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The First World War in New Zealand Fiction

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Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter I: ‘Some Bitternesses Never Die’: The First World War and Hauntology	7
Chapter II: The Mythic, Literary Qualities of Gallipoli	32
Chapter III: Worlds of the War	56
Chapter IV: ‘Men Without Women’: The First World War and Heterosexual Love	75
Conclusion	104
Bibliography	107

Abstract

New Zealand fiction in which the First World War features either directly or indirectly has steadily grown in volume since the end of the war in 1918. Well-known texts, such as *Passport to Hell* (1936) and *Once on Chunuk Bair* (1982), have been the subjects of much literary criticism and evaluation. But there are several more New Zealand texts that fall within the sub-genre of Great War fiction that have not been subject to the same academic scrutiny; nor has there been a comparative study of these texts. Some of these include Robin Hyde's *Nor The Years Condemn* (a less well-known sequel to *Passport to Hell*) as well as more contemporary novels such as Elizabeth Knox's *After Z-Hour* and C.K. Stead's *Mansfield*, along with short texts such as Barbara Anderson's 'Real Beach Weather' and Dean Parker's counterfactual essay 'What if a poet had taken us out of the Great War?'. This thesis seeks to fill this gap in academic thought by closely examining several fictional accounts, and detecting both their differences, but also the common concerns that might unify them beyond merely including reference to the First World War. The thesis addresses the motives behind writing about the war, and its haunting nature, before moving on to a discussion of the presence (or lack thereof) of the Gallipoli myth in our fiction. The thesis then explores the different 'worlds' of the war, both literally and metaphorically, including the use of pastoral New Zealand as a contrast to the industrialised front. Finally, the thesis examines the impact of the war on heterosexual relationships, and how the fiction responds to this often unremembered legacy of the Great War.

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Introduction

‘Art and history are not to be separated[;] art exists in time and is shaped by the events of time.’¹

- Samuel Hynes

In 2014, to coincide with the centenary, Victoria University Press published a collection of essays by New Zealanders on memory and perception of the First World War. *How We Remember: New Zealanders and the Great War* offers a range of personal views on various aspects of the war.² Among these is the essay ‘We Who Imagine’ by the novelist Hamish Clayton, which touches on the perceived lack of New Zealand fiction regarding the First World War. He laments that ‘for all we are told that Gallipoli was formative in our national identity, fiction about the First World War (with the notable exception of Robin Hyde’s *Passport to Hell* (1936)) is surprisingly missing.’³ Another contributor to the same volume, C. K. Stead, mentions a couple more examples, including *Civilian into Soldier*, and Charles Ferrall does explore in detail Maurice Shadbolt’s play *Once on Chunuk Bair*. But generally, New Zealand fiction concerned with the Great War is not mentioned. The common thread running through many of the essays is recourse either to facts and figures, or to personal connections to the war. While these approaches are to be expected in the context of the collection’s subject matter, it is perhaps a missed opportunity that more attention was not given to New Zealand’s literary depictions of the First World War. If the ‘we’ in *How We Remember* refers to New Zealanders as a whole (and not merely the New Zealanders contributing essays), then the absence is even more conspicuous, because one of the ways ‘we’ remember is through the conscious fictionalisation of the Great War. One of the purposes of this thesis is to fill this gap, and emphasise fiction as a mode of war commemoration in New Zealand, with all the

¹ Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p. xii.

² *How We Remember: New Zealanders and the First World War*, ed. by Charles Ferrall and Harry Ricketts (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2014).

³ Hamish Clayton, ‘We Who Imagine’, in *How We Remember: New Zealanders and the First World War*, ed. by Charles Ferrall and Harry Ricketts (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2014), p. 250.

attendant ‘baggage’ (literary romanticism, meeting the needs of the present, personal atonement) commemoration brings.

Part of the First World War’s enduring legacy, and the literature that surrounds it, is that it was the first conflict in which significant numbers of literate people participated. Prior to this, although wars had been fought, and had been terrible, the literature they produced was often not from the ordinary soldiers, but by educated officers, or more likely educated observers. For instance, the most famous fictional representation of the Crimean War might be said to be the poem ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’ (1854) by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who did not participate in the conflict. The poem, therefore, is a romanticised interpretation, full of phrases such as ‘noble’, ‘honour’, and ‘glory’, which, after the cultural shift of the First World War, would be considered by some to be obscene. As Ernest Hemingway writes in *A Farewell to Arms* (1929): ‘Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.’⁴ Ordinary men and women, raised on a diet of Tennyson, and later Kipling, were unprepared for war service in which abstract, idealistic concepts such as honour and glory were not felt as keenly as the bitter concrete details of mud and rain and blood. Their surprise and disgust was registered in thousands of illicit diary entries and letters home, some of which would become the basis of memoirs and, finally, fictional works. Furthermore, it is this collision between romanticised, literary expectations, and the reality of the Great War, that is the spark and fuel of nascent modernism. As Paul Fussell writes in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, the world before the war had ‘no *Ulysses*, no *Mauberry*, no *Cantos*, no Kafka, no Proust, no Waugh, no Auden, no Huxley, no Cummings, no *Women in Love* or *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. There was no “Valley of Ashes” in *The Great Gatsby*.’⁵ By implication, without the war, there would have been none of these works, and their creators would never have been influenced by the cultural touchstone that the First World War became.

Fictional representations of the Great War, as opposed to memoirs (or even history books), are of distinct interest, as they tend to raise different

⁴ Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Scribner’s, 1929), p. 196.

⁵ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 23.

questions. For instance, why read or write a story about imagined people participating in a real event, particularly one such as the Great War, which produced many first-hand factual accounts? As Hamish Clayton says in an interview with *The Lumiere Reader*, ‘If you just want to read a historical novel to read about what life was like way back then, you’re better off reading history writers, because they’ll know. I actually think it’s quite flimsy and short-sighted to be assuming for historical novels only to be painting this picture of the past.’⁶ Here, Clayton is defending the value of the historical novel, but as something which strives *beyond* mere factual details. The historical novel is inevitably a product of its time, and therefore has something equally valuable to say about contemporary concerns, even if it is only implicitly. The historical novel – by its very definition produced some time after the events of the plot – also provides readers and writers with an imaginary gateway into the past that they might claim ownership of. History books and personal memoirs do not permit private ownership of the past in the way that a novel or short story might. Eleanor Catton, in an essay for *Metro*, writes of ‘my loyalty to Levin in *Anna Karenina*’ and ‘my relationship with Levin’, as if the character is real to her, and deserving of feelings one might reserve for tangible humans.⁷ Catton does not mention real figures of the period in which *Anna Karenina* takes place, such as Tsar Alexander II, or Alexander Gorchakov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire. Because Levin exists solely within a novel, Catton feels she can develop a relationship or understanding of him, and in turn, come to ‘own’ him a little. Good stories tend to create this illusion of knowing a character, and even of thinking one has a special relationship with the character and their story. Of course, factual accounts of real historical figures can conjure up the same feeling of familiarity, but because history is often defined as public property, it can be difficult to imagine a truly personal connection. One might read a biography of Sir Edmund Hillary, and come to ‘know’ him, but he remains a ‘national’ hero and icon; whereas fictional characters – with perhaps the exception of Sherlock Holmes and Harry Potter – tend not to be elevated to the same ‘national’ consciousness. Furthermore, while

⁶ Brannavan Gnanalingam, ‘Hamish Clayton on *Wulf*, *The Lumiere Reader*, <<http://lumiere.net.nz/index.php/hamish-clayton-on-wulf/>> [accessed 22 February 2016].

⁷ Eleanor Catton, ‘Eleanor Catton on Literature and Elitism’, *Metro*, <<http://www.metromag.co.nz/metro-archive/eleanor-catton-on-literature-and-elitism/>> [accessed 22 February 2016].

personal memoirs can provide intimate accounts of events – as Alexander Aitken’s *Gallipoli to the Somme* (1963) does for the Great War – there is always the knowledge that this person really exists outside of the text, and therefore cannot be fully ‘possessed’ by a reader. There is a certain reluctance to fill the gaps in a real person’s life with imagined actions or beliefs, fuelling the need to fictionalise, as Maurice Shadbolt does with Lieutenant-Colonel William Malone (who becomes Colonel Connolly) in his play *Once on Chunuk Bair* (1982).

