’ with an emotional capacity that outstripped the ‘merely’ sexual. For Richard Northey, for example, human rights considerations were inextricably intertwined with an individual’s ‘mental health’ and ‘self esteem’. Northey argued that:

The question that really arises is the human right to be able to express affection, and an emotional life for all people, rather than a continuing persecution for a characteristic over which people have no control. It is a question of mutual respect and acceptance of people as people, and the right to full participation in life.¹³⁰

Parliamentarians such as Northey extended the ambit of emotional possibility beyond the male-female relationship. Though differentiated by gender preference, same- and opposite-sex couples shared broadly analogous emotional conditions. Reformers thus activated understandings of ‘homosexuals’ not as alien, but with qualities and attributes which, because of their shared nature, were of a universal status.

This re-inscription of ‘homosexual’ identity as ‘similar but different’ to ‘heterosexual’ states of being resisted suggestions of an inherent ‘homosexual’ inferiority or abnormality: it manipulated the linguistic and cultural parameters of

¹²⁷ Jim Anderton, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7265.

¹²⁸ Anderton, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7265.

¹²⁹ Richard Northey, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7257.

¹³⁰ Northey, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7257.

what was considered to constitute ‘normality.’ When conflated with equality and human rights claims, reformists called for an acknowledgement of the subjectively experienced condition of ‘homosexual’ lives. Thus, for the first time, not only were ‘homosexuals’ cast in a potentially positive light, but allowances were made for the ‘actuality’ of individual experiences.

Politicians posed questions as to how the law affected and limited ‘homosexual’ men, both in the imagined past and contemporary present. For example, Trevor Mallard cited two confidential submissions given by wives of ‘closeted’ ‘homosexuals’. This was evidence, he suggested, of the ways in which the ‘law’ worked’ to push people ... into marriages’ and then ‘casual sexual relationships’.¹³¹ Judy Keall professed an awareness that, in advocating for reform, she spoke for individuals who were ‘personal friends’ and ‘people in *every* walk of life’.¹³² Keall suggested that many ‘homosexuals’ were ‘ordinary working people’, such as ‘lawyers, doctors, policemen ... teachers and trade union officials’, but all were members of families, and all required ‘to give and receive physical affection’.¹³³

Alongside this image of apparent diversity, other members, such as the Hon. Margaret Shields, reflected on personal experience. She recalled, in particular, the story of a family friend who, after struggling with his sexuality for much of his life, had committed suicide. Shields read an excerpt written by the man’s mother; testimony which accounted for her son’s emotional torment and underscored for the House the sense of loss and dislocation suffered by the man and his family. The piece emphasised the dehumanisation experienced by real individuals; it ended simply with the statement ‘[t]here was no priest at the funeral. We buried him at Makara.’¹³⁴ A further example was offered by David Butcher. He considered the experience of another New Zealand man who, having been rejected by his family, travelled to the United Kingdom and fell in love with a man of English nationality.

¹³¹ Trevor Mallard, 2 July 1986, *NZPD*, Vol. 472, p. 2599.

¹³² Judy Keall, 16 October, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, pp. 7429 (emphasis added).

¹³³ Keall, 16 October, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, pp. 7429-31.

¹³⁴ Margaret Shields, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, pp. 7264-5.

‘Had his friend been female and had they been married’, Butcher reasoned, ‘the friend would have qualified automatically for admission to New Zealand.’¹³⁵ Instead, the men were permanently separated and the relationship ended. ‘A law that creates distress’, Butcher concluded, ‘cannot be fair.’¹³⁶

Integrating Queer Narratives and Voices

Over time, queer stories and voices were increasingly integrated within the dialogue of the House. Katherine O’Regan, for example, read a letter submitted by a ‘gay man’ during the debate surrounding the *Human Rights Bill* in 1992. She mobilised this as an example of those who, in the words of the author, would be allowed to live in a ‘neutral environment’ for the first time.¹³⁷ The man related his ‘fear of discrimination’ and asked that he be ‘judged for who I am: for my work and for my successes and my failures, not on the basis of prejudice’.¹³⁸ The introduction of a queer voice provided a unique, if disembodied, interface between the ‘homosexual’ subject and the House; a space which had continued to privilege only heteronormative displays of identity.

The physical and emotional vulnerability for many ‘homosexuals’ had also been emphasised several years earlier when Margaret Shields read the testimony of a bereaved mother and the suicide note left by the woman’s ‘homosexual’ son. The man wrote of the anguish caused through cultural exclusion and persecution. He stated that:

I have come to the end of keeping on with keeping on. I have wished myself somewhere else for a very long time. I don’t want to hurt the people who care about me, but I have decided at last that I have the right to do what I want to do.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ David Butcher, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7613.

¹³⁶ Butcher, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7613.

¹³⁷ Katherine O’Regan, 15 December 1992, *NZPD*, Vol. 532, p. 13209.

¹³⁸ O’Regan, 15 December 1992, *NZPD*, Vol. 532, p. 13209.

¹³⁹ Shields, 9 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7264.

In her closing comments during the Bill's third reading, Wilde also referred to a young man, self-identified as gay, who worked as a police officer in a small town. Its inclusion constituted the first articulation of a positively defined 'queerness' made by a queer New Zealander in the House of Representatives. The statement thus marked an important 'moment' in New Zealand's social and cultural history since it ruptured the House's definitional membrane, displacing and inverting the normativising views of some politicians, and replacing them with an insistence of queer affirmation and pride. The man stated that:

It angers me that the community I love and work for will despise me only after they find out I am gay, especially when being gay has given me *special qualities* to make me a good police officer.¹⁴⁰

Dr Bill Sutton provided a similar voice of queer self-definition and determination in 1985, although, this time, within an international and literary context. Sutton read an untitled poem by W. H. Auden; a poet noted both as a 'practicing homosexual' and as an individual who had articulated the emotional vitality of 'homosexual' love and desire.¹⁴¹ Sutton asserted that even a cursory evaluation of Western literature beared out claims for 'the basic human dignity of male homosexuality'.¹⁴² He believed that such evidence demonstrated that 'the world of homosexual love' was as 'rich and multifarious ... as the world of heterosexual love [was] ... for heterosexuals'.¹⁴³ Sutton argued that texts, although fictional, provide a 'reasonable antidote to some of the long descriptions of homosexual behaviour made by people who regard[ed] such behaviour as disgusting'.¹⁴⁴ Sutton's comments were an admission of the House's significance as the symbolic and material centre of New Zealand governance and its coercive power to 'produce' persons as abstract entities. Yet, in equal measure, Sutton acknowledged the existence of a further body of

¹⁴⁰ Wilde, 2 July 1986, *NZPD*, Vol. 472, p. 2583 (emphasis added).

¹⁴¹ Dr Bill Sutton, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7619.

¹⁴² Sutton, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7619.

¹⁴³ Sutton, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7619.

¹⁴⁴ Sutton, 23 October 1985, *NZPD*, Vol. 466, p. 7619. Sutton pointed out that 'many testimonials in literature' bore witness to the 'profound, loving feelings that some male and female homosexuals experience'. For these reasons he believed '[w]e should treat those feelings with the respect we accord to all human love'.

knowledge, a canon of 'queer' literature, which, by resisting the powers of the state, made sophisticated claims for sexual difference and cultural protest.

Queer Bodies, Resistance and Rhetorical Challenges

However powerful their articulation, queer objections to depictions of 'homosexuality' remained 'disembodied' and confined to textual representation. This was remedied in 1994 when Chris Carter, a self-identified gay man, was elected to parliament. He was followed in 1996 by Tim Barnett, also self-identified as a gay man, and, in 1999, by Georgina Beyer, self-identified as transsexual. Their 'maiden speeches' embody valuable insights into the increasingly heightened definitional dialectic that occurred within the House.

All provide an insistent queer voice that, like Wilde's young police officer in 1986, invert 'conservative' views of renegade sexualities. Carter's notions of personal sexuality, for example, were not underplayed, but reworked into the contexts of the unique and positive. He argued that his sexuality enabled the better understanding of others, particularly those 'who have had to face similar difficulties' as himself.¹⁴⁵ It provided 'an empathy' for the socially vulnerable, queer or non-queer; individuals who were subjected to 'prejudice and intolerance' by the governing majority.¹⁴⁶ All three members positioned themselves within New Zealand's slipstream of 'liberal' and groundbreaking tradition, which, they contended, must now acknowledge an emergent queer contribution. Carter paid tribute to New Zealand's celebration of '100 years of women's suffrage' and, in turn, emphasised his position as the 'first sitting member of this House to acknowledge publicly' that his sexuality was 'different from that of the majority of New Zealanders'.¹⁴⁷

Barnett praised those politicians who 'achieved' great things for 'real people'; this included Fran Wilde, for 'liberating the lives of gay men', and Katherine O'Regan,

¹⁴⁵ Chris Carter, 16 March 1994, *NZPD*, Vol. 539, p. 438.

¹⁴⁶ Carter, 16 March 1994, *NZPD*, Vol. 539, p. 438.

¹⁴⁷ Carter, 16 March 1994, *NZPD*, Vol. 539, p. 439.

for ‘ensuring protection from discrimination’ of those with AIDS.¹⁴⁸ Alongside this, Barnett stated that he ‘was the first person in the world to be newly elected to a national Parliament’, having been ‘open about [his] homosexuality throughout [his] campaign’.¹⁴⁹ Beyer likewise suggested that:

I cannot help but mention the number of ‘firsts’ in this Parliament: our first Rastafarian ... our first Polynesian woman member of Parliament, and, yes, I have to say it, I guess, the first transsexual in New Zealand to be standing in this House of Parliament. This is a first not in New Zealand, ladies and gentlemen, but also in the world. This is a historic moment.¹⁵⁰

Beyer’s comments imagined a genealogical tradition of ‘difference’ in the House which gave cultural legitimacy to its queer additions.¹⁵¹ Further, like Carter and Bennett, Beyer’s views were also inserted into the broader schema of ‘liberal’ social and cultural reform. Beyer referred to women’s suffrage and argued that New Zealand ‘leads the way in so many aspects’ and would do so again.¹⁵²

In these later narratives, the terminology of rights-speech, established internationally by feminism and the civil rights movement, become enabling tropes for the articulation of contested narratives by queer subjects. Carter explained that ‘my sexuality has played a very positive role in my life’ as it ‘shaped’ a ‘personal philosophy and’ sharpened ‘[my] sense of social justice’.¹⁵³ He described his

¹⁴⁸ Tim Barnett, 27 February 1997, *NZPD*, Vol. 558, p. 435. Barnett also acknowledged Jonathan Hunt for ‘ending the anonymity of adopted children’, Helen Clark for ‘reducing the number of lives lost through smoking’, and Mike Moore for ‘introducing competition for domestic airlines’. Such comments are subversive since they highlight queer values alongside otherwise ‘mainstream’ endeavours. See Barnett, 27 February 1997, *NZPD*, Vol. 558, p. 435

¹⁴⁹ Barnett, 27 February 1997, *NZPD*, Vol. 558, p. 435

¹⁵⁰ Georgina Beyer, 9 February 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 581, p. 336.

¹⁵¹ Both Carter and Tim Barnett acknowledged a sense of cultural ancestry or genealogy. Carter referred to the knowledge that ‘we each build on the foundations of those who went before us’. For Barnett, Carter himself represented an immediate queer antecedent. Barnett also made reference to Oscar Wilde and, as suggested above, cited members who were involved in homosexual reform. Interestingly, and as I will indicate in Chapter Three of this thesis, genealogies also formed fundamental lynchpins for many queer writers active from 1950 onwards. For comments in parliament see Carter, 16 March 1994, *NZPD*, Vol. 539, p. 439; Barnett, 27 February 1997, *NZPD*, Vol. 558, pp. 433, 436. For my comments of genealogies in New Zealand fiction see Chapter Three, pp. 112-5.

¹⁵² Beyer, 9 February 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 581, p. 336.

¹⁵³ Carter, 16 March 1994, *NZPD*, Vol. 539, p. 438.

personal emancipation from ‘oppression and discrimination’ and articulated this within the boundaries of sexual subjectivity.¹⁵⁴ Carter envisaged a joint struggle toward ‘normalisation’ and hoped to make the ‘trail less littered with braying donkeys and slippery banks’ for those ‘gays and lesbians who aspire’ to ‘political or community office’.¹⁵⁵ Beyer articulated a loose set of political objectives when she stated her ‘keen interest in human rights from the aspect of gay, lesbian, and transgender communities in this country’.¹⁵⁶ This she saw as part of a wider queer movement that would be composed of herself, Carter and Barnett, although she was emphatic that queer issues were of ‘national significance’.¹⁵⁷ Barnett reminded the House that every party had ‘lesbian, gay, and bisexual voters’ and demanded that parliamentarians ‘take responsibility for planning this nation’s future’.¹⁵⁸ Barnett suggested that politicians ‘must be visionaries’; they must harness ‘the imagination’ and not the ‘wisdom of yesterday’.¹⁵⁹

Such rhetoric demonstrates ways in which queer members began formulating responses to ‘official’ discourses. Often, as outlined by Barnett above, this rhetoric hinged on the critique of reductive values apparent in conservative and heteronormative ideologies. Carter rejected the reductive categorisation of identity when he suggested that ‘[s]ome sections of the press seem determined to label me on the grounds of my sexual orientation’.¹⁶⁰ Carter suggested that ‘[d]ifference and diversity enrich rather than damage our culture’ and that he, ‘like all other New Zealanders’, belonged to a family.¹⁶¹ Carter also used his maiden speech as an opportunity to attack previous conceptions of ‘homosexuality’ as a ‘condition’ of unreasoned sexual desire and promiscuity. He described his relationship with his

¹⁵⁴ Carter, 16 March 1994, *NZPD*, Vol. 539, p. 438. Carter described sexual oppression as having many possible outcomes. He argued that ‘it can lead to a deep cynicism and often hedonistic behaviour. For me, it meant that I developed a strong, stubborn determination to succeed on my own terms, and in doing so led to a realisation that I was not alone in treading an unequal highway’. See Carter, 16 March 1994, *NZPD*, Vol. 539, pp. 438-9.

¹⁵⁵ Carter, 16 March 1994, *NZPD*, Vol. 539, p. 439.

¹⁵⁶ Beyer, 9 February 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 581, p. 336.

¹⁵⁷ Beyer, 9 February 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 581, p. 336.

¹⁵⁸ Barnett, 27 February 1997, *NZPD*, Vol. 558, p. 435.

¹⁵⁹ Barnett, 27 February 1997, *NZPD*, Vol. 558, p. 435.

¹⁶⁰ Carter, 16 March 1994, *NZPD*, Vol. 539, p. 437.

¹⁶¹ Carter, 16 March 1994, *NZPD*, Vol. 539, p. 440.