One of the opportunities an analysis of fictional sources presents – at least, in the New Zealand context – is to explore new ground, and bring into relief texts (particularly twenty-first century ones) that have not received much critical attention from literary critics. Indeed, it is difficult to find detailed critical analysis of *any* New Zealand war fiction, let alone that concerned with the First World War. Naturally, there have been individual examinations of some of the texts which feature in this thesis, particularly *Passport to Hell*, *Man Alone*, and *Once on Chunuk Bair*. But in terms of a comparative study of how the war is presented in these texts, and others, there appears to be little. *The Penguin Book of New Zealand War Writing* (2015) presents lengthy excerpts from both fictional and non-fictional sources, with some introductory analysis, but there is no comparing or contrasting between the texts. The closest one comes to such an undertaking is J.C. Reid’s *New Zealanders at War in Fiction*, a six-page pamphlet derived from a radio talk given by the author.⁸ Like Hamish Clayton, Reid reiterates the perception of ‘how little New Zealand war fiction there is’ with surprise, ‘considering the number of New Zealanders who have been involved in two World Wars.’⁹ However, as he is writing in the 1960s, the absence is more understandable. Of greater interest is his suggestion of the categories into which war fiction – including New Zealand’s – might fall. Briefly, they are ‘adventure stories, shockers or romances’; those that are ‘propagandist, directed against war’; and finally, ‘those books primarily concerned with exploring the spirit of man through his reaction to the total demands of war.’¹⁰ Reid tends to place New Zealand war fiction in the last category, particularly those produced after the First World War, such as John A. Lee’s *Civilian into Soldier* (1937) and Robin Hyde’s

⁸ J.C. Reid, *New Zealanders at War in Fiction* (Auckland: New Zealand Publishing Society, 1966).

⁹ Reid, p. 2.

¹⁰ Reid, pp. 2-3.

Passport to Hell (1936). In his overall conclusion, Reid observes that ‘when the New Zealand novelist gets beyond the pragmatic, the documentary and propagandist, it is not to try to glamorise war or to transform it into nostalgic memory, but to view it as a barometer of man’s moral and emotional nature.’¹¹ Reid’s categories are useful, but also limiting in their focus on either the character’s journey, or whether the fiction is pro or anti-war. There is less room for exploration of setting and national identity, or relationships between men and women during war (as opposed to merely the ‘spirit of man’). Furthermore, the quantity of New Zealand war fiction has increased dramatically since the 1960s, both in general and in the subgenre of First World War fiction. Thus, there are a greater variety of texts by a greater variety of authors (many of whom are non-combatants), and more complex strains to find running through them.

Chiefly, it is the novel which constitutes much of the literature in this thesis, although some short stories and a play are also examined. *Passport to Hell* is treated as fiction for the purposes of this thesis, since a degree of inventing can be assumed in Hyde’s telling (Hyde, of course, having not served in the war). It is not an exhaustive list of fiction featuring the Great War, but the texts chosen for this thesis do span a range of plots and publication dates, with a mixture of the well-known (even canonical) and the more obscure or unexpected. Above all, they all have something significant to say about the First World War in relation to New Zealand and New Zealanders. Some of the novels included are *Passport to Hell* (1936), *Civilian into Soldier* (1937), *Nor The Years Condemn* (1938), *Man Alone* (1939), *Once on Chunuk Bair* (1982), *After Z-Hour* (1987), *White Feathers* (2002), *Mansfield* (2005), and *The Invisible Mile* (2015). Short fiction, such as Katherine Mansfield’s ‘The Fly’ (1922), Barbara Anderson’s ‘Real Beach Weather’ (1999), and Dean Parker’s ‘What if a poet had taken us out of the Great War?’ (2010), also contribute towards the literary criticism this thesis undertakes. In the first chapter, the hauntological aspect of the war is demonstrated in many of these texts, suggesting a propensity on the part of New Zealand authors to consider the great, burning ‘what-ifs’ that arose from the First World War. In the second chapter, the place of the Gallipoli myth in our fiction is evaluated, with particular attention paid to the two very different myth-making interpretations of

¹¹ Reid, p. 6.

Maurice Shadbolt and Dean Parker. In the third chapter, the different 'worlds' of the war and their portrayal in New Zealand fiction are explored, including the pastoral or 'Arcadian recourses', the superiority of the 'New Zealand' world, and the literary world in which all of these stories take place. Finally, in the fourth chapter, relationships between men and women, and the effect of the war on those relationships, are examined in the context of our fiction. In particular, attention is paid to the physical and emotional disconnection that developed between the sexes during and after the war.

Chapter I: 'Some Bitternesses Never Die': The First World War and Hauntology

Why write a war story? It is a question perhaps less asked than 'How to write a war story' (of which a simple internet search yields many results). It is almost taken as a given that a writer might wish to turn his or her attention to the subject of war, and that readers would be eager to read them. The neat reflection of the personal struggle with the military crisis is perhaps the classic trope of the genre, tracing its path all the way back to Achilles brooding in his tent as the Greeks begin to fail against the Trojans. In the New Zealand context, local novels in which war plays a significant role often top bestseller lists. Maxine Alterio's novel about First World War nurses, *Lives We Leave Behind* (2012) quickly took the top spot after being published, while the new editions of Deborah Challinor's 'Children of War' trilogy – *Tamar* (2002), *White Feathers* (2003), and *Blue Smoke* (2004) – were well-received, with all three books featuring, at one point, in the top ten list of bestselling New Zealand fiction.¹ So, there is some evidence that readers and writers in this country have an appetite for war literature. Yet the question remains: *why*? Does war – particularly the First World War – merely provide a sufficiently epic backdrop onto which a romance or *bildungsroman* might be tacked? Or is there some deeper, subconscious pull that draws authors towards the war, and demands they fictionalise it?

THE BEAUTY OF ART AND NARRATIVE

First and foremost, the 'unspeakable' nature of the war can create tantalising opportunities to fictionalise. In *Passport to Hell*, Robin Hyde describes the effects of the sun on corpses at Gallipoli:

Twenty-four hours of the Gallipoli sun had caused each body to swell enormously – until the great threatening carcasses were three

¹ Booksellers New Zealand, 'Nielsen Weekly Bestsellers List: week ending 10 November 2012', <<http://www.booksellers.co.nz/book-news/nzs-bestsellers/nielsen-weekly-bestsellers-list-week-ending-3-november-2012-0>> [accessed 24 January 2016]; Booksellers New Zealand, 'Nielsen Weekly Bestsellers List: week ending 28 April 2012', <<http://www.booksellers.co.nz/book-news/nzs-bestsellers/nielsen-weekly-bestsellers-list-week-ending-28-april-2012>> [accessed 24 January 2016].

times the size of a man, and their skins had the bursting blackness of grapes. It was impossible to recognise features or expression in that hideously puffed and contorted blackness.²

For the first time, the real, lasting horror of war – the imagery – enters Starkie’s story. It is the nature of the conflict that, although some men may survive the fighting, the deaths of their comrades – the horrific wounds, the rotting corpses – can scar them just as if a bullet had nicked their shoulder. Hyde refers to this trauma in another paragraph:

It was only afterwards – after the War; after that outrageous libel on the normality of the human mind had been, for the time, dragged away – that every twisted limb, every blackened waiting in those gullies, came back into memory once again, and for ever repeated the protest the tortured body uttered after its death.³

This passage highlights involuntary return of traumatic memories after the war’s end, but might also fall under the category of the ‘unspeakable’ – the sort of thing soldiers would avoid recounting, even long after the war’s end. Hyde’s contemporary, John A. Lee, explores this idea in *Civilian into Soldier*, albeit more overtly:

Looking at those glittering crosses, he had realised that the front, the suffering out of which this wreckage had stumbled to die, was beyond description, something men could know, something men could feel, something men could talk about only to those who had known and felt.⁴

Strictly speaking, Lee portrays war narration not as *entirely* unspeakable, but as something exclusive to those who have been there – in this case, male soldiers. Women and non-combatants are excluded on the grounds they would not understand. And yet, this is where, in part, the perceived unspeakable nature of the war comes from; for although millions of men fought and died in the conflict, there were far more women and non-combatants waiting at home, whose experience of the fighting was inevitably second-hand. If their menfolk returned

² Robin Hyde, *Passport to Hell* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986), p. 84.

³ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 85.

⁴ John A. Lee, *Civilian into Soldier* (London: May Fair Books, 1963), p. 44.

unwilling to share those experiences, then it partly explains how the First World War came to be associated with silence.

Fussell addresses the concept of the ‘unspeakable’, defining it as a kind of euphemism. He writes that:

The real reason is that soldiers have discovered that no one is very interested in the bad news they have to report. What listener wants to be torn and shaken when he doesn’t have to be? We have made *unspeakable* to mean indescribable: it really means *nasty*.⁵

Fussell is focused here on reportage *during* the war. Afterwards, readers were much more tolerant of being ‘torn and shaken’; indeed, that tolerance has probably only increased as we grow more distant from the war in time. But an unwillingness to listen at the time the conflict was raging would certainly have silenced many men for good. The other aspect, though, is the fact that many of these men would not have been able to communicate their stories effectively. It is one thing to be literate; it is entirely another thing to be able to craft a story, to arrange and order events in a meaningful way. This is where Robin Hyde and her successors become so valuable. Not only do authors have the personal distance from the conflict required for *aesthetic* distance, but they also have the skills to construct a narrative which offers up the kind of meaning and nuance that is sometimes lacking in history books. Furthermore, although they may have lost relatives in the war, or feel strong empathy, they are not necessarily stifled by the same trauma which a direct participant may feel. Hamish Clayton, discussing his own attempts at writing fictionally about the war, felt his aim was ‘to redeem something of the chaos of life and humanity at its most harrowing through recourse to the order and the beauty of art and narrative.’⁶ It is the order and structural beauty of fiction – its use of language, rhythm, cadence – that allows it to give shape to something, which, on the surface, may appear messy, disorienting, and – most unforgivably – *meaningless*. And it is meaninglessness that is the true affront to intellectual sensibilities. The point of storytelling is to find, or give, meaning in human experience. The First World War, so universal

⁵ Fussell, p. 170.

⁶ Clayton, p. 248.

and yet so meaningless, naturally provides artists of all media with plenty of ground to explore.

ATONEMENT

Yet, ‘order’ and ‘beauty’ – so often associated with ‘good’ literature – can sometimes be problematic in the context of certain interpretations of war writing. Kate McLoughlin opens her book of literary criticism, *Authoring War*, with this epigraph taken from Tim O’Brien’s short story collection/memoir of the Vietnam War, *The Things They Carried* (1990):

If at the end of a war story you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the victim of a very old and terrible lie.⁷

Evidently, McLoughlin favours O’Brien’s perspective on war writing; for of all the authors and texts she draws upon in her book, it is his words that she lays out on a single, early page for readers to consider and reflect upon. Indeed, she refers to this explicitly in her Introduction, explaining that:

Tim O’Brien’s great warning about war writing that is taken as the epigraph to this book informs all its readings. While war literature may dazzle with its technique and resourcefulness, its subject matter can – should – sadden and horrify.⁸

Although sadness and horror seem synonymous with ‘the larger waste’ O’Brien refers to, there is more to his remark than that. His comment leaves little room for other interpretations of war, particularly those in which ‘some small bit of rectitude’ is salvaged, such as hope; for if a writer dares to write a war story from which a reader derives some hope, then they – according to O’Brien – have made the reader ‘the victim of a very old and terrible lie.’

This phrasing seems to descend from Wilfred Owen’s famous poem, ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ (1920), which talks about the ‘old lie’ of glorious death in war. Both writers are recognising the gap between the waste and horror of the

⁷ Kate McLoughlin, *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. vi.

⁸ McLoughlin, p. 20.

soldier's experience, and the home front mentality, which tends to view war more abstractly, due to their physical (and sometimes emotional) distance from the conflict. But there is also a hint of cynicism, and perhaps even nihilism, in O'Brien's comment, which can be read in many modern texts about war, particularly the Vietnam War. *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Platoon* (1986), *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989) are definitive films of that conflict, and can be considered very cynical and nihilistic. Possibly, we have the Great War to thank for this far-reaching trend (indeed, Simon During in *How We Remember* uses these precise terms – cynicism, nihilism – when discussing post-war writers Celine and Kafka).⁹ Following from this trend, it is mature, and intelligent, to criticise the Great War as a waste, as meaningless, as achieving nothing. It is naïve to think of it as noble in any way, or that some good came of it; although this attitude does not extend to the Second World War (which is inevitably righteous). Such attitudes can be found in *How We Remember*. The most explicit of these comes from journalist and former television presenter John Campbell, who, considering this notion, asks:

Does that differentiate our attitudes to the two World Wars? And somehow, also, to the men who were killed in them? The latter was a war against something terrible and discernibly evil. The former, now, if you ask anyone other than a historian, was a war against what?¹⁰

Campbell acknowledges the strange inconsistency among 'anyone other than a historian' when it comes to perspectives on the two wars, but regrettably does not explore the phenomenon much further. During writes of his father's views on the two wars in his essay, 'The Sins':

My father was determinedly apolitical, and would never have demurred from Anzac Day's official pomp on pacifist grounds, but still it was clear to us who knew him that he thought that slogans of official patriotic militarism – 'the war to end all wars', 'fighting for freedom' and so on – were expressions of deluded jingoism. He

⁹ Simon During, 'The Sins', in *How We Remember: New Zealanders and the First World War*, ed. by Charles Ferrall and Harry Ricketts (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2014), p. 174.

¹⁰ John Campbell, 'Cecil Bernard Carrington, of Awakino', in *How We Remember: New Zealanders and the First World War*, ed. by Charles Ferrall and Harry Ricketts (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2014), p. 17.

was of the party who believed that responsibility for what was then often still called the ‘Great War’ was shared by all the European powers – unlike the next war against Hitler.¹¹

During is less concrete in his own views, although he does mention reading A. J. P. Taylor’s *The First World War: An Illustrated History* as a child, and extracting the message that ‘no respect was owed to the elites who had taken Europe to war.’¹² Such comments are commonplace when discussing the Great War, so much so that they have become almost a historical truth, in spite of their subjectivity. But they can equally be applied to the Second World War. The war against Hitler – as it is essentially remembered – is in actuality little different to its predecessor. In 1939 we went to war to preserve Poland’s independence (which, as Fussell writes, was ironic, as it only ‘managed to bring about Poland’s bondage and humiliation’).¹³ In 1914, we went to war to preserve Belgium’s independence. In the Second World War, we fought against a genocidal regime: Nazi Germany. In the First World War, we fought against a genocidal regime: the Ottoman Empire. Differences between the wars – such as Italy and Japan switching from the Entente to the Axis – are fundamentally superficial. They are the same war, really, in two acts, as they are sometimes considered by historians. C. K. Stead even refers to the First World War as the ‘overture’ to the Second.¹⁴ So why are they are remembered so differently? Perhaps the distortion – and obfuscation – can be attributed to propaganda masquerading as history. In any case, what is significant is that the First World War is generally derided as a meaningless waste, *in contrast* to the Second. It is the contrast that makes thinking about *both* wars crucial; for without the Second World War, much of what and how we think about the First would not be so. It would not be the *disappointment* held up against the *achievement*; it would not be the *tragedy* alongside the *success*.

Depending on how one interprets O’Brien’s maxim, New Zealand’s Great War literature either generally adheres to it, or generally does not, depending on

¹¹ During, p. 169.

¹² During, p. 169.

¹³ Fussell, p. 8.

¹⁴ C. K. Stead, ‘The First World War: Close Up From a Distance’, in *How We Remember: New Zealanders and the First World War*, ed. by Charles Ferrall and Harry Ricketts (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2014), pp. 185, 186.

how much ‘rectitude’ is too much. But one of the conjectures of this thesis is that there is more than one way to tell a ‘true’ war story.