(male) partner of twenty-one years as ‘excellent and loving’, and declared that such ‘reality’ ‘puts paid to any myth that gays cannot live in stable long term monogamous relationships.’¹⁶² During debate surrounding the *Matrimonial Property Amendment (MPA) Act*, Carter acknowledged that, while marriage may be a ‘fundamental institution in our society ... I cannot marry my partner of 27 years, even though we live in the nature of marriage’.¹⁶³ Despite this, he emphasised that ‘[o]ur relationships are found throughout New Zealand, from the smallest country town to the largest city’.¹⁶⁴ Gays and lesbians constituted an ‘important section of the community’ with ‘little protection’ or ‘legal entitlement’.¹⁶⁵ Such rhetoric made use of inclusive language that acknowledged the human plight of the legally disenfranchised. He emphasised that ‘[w]e are talking about human lives here. I am telling members about a real couple’.¹⁶⁶

Queer politicians, usually alongside other allies, act as an internal pressure group within parliament, asserting claims for queer inclusion and integration. Like Carter, Barnett had attacked the *MPA* two years earlier for its then proposed exclusion of same-sex couples. He stated that ‘homosexuality is rarely added to the list’ of diverse peoples active in the House and opined that ‘[i]nvisibility haunts us’.¹⁶⁷ Barnett suggested that ‘[i]n this House responsibility accompanies my sexuality’; this conferred the need ‘to give voice to communities who have been silenced for too long ... through fear of exposure’.¹⁶⁸ Like Carter, Bennett reflected on his own relationship of 15 years, suggesting that ‘to justify the exclusion of same-sex couples ... would be most amusing if it was not so insulting’.¹⁶⁹ He believed that there could be ‘no logical justification ...[,] no genuine arguments’.¹⁷⁰ He argued that continued marginalisation was a ‘fundamental mistake’ and belonged to

¹⁶² Carter, 16 March 1994, *NZPD*, Vol. 539, p. 440.

¹⁶³ Carter, 14 November 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 588, p. 6528.

¹⁶⁴ Carter, 14 November 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 588, p. 6528.

¹⁶⁵ Carter, 14 November 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 588, p. 6528.

¹⁶⁶ Carter, 14 November 2000, *NZPD*, Vol. 588, p. 6528.

¹⁶⁷ Barnett, 6 May 1998, *NZPD*, Vol. 567, p. 8271.

¹⁶⁸ Barnett, 6 May 1998, *NZPD*, Vol. 567, p. 8271.

¹⁶⁹ Barnett, 6 May 1998, *NZPD*, Vol. 567, p. 8271.

¹⁷⁰ Barnett, 6 May 1998, *NZPD*, Vol. 567, p. 8271.

previous, less ‘enlightened’ moments of New Zealand’s history. Barnett emphasised that ‘[w]e need legislation for the 21st century, not the 1960s’ and suggested that until legislation reflected ‘human rights standards’ and could ‘create accessible law’ for all New Zealanders, it could not be considered just and equitable.¹⁷¹

Conclusion

Parliamentary debates demonstrate the increasingly involved claims for the ‘homosexual’s’ constitution in New Zealand’s recent history. This chapter has demonstrated that those members who opposed reform did so through the progressive mobilisation of several key discourses. These invoked an assemblage of usually connected meanings that promoted understandings of ‘homosexuality’ as alien and malignant. Comments that ‘implicated’ the ‘homosexual’ in other socially undesirable phenomena caught up anxieties directed not just at deviant mentalities but the reified structures that underlying normative identities as well. Alongside this, several instances of definitional slippage and internal contradiction reinforced the precarious ‘logic’ of the ‘homosexual’ composite. When submitted to scrutiny, debates revealed fracturing between universalising and minoritising views of ‘homosexual’ identity.

By the 1980s proponents for *HLRB* had mobilised in direct opposition to reductive strategies. They introduced rights-based terminologies to ‘official’ discussions and provided accessible connections to the range of queer voices outside the parliamentary Chamber. Yet, it was not until the mid-1990s that viable and cogent dissent was offered by individuals with publicly acknowledged queer identities. Rhetoric formulated by Chris Carter, Tim Barnett and Georgina Beyer ensured that claims for queer inclusion and integration were heard with relative frequency. Such views provided for the more immediate contestation of antagonistic language and the proliferation of anti-queer mythologies.

¹⁷¹ Barnett, 6 May 1998, *NZPD*, Vol. 567, p. 8272.

However, the absence of queer voices prior to 1994 leaves a wholly untenable conclusion: namely, that the dearth of earlier contributions accorded to parliament the uncontested ability to define 'homosexuals' through its coercive legislative power. Such conclusions leave the first ninety-six years of the twentieth century uninformed by alternative understandings of sexual difference. Calls for self-determination were articulated well before Carter's entry to parliament in 1994. As identified by Dr Sutton in 1985, the realm of fiction offered an impressive body of knowledge with which to subvert normativised and negative assumptions of 'homosexual' inferiority. What Sutton failed to acknowledge, however, was the existence of a New Zealand specific body of queer literature. For historians of sexuality, New Zealand's queer fiction offers a plethora of views pertaining to the status of 'queerness' and sexual subjectivity. These were articulated by men with a range of class and ethnic backgrounds, and, as argued in Chapter Three of this thesis, represents a cogent contestation to the hegemony of heteronormative relationships.

Chapter Three:

‘Men of my kind’: Moments of Queer Resistance and Critique in New Zealand Literature

Literary academic Bill Pearson referred obliquely to the ‘homosexual’ male when he asserted in his seminal 1974 essay ‘Fretful Sleepers’ that ‘[t]here is no place in normal New Zealand society for a man who is different’.¹ The ‘New Zealander’, he suggests, is afraid of ‘any variation of the norm’ and enacts severe social and cultural penalties for those that deviate from the ‘accepted’ benchmarks of normative masculinity.² The presence of this protest in text, however, points to literature’s capacity for the expression of cultural protest and critique. In this chapter I argue for the recognition of New Zealand literary sources as important correctives to the marginalising views apparent in ‘official’ discourses. I draw on a reading of New Zealand fiction, particularly novels and short stories, as an aid for distilling and reasserting suggestions of queer visibility, cultural protest and assertions of agency within New Zealand’s ‘national’ contexts.³ An extensive library of subversive literature offers a formidable tool for the cultural re-negotiation of the discursive parameters surrounding gender and sexuality. At the same time, for the ‘man who is different’, it provides a key cultural outlet for self expression and social agitation.

¹ Bill Pearson, ‘Fretful Sleepers’, in *Fretful Sleepers and Other Essays* (Auckland: Heinemann, 1974), p. 6.

² The New Zealand male embodies certain normative characteristics. Pearson implies that these are emphatically ‘heterosexual’. The New Zealand male is ‘manly’, ‘tough’, but ‘not too talkative’, seldom shows emotion, except ‘anger and resentment’, drinks his ‘beer fast’, but ‘prides himself that, even full of beer, his reserve won’t change’. His life alternates between the masculine and liberating public sphere of the ‘pub’, ‘football club’ and ‘the racecourse’, and a private life spent in the ‘vegetable garden and the workshop’, with the ‘wife ... house and garden’ representing his ‘ultimate realities’ and ‘unrecognised dissatisfactions’. See Pearson, ‘Fretful Sleepers’, pp. 15-7.

³ Thus I agree with relatively recent comments made by John Newton in *Landfall*. He argues that men like Frank Sargeson should be revalued in a renewed socio-historical framework. His stories demonstrate ‘[w]hat it was like for a closeted gay man ... in Auckland in the middle years of this century’. It ‘encourages’ audiences, Newton suggests, ‘to read in [these stories] a history which is more than simply literary’. See John Newton, ‘Homophobia and the Social Pattern: Sargeson’s Queer Nation’, *Landfall*, 199 (2000), pp. 103-5.

Queer contributions to public discussions of sexuality were articulated well before the queer interventions of the mid-1990s outlined in Chapter Two. This chapter considers texts written since 1948 by several major queer contributors to New Zealand fiction. My commentary is structured thematically and separated under two separate though connected areas of interest. The first, physical and lived experience, considers aspects of the body and sexual expression, families and domestic space, and communities and liberation. The second, language and the interior world, looks at notions of queer self knowledge and consciousness, symbolism and queer objectification, and fiction's direct challenge to 'official' discourses.

The consideration of these topics tracks the mapping of the linguistic and cultural strategies employed by men at varying times in New Zealand's last half-century and reflects writer's critical engagement with a range of diverse, though often shared, experiences and social pressures. Furthermore, such emphases are not arbitrary but reflect men's concerns since 1948. The authors considered for this thesis engage with a range of broadly similar preoccupations, metaphors and stylistic devices. Like *Hansard*, these themes are not static, but subject to certain focuses and deviations. Their articulation is contingent on a range of factors. The roles played by subjectivity, and the parameters of time, space, and cultural geography, remain central to the mobilisation of cultural expression and protest.

Textual representations are therefore constructed within the unique contexts of the author's range of lived experience. Later writers like Peter Wells, Noel Virtue, and Stevan Eldred-Grigg write from periods in which the decriminalisation of male homosexuality enables the more 'open' exploration of sexuality. They articulate notions of 'queerness' within frameworks that reflect emergent queer politicisation and the 'ethnic' model of 'gay identity'. In contrast, men like Bill Pearson and Frank Sargeson write during earlier contexts at which queer narratives, like queer identities, remained, for the most part, necessarily concealed. They were reliant on a range of strategies to mask 'queer' themes and subplots from a potentially hostile

and, assumedly, non-queer readership.⁴ However, as I foregrounded in Chapter One, geographic and cultural relocation to London gave James Courage the ability to circumvent many of these problems. His transition to a site of intellectual and cultural liberalism provided Courage with the freedom to write in modes other than the ‘coded’ method of narration favoured by Pearson and Sargeson and demonstrates one of several strategies open to men in negotiating exacting standards of social control.⁵

However, men did not write in a cultural vacuum. Considerable evidence exists of informal networks between writers, as well as artists, academics and cultural commentators more generally.⁶ Discussions thus occurred between those engaged in literature and artistic pursuit elsewhere. For those working in the field of fiction, discussions took the form of informal meetings or written correspondence and ensured the maintenance of transnational linkages, such as those enjoyed between Sargeson and Courage. Indications also exist of interchanges between men of differing generations, such as the meetings Wells records between himself and Sargeson in 1980, meaning that men were not isolated, but drew strongly from an established queer culture and literary tradition.⁷ Other writers, such as Eldred-Grigg, articulate linkages with imagined literary ancestors, such as Courage, who, like

⁴ For an example of hostile receptions to queer literary craft see A. R. D. Fairburn, ‘The Woman Problem’, in *The Woman Problem and Other Prose*, selected by Denis Glover and Geoffrey Fairburn (Auckland: Blackwood and Janet Paul, 1967), pp. 13, 23-5, 27. Such commentary embodies the early detection of ‘homosexual’ interests in fiction. Kai Jensen explains that ‘The Woman Problem’ was written during the 1940s but not published during Fairburn’s lifetime. See Kai Jensen, *Whole Men: The Masculine Tradition in New Zealand Literature* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1996), p. 80.

⁵ However, leaving New Zealand could have profound personal consequences. For most men this required long term and perhaps permanent separation from family and friends, as well as the spaces and communities which constituted their home lives as children and young men. Monetary costs also meant that such choices were only be open to men with suitable economic means, particularly in the mid-twentieth century when transnational travel remained a relative luxury for many New Zealanders.

⁶ It is clear that discussions occurred between artistic disciplines. I discuss the potential for including analyses of New Zealand’s literary tradition alongside other sectors of the arts in some of my concluding remarks.

⁷ See Peter Wells, 8 January 1980, Personal Journal, unpublished typescript, copy held by author; 23 March 1980, Personal Journal, unpublished typescript, copy held by author.

himself, wrote extensively about the Canterbury region and the negotiation of queer identities.⁸

Many texts also have autobiographical resonances and suggest a close relationship between lived experience and textual representation. Sargeson's *I Saw In My Dream* (1949), for example, echoes many of the hallmarks known of the author's early life. It depicts domineering parents, a sexual scandal, the adoption of a new identity, and the celebration of the rural environment as a space of equipoise and refuge.⁹ Both Courage and Eldred-Grigg's fiction imagines early lives spent in Canterbury; a representation that parallels their sense of community and sexual difference experienced in the 'real' world.¹⁰ Virtue similarly draws from his experiences as part of a Brethren family in *In The Country of Salvation* (1990) and returns to it in his memoir *Once a Brethren Boy* (1995). Ihimaera depicts both the experiences of men who 'come out' later in life in *Nights in the Garden of Spain* and Maori conceptions of sexual difference in *The Uncle's Story*: both of which echo to some degree his own life-story.¹¹ Wells explicitly mentions his use of lived experience in the *The Long Loop Home* (2002) and suggests that, in art, the 'waste product' is 'life'.¹² It is through artistic endeavour that men and women transform life 'not into gold' but into 'some form of art'.¹³ Wells considers that 'it is probably

⁸ Courage died on Eldred Grigg's eleventh birthday. Eldred Grigg suggests that, though Courage was not a man he knew personally, he is nevertheless 'a predecessor in the literary line' and that he 'perhaps' knew him 'through his stories'. See Stevan Eldred Grigg, *My History, I Think* (Auckland: Penguin, 1994), p. 58. Earlier indications of queer ancestors are also evident in Frank Sargeson's 'An Imaginary Conversations'; a piece that depicts a conversation between known 'homosexuals' William Yate and Samuel Butler. See Frank Sargeson, 'An Imaginary Conversation', *Landfall*, 20, 1 (Dec 1966), pp. 349-57.

⁹ For an overview of Sargeson's childhood and youth see Michael King, *Frank Sargeson: A Life* (Auckland: Viking, 1995).

¹⁰ For Courage, this plays out in *The Young Have Secrets* (1954), while, for Eldred-Grigg, autobiographical strands appear in *The Shining City* (1991). Eldred-Grigg also demonstrates borrowings from later in life in *Shanghai Boy* (2006).

¹¹ Paul Millar notes that *Nights in the Garden of Spain* 'foreground[s]' Ihimaera's queer sexuality and parallels a 'coming out' at a personal level. See Paul Millar, 'Ihimaera, Witi', in *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, eds., Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 256.

¹² Peter Wells, *Long Loop Home: A Memoir* (Auckland: Vintage, 2001), p. 32.

¹³ Wells, *Long Loop Home*, p. 32.

only in fiction or films that people appear to know exhaustively their own reality. This of course is the great attraction of all art: it offers a meaningful mirror'.¹⁴

(1) Physical and Lived Experience

The Body and Mapping Physical and Lived Experience

While fiction cannot be used to establish the lived environment in the sense of the 'real' or the 'authentic', texts go some way to assessing the imagined depiction of men's everyday worlds, mapping many of the spaces and 'experiences' that factored in queer lives and mentalities. For example, writers often articulate a bodily awareness of difference when traversing spaces and communities. This consciousness represents men's sense of being marked as 'queer', highlighting an underlying vulnerability or power imbalance that fractured lived environments composed through heteronormative patternings.

This produces a pronounced sense of surveillance and alienation for the protagonist of Courage's *The Visit to Penmorten: A Novel* (1961). Walter is subjected to the gaze of two men while traveling on a train; calculating behaviour which is described as cool appraisal and assessment. He suggests that their evaluation is 'hostile' and 'indifferent'.¹⁵ Walter is also, symbolically, an Australian living in the United Kingdom.¹⁶ His national identity, even if related in many respects to England's, means that he exists outside the 'ordinary' purvey of accepted custom and ritual, and, therefore, the precise normative systems that govern everyday British life. Courage's complex and coded sense of 'otherness' embodies many of the experiential tropes of queerness; a bodily or outward 'strangeness' that is underscored by suggestions of 'abnormality' or internal 'deviation'.

Henry in Sargeson's *I Saw In My Dream* (1949) is similarly inhibited by an observing gaze. The determining and metaphorical capacity of this is perhaps best represented by Henry's retreat from the symbolic surveilling power of the sun. The

¹⁴ Wells, *Long Loop Home*, p. 143.

¹⁵ James Courage, *The Visit To Penmorten: A Novel* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1961), p. 11.