Ian McEwan’s *Atonement* is another war novel, of sorts, although his milieu is the Second World War and the years prior to it. It is partly a romance, concerned with the young love of childhood friends Robbie Turner and Cecelia Tallis, who are torn apart not just by a war, but a lie also. The novel’s premise is that the twelve year-old, would-be novelist Briony Tallis, through a series of misunderstandings, and her own naivety, wrongly accuses Robbie of raping her cousin. Robbie is sent to prison for this crime, and at the outbreak of the Second World War, joins the army in an effort to secure a more permanent freedom. He manages to survive the evacuation of Dunkirk and is reunited with Cecelia in London. Briony, by this stage, has realised the error of her false accusation, and promises to set things right. And so the story ends – almost. In the second ending, it transpires that Briony is in fact the author of all we have read, and that her record of events has been her way of atoning for consequences of her actions. In a twist, the reader learns that the ending of her novel is fictitious; that Robbie and Cecelia were never reunited, each dying during the war. McEwan’s fictional author considers this ‘true’ ending of her story, and offers this argument:

How could that constitute an ending? What sense or hope or satisfaction could a reader draw from such an account? Who would want to believe that they never met again, never fulfilled their love? Who would want to believe that, except in the service of the bleakest realism? I couldn’t do it to them. [...] I no longer possess the courage of my pessimism.¹⁵

What Briony means by the ‘courage’ of her pessimism is the great effort it takes to be pessimistic. It is infinitely harder to face the truth without hope, to find some kind of closure. The novel’s twist becomes its central theme: *atonement* is intertwined with *hope*. One follows the other; for those who atone do so in the hope that they will be forgiven. Salvaging rectitude from the larger waste (i.e. hope) is intrinsic to such forgiveness.

Fundamentally, the issue of what is a good (true) war story, and what is a bad (false) war story, is one of taste. *Atonement* offers a compromise in regards to

¹⁵ Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 371.

this matter; for although readers may be initially delighted by the first ending, in which the lovers are reunited, McEwan offers up his postscript of ‘London, 1999’, in which the reader learns that the ending was not ‘real’. The cynical reader, for whom war offers nothing hopeful, can close the book satisfied. But the reader who prefers some shred of hope in their fiction can reread that ‘false’ ending as much as they like. It exists forever on the page, like a memorial. And does the First World War, as a subject, not invite a certain inclination towards atonement? Does it not beg for closure, in its constant haunting of our culture?

O’Brien’s comment on war stories may ‘inform’ the readings in McLoughlin’s *Authoring War*, but it does not so in this essay. It is not the desire or intention of this thesis to discern whether the literature is true or false, good or bad, but to seek out and explore the persistent, lingering themes – particular or otherwise – in New Zealand’s fictional writing on the war.

HAUNTOLOGY

An interesting, if fluid, concept to consider in relation to the Great War and its persistence in fiction is hauntology. The phrase is attributed to Jacques Derrida, who coined it for his book *Spectres of Marx*. Derrida, writing after the collapse of the Soviet Union, ‘argued that Marxism would haunt Western society from beyond the grave’ – a counterargument to the ‘end of history’ notion proposed by Francis Fukuyama, and others, who considered the spread of Western liberal democracy (and its apparent triumph) to be the final form of government, and thus the final state of Man.¹⁶ Derrida’s concept appears to be more of a pun on ‘ontology’, rather than a serious theory; although in recent years bloggers and other Internet-based commentators have embraced the term, expanding on it in regards to artistic forms, such as pop music.¹⁷ Derrida’s original point, however, is that Communism, far from being dead, will continue to ‘haunt’ the world, because

¹⁶ Andrew Gallix, ‘Hauntology: A not-so-new critical manifestation’, *The Guardian*, 17 June 2011 <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2011/jun/17/hauntology-critical>> [accessed 23 June 2015]; Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

¹⁷ Tida Wilson, *Hauntology: The Spectre of Pop*. Future Collective, updated 2014, <<http://futureolv.tumblr.com/post/80590187160/hauntology-the-spectre-of-pop>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

it was never truly implemented in the first place. It remains *unresolved*, which is the word we might consider to be at the heart of all hauntological examinations.

The Great War, with its failed (i.e. unresolved) promise to end all wars, is a natural source of hauntological themes. The First World War haunts us because it, perhaps more than any other historical event, resonates most in our modern lives. Current events, at the time of writing this thesis, include civil war in Syria, separatist strife in Ukraine, the rise of the Islamic State. All of these can trace their origins back to the First World War – the Entente partition of the Middle East, the dissolution of the Russian Empire. Indeed, one might trace all modern historical events back to the Great War, and beyond. But there are two elements which set the First World War apart in its significance: its (relative) recentness and the extreme contrast between the *before* and *after* of the conflict. In the four years of the war, Europe and other parts of the world underwent immense, unprecedented geopolitical, social, and economic change. Who, in 1914, could predict the world of 1918, where the Russian Empire has become a Soviet Republic, fighting a civil war against reactionary elements; where the Austro-Hungarian Empire has been divided into four new nations; where the Ottoman Empire has been carved up by Britain and France; where women are poised to receive the vote in several countries? Not even the Second World War can compare with such monumental changes.

The perceived meaninglessness of the war is also a factor, too, in its haunting nature. As previously discussed, although modern observers can find good and evil in the Second World War, such black and white distinctions tend to be more elusive when discussing the First. Thus, with no great evil vanquished, and another, more terrible conflict looming on the horizon, it is easy to look upon the millions of dead as lives wasted. From this perception emerges the collective guilt that people might feel, particularly on Anzac Day or November 11th. It is guilt, too, that cannot be resolved, because those to whom we must atone are all dead, even as the effects of the war are still felt, reverberating a century later. So then, how to atone? Perhaps fiction offers an answer. In specific regard to literature, Andrew Gallix, quoting Mark Fisher, writes that ‘works of art are haunted, not only by the ideal forms of which they are imperfect instantiations, but also by

what escapes representation.’¹⁸ War, perhaps more than any other subject, is notorious for escaping complete representation.¹⁹ The ironies of war and the tendency towards *what-ifs* and *if-onlys* when thinking about them (particularly the Great War – ‘what if/if only Franz Ferdinand was not assassinated’) also resonate with hauntology, which, as Gallix reminds us, ‘is itself haunted by a nostalgia for all our lost futures.’²⁰

This notion of hauntology comes through in New Zealand literature involving the Great War, perhaps most obviously in Elizabeth Knox’s debut novel, *After Z-Hour*. This is unsurprising, considering the novel is a literal ghost story, and is particularly concerned with the ghost of a New Zealand serviceman from the war. Six strangers are stranded in an old house during a storm, somewhere in the South Island. Through the use of multiple narrators (chapters are alternately titled after the viewpoint character) the reader learns some of the backstory of Jill, Basil, Kelfie, and later, Mark – the ghostly seventh voice.

If the novel has a principal theme, it would be trauma and its lingering aftermath. The four viewpoint characters all suffer their own traumatic experiences, which staying in the house seems to bring to the surface. Jill has just lost her step-daughter in an accident, and struggles with the aftermath; she is ‘the step-mother who couldn’t own her own grief’, who watches ‘the character of a stranger eclipsing [her] husband’s, his loved face becoming sour and ill-meaning.’²¹ This death is all the harder to cope with because it is so unjust, and contrary to expectations: one anticipates burying their parents, but never their child. This aspect of Jill’s story has a clear connection to the Great War (and Mark’s story), because of course, that war left millions of parents in a similar situation; the main difference being most of them did not receive the small closure of a burial.

Basil, meanwhile, is alternately haunted by a mysterious vanishing house from his youth, and the suicide of a friend, but also his unrequited love for a

¹⁸ Gallix.

¹⁹ ‘The premise of *Authoring War* is that accounts of war are *always* authored, in the sense that the gap between the experience and the representation of conflict can be narrowed but never completely eliminated.’ McLoughlin, p. 20.

²⁰ Gallix.

²¹ Elizabeth Knox, *After Z-Hour* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1987), p. 29.

woman, Audrey. He tells her about the vanishing house – as he told his suicidal friend – but receives little sympathy:

While Russell didn't care whether my story was true or not, Audrey, my friend Scott's girlfriend – who I loved, who gave me so much of herself, trustfully, understanding that I honoured everything she felt, but not understanding that I loved her – Audrey was frightened of me. Indulgently laughed at by her parents, emotionally blackmailed by her lover, *she* was haunted by her happy, active, guiltless self – the woman she might have been, given half the chance. Audrey didn't count on real ghosts, intractable mysteries like my Vanishing House. Her sanity, her sense of justice drew her to me. Sometimes I could see her thinking, 'At least Basil's sane.' When I turned out not to be sane, by her reckoning, she stopped trusting me. She didn't stop speaking to me, but never really said anything anymore.²²

Basil perceives Audrey to be haunted by her *potential* identity – 'the woman she might have been, given half the chance.' This is exactly what Gallix refers to by 'lost futures', and it is precisely the same loss and haunting that emanates from the Great War, not only for the dead who might have lived, but the survivors who nonetheless returned thoroughly and irrevocably changed. It is also the haunting for non-combatants – wives, girlfriends, parents, and children – whose lives followed a different course as a result of the war. It is a lost future, too, for Basil; his love for her is not returned, and so the potential they might have had never eventuates. Broken-heartedness is as much a trope of the war as trenches and gas (as explored subsequently in this thesis). But most significant is the fact that Audrey, having heard Basil's story about the ghostly house, has her perception of him changed irrevocably. He turns out 'not to be sane, by her reckoning and she stops 'trusting' him. Is it his belief in a *literal* haunting that she finds insane? Or is it the fact that he is haunted at all? Basil forgives Audrey's personal haunting – perhaps even loves her more for it – but she cannot do the same for him. She becomes 'frightened' of him, as one might be frightened of a shell-shocked veteran, whose hauntings from the Great War would be closer to the literal than the metaphoric. And so she becomes lost to him, him to her.

Kelfie, the novel's youngest character, suffers his own personal trauma, stemming from the broken relationship with his father. Eventually, Kelfie meets

²² Knox, p. 138.

up with him in Mexico, where his father now lives with his new family, and shares his thoughts on their relationship:

Hating the silence after my words, and feeling desperate, I began to tell him what I had been thinking about before he came into the room. ‘A few months ago I was sitting in a cinema watching Bergman’s *Autumn Sonata*. Almost every woman in the audience was weeping, and I thought to myself, ‘Yes – this is what it’s all about: betrayal, alienation, abandonment – only the film was about a mother and daughter, not a father and son. You know, you’ll never have any idea of the damage you’ve done me, or the good. I can’t even distinguish one from the other anymore.’²³

‘Betrayal, alienation, abandonment’ – these are the words Kelfie uses to describe the relationship between him and his father. But they might equally be applied to the victims of the First World War, both the living and the dead. Indeed, one might even take the metaphor further and see this father-son tension as representative of the intergenerational inequity of the Great War itself: the old sending the young off to die. The idea is even addressed in C. K. Stead’s *Mansfield*, in an exchange between D. H. Lawrence and the titular character:

“Why should I howl if grandfather is pushed over a cliff? Goodbye, grandfather, now it’s my turn.”

“Only it’s not grandfather that’s going over,” she says. “And it ought to be.”²⁴

Essentially, the themes of Jill’s, Basil’s, and Kelfie’s stories are the themes of the Great War, too. They keep cropping up, like the war itself, in unexpected places. The best analogy for this hauntological phenomenon comes from Kelfie, who tells an anecdote about hearing two jokes: first, one about a man who builds a house from many bricks, and gets rid of the single spare one by throwing it up in the air; second, one about a man who hates poodles and a woman who hates cigars in a plane. They agree to throw his cigar and her poodle out of the plane, and when it lands, they find the poodle sitting on the wing. And what does it have in its mouth? The brick, of course. Kelfie goes on to explain:

²³ Knox, p. 56.

²⁴ C. K. Stead, *Mansfield* (London: Vintage, 2004) p. 121.

‘That joke used to intrigue me when I was a kid, not because it was funny, but because it broke a fundamental narrative rule. Like if, after reading *Wuthering Heights*, sometime later reading *Lord Jim* you were to find a character called Heathcliff turning up in the story.’²⁵

This is how ghosts and other hauntings work: they are characters from other stories (the Great War) turning up in others (the present day). They break ‘a fundamental narrative rule’ – but only if we perceive the stories as separate. If, on the other hand, we read the First World War as merely an earlier chapter, then it is more like Magwitch turning up again in *Great Expectations*. Likewise, the two jokes (really one joke) are only strange if one does not see the interconnectedness of all things; a holistic approach which *After Z-Hour* seems to endorse, and which this thesis applies generally to reading the literature of the Great War.

As mentioned above, another New Zealand novel in which the war is most certainly haunting is Stead’s *Mansfield*, an imagining of Katherine Mansfield’s life during the First World War. In *How We Remember*, Stead writes that the Great War, in his youth, was perceived as ‘unfinished business.’²⁶ This unresolvedness, of course, is integral to hauntology, and manifests itself in different ways in his novel. Generally, *Mansfield* is more about the eponymous author and her relationships (with men, other artists, and her homeland) than the war. But the war is felt nonetheless, despite Mansfield initially thinking otherwise:

As she settled into bed, turning on her side, drawing her legs up, pulling the blankets tight over her shoulder, it occurred to her that this was what the war, which in prospect had frightened her, was going to be: something very large, very terrible [...] which would give her a moment of terror – and then would sail on, leaving her untouched, Europe’s “Moment of Destiny” would go on being uniforms in public places, bandaged limbs waved at her train, visits from her darling little brother; it would be Jack’s anxieties and Lawrence’s anguish, the arrival of “the wounded” at Charing Cross greeted by cheering crowds...²⁷

²⁵ Knox, p. 153.

²⁶ Stead, ‘The First World War: Close Up From a Distance’, p. 185.

²⁷ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 46.

In these early days of the war (1915), it is still possible for Mansfield to think that she will escape the war ‘untouched’; that she will experience it from afar. She envisages the war as being something she sees, rather than feels (‘uniforms in public places, bandaged limbs waved at her train’). She also believes – ironically, it later transpires – that she will continue to receive ‘visits from her darling little brother’, Leslie Beauchamp, who is serving in the British army. His death early in the story becomes her war wound, and the chief haunting of the war in this novel. The traumatic effect of his death becomes apparent when Mansfield writes of it:

She’d written an account of Leslie’s death, based on a letter from an officer friend, Jamie Hibbert. She told how Leslie had said, “God forgive me for all I have done.” Then, she went on, he had spoken his dying words: “Lift my head, Katie, I can’t breathe.”

But Leslie had not named her. He had asked his friend to lift his head – that was all. The “Katie” was an invention.²⁸

This brief anecdote is remarkably telling, and particularly relevant to Great War literature itself. Mansfield’s reimagining of her brother’s death, in which she becomes an important character, is a way of achieving closure for her: that she was there comforting him in his thoughts, even if she could not be there in the flesh. It is also an attempt to make sense of his death, by giving it an undeniably literary quality, a kind of tragic romance. ‘Lift my head, I can’t breathe’ has no story; but with addition of the absent ‘Katie’, it suddenly becomes rich with meaning. This is one of the principal concerns of Great War literature: to give meaning, to make sense of something which is today considered devoid of purpose.

Mansfield spends much of the novel working on her writing, or struggling with her various relationships. The war is pushed to the background, quite authentically; people’s lives must go on. But late in the novel, as she is writing, Mansfield hears (or thinks she hears) a strange, insistent tapping, and has this thought:

None the less, it’s true that the tapping, dull and steady, frightens her, as if those words (“something buried, something refusing to

²⁸ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 80.

die”) have meaning. It is perhaps the idea more than the sound: life-chances missed, time and energy wasted, and the self you might have been, down there in the dark, knocking, crying “Why didn’t you give me a chance?”

As if... The phrase is as dangerous as its cousin, *if only...*²⁹

There is such a strong correlation between this passage and Basil’s thoughts on Audrey in *After Z-Hour* – ‘the self you might have been’ – that one cannot help but identify it as a key trope of the war. In fact, this passage abounds with hauntological concepts: ‘something buried, something refusing to die’, ‘life-chances missed’, and of course, the word *if*. Notably, these respective *if* phrases are considered ‘dangerous’ by Mansfield; an acknowledgement, perhaps, that one can obsess too much over lives unlived, or missed opportunities. Indeed, musing over lost futures is a pastime of another character, Fred Goodyear, who loves Katherine Mansfield, but dies before he can realise his romantic ambitions. He thinks about how they met, and how his friend, John Middleton Murry, outmanoeuvred him for Mansfield’s affections. He considers what might have been, had he become her lodger instead of Murry:

Many times since Fred had played over that conversation and the way it might have gone. Had he known her circumstances and foreseen what was coming, he could have talked about his own needs, not Jack’s. She could as easily have made the offer to him. [...] They would have got to know one another slowly, easily, inevitably. His habitual shyness would have been an obstacle, just as Jack’s had been. And she would have overcome it, as she had for Jack, by asking at last, “Why don’t you make me your mistress?”³⁰

If Mansfield herself is haunted more literally by her brother’s death (a haunting that falls just short of physical manifestation), then the vivid longing above is Goodyear’s personal haunting. Like Audrey in *After Z-Hour*, he is haunted by the self he could have been; a haunting made worse by the apparent ease with which it could have become reality.