¹⁶ Courage, *The Visit To Penmorten*, p. 17.

sun is first mistaken as an internalised ‘fire’ that leaves his ‘bones and muscles ... cracking and trembling’.¹⁷ The sun operates as both a source of external illumination and a symbol of moral judgment, insisting on the imposition of the normative masculine traits of physical labour.¹⁸

Later narratives, such as Wells’ short story, ‘One of THEM!’ provide glimpses of bodily surveillance committed by an internalised and damaged *queer* outlook. Jamie combines multiple epithets in his assertion that a man using public toilets for sex is a ‘WeirdoQueerPansyPoofterHomo’, who ‘ought to be put down!’¹⁹ This is informed by Jamie and Lemmy’s experience of violence committed against male bodies deemed to be transgressive.²⁰ Such depictions represent the demoralising capacity of heteronormativising values when applied against queer bodies. It also suggests ways in which the queer subjects themselves could be complicit in the pursuit of sexual policing.

In Eldred-Grigg’s *The Shining City*, however, sexual intercourse provides deliverance from the disaffecting gaze of the heteronormative. Christopher articulates his first sexual experience in terms which celebrate relations between men. Sex with Stephen St John is described as a revelation of human intimacy. For Christopher, it represents the ‘the very first time in my entire life that anyone had ever touched me there’.²¹ A sense of awkwardness or bodily apprehension is absent. Instead, Christopher enjoys a feeling of transcendence and increased physical

¹⁷ Frank Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, 1949 (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1974), p. 78.

¹⁸ Henry is depicted as suffering from a fever-induced illness during this sequence. The sun produces such a quotient of light and heat that Henry is eventually prompted to rise from bed and help his father in the garden. This follows an image of Henry immersed in water of tremendous density and is conflated with anxieties of uncleanness and moral inferiority attributable to his perceived sexual indiscretion. See Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, pp. 70-1, 78.

¹⁹ Peter Wells, ‘One of THEM!’, in *Dangerous Desires* (Auckland: Reed, 1991), p. 33.

²⁰ Those bodies marked as different are subject to reprisals, either physical or verbal. This is embodied by Jamie’s insistence that factory workers, conventionally a ‘normative’ industrial body, would ‘kill’ him. Jamie also relates an observing and hostile gaze present when ascending a bus while rather flamboyantly attired. For this, the boys are jeered and called call ‘an ugly name, a word that hurts’. See Wells, ‘One of THEM!’, pp. 52, 71.

²¹ Stevan Eldred-Grigg, *The Shining City* (Auckland: Penguin, 1991), p. 211.

vitality. His body, he suggests, ‘seemed to hum’ and his ‘mind’ to ‘zing’ after sex.²² This is in direct contrast to earlier scenes that express Christopher’s depleted sense of self worth prior to his ‘coming out’.²³

Spiritual, psychological, and sexual properties conflate in Wells’ 1996 short story, ‘The Law of Relativity’. Despite Eric’s fear that Ethan might obstruct his remaining bond with Perrin, a life-long friend lost to AIDS, their relationship is an image of healthy symbiosis. This is embodied in the holistic phrase ‘the epiphany of desire’.²⁴ Their bodies appear naturally compatible, described as ‘purely as joints are made to fit, as machine parts cohere to function efficiently’.²⁵ Through sex, Eric discovers the redemptive power of intimacy. Ethan becomes the ‘rescuer of his hope’ and ‘his polar centre’; an anchoring point from which to recover physically and emotionally.²⁶

However, HIV and AIDS factor as a major bodily and psychological threat for men in the 1990s. Narratives depict the way in which disease intrudes upon conceptions of wholeness gained through sexual encounters. David in Ihimaera’s *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* relates such ideas in his suggestion that ‘[w]hen we have sex with a man, we are having sex with all the other men he has fucked with’.²⁷ He associates these moments with notions of indiscriminate moral and physical danger. He suggests that men ‘dance with the man who danced with the girl who danced with the Prince of Wales’.²⁸ He also explains that the constant threat of illness

²² Eldred-Grigg, *The Shining City*, p. 217.

²³ Christopher is ‘skinnier than any [other] boy’ as a child and is connected to a notion of physical difference and marginalisation. Christopher suggests that his bodily condition ‘was one of the dominating facts of [his] existence’ and placed him outside of the masculine physical and aesthetic ideal. Since he was ‘unable to throw the way boys were meant to throw’, Christopher’s success at swimming is also somewhat suspect, and, ‘by definition’, a ‘failure at anything real’. He concludes that ‘no matter how well I swam I still looked awkward and skinny’. See Eldred-Grigg, *The Shining City*, p. 80.

²⁴ Peter Wells, ‘The Law of Relativity’, in *The Duration of A Kiss* (Auckland: Reed, 1994), p. 16.

²⁵ Wells, ‘The Law of Relativity’, p. 15.

²⁶ Wells, ‘The Law of Relativity’, p. 10.

²⁷ Witi Ihimaera, *Nights In The Gardens of Spain* (Auckland: Reed, 1995), p. 55.

²⁸ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Gardens of Spain*, p. 55.

means that men can be easily ‘pushed over the edge into self-loathing’.²⁹ The destructive force of AIDS is also represented in Wells’ short fiction through the emblematic penetration of queer spaces. Such attacks operate as ‘a perforation of memory’ and the threatened dismantling of a queer ‘civilisation’ and ‘culture’.³⁰ The menace posed by illness is signified by ‘drumrolls’ and the notion of a ‘distant war’.³¹

Despite this, characters like Wells’ Eric articulate the need for dynamic responses to the threat of AIDS. Eric suggests opportunities to weather the ravages of illness by arguing that men can ‘go underground again – disperse, change [their] natures – or else *fight*’.³² Resistance to the disfigurements of disease is also tied back to the life-giving potential of sexual expression in Wells’ ‘Dark and Light’. Eric’s traversal through a maze at a sex club symbolises the possibilities for a queer and personal rebirth through sex: the re-infusion of the redemptive powers of sexuality within a space described as the ‘analogue of the human heart’, ‘a sexual universe’ and the ‘interior of a man’s mouth’.³³ Eric’s journey is mapped alongside a parallel retreat from darkness into light and his ultimate liberation. Through his spiritual and sexual catharsis Eric emerges from ‘the night’ to discover that there is ‘light, trembling like a membrane all over the world’.³⁴

In comparison, numerous problems of cultural negotiation plagued queer writers in the years before the 1980s. Just as the negativised rhetoric of the 1950s was curtailed by notions of ‘seemliness’ and ‘propriety’, so too was the ability to present subject matter in fiction viewed as potentially ‘sexually explicit’. ‘Sexual explicitness’, however, had a relatively wide ambit when depicting ‘homosexual’ narratives. Pearson may well have been cognisant of this when deciding in 1963 not

²⁹ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Gardens of Spain*, p. 56.

³⁰ Peter Wells, ‘Perrin and the Fallen Angel’, in *Dangerous Desires* (Auckland: Reed, 1991), pp. 13, 15.

³¹ Wells, ‘Perrin and the Fallen Angel’, p. 17.

³² Wells, ‘Perrin and the Fallen Angel’, p. 17 (author’s emphasis).

³³ Peter Wells, ‘Dark and Light’, in *Dangerous Desires* (Auckland: Reed, 1991), pp. 214-6.

³⁴ Wells, ‘Dark and Light’, in *Dangerous Desires*, p. 220.

to cast the male protagonist of *Coal Flat* as ‘homosexual’.³⁵ While Paul is not ‘homosexual’ in any explicit sense, his narrative journey maps many of the social pressures that governed ‘transgressive’ male bodies. The accusation of impropriety committed against a young boy, for example, conflates many of the anxieties surrounding the protection of children from ‘deviants’ perpetuated in public and ‘official’ discourses of the ‘homosexual’.³⁶

Yet, while Paul is not explicitly homosexual, neither is he described as emphatically ‘heterosexual’. Like Walter in Courage’s *The Visit to Penmorten*, Paul is marked by a sense of outward difference: a suggestion that ‘there’s something not quite right’ or that ‘he was ashamed of something’.³⁷ His depiction as a pacifist also places him outside the ‘conventional’ boundaries of normative masculinity.³⁸ More explicit suggestions of ‘homosexuality’ are considered through Arthur Henderson; a man identified by the towns-folk as a ‘pansy’ and the ‘village queen’.³⁹ It is through Arthur that Pearson surreptitiously critiques the cultural linkages between ‘homosexuality’ and pedophilia, concluding that the abuse of children is outside any realm of human understanding, including any so-called ‘homosexual’ predisposition.⁴⁰ Arthur also displaces lingering medical discourses applied against queer bodies in suggesting that ‘everyone’s got a different nature and everyone isn’t made the way the doctor ordered’.⁴¹

³⁵ Wells suggests that Pearson’s decision was based on the need to ‘separate the protagonist from himself’ and also engage in a stylistic mode that would better elucidate some of the ‘wider structure[s] of society’ that the so-called ‘pre-liberation’ ‘homosexual’ novel was not well equipped for. See Peter Wells, ‘Introduction: Modest Achievements’, in *Best Mates: Gay Writing in Aotearoa New Zealand*, eds., Peter Wells and Rex Pilgrim (Auckland: Reed, 1997), p. 25.

³⁶ It is clear that such connections are made by characters in the novel. These suggestions are implicit in Mike’s reflection that Paul was not the kind of man ‘one would have suspected was capable of it’. Paul is also further implicated in relationship with Arthur Henderson. See Bill Pearson, *Coal Flat* (Auckland: Heinemann, 1963), pp. 279-80.

³⁷ Pearson, *Coal Flat*, p. 12.

³⁸ This is emphasised early on by Mrs Palmer who contrasts the obvious ‘masculine’ difference between her own son who fought in World War II and the miners who remained at home. In addressing these workers, Palmer asserts that ‘I’ve always got that little bit stored under my cap: my boy was a man and that’s more than you dodgers were, skulking behind a protected occupation’. See Pearson, *Coal Flat*, p. 17.

³⁹ Pearson, *Coal Flat*, pp. 21-2, 29.

⁴⁰ Pearson, *Coal Flat*, p. 291.

⁴¹ Pearson, *Coal Flat*, p. 291.

Neither Paul nor Arthur are depicted in a sexual relationship with another man. *Coal Flat*, and stories of that period, instead demonstrate the necessity for certain kinds of ‘distancing’ strategies. For example, in *The Hangover*, Sargeson’s 1967 novel, a queer outlook is ‘explained’ by the central character’s confused, and ultimately homicidal, mental condition. Sargeson ‘satisfies’, at least on the surface, official assumptions of ‘deviance’ that connected ‘homosexuality’ with a range of other medical or psychological problems. Since such an attraction embodies the ‘compromised’ homosexual state, Sargeson is free to use Alan to explore renegade sexual experiences with relatively impunity.

Dick Lennie, for example, represents for Alan a life of intellectual and Bohemian freedom. He is also clearly queer.⁴² Alan’s immediate response to Dick is an erotic one; an impulse that leaves Alan ‘feel[ing] hot and oppressive’.⁴³ His chance encounter with Solly is also significant. Although their friendship is left largely ambiguous it is nevertheless characterised by a deep emotional and erotic connection. Alan describes it as a ‘new kind of love’ that is ‘best ... understood in what appeared to be his own terms ...[,] a happiness much too sweet to be resisted, yet at the same time closely linked with suffering’.⁴⁴ However, it is Solly who articulates the novel’s strongest moment of sexual subversiveness. Speaking to Alan, Solly considers that:

It’s bloody painful, getting stung by your own lust ... But fair enough when it pushes a man to becoming a member of somebody else’s body ... Ever read the bit in *Moby Dick*, Alan? – about squeezing hands, all of us

⁴² I use the wider sense of the word ‘queer’ here. Lennie articulates a sexual attraction for men as well as women and appears to formulate a polysexual or fluidic sense of sexual and sensual possibility. His predilection for men, however, appears more pronounced than his desire for women. For examples see Frank Sargeson, *The Hangover* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1967), pp. 42, 48, 57-8, 92-3, 138.

⁴³ Sargeson, *The Hangover*, pp. 20-1.

⁴⁴ Sargeson, *The Hangover*, p. 26. The romantic and erotic aspect of their relationship is also suggested in an episode which depicts Alan and Solly as newlyweds. The sequence depicts the two boys standing beneath a tree which drops white blossoms akin to wedding confetti. Solly suggests that it is a ‘kind of wedding’. This brings Alan’s ‘heart to a momentary standstill’ and generates his impulsive profession of love. It also imbues in Alan a contrary sensation of constriction and fear that is as ‘though hands were at [Alan’s] throat’. See Sargeson, *The Hangover*, pp. 29-30.

squeezing ourselves into each other, squeezing ourselves into the universal milk and sperm. Bloody marvelous image.⁴⁵

Such a statement is significant given the problematic status of negotiating cultural discourses during this period. It represents one of New Zealand's earliest graphic allusions to intercourse between men.

For Courage, circumventing censure in *A Way of Love* meant shrouding depictions of sexual intimacy in darkness, or representing erotic moments within environments that emphasise suggestions of privacy and discretion.⁴⁶ Courage avoids the graphic depiction of erotic relationships in his novel and, in turn, minimises the potential for the sexually provocative. While sexual intimacy does occur in the story, it arises outside the gaze of the reader. This exercise in 'sexual neutering' does not represent an 'apologetic' or internalised stance, but rather Courage's awareness of societal morays. The novel is replete with careful cultural negotiation. The text's promotional blurb, for example, written by Courage's editor, holds that '[i]t requires considerable detachment in a writer to assume that a homosexual love affair is as valid a subject for a serious novel as any other'.⁴⁷ Such statements acknowledge the potentially incendiary nature of 'homosexuality' and represent the novel's first distancing strategy.

Despite efforts to minimise its inflammatory nature, however, the novel's reception in New Zealand was mostly negative, with commentators almost wholly obsessed by the novel's otherwise positive depiction of love between men.⁴⁸ By 1961, *A Way*

⁴⁵ Sargeson, *The Hangover*, pp. 84-5.

⁴⁶ See James Courage, *A Way of Love*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1959), pp. 96, 205.

⁴⁷ Courage, *A Way of Love*, Blurb. Editorial intervention also emphasises the role played by publishers in revising or reframing texts before release. In writing *A Way of Love*, Courage explained to Sargeson that he was made to 'excise about a dozen phrases' before Cape agreed to publish his novel. Cape insisted that, despite the Wolfenden Report two years earlier, the novel would likely to be received with hostility by critics. This suggests an awareness on the part of the publishers that the narrative might insight distaste amongst certain members of the public. See John Lee "'A Private History": Towards a Biography of James Courage, Expatriate New Zealand Writer' (MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2001), pp. 99-100.

⁴⁸ M. K. Joseph's review perhaps best represents this critical stance. See M. K. Joseph, 'Review', *Landfall*, 13, 2 (June 1959), pp. 178-9.

of Love had effectively been banned by authorities, who, citing the work as indecent or pornographic, argued it gave ‘undue emphasis on matters of sex’.⁴⁹ Thus, while greater literary possibility existed in London in the late 1950s, the novel’s vilification in New Zealand suggests cultural limits to narrative ‘resistance’ and the ability of the state to monitor and police potential ‘deviance’ and subversiveness in fiction.⁵⁰

Families, ‘Queerness’ and disturbing the ‘Hetermorm’

While authors were thus often limited in their abilities to depict sexual expression at an explicit level, they succeeded in committing to text some of the central ideological and institutional bodies responsible for continued ‘repressiveness’.

Texts often cast the nuclear family as compromised by a narrow Puritanism and a predisposition for aggressive social control.⁵¹ Courage’s 1954 novel, *The Young Have Secrets*, for example, depicts the Garnetts as a family overwhelmed by rigid conformities. Rose raises this in the contexts of gender inhibition when she asserts that, had she been ‘born a man’, she would have ‘wanted to be a sailor ... like that old Flying Dutchman, never able to rest’.⁵² This image of unanchored freedom contrasts with the emotional enclosure and dislocation that Rose suggests informs the ‘reality’ of women’s lives in the early-twentieth century.⁵³

The casting of Mr Garnett, the central puritanical figure, as a school principle is also significant. He appears a stickler for puritanical strictures in both ‘personal’ (a father) and ‘professional’ (an educator) capacities. Mr Garnett’s world is one

⁴⁹ Wells, ‘Introduction: Modest Achievements’, p. 24. The hurt caused to Courage was plain. Phillip Wilson suggests that ‘[t]he banning of his novel’ in New Zealand was a ‘blow to a man so sensitive’. He recalls that Courage had ‘mentioned that he was thinking of returning to New Zealand but he feared that his outlook on life would not be appreciated here ... [h]e was afraid perhaps of the puritan narrowness, the hardness and rawness of New Zealand as he remembered it’. Wilson concludes that Courage ‘died as he had lived, in exile and alone’. See Phillip Wilson, ‘James Courage: A Recollection’, *Landfall*, 18, 1964, p. 235.

⁵⁰ It was not until 1983 that an explicitly ‘gay’ novel, Barry Nonweiler’s *That Other Realm of Freedom*, emerged in New Zealand. This suggests that the coded method of narration favoured by Sargeson and others remained the only strategy open to authors working in New Zealand in the interim. See Wells, ‘Introduction: Modest Achievements’, p. 27.

⁵¹ This connects with Robert Chapman’s near-contemporary comment that ‘the family as it is ... [serves] as a centre of constrained conformity instead of willing cohesion, of discontent instead of content’. See Robert Chapman, ‘Fiction and the Social Pattern’, *Landfall*, 7, 1 (March 1953), p. 54.

⁵² James Courage, *The Young Have Secrets* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), p. 107.

⁵³ Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, p. 108.

composed of rules and regulations as well as a necessary emotional distance from those around him. His uncharacteristic attempt to ride a penny-farthing at night is cut short by a symbolic (and literal) rupture; ‘a cracking and snapping of spokes’, described as a ‘decrepit harp in collapse’.⁵⁴ This ends in a ‘confusion of darkness and iron’, and the enforced return of propriety.⁵⁵ Courage suggests that New Zealand’s discursive ideological structure is to blame for continued conformity. For Walter, this constitutes a strange ‘language of which he did not know the grammar’, and, therefore, a system of acquiescence that gradually indoctrinates and excludes alternate modes of understanding.⁵⁶ It is only Mark Garnett who demonstrates an escape from rigid puritanism. Significantly, he is also encoded as queer, living, as he does, as a bachelor in a lighthouse, and articulating a range of sexually subversive ideas in direct contrast to both puritanical and heteronormative motifs.⁵⁷

Repressive family environments exist elsewhere in fiction. For example, it is apparent in depictions of Henry’s parents in Sargeson’s *I Saw In My Dream*. His father is described as the family’s central authority figure and enforces the normative parameters of behaviour through force.⁵⁸ Henry’s mother is often depicted beside their property’s hedge, symbolic of a prevailing moral vigilance and the policing of domestic boundaries.⁵⁹ This narrows Henry’s expressive potential and ensures his compliance to puritanical values of purity and self control.⁶⁰ However, Marge, who left home to study at university, urges Henry to ‘get a job in the city’.⁶¹ Home life represents an inhibited space that reduces a sense of

⁵⁴ Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, p. 134.

⁵⁵ This is embodied by Mr Garenett’s insistence that the experience represents the ‘loss’ of ‘self respect’ before a ‘concourse of whopping guttersnipes’. He also asserts conservative formulations of personal property rights in his suggestion that Walter’s use of the bike constitutes theft. Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, p. 135.

⁵⁶ Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, p. 170.

⁵⁷ Such moments of sexual significance are nearly always gender neutral and spoken to Walter. For examples see Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, pp. 175, 182-3, 222.

⁵⁸ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, pp. 8, 76.

⁵⁹ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 13.

⁶⁰ This is exemplified by Henry’s attempt as a boy to watch his Aunt Clara while bathing. His mother insists that he be ‘clean’ and suggests that if Henry ‘were a few years older’ he deserve to be ‘locked up for the rest of [his] life’. See Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, pp. 15-6.

⁶¹ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 59.

possibility and vitality: staying 'at home' means 'you never get your eye teeth cut ... and [have] hardly any idea that you [are] even alive'.⁶²

The critique of puritanical tendencies is refined with greater narrative force in later texts. Virtue's rendering of Billy's parents in *In The Country of Salvation*, for example, elucidates multiple slipstreams of subjective religious thought. Cushla's eventual disillusionment with the church, and her critical engagement with Christian religious discourse, results in her adoption of a more humanist Christian outlook. Virtue writes that:

As far as Cushla was concerned being a Christian was also acting with goodness and kindness and finding understanding ... going to church without fail and all that self-denial business ... didn't do anyone a scrap of good ... if you didn't enjoy yourself before you kicked the bucket.⁶³

This rhetoric contrasts with Restell's engagement with more conservative and evangelical precepts, as well as his use of violence, to ostensibly 'restore' Billy's 'natural' constitution as 'heterosexual' and 'Christian'.⁶⁴

Such sequences make valuable linkages with Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story* and its depictions of violent 'restorative' attempts to 'reform' 'deviant' minds and bodies. This is informed, however, by 'Christian' and 'Maori' contexts that eschew alternative understandings of same-sex relationships embodied by concepts like takatapui. Christian and (apparently) 'traditional' Maori outlooks combine in warnings against sexual practices that ignore humanity's 'natural' procreant urges. This is embodied by Michael's father who views 'homosexuality' as 'anathema' to the family's 'beliefs' as 'Maori and Christians'.⁶⁵ Same-sex attraction violates the collective 'responsibility' conferred to Michael as Maori and male. His inability to provide his parents with 'mokopuna' (grandchildren), at least in the 'traditional'

⁶² Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 59.

⁶³ Noel Virtue, *In The Country of Salvation* (Auckland: Vintage, 1990), p. 110.

⁶⁴ Virtue, *In The Country of Salvation*, p. 110.

⁶⁵ Witi Ihimaera, *The Uncle's Story* (Auckland: Penguin, 2000), p. 27.

sense, threatens the family's 'whakapapa' (genealogy) and is deemed a 'selfish' act by Michael's mother.⁶⁶

Most texts underscore the ways in which everyday life is mobilised around heteronormative expectations. Henry, in Sargeson's *I Saw In My Dream*, occupies at birth a world composed of gendered and social expectation. Sargeson raises an implicit critique of heteronormativising 'logic' in arranging Henry's earliest thoughts in a verse-like structure that emphasises 'received' knowledge. Asked by his mother 'WHO LOVES YOU?', Henry responds, '[m]ummy and daddy'.⁶⁷ These initial moments reveal 'indoctrinating' traits hidden in familial structures that connect the gendered hierarchies of '[m]ummy and daddy' with the assurance of divine sanction suggested in the presence of '[g]entle Jesus' and [o]ur Father' within the verse structure.⁶⁸ Henry's insistence on the 'natural' composition of family life is therefore not based upon an 'objective' view but the assumption that every day 'had always been so as long as [he] could remember' with never 'any change'.⁶⁹

A similar 'logic' is tied up in a reading of class and social standing in Courage's *The Young Have Secrets*. Walter's grandfather laments the perceived erosion of 'tradition' and morality and holds that 'transplanted gentry' must 'keep [their] standards'.⁷⁰ For Mr Grace, marriage incorporates the necessary preservation of 'manners', the memorialisation of England as the 'old country', and a prohibition on 'coupling with lesser breeds outside the law'.⁷¹ Here Courage makes coded references to the establishment's opinion of other culturally offending sexual categories by including a general inference to relationships outside of the legally-sanctioned 'norm'. Grace's appraisal of interracial couplings is expressed as an 'inherent immorality' or 'mistake' and thus conflates several trigger words used to

⁶⁶ Ihimaera, *The Uncle's Story*, p. 27.

⁶⁷ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 3.

⁶⁸ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 3.

⁶⁹ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 4.

⁷⁰ Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, p. 158.

⁷¹ Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, p. 158.

describe same-sex relationships in ‘official’ discourses. Like relationships between Maori and Pakeha, the ‘homosexual’ is another ‘species’ entirely.⁷²

Depictions of home life in later narratives, such as Wells’ 1997 novel, *Boy Overboard*, depict domestic space as controlled by patriarchy and potentially violent forms of normative masculinity.⁷³ However, the novel also raises subversive moments of marginalised agitation. This is illustrated in Jamie, Aunt Gilda, and Ponky’s confrontation with Horton, an escaped criminal. Wells emphasises their familial aspect by asserting their ‘tribal’ response of ‘defence’ and ‘anger’ to Horton’s imagined transgression of the home. He underscores the constructed nature of gendered identities through Jamie’s suggestion that Uncle Ambrose had ‘abandoned’ his paternal role in failing to protect his family from harm.⁷⁴ Aunt Gilda is instead cast in the role of ‘general’, exploding conventional archetypes of ‘masculine’ capability and heroism like those embodied by ‘Davy Crockett’.⁷⁵ When combined, the three possess an aggressiveness and individual courage ‘so powerful’ it operates at an elemental level: ‘one seismic wind ... screaming out loud in our fury of being awoken into such panic’.⁷⁶ This creates for Jamie a sense of group cohesion and an ‘odd prickling of *pride*’.⁷⁷ Other formulations of ‘family’ retain associations of queer solidarity, such as the pact created by Jamie, his brother, Matthew, and their friends, the brothers Geoff and Dirk. Their relationship is one envisaged as an ‘eternal brotherhood’, and is premised upon ideals of trust. It represents, according to Matthew, an undertaking made in ‘[u]tter secrecy and

⁷² Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, p. 160. However, Grace’s insistence that ‘[n]obody ... seems to listen’ suggests that his opinions are likely outside the ambit of immediate agreement in the novel and instead represents an exaggerated, even ironic, statement of social conservatism. Courage is also rather subversive in his casting of an interracial and unwed relationship between a Pakeha man and Maori woman, Rahi and Mrs. Nelson, as the novel’s most indicative of love and emotional benefit. For these suggestions see Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, pp. 160, 205.

⁷³ For example, Jamie’s life with Uncle Ambrose is described in terms of enforced imposition and authoritarianism; a ‘Berlin Wall rising up behind us’. See Peter Wells, *Boy Overboard* (Auckland: Vintage, 1997), p. 49.

⁷⁴ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, pp. 95-7.

⁷⁵ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 95.

⁷⁶ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 95.

⁷⁷ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 97 (emphasis added).

silence' that the boys will 'protect and look after each other', as well as '[o]ffer help' and 'aid' where possible.⁷⁸

Fiction increasingly challenges the hegemony of the heteronormative conception of the family. This is particularly evident in texts written from the mid-to-late-1990s that explore alternative modes of relational support and families that better integrate 'queer' emotional requirements.⁷⁹ This is not of sole benefit to queer individuals, however, but indicative of more favourable cultural conditions to be enjoyed by society at large. For example, by making peace with her transgendered son, Martha, in Virtue's *The Transfiguration of Martha Friend* (1996), gains an increasingly extensive queer family. Yet, it is not until after suffering a stroke, a condition described as a 'transfiguration', that Martha undergoes a complete shift in attitude.⁸⁰ Martha becomes a 'converted model' who is 'updated and re-processed ... whole and eager for education'.⁸¹ This 'new' Martha discards earlier emotional dissociations and embraces those around her. She forms a relationship with Alex and Tennessee, two 'gay' men she loves as 'deeply as she loved her son' (and now daughter).⁸² Such associations confer a familial aspect and, despite Martha's status as 'heterosexual', rework and celebrate queer 'togetherness' and identity in new and dynamic ways.⁸³ Her depiction in drag at the story's end is also indicative of a new, and queered, performative role: a shift in *queer* cultural discourses that allows the non-queer Martha a sense of community.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 227.

⁷⁹ This reflects the increased calls for reform surrounding same-sex marriage and reproductive rights evident in contemporary legal discourses in New Zealand and other Western nations from this time.

⁸⁰ Despite having made her 'peace' with her son, now a woman named Letitia, Martha is immediately anxious at what the 'neighbours' might think if she is seen entertaining Letitia's partner, a castrato. Such 'pre-transfiguration' moments suggest Martha's incomplete acceptance of transgendered identity at this point. See Noel Virtue, *The Transfiguration of Martha Friend* (Auckland: Vintage, 1996), pp. 111-2.

⁸¹ Virtue, *The Transfiguration of Martha Friend*, p. 164.

⁸² Virtue, *The Transfiguration of Martha Friend*, p. 164.

⁸³ Martha relates, for example, how she grew to 'love them both ... admiring their courage in proclaiming openly that they were a couple ... [n]ow they had keys to [her] house, [and] shared making coffee for her every morning'. See Virtue, *The Transfiguration of Martha Friend*, p. 173.

⁸⁴ Virtue, *The Transfiguration of Martha Friend*, pp. 163-75.

Possibilities for queer families are also raised in both of Ihimaera's 'gay' novels. The depiction of David in *Nights in the Garden of Spain* represents the experience of men who, despite a 'queer' sexual orientation, marry an opposite-sex partner and father children.⁸⁵ For David, however, his children provide a continued sense of grounding and 'reality'. He asserts that his daughters are 'passionately loved' and 'continue to be the most important people' in his life'.⁸⁶ Although David is initially reluctant to include Chris, his male partner, in familial contexts, this is explained by David's tendency to live 'separate' lives when he was married.⁸⁷ However, by the novel's end, David, Chris, and the children, display a pronounced familial bond. The story's final sequence emphasises Chris's 'natural' 'protective instincts' and suggests that a nurturing response toward children is not an 'inborn' trait exclusive to 'heterosexual' couples.⁸⁸ Other modes of family are raised in Maori contexts by 'The Noble Savage'.⁸⁹ His marriage to Leah is not a 'retreat' to the socially-sanctioned heteronormative, but a refinement of complex and subjective sexual identities. 'The Noble Savage' rails against tendencies in public discourses to separate out modes of 'cultural' and 'sexual' being.⁹⁰ His decision to marry satisfies both notions of 'whakapapa' and queer pride and is thus presented as a holistic and culturally affirming choice.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Gardens of Spain*, p. 150.

⁸⁶ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Gardens of Spain*, p. 43.

⁸⁷ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Gardens of Spain*, pp. 142-3. David is initially cynical of queer attempts to create child-focused families. It is a 'typical gay dream', he suggests: poorly thought through, with little real knowledge of what it means to be 'a father'. See Ihimaera, *Nights In The Gardens of Spain*, p. 150.

⁸⁸ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Gardens of Spain*, p. 278. The final scene depicts a moment of domestic integration and normality ('as if there is nothing unusual about him being there') and presents David's journey as one of necessary maturity ('[h]e is getting the measure of me. Forcing me to grow up'.) See Ihimaera, *Nights In The Gardens of Spain*, pp. 278-9.

⁸⁹ Ihimaera uses a series of 'masks' to signify individuals throughout the novel. Timotheos Roussos suggests that such 'monikers' act 'as illustrative epithets' which says almost as much about 'the namer' as 'the named' (in this case, David and 'The Noble Savage'). For additional explanation see Timotheos Roussos, 'A Man's 'True Face': Concealing/Revealing Masculinities in Novels by Alan Duff and Witi Ihimaera', *Philament: An Online Journal of Arts and Culture* [online], 14 October 2006, available URL:

http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/publications/philament/issue5_Critique_Roussos.htm.