The war’s hauntology even makes an appearance in the work of the real Katherine Mansfield. Her short story ‘The Fly’ (1922) covers the haunting nature

²⁹ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 204.

³⁰ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 92.

of the war, and the guilt associated with it. The central character – referred to only as ‘the boss’ – hosts an old friend, Woodifield, in his office. Both men have lost sons in the Great War, and this comes up in conversation between them, through Woodifield mentioning his daughters visiting the war graves in Belgium. After Woodifield departs, the boss is distraught. Mansfield writes:

It had been a terrible shock to him when old Woodifield sprang that remark upon him about the boy’s grave. It was exactly as though the earth had opened and he had seen the boy lying there with Woodifield’s girls staring down at him. For it was strange. Although over six years had passed away, the boss never thought of the boy except as lying unchanged, unblemished in his uniform, asleep forever.³¹

‘Unchanged’ is a key word here, as it hints at the haunting nature of the boss’s loss. Even six years later it still affects him, although he is no longer ‘overcome with such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping [can] relieve him.’³² In fact, this lack of an outward emotional response confuses him, particularly when he tries to cry following Woodifield’s departure:

The boss took his hands from his face; he was puzzled. Something seemed to be wrong with him. He wasn’t feeling as he wanted to feel. He decided to get up and have a look at the boy’s photograph. But it wasn’t a favourite photograph of his; the expression was unnatural. It was cold, even stern-looking. The boy had never looked like that.³³

The boss ‘wants’ to cry, as he has in the past, but for some reason does not. There is a suggestion that perhaps the hurt has gone away; the haunting is over. But then he notices a fly struggling to escape from his inkpot. He helps the fly by flicking it out onto a piece of blotting paper, where he observes it painstakingly cleaning itself. But when it is just about ‘ready for life again’, the boss has an idea:

He plunged his pen back into the ink, leaned his thick wrist on the blotting paper, and as the fly tried its wings down came a great heavy blot. What would it make of that? What indeed! The little

³¹ Katherine Mansfield, ‘The Fly’, in *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 415.

³² Mansfield, pp. 415-16.

³³ Mansfield, p. 416.

beggar seemed absolutely cowed, stunned, and afraid to move because of what would happen next. But then, as if painfully, it dragged itself forward. The front legs waved, caught hold, and, more slowly this time, the task began from the beginning.³⁴

The boss becomes fixated upon the fly's struggle, even as he is cause of it (perhaps because he is the cause of it). He does it twice more, deciding that the third time should be the last. As Mansfield writes:

It was. The last blot fell on the soaked blotting-paper, and the dragged fly lay in it and did not stir. The back legs were stuck to the body; the front legs were not to be seen.

“Come on,” said the boss. “Look sharp!” And he stirred it with his pen – in vain. Nothing happened or was likely to happen. The fly was dead.³⁵

Afterwards, the boss is seized by ‘a grinding feeling of wretchedness’, which might be read as guilt.³⁶ He is certainly responsible for the fly's death, but he doesn't intend to kill it; he merely wishes to test its mettle, to determine how much of a ‘plucky little devil’ it can be.³⁷ Naturally, parallels emerge with the First World War, which can be seen as the older generation – the fathers – sending the younger generation – their sons – off to test their manliness in the crucible of war. Like the death of his son, the death of the fly haunts the boss (that ‘feeling of wretchedness’) because he unconsciously feels responsible. His generation held the pen over their sons, dropping the ink of battle and campaign year after year. A less obvious reading might view the fly as a metaphor for the boss himself, with each drop of ink representing memories of his son; in which case, the implication is that haunting of the war will eventually wear him down, until he can no longer shake it off. In any case, although the boss often muses that six years or more have passed, the war is still felt, and still affects his actions, even if those actions are as simple and minute as dripping ink on a fly.

David Coventry's debut novel, *The Invisible Mile*, is another contemporary work in which the war's residues are felt, although the connection

³⁴ Mansfield, p. 417.

³⁵ Mansfield, p. 418.

³⁶ Mansfield, p. 418.

³⁷ Mansfield, p. 417.

is much more inevitable than in *After Z-Hour*. The novel is concerned with the 1928 Tour de France, in which New Zealanders and Australians participated as the first English-speaking team. Although the focus is on the gruelling experience of the riders, the Great War looms in the background, and resurfaces as the riders follow the routes of old battlefields. There is an implicit connection between their physical struggle and that of the soldiers ten years previously, which becomes overt when one rider recalls a story he heard from a veteran. The veteran was a POW, forced to work by the Turks on the Berlin-Baghdad Railway (much as Allied POWs would later be forced to work by the Japanese on the Burma Railway in the Second World War). Ernie (the rider) recounts the details as described to him by the unnamed veteran:

For weeks and weeks they were strapped and shoved with rifle butts, hit and hit over again. Barely a drop of water. No food. If they fell out of line they were kicked until they got up or they just lay there. It was a death march, this guy told me, that's what he called it.³⁸

Ernie then goes on to explain how he heard a phrase uttered by a rider in a previous race – “To drop out is to die!” – and how it triggered his memory of the conversation with the veteran:

I felt a strange shock. How he came to say this I wasn't sure, how those words went from one place to another. One mouth to another. It got me thinking that there's nothing we say that isn't part of something. I thought that because Percy yelled it out and I remembered suddenly this joker, this fat bloke, saying these same words in the pub. It was something he'd said. He said: “We were driven, beast driven into the desert,” he said. “To drop out was to die.”³⁹

For Ernie, hearing that same phrase resurface in another context – cycling, a feature of his own life – leads him to consider how ‘there's nothing we say that isn't part of something.’ What is that ‘something’, though? It is certainly an acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of human experiences; or rather, how humans strive, consciously or unconsciously, to *make* these connections. Is the

³⁸ David Coventry, *The Invisible Mile* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2015), pp. 154-55.

³⁹ Coventry, p. 156.

‘strange shock’ Ernie feels upon hearing that phrase again simply astonishment that someone could describe abandoning a cycling race in the same terms as falling down in a death march? Or is it shock from a realisation that they, as cyclists on their own grinding journey, might have more in common with the soldiers in the war than they thought? Perhaps he knows that this is the closest he will ever come to understanding some of the hardship those who served; hardship which is often *indescribable*, or unable to be *related*, by those who experienced it. Ernie was fortunate to receive a glimpse from that veteran, but such recollections are always vague in places, with details missing. A brief anecdote, particularly one about such an unknown aspect of the war, can be just as haunting as the absence of a story. When he heard it, perhaps Ernie did not immediately connect with the subject matter. It was only years later, when he heard the phrase again, that he began to understand. In a way, he is seeing cycling, and therefore himself, as a continuation of the veteran’s story, in a similar fashion to Katherine Mansfield in Stead’s novel, when she ‘writes’ herself into Leslie’s death.

This ‘involving’ of oneself in the war occurs again in Coventry’s novel, much more clearly, when the unnamed narrator tells a woman of his exploits in the war. Except, they are not ‘his’ memories; they are his brother’s, Thomas. After visiting the Somme battlefield, the narrator considers their importance to him:

We drive back through the meagre hours we have before the start of the stage, and I know I need his memory. I need Thomas and the memory he once had of this place, this continent. For those long months that he stared at the window [...] I watched and tried wordlessly to recall with him what he saw. All the damage, all the harm.⁴⁰

Here, the narrator demonstrates a clear desire to connect with his brother’s war experience. Having finally arrived at the physical place from which these memories spring, he expresses a ‘need’ for Thomas’s memory. But what is the explanation for this need? One answer is that the narrator feels he cannot truly *experience* or *understand* the Somme without some mental connection, however tenuous, to it. It is this desire for a connection in the mind – to put oneself in the

⁴⁰ Coventry, p. 268.

shoes of a soldier who was there – that leads him to crave his brother’s memories. And indeed, in a wider sense, it is the drive behind the need by authors to fictionalise the Great War. It must be conjured up as a story in our minds, with characters and motivations, before we can truly connect with it. Coventry’s unnamed narrator does this himself, when he tells a woman ‘his’ war story – in reality, his brother’s. He refers to it as ‘my voice rolling forth over the top of my brother’s life’.⁴¹ The woman eventually reveals she knows the narrator appropriated this story, but lets him finish regardless – an acknowledgement, perhaps, of the need to write oneself into history.