⁹⁰ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Gardens of Spain*, p. 235.

⁹¹ In proposing to 'The Noble Savage', Leah is careful to celebrate his 'queerness'. Speaking to 'The Noble Savage', she reasons that his 'sexuality has a strength of its own which you can bring to a relationship not only with me but with any children we may have'. Ihimaera, *Nights In The Gardens of Spain*, p. 234.

This is further developed by his re-introduction as Tane Mahuta in *The Uncle's Story*. In urging Michael to consider marriage to Roimata, Michael's friend, and a self-identified 'lesbian' woman, Tane states that with marriage, queer Maori 'can establish a tribe ... based not just on sexual identity but on family'.⁹² He asserts that their children will be queered 'by genealogy' and 'think of themselves as belonging to ... a wonderful new gay tribe'.⁹³ Ihimaera's story posits a mode of 'queerness' that departs from conventional 'Western' identities. The reformulation of Maori customs and practices transcend Eurocentric hegemonies of 'sexuality' and 'race' and address 'queer's' 'marginal' status within Maoridom itself.⁹⁴ Such sentiments are reframed in affirmative depictions of Michael's new tribe of social misfits: a group made up of other 'boys' like Waka.⁹⁵ Their reintegration within tribal contexts challenges and subverts accepted 'custom' in the novel.⁹⁶ The use of 'takatapui' is also emblematic of reworked Maori terminologies of kinship: a community group that is born 'out of a grandmother's compulsion to take her grandchild back to her bosom'.⁹⁷ Its liberating potential is emphasised by Michael, who states that 'that day we signaled, "[m]ake way, we are coming through." We would not be stopped'.⁹⁸

Spaces, Communities and Liberation

Regardless of their location in the historical schema, all texts reflect a plethora of liberating spaces open to queer personages. Such spaces enable or reinforce real and imagined escapes from 'heteronormative' systems of coercion, and, in many cases, ease, or invert, the 'conventional' power relations that marginalise queer interests.

⁹² Ihimaera, *The Uncle's Story*, p. 296.

⁹³ Ihimaera, *The Uncle's Story*, p. 296.

⁹⁴ Ihimaera, *The Uncle's Story*, p. 326. For a further critical analysis of this view and its bearing on Ihimaera's work see Michelle Elleray, 'Weaving the Wahine Takatapui: Mirimiri and Tahuri', *Span*, 48/49 (April and October 1999), pp. 118-130.

⁹⁵ This includes boys 'on the game, two trannies, some street kids' and other teenagers with 'green hair, pierced noses and chains hanging from their belts'. See Ihimaera, *The Uncle's Story* (Auckland: Penguin, 2000), p. 363.

⁹⁶ Ihimaera, *The Uncle's Story*, p. 365. Michael states that '[w]e are a tribe. We bring our dead. If tradition has to be broken, then I will break it. No one will stop us from burying our own among the people where they belong'. He asserts that 'the time for hiding ourselves and our dead is past. The time for burying them in some anonymous cemetery is over'.

⁹⁷ Ihimaera, *The Uncle's Story*, p. 365.

⁹⁸ Ihimaera, *The Uncle's Story*, p. 365.

The ‘city’ is often presented by historians as a central location for the affirmative living of queer lives.⁹⁹ However, no such ‘singular’ or ‘ideal’ site of liberation emerges from New Zealand-specific literature. Authors, instead, alternate between multiple spaces, geographies, and conditions of being.

In Wells’ short fiction, for example, the city is encoded both as a space of comparative liberation in ‘Sweet Nothing’ and, in ‘One of THEM!’, as a site of oppressiveness.¹⁰⁰ As adolescents still ‘making sense’ of their sexualities, Jamie and Lemmy remain outside the liberating properties of the metropolis. They are subjected to a ‘heterosexual’ gaze that is confused or suspicious of groupings that ‘deviate’ from the conventional ‘boygirl’ coupling.¹⁰¹ Other stories, like ‘Outing’, suggest a past, or ‘pre-liberation’, cityscape constructed as more threatening than contemporary environments.¹⁰² Still others depict ‘modern’ cities replete with sophisticated and extensive sexual economies. In ‘Dark and Light’, for example, the city incorporates zones of euphoric sexual liberation. The sex club yields, through anonymity, a ‘zone of freedom for those seeking sexual pleasure’.¹⁰³ Depictions of Auckland in Ihimaera’s *Nights in the Garden of Spain* accentuate a similar sexual economy, represented by the ‘steam parlour’, ‘maze’, and other sexual meeting places for queer men. However, while the city is a space of freedom and prosperity, it is ‘also streaked through with Puritanism and all the meanness that marks the mercantile class’.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ For examples see George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994); David Higgs, *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories Since 1600* (London: Routledge, 1999); Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1981-1957* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁰ Wells, ‘Sweet Nothing’, pp. 18-22; ‘One of THEM!’, p. 31.

¹⁰¹ Wells, ‘One of THEM!’, p. 52.

¹⁰² Eric notes, for example, that his ‘boyfriend was 14 years younger than him’ and thus lacked personal memories of ‘aversion therapy as a “cure” for homosexuality’ or ‘a city in which there were no bars, saunas or nightclubs’. See Wells, ‘Outing’, in *Dangerous Desires* (Auckland: Reed, 1991), p. 96.

¹⁰³ Wells, ‘Dark and Light’, p. 211. Eric also reflects on the ‘option[s]’ that remain open to him in satisfying his sexual and emotional needs. This extends from having a ‘relationship’ with someone to the enjoyment of ‘anonymous sex’ and the ‘relief of orgasm’. See Wells, p. 213.

¹⁰⁴ Ihimaera, *Nights in the Garden of Spain*, p. 24. This includes violence committed against queer agents.

In earlier narratives, like Courage's *A Way of Love*, London supplies a range of private spaces that afford queer companionship and networks of support. Bruce ascribes a sense of community and solidarity evident in such phrases as 'men of my kind' or 'our immense league', and, formulates, in the process, one of New Zealand's first moments of self-affirmation or 'pride' in fiction.¹⁰⁵ These networks engender a sense of community and commonality that revalues the queer subject in surroundings populated by other queer personages.¹⁰⁶ This mutual cultural fabric provides, for Bruce, a near-geographic sense of place that leaves him 'homesick' and 'in exile' when forced to do without it.¹⁰⁷

However, such networks remain largely invested in private microcosms. Matt Houlbrook gestured towards this apparent paradox when he characterised the city as 'a productive space that generates and stabilizes' new forms of 'selfhood' within conditions that are simultaneously 'alienating, disruptive, and dangerous' for queer personages.¹⁰⁸ The performance of queer displays in 'private' worlds suggests a necessary concealment from a wider heteronormative world. This is particularly the case for the communities and individuals identified by the protagonists in both *A Way of Love* and *The Visit To Penmorten*: men of a usually bourgeois predisposition, who cherish apparently 'middle class' values of propriety, discretion and respectability.¹⁰⁹ Men in these texts continue to show a concern for the outward display of the 'normative' and an alternation between 'public' ('heterosexual') and private ('homosexual') worlds.¹¹⁰ The depiction of Auckland in the 1960s in Sargeson's *The Hangover* is similarly a space of sexual and emotional possibilities

¹⁰⁵ Courage, *A Way of Love*, pp. 13, 145.

¹⁰⁶ Courage suggests that men share a 'common erotic compulsion, a common form of social difficulty, often a common glossary, and ... rejoiced in the anonymity of cities'. See Courage, *A Way of Love*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁷ Courage, *A Way of Love*, pp. 145, 150.

¹⁰⁸ Houlbrook, pp. 3, 5.

¹⁰⁹ Houlbrook emphasises such characteristics in his insistence that an identifiably 'respectable "homosexual" identity' emerged at this time that was predicated upon the 'values of privacy and discretion that permeated bourgeois culture in the first half of twentieth century'. This, he suggests, helped articulate a 'respectable "homosexual" identity at the intersection of class, masculinity, sexuality, and place'. See Houlbrook, pp. 195-7.

¹¹⁰ For examples see Courage, *A Way of Love*, pp. 25-7, 107, 141, 143; *The Visit To Penmorten*, pp. 46, 112.

for queer personages, though contained, in this case, within the peripheral spaces of ‘Bohemia’.¹¹¹

These urban environments contrast with even greater limitation evident in suburban areas. In *The Hangover*, Sargeson evokes the ‘closeness’ of suburban life by encoding Alan’s home as a ‘solidly established order that enclosed his mother and himself as isolated units’.¹¹² The lived environment is encapsulated by depictions of the rampant consumption of consumer goods, and its attendant physical, aesthetic, and aural intrusions into a ‘private’ home life already inhibited by the repressive puritanical tendencies of the nuclear family.¹¹³ In Sargeson’s 1976 novel, *Sunset Village*, Brixton Brake – described elsewhere as the ‘grim old faggot’ – enjoys a ‘long urban lifetime’ in a city environment characterised as a ‘cross-section of modern Bohemia’.¹¹⁴ This is in direct contrast to the ‘uniform and conforming’ qualities of ‘the suburban side of the belt’.¹¹⁵

Suburban environments in later texts conflate explicitly with fractured queer identities. In *Boy Overboard* this occurs through the use of objective correlatives that emphasise marginal or demoralised psychological states. Jamie relates a sense of dispossession in his description of a lived-environment that is suggestive of class degradation and economic depression.¹¹⁶ Like Alan’s world in *The Hangover*, Jamie’s environment is enclosed and contained. Life is located in the ‘narrow tunnel’ of their ‘world’, with true happiness only ascribed to those living ‘elsewhere’.¹¹⁷ Such responses reflect a sense of imprisonment beyond the merely

¹¹¹ Moments of potent homoeroticism usually occur in Dottie’s hostel, for example; the novel’s central node for Bohemian counter-culture. For examples, see Sargeson, *The Hangover*, pp. 35, 92-3, 125.

¹¹² Sargeson, *The Hangover*, pp. 22-3.

¹¹³ Sargeson, *The Hangover*, pp. 22-3.

¹¹⁴ Frank Sargeson, *Sunset Village* (Wellington: Reed, 1976), p. 31.

¹¹⁵ Sargeson, *Sunset Village*, pp. 29, 31.

¹¹⁶ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 5.

¹¹⁷ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, pp. 7, 19. Such statements connect to comments Wells makes in *Long Loop Home* about his childhood and youth spent in Point Chevalier. See Wells, *Long Loop Home*, pp. 236, 257.

‘claustrophobic’ and reflect Jamie’s latent sexual anxieties. He expresses the belief that ‘[w]e are an island and nobody, no, nobody escapes’.¹¹⁸

The suburban environment in Virtue’s *In The Country of Salvation* is similarly a space of increased moral policing and surveillance. However, the expanse of suburban spaces means that Billy and his brothers access a range of social opportunities, as well as a tangible proximity to the ‘sin’ and ‘temptation’, and thus sexual possibilities, Restell believes abide in the city.¹¹⁹ Narrative depictions of mid-1990s Auckland further suggest the ‘queering’ of suburban spaces. This is illustrated in displays of queerness in upmarket cafes in Ponsonby in *The Transfiguration of Martha Friend*, as well as the integration of Martha, Alex, and Tennessee in familial-like arrangements of care and nurturing in Martha’s Devonport locale.¹²⁰

Similar slippages occur in depicting the liberating or marginalising potential of rural and small town communities. Such spaces operate mostly as geographies of inhibition and enclosure in Well’s short fiction.¹²¹ In ‘Sweet Nothing’, for example, Alan, ‘an-out-towner’, visits a provincial, and thus ‘closeted’ settlement, described as ‘New Zealand at its most prohibitively prim’.¹²² Alan suggests that the town is ‘full of eyes’ and a ‘rancour which forbids true happiness or ecstasy in others’.¹²³ Such an environment undercuts visible displays of queerness and reduces sexual possibilities to the more liberalised sphere of city life.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 112. In a significant conversation with his cousin, however, Ponky offers recourse for negotiating such complexities. The best way to survive a sinking car, she suggests, is to ‘be patient’ and, ‘above all ... not panic’. See Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 112.

¹¹⁹ Virtue, *In The Country of Salvation*, p. 102.

¹²⁰ Virtue, *The Transfiguration of Martha Friend*, pp. 110, 164.

¹²¹ Wells suggests that such a material context embodies a major hallmark of ‘modern’ queer fiction: a ‘centrifugal/centripetal, push/pull, small town/metropolis’ dynamic that ‘parallels, often literally, a kind of coming out’. He also believes that ‘all of New Zealand is a variant of a small town, regardless how large the city’. See Peter Wells, ‘Confessions of a Provincial Pouf: An Epilogue’, in *The Duration of a Kiss* (Auckland: Reed, 1994), p. 200.

¹²² Wells, ‘Sweet Nothing’, p. 22.

¹²³ Wells, ‘Sweet Nothing’, p. 22.

¹²⁴ It is notable that ‘queerness’ is not extinguished by these surroundings. Alan concedes that his chance encounter with Terry, a local, offered a ‘rare, genuine connection’ and ‘something more real than even his friends’ who live in the city ‘could provide’. Terry’s sexuality, however, is necessarily

Both Ihimaera's *Nights in the Garden of Spain* and Eldred Grigg's *The Shining City* display ambivalence in exploring rural and small town contexts. In Ihimaera's narrative, David recollects rural spaces during adolescence as a 'Walt Whitman country' and celebrates the 'freedom of being' himself in homosocial environments.¹²⁵ Men like Charles and Dennis also live openly 'queer' lives in the narrative present, forming small, familial-like microcosms with other queer personages, like Eva and her lover, Sue.¹²⁶ In *The Shining City*, rural environments act as spaces of homosocial bonding and sexual exploration. At Moorland, a rambling Canterbury estate, George and Christopher leave a party to roam 'across paddocks' together: a geography that affords opportunities to exchange 'exploits' and become 'confidential' with one another.¹²⁷ Later sequences at Beau Carneage Bay present Christopher and Ashley with the privacy necessary to explore the erotic undertone present in their relationship. The Bay is described as a 'hand held open among yellow hills'.¹²⁸ It is a space of 'softness' that contrasts with the fixity and hardened 'reality' of urban life in Christchurch.¹²⁹

These erotic and emotional depictions were not excluded from texts written in the middle part of the twentieth century. For example, rural spaces evoke important restorative capacities in Sargeson's *I Saw In My Dream*.¹³⁰ This occurs through an emotional and geographic retreat from the formalised (and heteronormative) strictures represented by suburban life and the counterpoint embracing of alternative systems of sociability between men in rural settings. Such relationships inform homosocial environments beyond those typically celebrated as 'merely'

concealed beneath a surface performance of heteronormativity. Alan suggests that this is 'probably no different from a thousand other stories of gay men in small towns throughout the country'. See Wells, 'Sweet Nothing', p. 22.

¹²⁵ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Garden of Spain*, p. 58.

¹²⁶ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Garden of Spain*, p. 215.

¹²⁷ The men ultimately have sex with the addition of George, a local mechanic. See Eldred-Grigg, *The Shining City*, pp. 236-7.

¹²⁸ Eldred-Grigg, *The Shining City*, p. 259.

¹²⁹ Eldred-Grigg, *The Shining City*, pp. 259, 262.

¹³⁰ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, pp. 125, 128.

networks of male mateship.¹³¹ Careful textual readings demonstrate an extensive erotic continuum between men. When read as a whole, this supplants, or at least problematises, previous critical interpretations of the novel's esoteric or 'non-explicit' inferences of the homoerotic.¹³² This includes the use of endearments, suggestions of a critical queer outlook, as well as coded inferences of a local sexual economy.¹³³

Sargeson exploits 'conventional' understandings of male mateship. He invests the novel's erotic content within mateship's fractured ambiguities and the affectionate, if gruff, masculinity this affords to men in remote areas.¹³⁴ Both Pearson's *Coal Flat* and Sargeson's *I Saw In My Dream* depict rural or near-rural communities that publicly celebrate codes of liberality. In *I Saw In My Dream* this is embodied by the 'live and let live' attitude which is raised when 'old Mrs. Daley' is caught between her mere and a stallion; a moment suggestive of animalistic and public sex.¹³⁵ Sargeson's subversive tones are reinforced through Jack's insistence that 'it was just an accident ... [and] was only natural after all'.¹³⁶ Liberalism in *Coal Flat* is described as 'frontier humanism'.¹³⁷ Members of the community suggest that individualism is a celebrated 'right' peculiar to the coal mining settlements on the West Coast.¹³⁸ Henderson's well known queerness is tolerated because of his

¹³¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has argued against the use of 'the homosocial' as a descriptor for the non-sexual 'social bonds between persons of the same sex'. She suggests instead that the 'homosocial' is inevitably caught up in 'desire' and the 'potentially erotic'. How far relationships manifest as 'properly sexual', she adds, must remain an 'active question'. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) pp. 1-2.

¹³² Jensen, for example, largely excludes *I Saw In My Dream* from his consideration of Sargeson's 'homosexual' preoccupation in fiction, instead favouring *Sunset Village* and *The Hangover* as his central and explicit examples of novel-length narratives. See Jensen, *Whole Men*, pp. 107-26.

¹³³ See Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, pp. 108, 132-134, 136, 162, 263, 269.

¹³⁴ John Newton has argued that certain texts emit 'a barrage of winks and innuendoes, not excluding figurations of anal penetration'. He reasons, however, that Sargeson did not mean to suggest that male friends might "'really" be gay'. Instead, Newton suggests that Sargeson's use of the homoerotic was merely a tool to 'show us that the codes of desire' are 'effectively indistinguishable' from normativite codes used to prohibit sexual relationships between men. See Newton, p. 102.

¹³⁵ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 185.

¹³⁶ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 185.

¹³⁷ Pearson, *Coal Flat*, p. 324

¹³⁸ Pearson, *Coal Flat*, pp. 23, 324. This contrasts with Pearson's later statements regarding New Zealand life in 'Fretful Sleepers'. He suggests that 'many an honest man has been soured,

adherence to at least the outward signs of the heteronormative; a domestic space lived through the still publicly sanctioned institution of marriage. Such depictions speak of a potential, if muted, ability for men's forging of subjective lives in non-urban environments.

(2) Language and the Interior

Queer self knowledge and consciousness

Just as fiction maps spaces and 'experiences' that factored in men's lives, so too does it provide inferences of the interior formation of subjective 'queerness' and mentalities. Much of New Zealand's queer fiction demonstrates attempts made by protagonists to 'explain' and 'understand' their sense of internal difference and underscores the dynamic relations between individuals, communities, and their social and cultural environments.

The texts studied here often demonstrate the ways in which men gathered information towards an ultimate goal of 'self knowledge'. In the coded narratives of Sargeson's stories, the ability to articulate sexual wholeness is disrupted by severe gaps in knowledge regarding matters of sexuality, 'normative' or otherwise. Sexual education in *I Saw In My Dream*, for example, is delivered by Henry's mother in the form of a cryptic book that reinforces limiting notions of impurity and 'vice'.¹³⁹ In *The Hangover*, Alan relates that '[e]verything was so much larger and complicated' when compared with childhood.¹⁴⁰ He finds 'himself a young man who was *baffled*' by systems of meaning in a world that remains enigmatic.¹⁴¹ Other coded narratives reinforce notions of uncertainty, isolation and confusion. The protagonist in Courage's *The Visit to Penmorten*, for example, explains that he is 'troubled by the sense of his own isolation ...[,] the lack of power to

emasculated or turned showman' because of 'the poky little minds that milch and destroy them'. See, Pearson, 'Fretful Sleepers', p. 25.

¹³⁹ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 38.

¹⁴⁰ Sargeson, *The Hangover*, p. 22.

¹⁴¹ Sargeson, *The Hangover*, p. 22 (emphasis added). Walter in *The Young Have Secrets* is similarly unaware of the realities of reproduction as well as the possibilities for desire between boys. See Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, pp. 82, 104-5.

communicate, something pressing and profoundly necessary'.¹⁴² His 'panic' is both one that is signally resistant to literal identification, yet metaphorically parallels the disaffecting experience of being of marginalised.¹⁴³

Inferences of interior darkness and cultural dislocation highlight a central means through which queerness is signaled in fictional narratives. Of the three texts identified above, all relate a central character's power imbalance to systems of coercion and control, as well as a contrary instinct that quests towards 'wholeness' in possibilities outside the heteronormative. This imperative, however, requires techniques and strategies that maximise the cultural parameters available to authors. The use of female signal characters like Molly and Marge in Sargeson's 1940s text is a key example. Such characters explore sexual and emotional possibilities not open to male figures and inhabit imaginative spaces coded as queer.¹⁴⁴ These relationships are never characterised by sexual or emotional attraction. Instead, Henry perceives in women an emotional and sexual empathy:

Because it all sounded so very strange, almost as though someone was speaking out loud the thoughts that came into your mind sometimes. Yet to have the feeling of hearing your own thoughts being spoken out loud by a girl ... He could never have imagined such a thing.¹⁴⁵

Both signal characters are separately locked within spaces that symbolically echo the dimensions and psychological associations of 'the closet': Marge in a toilet cubicle and, more significantly, Molly in an office strong room.¹⁴⁶ For Henry, these are geographies of sexual privacy that protect the individual from a cultural and

¹⁴² Courage, *The Visit To Penmorten*, p. 48.

¹⁴³ Courage, *The Visit To Penmorten*, p. 17. This experience is couched in subversive desires for integration and surety of knowledge: a 'curiosity' that touches 'something deeper, not in the present'. See Courage, *The Visit To Penmorten*, p. 37.

¹⁴⁴ Wells identifies the use of signal characters as the 'transposition of homosexual sensibility into heterosexual characters'. See Wells, 'Confessions of a Provincial Pouf: An Epilogue', p. 199.

¹⁴⁵ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 59.

¹⁴⁶ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, pp. 51, 61.

moral fall. Yet, while ‘the closet’ protects individuals from sexual ‘danger’, it also remains a space of claustrophobic impossibility.¹⁴⁷

This obliqueness is less necessary in fiction published from the 1990s.¹⁴⁸ However, depictions of ‘pre-adult’ orientations remain relatively problematic in earlier stories. Authors instead employ veiled and symbolic suggestions of queerness. In Courage’s *The Visit to Penmorten*, Walter is said to have been ‘a child, anxious, abandoned, [and] profoundly guilty’.¹⁴⁹ Such suggestions place Walter’s childhood within conventional Freudian and oedipal paradigms of desire for a maternal and sexualised mother, and resentment and jealousy towards a father who is the recipient of that gratification. Such a straightforward interpretation, however, ignores the way in which guilt manifests itself through Walter’s sense of responsibility for his *father’s* death and its expression through his perceived failure to maintain his normative roles as a man and a son. It is in his remorse for past *cultural indiscretions*, that Dr Budden, Walter’s male friend and psychoanalyst, becomes a substitute for Walter’s father, and a recipient of an erotic emotional transference usually reserved for female personages.¹⁵⁰

In Courage’s *The Young Have Secrets*, Walter, an adolescent, is drawn to images of subversive and non-normative masculinity. Impressions of gender-transgression appear in readings of Matthew Arnold’s ‘The Forsaken Merman’ with its binary contrast between the vibrant, life-giving potential of the merman’s habitat, and the somber and puritanical qualities embodied by the shore-bound and fettered nature of the human world.¹⁵¹ This allegory of embattled and marginalised queerness is

¹⁴⁷ Henry’s symbolic transformation into Dave, however, is suggestive of a kind of ‘coming out’ achieved through liberating ‘homosocial’ spaces. He is described as a ‘cold embryo waiting to be born’. See Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁸ Wells suggests, for example, that ‘[t]he major difference ... between that fin de siècle and our own is that contemporary writers can be overt in their depiction of homosexual passion ... [and] write about sex in a very charged yet straightforward way’. See Wells, ‘Confessions of a Provincial Puff: An Epilogue’, p. 199.

¹⁴⁹ Courage, *The Visit To Penmorten*, p. 33.

¹⁵⁰ Courage, *The Visit To Penmorten*, pp. 149, 173.

¹⁵¹ Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, p. 61. I do not suggest intent on Matthew Arnold’s part to create an allegory of queer experience or ‘otherness’, but the ability of a queer subject to ‘read in to’

reinforced by the merman's bodily difference and its status as neither man nor fish: an image of indeterminacy that connects with notions of 'inversion' ascribed to 'homosexual' identities in early accounts of sexuality. Likewise, Henry in Sargeson's *I Saw In My Dream* is drawn to an image of a female water baby. This is a fairy-like creature, which, like Walter's merman, acts as a signal of transgressive sexual and gender identities. Henry apprehends an impressive notion of sensual comfortability through a feminine image that triggers or reinforces notions of queer sensibility. He notes that:

It showed a little girl sitting on the big green leaf of a water lily. She was ... pink ... without any clothes ... and she had green wings growing out her back.¹⁵²

Symbolism

Authors frequently use symbolism to depict adult 'queer' interiors. Such strategies enabled men to speak in powerful and non-explicit ways through subtext. In early narratives, this provided a central means for engaging in coded discussions of sexuality, while later writers were able to exploit symbolic techniques as a means to heighten the erotic and subversive qualities of their fiction.

In *Coal Flat*, Pearson evokes the conforming and corrosive powers of 'the community' when confronted by individuals who transgress normative frameworks: a metaphoric paralleling of 'heteronormative' coercion applied against bodies coded as 'queer' or 'deviant'. The use of 'scab' by various townspeople, for example, reflects applications of pejorative terminologies, like 'fag' or 'faggot', used to stigmatise and commit violence against renegade sexualities; it suggests a similar degree of 'toxicity' or instinctive repulsion espoused by those who 'embody' 'normative' traits.¹⁵³ Paul is ultimately 'corroded by the town's enmity' and forced

such texts, even if subconsciously, certain empathies and emotional resonances that originate from their status as 'marginal' and queer. For his poem see Arnold 'The Forsaken Mermaid', in *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, second edition, ed., Miriam Allot (London and New York: Longman, 1979), pp. 100-5.

¹⁵² Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 14.

¹⁵³ Pearson, *Coal Flat*, p. 223.

to adopt a ‘series of prevarications and compromises’ in order to minimise the damage done to his social status.¹⁵⁴ Thus, while Pearson does not depict explicit manifestations of homophobia, *Coal Flat* nonetheless works as a convincing allegory of uneven power relations used to constrain and limit those identified as ‘transgressive’, even in spaces like Coal Flat, with its apparently ‘liberalised’ culture.¹⁵⁵

Symbolism in Courage’s *A Way of Love* is used to supplant negative assumptions of same-sex relations. The presence of the hyacinth plant, named in Greek mythology for Apollo’s fallen male lover, Hyacinthus, enjoins moments of domestic and romantic possibilities in celebrated cosmologies of ‘queer’ pasts. Bruce notes that:

[t]he heat had opened the blue-green pyramid of the blossom between the plant’s spear-like leaves. A deep and subtle scent – how shall I describe it? – a scent of pollen, of honey, of spring itself ... the scent suddenly gave what I can only call an acute physical point to a passing loneliness I might otherwise have disregarded but which I now sought to alleviate.¹⁵⁶

He also states later that:

[t]he scent of the hyacinth was very strong on the closed air and no less disturbing than before. I stood still, in thought, curious to discover that my mind was concerning itself with someone apparently quite irrelevant ... a young face, tigerish, baffled, the tender skin of which had once, for a moment, grazed my own.¹⁵⁷

Courage uses the hyacinth as a means to symbolically underscore men’s natural inclination for sexual and emotional satisfaction. Its association with a ‘queer past’ lends itself well to romantic depictions between men. Furthermore, its mythological

¹⁵⁴ Pearson, *Coal Flat*, p. 225.

¹⁵⁵ Paul suggests New Zealanders remain ‘prisoners of our own taboos’ created ‘in a different country in an older period’. Suggestively, normative systems are maintained out of New Zealand’s fear of ‘humanity’ and the less restrictive range of behaviour this includes. See Pearson, *Coal Flat*, p. 339.

¹⁵⁶ Courage, *A Way of Love*, pp. 34-5.

¹⁵⁷ Courage, *A Way of Love*, p. 41.

origins echo many parameters of Hellenistic same-sex relationships: intimacies that were normally composed between older and younger men or adolescents.¹⁵⁸

Authors writing in the latter part of the twentieth century deploy symbolic tropes of queerness in more direct modes of representation. In their depiction of childhood identities, for example, authors connect conditions of exclusion with explicitly queer identities. In Virtue's *In The Country of Salvation*, Cushla, cares for three calves abandoned by their mothers.¹⁵⁹ Billy, the youngest of three brothers, finds the 'smallest calf' dead in the aftermath of a farm get-together.¹⁶⁰ Its death is explained by Mr Young as a 'natural' rejection of the marginal (a 'runt') and the 'sick' ('bad blood'): a culturally contingent explanation that parallels Billy's frequent illness as a child and his later paternal rejection as 'fallen' and 'deviant'.¹⁶¹ However, Billy's queerness is resistant to negativised imputation and is instead conflated with a presumption that he is 'special'.¹⁶² Billy's suggestion that art and poetry 'became a shelter' also imbibes an inherent agency that opposes the disaffecting consequences of alienation and separation.¹⁶³ This critical engagement is crucial in constructing modes of 'consciousness' that articulate 'difference' as positive and affirm emotional experiences that are at odds with Billy's conservative upbringing.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ At the start of their relationship Bruce is forty-five years old and Bruce is said to be 'twenty-three, possibly twenty-four'. See Courage, *A Way of Love*, p. 21. For a recent account of same-sex practices in ancient times see David M. Halperin, 'Homosexuality', in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, eds., Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 720-3.

¹⁵⁹ Virtue, *In The Country of Salvation*, p. 49.

¹⁶⁰ Virtue, *In The Country of Salvation*, p. 67.

¹⁶¹ Virtue, *In The Country of Salvation*, pp. 67-8.

¹⁶² Virtue, *In The Country of Salvation*, p. 135.

¹⁶³ Virtue, *In The Country of the Salvation*, p. 135. Restell's attempt to deface and destroy Billy's poetry represents efforts to disrupt transgressive 'difference' through the violent impositions of patriarchy. However, Billy's counterattack, made against father's private (and sacred) items, signifies emboldened claims of queer selfhood brought against the limiting parameters of heteronormativity. See Virtue, *In The Country of the Salvation*, p. 141-2.

¹⁶⁴ This is exemplified during a moment of critical awareness late in the novel at which time Billy's 'feeling of being different' 'fit[s] in' and is explained by his love for Rewi. See Virtue, *In The Country of the Salvation*, p. 165.