Perhaps Robin Hyde’s best-known contribution to this genre is *Passport to Hell*, but she also wrote a sequel, the brilliantly-titled *Nor The Years Condemn*. Described as ‘an attempt to present the boom-and-bust period which followed the war’, the novel follows Starkie as he navigates the changing times of New Zealand in the 1920s and 1930s.⁴² There is much in the novel regarding the war’s lingering effects, particularly on male-female relationships. Indeed, in the first few pages, ghosts enter the narrative, albeit metaphorically. A nurse, Sister Bede, considers her relationship with Starkie, and their shared (but different) war experiences:

She knew, had always known, why Stark exasperated her. He troubled the depths, making he remember things she wanted to set aside. He was an unsolved problem limping about, and his ghosts were on nodding terms with her ghosts.⁴³

This short passages capture’s much of the essence of hauntology. Starkie makes Bede ‘remember things she wanted to set aside’, i.e. the war. She even refers to him as an ‘unsolved problem’, which, if we consider Starkie in this context to be a metaphor for the war, indicates awareness on the part of Hyde of the war’s unresolved nature. And of course, ‘his ghosts were on nodding terms with her ghosts’, which implies a shared trauma that is gender-blind, a strong theme throughout the novel. The guilt of surviving the war, and the struggle to justify it, is something that plays on Bede’s mind also. ‘You must explain to the dead,’ she

⁴¹ Coventry, p. 271.

⁴² Joan Stevens, *The New Zealand Novel 1860 – 1965* (Wellington: Reed, 1966), p. 56.

⁴³ Robin Hyde, *Nor The Years Condemn* (Auckland: New Women’s Classics, 1986), p. 16.

thinks, ‘why they are dead; you must explain to yourself why you are still alive.’⁴⁴ It is the sort of question Hyde herself might have struggled with.

In *Report on Experience*, John Mulgan refers to the influence of the First World War. ‘We had never in fact outgrown the shadow of that earlier war, which our fathers had fought. It brooded over our thoughts and emotions,’ he writes. ‘We felt the tragic waste and splendour of this first World War and grew up in the wasteland it produced.’⁴⁵ This is an observation with much in common with hauntology, particularly in the ‘feeling’ of the ‘tragic waste and splendour’ long after the war’s conclusion. It is unsurprising, then, that the same themes can be drawn from his famous 1939 novel, *Man Alone*. It is an iconic work of New Zealand literature, once considered ‘the fullest prose rendering of what the New Zealand twenties and thirties felt like.’⁴⁶ Like Hyde, Mulgan tries to capture the essence of the period, which inevitable includes the lingering effects of the Great War. The novel’s protagonist, Johnson, meets few veterans eager to talk about the war. But when he does meet one – a man named Thompson – it is all he wants to talk about:

Thompson and Johnson talked at nights about the war. Thompson had an obsession about the war. He was going over it in his mind again, remembering every piece of it, the battles and the men and the names of places and talking about it till Scott shouted:

‘Christ, turn it in. I wasn’t at the war,’ and Thompson said nothing, looking at him, pale, gaunt, contemptuous.

‘No,’ he said, after a time, ‘you wasn’t in the war.’⁴⁷

Thompson is described as having ‘an obsession about the war’, a lingering fixation which is never elucidated (as is Mulgan’s style). It is likely that, for Thompson, the war was the most significant time in his life; the event from which he draws much of his identity and self-worth. This may explain why he feels so ‘contemptuous’ towards Scott, who ‘wasn’t in the war’, and is therefore disdained and treated poorly by Thompson. In any case, the war is still ever-present in

⁴⁴ Hyde, *Nor The Years Condemn*, p. 17.

⁴⁵ John Mulgan, *Report on Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 33.

⁴⁶ Stevens, p. 62.

⁴⁷ John Mulgan, *Man Alone* (Auckland: Penguin, 1990), p. 28.

Thompson's life, its residues still shaping his identity, although in his case it might be called a consensual, or desired, haunting.

As with other authors, Mulgan uses language that emphasises the war's hauntological qualities. Of the Waikato, he writes, 'There were a lot of memories of the war in that part of the world. The valley was haunted by strange men who had been to the war.'⁴⁸ More obliquely (in relation to the war), he describes the Rangipo Desert as 'a legend-haunted country, dreaded by the Maoris.'⁴⁹ These 'legends' are nothing to do with the Great War, but the concept of a haunted landscape has echoes of the Western Front, which is haunted by ghosts of its own. For Johnson personally, the war resurfaces through acts of violence. When he accidentally shoots and kills his employer, Stenning, in a struggle, Johnson is shocked. '[He] had not contemplated before the effect of a shot-gun at close quarters; it was like some old memory of the war that he had drowned.'⁵⁰ For Johnson, the effect of firearms on human bodies is a memory he has tried to drown, i.e. *kill*. But like a ghost, it comes back years later, to blur the lines between past (dead Germans?) and present (dead Stenning). Memory is a subtle, fluid thing; but it is the closest we come to experiencing a phenomenon akin to paranormal haunting.

These previous novels have demonstrated the potency of hauntology, and the burning desire on the part of characters (and therefore, their authors) to ask, 'What if...?' But there is another work worth mentioning in this context, even though it strictly takes place during the Second World War. M. K. Joseph's *A Soldier's Tale* (1976) is another New Zealand war novel, in which lost futures and counterfactuals play a key role, and in which residues of the First are, naturally, still to be found. It is written as the recollection of a serviceman (perhaps Joseph himself) who hears the eponymous tale from a British soldier around the campfire. The soldier, Saul Scourby, describes the few days he spent with a Frenchwoman named Belle in Normandy, who collaborated with the Nazis during the occupation, and was subsequently hounded by the French resistance. Scourby protects her from her vengeful countrymen while enjoying her hospitality and sex. Although he wishes to find sanctuary for her after his unit moves on, Scourby

⁴⁸ Mulgan, *Man Alone*, p. 28.

⁴⁹ Mulgan, *Man Alone*, pp. 135-36.

⁵⁰ Mulgan, *Man Alone*, p. 123.

comes to realise her fate is sealed. Thus, the novel ends with him killing her without warning or discussion, in an act of either cruelty or mercy, depending on one's reading. It is a savage ending that lives up to O'Brien's maxim; a moral quandary symbolic of the many moral quandaries that emerged from that conflict.

The relevance of *A Soldier's Tale* to this thesis lies in its thematic similarities to the other New Zealand texts concerned more directly with the First World War. Among its more affecting moments is a long passage in which Scourby imagines a possible outcome for him and Belle – 'a temporary past and future.'⁵¹ He begins thus:

I'll tell you what you can do, he said. I'll come back as soon as the war's over and I can get leave, and we'll marry. We'll go back and live in England, and no one need know.

(And perhaps as he said this he meant it, for perhaps he needed some comforting dreams too. It was the start of a kind of game between them, to play house, as if they were old married people and this was how they lived, had lived, would live, might live, grow old, have children. Desperately she joined in the game.)⁵²

In brackets are the narrator's (or Joseph's) clarifying comments; for this story, it must be remembered, is presented as a second-hand telling, with some parts elaborated upon or outright imagined by the narrator. Here, he recognises the 'comfort' that such dreaming about the future can bring, both to Scourby and Belle, who 'desperately' joins in. The word *desperate* is essential here, because it implies need, rather than mere want. Like Fred Goodyear – another ill-fated character, from an earlier war – Belle has little choice but to cling to the fantasy of a conjured future. In fact, she must invest even more in it than Scourby; for he has many potential futures open to him (go home to England, get killed in the war, meet another girl), while she does not. Her options are limited, partly by her sex, but mostly by the situation she finds herself in, in which people are unable to forget or forgive her transgressions.