Eldred-Grigg uses symbolism in *The Shining City* to identify ways in which conservative ideologies impact on the formation of subjective queer identities. Christopher's diary entries demonstrate the imposition of normative hegemonies that penetrate space afforded for privacy or 'introspection'.¹⁶⁵ His thoughts instead embody a litany of publicly-sanctioned reflections that relate more to the inoffensive workings of education and the family than a critical analysis of daily life.¹⁶⁶ Christopher admits a sense of self-consciousness and notes that the diary exists for 'some other reason' than 'introspection': '[s]omething to do with other people, and me, and how we all fitted in with one another'.¹⁶⁷ Self reflexivity is only gained at university through the counter culture and leftist movements and its symbolic opposition to Christopher's conditioned thinking.¹⁶⁸

Queer Objectification

In contrast, Jamie in Well's *Boy Overboard* displays an instinctive inclination toward a 'queer' orientation. This is indicated through the presence of an objectifying gaze that expresses an erotic and non-deviant appreciation of the male body. Such passages connect more explicitly in their depictions to attempts to assimilate and make sense of 'queerness' itself. The insertion of the reader within the protagonist's fragmented, but the nonetheless 'queered', worldview ensures that the reader experiences both Jamie's erotic impulse and also the way in which this is undercut by a lack of surety and self-doubt. In describing his attraction for the actor John Saxon, Jamie states:

I slowed down to gaze at his body, erotically wreathed with muscles, his togs so white and tight against his dark hairy legs. *I always found myself gazing at the togs as if within them or behind them lay a key to*

¹⁶⁵ Eldred-Grigg, *The Shining City*, p. 41.

¹⁶⁶ Eldred-Grigg, *The Shining City*, p. 41.

¹⁶⁷ Eldred-Grigg, *The Shining City*, pp. 41-2.

¹⁶⁸ Eldred-Grigg, *The Shining City*, p. 163. Notions of propriety and class-based hierarchies are displaced by Christopher's realisation that minorities had 'always been exploited by people like my father, and my Urquhart uncles ... all the men of my childhood. It was time to stop them'. This extends to explicitly militant conceptions of queerness embodied by Christopher's belief that '[g]ay people ... I decided ... had been exploited too'. See Eldred-Grigg, *The Shining City*, p. 171.

*understanding the moods and feelings which had plunged me deep into a trance.*¹⁶⁹

Boy Overboard insists upon an inherent power imbalance that exists for queer adolescents; the ‘conceptualisation of the missing word’ and sexual experimentation with other boys that yields only ‘incomplete conclusion[s]’.¹⁷⁰ Jamie’s appreciation of male bodies offers a mode of self liberation that, when accessed, will enact Jamie’s holistic reformation as a whole being. Sexual knowledge represents a rubric of self discovery and cultural resistance; a set of alternate definitional values that, in the world of the novel, remain repressed and concealed by those complicit in coercive systems of governance and the privileging of heteronormativity.¹⁷¹

Such depictions contrast with the inhibited representation of ‘sexual explicitness’ in texts that contain distinctly ‘homosexual’ emphases, like Courage’s *A Way of Love*, and, to a slightly lesser extent, *The Visit to Penmorten*. In coded narratives like *I Saw In My Dream* and *The Hangover*, however, objectification forms a central means for identifying queer sensibilities. In *I Saw In My Dream* this is experienced in moments of same-sex attraction which are emotionally and erotically charged. For Sargeson, writing in post-war New Zealand, however, this necessitates a level of ambivalence. Moments of queer objectification do not connect with overt sexual suggestion but manifest themselves in states of sensual tangibility:

Bob held his racket as though he had hold of a shovel and tried to scoop up every ball that came over the net ... And then he took off his shirt and played in just his trousers and stockinged feet ... the ball would land in the rambler roses and bring down a shower of petals all over himself, so they’d be in his hair, or sticking to the hair of his chest ... Bob with his big muscles and sunburn.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 165 (emphasis added).

¹⁷⁰ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, pp. 170, 253.

¹⁷¹ This includes a range of personages, especially guardians, teachers, other children, and those working in law enforcement. For examples see Wells, *Boy Overboard*, pp. 23-24, 219, 253.

¹⁷² Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 34.

Henry's gaze is closely observant. It traverses from the outlines of Bob's musculature to details of his chest hair; hair that is 'queered' through its conflation with flower imagery. It is only later that more graphic associations are made when Henry recalls the image of his uncle during a fever dream. It is here, during a moment at which the character's 'natural moral faculties' are impaired, that the earlier scene of aesthetic appreciation is overlaid with an image of ejaculation and sexual climax.¹⁷³

In *The Hangover*, a text written almost twenty years later, Sargeson signals Alan's attraction for men through the objectification of exaggerated extremes of male beauty. Geoffrey, for example, is described as 'pink, blue-eyed, black-haired'.¹⁷⁴ He is a person, Alan suggests, who had 'grown up tall and strong and far too handsome'; something 'that came out of ... a large pretty-coloured box that had cost a lot of money and had a picture on the lid'.¹⁷⁵ In contrast, Alan's views of Jasper prefigure a body that is 'muscular without being muscle-bound ... smooth and sunbrowned all over'.¹⁷⁶ Jasper is someone who looks 'preeminently sleek [and] healthy'.¹⁷⁷

Challenging 'Official' Discourses

Literary texts also engage in often sustained critique against dominant discourses. Such tendencies call for increased cultural reflexivity and signify the presence of a rich imaginative and intellectual queer liberation.

Courage's *A Way of Love*, for example, is insistent that love between men is real and of genuine benefit. As Phillip remarks 'I can't see why [homosexuality] should be wrong ... none of it seems unnatural to me'.¹⁷⁸ Such examples evoke alternative constructions of the 'natural' and disturb society's expression of 'homosexuality' in

¹⁷³ Sargeson, *I Saw In My Dream*, p. 72.

¹⁷⁴ Sargeson, *The Hangover*, p. 23.

¹⁷⁵ Sargeson, *The Hangover*, p. 23.

¹⁷⁶ Sargeson, *The Hangover*, p. 130.

¹⁷⁷ Sargeson, *The Hangover*, p. 130.

¹⁷⁸ Courage, *A Way of Love*, p. 103.

transgressive terminologies.¹⁷⁹ Despite its necessary ‘sexual neutering’, *A Way of Love* operates as a mouth piece for the integration of the marginalised queer male. Through the character of James Caspar, an author, Courage refutes the queer male’s marginalised status. He insists instead that ‘I want to read a novel about queers that treats us as human beings’.¹⁸⁰ The fact that Courage’s novel is populated by ‘queers’ represents a significant act of realignment: a narrative world in which ‘queer’ lives factor as centre-stage. This critique is supported by Courage’s attribution of queer forbears. The novel gestures toward a plethora of ‘queer’ personages, ranging from modern figures, such as Tchaikovsky, Proust, and Gide, to Hellenistic persons, such as Eros, Ganymede and Sappho. Courage’s protest is therefore one which insists on the existence of a legitimate spectrum of ‘queerness’ in rich and publicly celebrated histories.

Pearson calls attention to the hypocrisies apparent in the legal status-quo in *Coal Flat*. His oblique critique of legal discourses, well before the *HLR* of 1986, situates the judicial system, not as a body concerned for the protection of the vulnerable, but as a public spectacle in which ‘appetites’ are ‘whetted’ by ‘other people’s secrets’.¹⁸¹ Pearson questions the artificial construction of coercive laws and, through this, the value systems and simple-minded mob-mentality apparent in much of ‘society’.¹⁸² Paul suggests that society is hollow and inhumane. This is represented by a culture that is ‘wooden, self-righteous and pompous’, and reinforced by Paul’s immediate appraisal of the judge as ‘unfathomable’ and ‘stern’.¹⁸³ Paul identifies emotional and non-rational bases that underlie the enshrining of ‘public decency’ in the law. In forming a verdict, Paul suggests that the members of the jury will ‘each’ make ‘some remark to let it be known that he was shocked by the case’ and ‘clear himself of any complicity’.¹⁸⁴ He holds that the jury members are a like ‘medieval people confronted with illness or insanity’ and

¹⁷⁹ Courage, *A Way of Love*, p. 103.

¹⁸⁰ Courage, *A Way of Love*, p. 110 (emphasis added).

¹⁸¹ Pearson, *Coal Flat*, p. 337.

¹⁸² Pearson, *Coal Flat*, p. 338.

¹⁸³ Pearson, *Coal Flat*, pp. 338-9.

¹⁸⁴ Pearson, *Coal Flat*, pp. 338-9.

subject to the desertion of ‘courage and clarity’ when confronted by ‘the many events in life they couldn’t face’.¹⁸⁵

In *Boy Overboard*, Wells depicts the impact of legal and cultural discourses on queer bodies in pre-‘liberation’ New Zealand. ‘Homosexuality’ is constructed as a public threat by those responsible for its surveillance. This is implied through reactions of the police and the children’s fathers in gauging the precise nature of Geoff and Jamie’s encounter with a man seen naked on the beach.¹⁸⁶ Both police and parents imagine the homosexual’s natural trajectory from social deviant to child molester.¹⁸⁷ The intrusion of ‘official’ bodies and knowledge into Jamie and Geoff’s world ruptures their precarious ‘queer’ experimentation. This breakage evokes notions of religious sacrifice and the violent penetration of the sacrosanct:

... our world has now been breached and broken into. The end of a spear has been lent into our flesh, and now our innards, slippery and hot, viscid and smelling of shit, will plop out onto the floor. Now strangers called adults will feel their way through our insides, trying to find treasure but instead slowly killing us as the pull more and more from our bodies.¹⁸⁸

Such excerpts characterise the coercive powers of the state as morally suspect and recast the role of ‘guardian’ within the contexts of Judas-like betrayal. Wells also critiques the imposition of coercive laws in depictions of the state’s reductive power. Through Jamie, Wells suggests ways in which ‘homosexual’ men were deprived of agency and ‘captured’ by official discourses. Mr. Webb’s use of photography underscores notions of classification used to order ‘disordered bodies’. Men are reduced to ‘faces frozen forever in the flashlight’.¹⁸⁹ The ‘naked man on the beach’ is reduced to a ‘frightened face, an empty face, a face at the first moment of its dying’.¹⁹⁰ Such episodes affirm fiction’s capacity to revise histories and reinsert

¹⁸⁵ Paul further suggests that in ‘their pompous stiffness’ the jury ‘were like German soldiers goose-stepping to terrify the enemy: only there was no enemy. It was just that they were afraid. Afraid of love’. See Pearson, *Coal Flat*, pp. 339.

¹⁸⁶ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, pp. 245, 251.

¹⁸⁷ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, pp. 245, 251.

¹⁸⁸ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 250.

¹⁸⁹ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 253.

¹⁹⁰ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 253.

homosexual ‘entities’ within a schema of the past. Such prefiguring acts as a conduit for ‘explaining’ the effects of discourse on the public negotiation of queer identities, and in Jamie’s case, accentuates the multiple difficulties that adolescents face in their efforts to acquire internal coherence.

It is within this ‘new’ narrative preoccupation that queer genealogies are redeployed. Whereas Courage used a sense of ‘forbears’ for cultural credibility, in *Boy Overboard*, a range of ‘queer’ agents operate as a central means for Jamie’s awakening. A sense of ‘queerness’ does not presuppose an ‘alternative’ sexuality, but, rather, a cultural distinction that marks an individual as different. Figures such as Yul Brynner, who played King Herod in film *The Ten Commandments*, provide alternate conceptions of masculinity: an ‘ambiguous choice’ and ‘a strange middle ground’ that Jamie suggests does not exist elsewhere.¹⁹¹ Egyptian culture provides potentially subversive gender roles within which Jamie might be either Yul Brynner or Cleopatra. Such figures provide alternative cultural scripts and moments of queer agency and willfulness. ‘I have become aware of a silence forming in me’, Jamie explains, ‘as powerfully present as if an ear or an eye has opened within my stomach’.¹⁹² He suggests that ‘I am moving, almost miraculously, inside its magic bell. It protects me and sings about me, as if another and personal spotlight has come on round me ... this slow awakening’.¹⁹³

Courage engages in an earlier critique of the determining ‘logic’ of religious and puritanical discourses. Explicitly queer personages in *A Way of Love* trouble the imputations of Judeo-Christian ‘sin’. ‘Homosexual’ men instead equate ‘queerness’ with phraseologies that celebrate their biblical censure (‘no stranger to the land of Sodom’).¹⁹⁴ Such inferences are placed alongside less ‘artificial’ modes of morality. Notions like ‘animal honesty’ import a naturally constituted sexual desire that presuppose and resist constructions of carnality and sexual transgression between

¹⁹¹ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 169.

¹⁹² Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 259.

¹⁹³ Wells, *Boy Overboard*, p. 259.

¹⁹⁴ Courage, *A Way of Love*, p. 54.

men.¹⁹⁵ Bruce's personal ideology is further one that rejects 'repentance' and celebrates 'gratification'.¹⁹⁶ He engages both religious and legal rhetoric in his insistence that 'a certain deviation' is 'neither a crime nor an unjustified indulgence'.¹⁹⁷ *The Visit To Penmorton* is equally subversive in its depiction of Morgan as Saint Sebastian: an early 'gay icon' for queer communities.¹⁹⁸ Walter articulates his disaffection from established forms of Christian dogma in his assertion that prayer was a futile pursuit; a plea left unanswered by an unkind 'father'.¹⁹⁹ Walter's conception of God in *The Young Have Secrets* is also associated with images of repressive human patriarchs. He holds that:

The Almighty was mixed up with Scripture, with a white beard like Mr. Garnett's, with Sunday School and with a picture of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea ... If you sinned, God had his revenge. He was terrible.²⁰⁰

Courage suggests that life potential is impeded by an overwhelming and self-harming puritanism. This is particularly so in regard to matters of 'sex' and self-knowledge. History, for example, contains 'not a word about what goes on under the clothes, not a syllable about the mental climate of the times'.²⁰¹ It is a 'swindle' and 'arbitrary' conception of the past.²⁰²

Religious subversion gains greater impetus in many later queer novels. Letitia's transition from a man to a woman in Virtue's *The Transfiguration of Martha Friend*, for example, borrows the religiously infused term 'transfiguration' in its description

¹⁹⁵ Courage, *A Way of Love*, p. 50.

¹⁹⁶ Courage, *A Way of Love*, p. 254.

¹⁹⁷ Courage, *A Way of Love*, p. 36.

¹⁹⁸ Courage, *The Visit to Penmorton*, p. 190. For explanations on St. Sebastian's status as a gay icon, see Richard A. Kaye, "'Losing His Religion": Saint Sebastian as Contemporary Gay Martyr', in *Outlooks: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities and Visual Cultures*, Peter Horne and Reina Lewis, eds., (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 86-105.

¹⁹⁹ Courage, *The Visit To Penmorton*, p. 28. Walter is instead depicted as attracted towards the contrasting image of liberating paganism. For a key example see Courage, *The Visit To Penmorton*, pp. 94-6.

²⁰⁰ Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, p. 161.

²⁰¹ Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, p. 175.

²⁰² Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, p. 175. Courage also includes significant critique of the sexual marginalisation of women in this context. See Courage, *The Young Have Secrets*, p. 222.

of a passage from fragile mortality to spiritual transcendence.²⁰³ This is significant since Letitia's gender reassignment surgery arguably disrupts and challenges 'conventional' or 'biologically'-appraised conceptions of gender identity. Martha's eventual inclusion within a conception of spiritual awakening, now queered by its association with renegade sexuality, embraces *non-queer* bodies in renewed and alternate ideas of spiritual growth and harmonious self expression.

Ihimaera, in *Nights in the Garden of Spain*, engages in an explicitly queer critique of 'conventional' and heteronormativising biblical interpretation. Sodom and Gomorrah is rejected as 'the touchstone of all emotional, religious, and societal hysteria about homosexuality'.²⁰⁴ Principle Batman's tirade is one that engages many of the discourses engendered by conservative religious ideologies. He states:

*Ever since ... God has set his face against the abomination of homosexuality. A homosexual is unfit for the Kingdom of God. Homosexual acts are against nature. They are sexual perversion, boys. You must guard yourself against lustful thoughts for other boys. You must pray for the boy who has lustful thoughts about you. A homosexual is a sinner. He is a criminal in the eyes of God and of society.*²⁰⁵

David's response is replete with a sense of reflexivity. He asserts his decision not to 'forgive' the 'assumption that They Were Right and that The Bible Was On Their Side'.²⁰⁶ He rails against the use of fear to 'enforce an acceptable heterosexual code of sexual conduct', enforce 'gender roles and masculinity', and 'combat homoeroticism'.²⁰⁷ The novel ends in a configuration of self actualisation and spiritual splendour. Chris is transformed as an 'angel' and a 'phoenix'. Such an image combines both Christian and pagan symbologies in a scene that takes place during Auckland's Hero Parade: a space that, itself, constitutes queer self-affirmation and visibility.²⁰⁸ As an 'icon of hope' Chris embodies the varied and

²⁰³ Virtue, *The Transfiguration of Martha Friend*, p. 42.

²⁰⁴ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Garden of Spain*, p. 107.

²⁰⁵ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Garden of Spain*, p. 108 (author's emphasis).

²⁰⁶ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Garden of Spain*, p. 108.

²⁰⁷ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Garden of Spain*, p. 105.

²⁰⁸ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Garden of Spain*, p. 300 (emphasis added).

unquantifiable dreams of queer selfhood. As David suggests ‘[h]e is everything *we* want him to be. He is whatever *we* wish ourselves to become’.²⁰⁹

Conclusion

When considered in their cultural contexts, spatial and temporal, literary texts provide historians with indications of queer ‘possibility’ that exist during historical episodes.²¹⁰ As ‘adjacent’ texts, fiction written by queer authors embody modes of understanding that problematise, disturb, and, at times, displace, views espoused in ‘official’ discourses. They suggest how queer writers ‘mobilized existing cultural tools’ within social constraints.²¹¹

Whether necessarily coded or not, fiction provides a unique cultural space from which to articulate moments of protest and critique. This offers writers opportunities for important revisions to historical periods that exclude or reject direct or outward signs of sexuality. It presents a ‘queering’ of the historical register and the reinsertion of emotional demands and ‘realities’ against the shifting tide of public discourses. It also demonstrates ways in which men gathered information towards an ultimate goal of ‘self knowledge’, or at least hints at the dilemma involved in fashioning a cohesive sense of selfhood.

At times, writers, whether knowingly, or otherwise, engage in direct contestation with ‘dominant discourses’; strategies which embody, in textual forms, an early and sustained intellectual liberation. My research reflects an increasingly pluralist sense of ‘queerness’ which is gained through the ‘global’ and dynamic reading of fiction. The appraisal of multiple texts articulates diverse queer experience: a matrix of cultural representation that resists singular understandings of sexuality. Such stories typically force audiences to ‘live’ through the narrative outlet of a ‘queer’

²⁰⁹ Ihimaera, *Nights In The Garden of Spain*, p. 300 (emphasis added).

²¹⁰ Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992) p. 10.

²¹¹ Walkowitz, p. 10.

protagonist and encourage non-queer audiences to co-exist and partake in moments of 'queerness', thus inverting the parameters of 'normative' sexuality.

The positive depiction of 'queer' personages in a multitude of cultural spaces limits the rhetorical power of contemporary reductivist strategies that characterise 'the homosexual' as marginal and negative. Its 'presence' in varied depictions, and across several historical 'moments', constructs increasingly varied spectrums of sexual expression and subjective identities.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated the wide ranging and often fraught process involved in assembling definitional properties surrounding queer identities. It demonstrates that 'queerness' has formed a major cultural preoccupation in New Zealand's public discourses since 1948.

This study addresses at least two omissions evident in New Zealand's social and cultural histories. Firstly, it contributes to the history of sexuality and, more specifically, queer history in New Zealand, both of which remain intellectual pursuits yet to be adequately explored by the academy. And secondly, it responds to the reluctance of many scholars to engage with historical concerns in modes of historiography other than 'traditional' archival and social-historical contexts. This thesis has highlighted the major narratological contribution offered by parliamentary and literary sources in developing a New Zealand-specific sense of sexual difference. It has also signalled productive possibilities apparent in integrating such accounts within increasingly reflexive and complicating bodies of theory. It indicates, as Steven Maynard suggests, that such models need not be unhinged from material or social bases but benefit from the dynamic fusion of two (or more) theoretical models.¹

The material past was explored at length in Chapter One. This was necessary to ground later readings of *Hansard* and fiction within their social and cultural contexts. It therefore explored some of the ways in which social and cultural discourses and institutional bodies intersected and influenced the subjective formation of queer identities. It showed that queer men and women were subject to both 'national' and 'international' pressures and influences. Furthermore, it suggested that there was no clear-cut 'moment' of queer liberation in New Zealand.

¹ Steven Maynard, "'Respect Your Elders, Know Your Past': History and the Queer Theorists", *Radical History Review*, 75 (1999), p. 65.

Instead attitudes and beliefs surrounding sexuality were fluidic and shifting throughout this period.

This chapter also argued for a revised and radicalised reconstruction of the past that repositioned the queer individual within the framework of ‘mainstream’ New Zealand culture. It concluded that a ‘queer underside’ existed alongside, and in many cases, intersected with ‘mainstream’ (and ‘normative’) histories and spaces and did so from the very outset of New Zealand’s history.

Chapters Two and Three moved on to a more substantive consideration of the discursive construction of ‘queerness’ evident in public discourses. Chapter Two focused on parliamentary debates and discussed the ways in which language cast diverse ‘homosexual’ persons as unified and sexually ‘deviant’. Such accounts promoted reductive and negativised understandings of ‘homosexuality’ in at least four major discourses: nature, science, religion and the law. Representations that ‘implicated’ the ‘homosexual’ in other socially undesirable phenomena also caught up anxieties directed, not just at ‘deviant’ mentalities, but at the reified structures underlying the maintenance of normative identities as well. Such accounts were not fixed, however, but instead demonstrate rhetorical emphases and patterns which emerged during particular historical moments. This complicated the ability to carry out public discussions of ‘homosexuality’ during some earlier episodes, but also emphasised the way in which rhetorical strategies were tied to the wider social and cultural environment.

By the 1980s, proponents for the *HLRB* mobilised in direct opposition to reductive strategies. However, it was not until the mid-1990s that dissent was offered by groups of individuals with publicly acknowledged queer identities. Chris Carter, Tim Barnett, and Georgina Beyer formed this first vanguard and ensured that claims for queer inclusion and integration were heard with relative frequency. Their contributions were significant since, for the first time, queer individuals were themselves influential in the linguistic and rhetorical framework used to structure

and describe so-called 'homosexual' personages. Queer MPs raised positive suggestions of queerness with greater immediacy and efficacy than previous decades and supported, from within parliament, continued legislative and social reform.

Chapter Three offered a close reading of fiction written by men with publicly avowed queer identities from 1948. It concluded that opposition to negativised accounts of 'homosexuality' did not emerge for the first time during the 'liberating' ethos of the 1980s in parliament, but at multiple instances, contemporary and prior to this in New Zealand's literary heritage. I suggested that fiction offers valuable and early correctives to the marginalising capacities evident in most 'official' discourses. It presents an 'adjacent' body of thought that, placed against parliamentary debates, constitutes a continued level of social protest and critical engagement. A consideration of fiction indicates ways in which queer writers 'mobilized existing cultural tools' within societal constraints and signaled the 'conditions' of queer 'possibility' that exist in given historical episodes.²

Queer authors exploited fiction as a productive imaginative space in modes of critique best suited to their precise cultural and personal contexts. This was informed by a range of factors; most particularly, the parameters of time and space, cultural geographies, and personal subjectivities. Such factors influenced the preferred species of resistance or critique used, and in this sense, suggests the ways in which works are embedded within the wider shifts in New Zealand's social and cultural discourses. Chapter Three therefore prompted more complicated readings of literary materials. It further demonstrated that methods of resistance were not necessarily isolated, but, formed part of a broadly analogous set of preoccupations and social concerns. These were mobilised by authors within the twin emphases of physical and lived experience, and language and the interior world. Historical and cultural contingencies meant that later writers like Wells, Virtue and Ihimaera were

² Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992), p. 10.

able to engage in more direct claims of queer critique than men in earlier historical moments. This reflects, perhaps, a more clearly articulated queer political agenda at work in national and international bodies of literature at this time.

The scope of this thesis has been necessarily focused and select. However, it is instructive to acknowledge the richness and complexity of both parliamentary and literary materials, as well as the continued dialectical process that remains evident between ‘official’ and ‘adjacent’ debates.

In fiction, authors such as Peter Wells and Stevan Eldred-Grigg have continued to make on-going contributions to queer-focused literature. In *Iridescence* (2003) Wells demonstrates the bringing together of historical and literary impulses in historical fiction. Its derivation from a real nineteenth-century British scandal, application of historical source materials, and evocation of queer people and spaces, indicates a conscious engagement with imagined ancestors and historical conditions.³ Eldred-Grigg’s 2006 novel, *Shanghai Boy*, is also interesting for its treatment of cultural difference between contemporary New Zealand and Chinese cultures; similarities and divergences that emerge between ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ conceptions of sexuality and the inevitable overlap brought about, historically, through trade, colonisation, and globalisation. Furthermore, the use of a gay male protagonist also means that New Zealand’s first encounter with representations of Chinese-New Zealand contact takes place in an emotional and political register made subversive but its inherent ‘queerness’.

Added to these literary contexts are the continued contribution of queer men to the fields of memoir and autobiography. Wells’ *Long Loop Home* (2001) contains many correlations to his 1999 novel *Boy Overboard* and reinforces the often close relationship enjoyed between fiction and lived experience. Douglas Wright’s *Ghost*

³ Wells’ novel sits comfortably alongside other historically-grounded and queer-focused works of fiction like Annamarie Jagose’s *Slow Waters*; a story written by a lesbian writer based upon the life history of William Yate. See Annamarie Jagose, *Slow Water* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2003).

Dance (2004) and subsequent *Terra Incognita* (2006) provide the decade's first new voice in queer literature. Life narratives present further opportunities in which historians could integrate queer 'protest' and critique. It also builds upon extant life narratives published by Frank Sargeson, Noel Virtue, and Stevan Eldred-Grigg.⁴ Wright's status as a dancer, choreographer, writer, and now artist,⁵ further suggests the ways in which future studies of queer literature might be enhanced by the consideration of writers in fields parallel to literary pursuit. This is equally the case with Wells, who is also a filmmaker. Productive intersections such as these would bring about a wider reading of art's subversive output.

The growth in literature is similarly met by the continued increase in members of parliament with publicly avowed queer identities. In the 2005 general election, the already incumbent Chris Carter, Georgina Beyer, and Tim Barnett were joined by a Labour colleague, Maryan Street, New Zealand's first self-identified lesbian politician, and Chris Finlayson, a self-identified gay man and member of the National Party. Finlayson's inclusion is significant given 'queer's' historical opposition to conservative political structures. Labour list candidate Charles Chauvel, a self-identified gay man, was also admitted to the House in 2006. These additions brought the body of queer politicians in Parliament to five percent of the total House, with members aligned across a spectrum of queer identities, including 'gay', 'lesbian', and 'transgendered', as well as social and political views, both 'liberal' and conservative.

Members have continued to engage in further social and legal reform surrounding queer rights. This has included the *Civil Union Act* in 2004 and clarification surrounding antidiscrimination provisions for transgendered persons in Beyer's proposed *Human Rights (Gender Identity) Amendment Bill*. Such efforts,

⁴ See Frank Sargeson, *Once Is Enough: A Memoir* (Auckland: Reed, 1973); *More Than Enough: A Memoir* (Auckland: Reed, 1975); *Never Enough!: Places and People Mainly* (Auckland: Reed, 1977); Noel Virtue, *Once a Brethren Boy: An Autobiography* (Auckland: Vintage, 1995); Stevan Eldred-Grigg, *My History, I Think* (Auckland: Penguin, 1994).

⁵ Wright exhibited his first collection, 'The Wounded Cloud and Other Works', at the Stanbeth Gallery in Auckland, in October and November 2006. See Douglas Wright, *Douglas Wright Art* [online], 12 October 2006, available URL: <http://www.douglaswrightart.com>.

particularly the former, generated significant hostilities inside and outside of the House, and saw the re-engagement of reductive rhetorical strategies used by those that opposed reform.

Numerous opportunities exist for future scholarship in the New Zealand context. Current and future research suggests a movement toward the greater integration of queer personages within ‘mainstream’ and ‘national’ historical surveys. Such accounts reflect a rebalanced and reflexive sense of culture that acknowledges pluralist complexities. These claims are reflected in part by the notable inclusion of Chris Brickell’s chapter ‘Sexuality, Morality, And Society’ in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* in 2008.⁶ While queer individuals are not Brickell’s sole focus, their inclusion in the dynamic relationships between ‘sexuality, masculinity and femininity’, as well as their contribution to ‘social movements and concerns’, ensures that queer communities are not further excluded by ‘national’ accounts that encode them as marginal to ‘normative’ society or else erased entirely from mainstream accounts.

Future accounts are thus more likely to engage with increasingly sophisticated theoretical models. This includes the continued integration of queer studies within historical frameworks, as well as the revision of New Zealand contexts that better account for the realities of cultural divergence; particularly in regard to Maori conceptions of sexuality.

Some critics might suggest that the dispersal of group identifiers like ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ risks fragmenting their political expediency by removing claims of communality and sameness. However, my reading of fiction demonstrates ways in which multiplicity and pluralism can supply, through diversity, refinement and re-conceptualisation, while still retaining political efficacy. The absence of a singular slipstream of queer consciousness does not suggest a ‘fragmentation’ of sexual

⁶ See Chris Brickell, ‘Sexuality, Morality, And Society’, in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed., Giselle Byrnes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 1 (forthcoming).

identities but the sophisticated and nuanced understandings of sexuality, and the promotion of holistic models that better account for humanity's diverse conceptualisations of 'self' and their experience of 'desire'. The 'queering' of identities and scholarship supplies renewed impetus for dynamic intellectual and community growth. It offers an increasingly sophisticated and integrated account of diverse experience and provides the means for obtaining long-term resistance against negativised strategies used in public and official discourses to reduce and conflate subjective lives.

The challenge of renewed historiographical modes and its accounting of multiple histories is perhaps best articulated by Michael, the self-identified gay Maori protagonist featured in Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story*. Michael reflects critically on the use of multiplicity as a tool for empowering personal and cultural growth, and, crucially, argues for the bringing together of narratives and history. He states:

I have realised ... that the telling of stories will bring a location and a history to the world that we build. We who are lesbian and gay must fix the stories with firmness and solder their notes with purpose so that they become part of the narratives – the foundations, the walls and the roof – all peoples tell about each other. We must speak our stories, we must enact them, we must sing our songs throughout this hostile universe. We must bring a new promise to life and a new music to the impulse of history.⁷

⁷ Witi Ihimaera, *Nights In The Gardens of Spain* (Auckland: Reed, 1995), p. 371.

List of Sources

This list of sources is set out under the following headings:

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