The most obvious connection, however, to the haunting of the Great War is this passage from the narrator's/author's frame narrative:

⁵¹ M. K. Joseph, *A Soldier's Tale* (Auckland: HarperCollins, 2010), p. 147.

⁵² Joseph, p. 155-56.

As I write this, it is just after eleven o'clock at night, and the transistor on my desk is carrying the BBC news for Monday 19 February 1973. The body of Marshal Petain has been stolen from his felon's grave on the Ile d'Yeu by political resurrection-men, either to be tossed into the sea or to be reburied at Douaumont, in the haunted wasteland of Verdun. Either way it is sinister and strange, conjuring old ghosts, recalling old stories (as in Hans Chlumberg's play, *Miracle at Verdun*) of the war-dead rising in their thousands and marching back with rolling drums to accuse the living. Either way there will be no rest for the old hero, old traitor, though (my God) the Occupation of France is thirty years gone. (The Irish have remembered for three hundred years, the Jews for three thousand.) Some bitternesses never die.⁵³

Petain is a useful symbol in Joseph's novel, as his life reflects some of the moral ambiguities that are such a central theme in *A Soldier's Tale*. He is both 'the old hero' and the 'old traitor', depending both on one's perspective, and chronological approach. In the First World War, he exists as the hero of Verdun, one of the men who saved France; in the Second he exists as the traitor who collaborated with the Germans. So which is the 'true' Petain? This, it seems, is the cause of the haunting, of his persistence in memory. His supporters must redeem him – literally dig up his corpse – while his detractors must keep him down, buried. It is the same with the Great War itself, which is still, a century on, subject to great debate over its meaning and significance. Which is the 'true' interpretation? As Samuel Hynes says, 'We live with the consequences of the First World War in another, more comprehensive way. The sense of a gap in history that the war engendered became a commonplace in imaginative literature of the post-war years.'⁵⁴ In other words, historiography often fails to offer up a definitive answer, leaving gaps. And in these gaps, literature flourishes.

And why does this particular literature flourish? The reason, it seems, is that the haunting themes of the Great War resonate with us as much today as they did at the time. The fiction persists (and the war persists *in the fiction*) because the problems which arose from the First World War are unresolved. The personal, everyday themes, too, remain ever-present, particularly the nostalgia for lost opportunities, lost futures. We all have regrets, we all wonder *what if*. The First World War becomes a potent symbol for this counterfactual longing, because,

⁵³ Joseph, pp. 82-83.

⁵⁴ Hynes, p. xi.

unlike the Second, it hinges on such a small act – a political assassination – which came tantalisingly close to being avoided. Furthermore, unlike the Second World War, the principal alternative for the First – no war at all – is so much more comforting and hopeful than the alternative for the Second, which is generally Axis victory. Yes, there are ‘lost futures’ from the Second World War, most vividly from Auschwitz. But they, too, benefit from the avoidance of the Great War. No Great War means no Great Depression; no Nazis, no Communists; no Holocaust; no Cold War, no Vietnam. And so on. It is the point on which a hundred years of history turns, and thus is imbued with an epic, tragic significance that endears it so much to readers and writers.

Chapter II: The Mythic, Literary Qualities of Gallipoli

When we say an event would ‘make a great story’, what we are recognising is the ‘literariness’ of said event. We are finding, consciously or unconsciously, the tropes of literature, or the conventions of genre, in real life. Fussell explores this attitude with close attention to the First World War, in particular focusing on the irony of the war, explained through the lens of literature. Irony can be difficult to define, but Fussell suggests that ‘irony of situation arises from a collision between innocence and awareness.’¹ The greater the collision, the greater the irony; and what greater collision is there, between expectations and reality, than the Great War? As Fussell writes, ‘the Great War was more ironic than any before or since. It was a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century. It reversed the Idea of Progress.’² Fussell presents examples of how the particularly ironic moments of the war are the most readily remembered by veterans, because of their literary nature; what Sharon Ouditt would classify as ‘an imaginary coherence composed of numerous narrative tropes and images.’³

As well as irony, mythic and romantic qualities feature in the memory of the war, and therefore, in the literature too. Fussell asserts that the front is ‘a world of reinvigorated myth. In many ways it will seem to imply a throwback way across the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries to Renaissance and medieval modes of thought and feeling.’⁴ Of the romantic, questing aspect of the war experience, Fussell writes that:

It is impossible not to be struck by the similarity between this conventional “romance” pattern and the standard experience re-enacted and formalised in memoirs of the war. [...] Every total experience of the war is “romantic” in the strict sense of the word. Every successful memoir of that experience shares something with traditional literary “romance,” and indeed, regardless of its “truth”

¹ Fussell, p. 5.

² Fussell, p. 8.

³ Sharon Ouditt, ‘Myths, memories, and monuments: reimagining the Great War’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War*, ed. by Vincent Sherry (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 247.

⁴ Fussell, p. 115.

or accuracy of documentary fact, in its “plot” could be said to lean towards that generic category.⁵

Although the war is often remembered as brutal and meaningless, literary interpretations can apply a structure and tropes which problematise the latter adjective, if not the first. Part of the motivation for those writing about the war, as we have seen, can be to salvage some significance from the events. In the context of New Zealand’s war experience, the popular epitome of the Great War is not the Western Front (despite its greater savagery), but the Gallipoli campaign. Its importance goes without saying, particularly as our national day of remembrance is 25 April, not 11 November. Although the campaign has been picked apart by historians, and its ‘birth of the nation’ myth strongly contested, such a culturally-prevalent story must inevitably seep into the literature.

Gallipoli (1916) by the Englishman John Masefield, is one of the first accounts of the eponymous campaign, and does so with lingering lofty rhetoric. Fussell classifies Masefield as an apologist, whose *Gallipoli* argues for ‘not just the thrilling “adventure” but – like Dunkirk later – the triumph (at least moral triumph) of the campaign. To assist this argument Masefield prefaced each chapter with a quotation of heroic tendency from *The Song of Roland*.’⁶ These quotations, with their ‘heroic tendencies’, indicate a propensity to mythologise Gallipoli even before the campaign was entirely over. Masefield’s choice of quotable text – *The Song of Roland* – is significant, as the medieval text is concerned with members of the doomed Frankish rear-guard, commanded by the noble Roland, who die fighting a Muslim enemy. Evidently, Masefield saw parallels between these events on the Franco-Spanish border more than a millennium previously, and the disastrous Gallipoli campaign in 1915. Both stories involve a European force thwarted by an Islamic adversary; so it is easy to see the temptation Masefield felt to align the two.

What makes Gallipoli truly literary, though – without needing recourse to extra-textual quotes – is its irony. Fussell acknowledges the whole war as ironic, but picks out the Battle of Somme, beginning on 1 July 1916, as the ‘moment, one of the most interesting in the whole long history of human disillusion, [...] as the

⁵ Fussell, p. 130.

⁶ Fussell, p. 87.

type of all the ironic actions of the war.’⁷ If the irony of the Somme looms largest in British memory and literature, then surely the irony of Gallipoli features most prominently in our own. Like the Somme, Gallipoli was an entirely unexpected catastrophe, but even more so; for it occurred much earlier in the war, and against an enemy whose ability was much less respected. Therefore, if anything, the irony is greater, making it a rich literary vein to mine. Masfield avoids tapping into the irony, however, possibly because it did not register to him at all that the Gallipoli campaign was ironic. So what of New Zealand authors and their works?

PROBLEMATISING GALLIPOLI

Occasionally, traditional myths can be problematised in literature (one might even argue that it is one of literature’s duties). In Robin Hyde’s *Passport to Hell*, the protagonist, Starkie, finds himself at Gallipoli, which is something of an anti-climax. One would expect that such an event – which is remembered as being so significant – would be represented in an almost mythical way, particularly as Hyde was writing at a time when New Zealand identity was beginning to assert itself in the country’s art and culture. But this never comes across. The only ‘especial significance’ the New Zealanders find at Gallipoli is the ‘gigantic Maori pa’ carved into ‘the yellow clay face of the Gallipoli cliffs.’⁸ Hyde takes this opportunity to draw some connection between this war, and the older, less well-known New Zealand Wars:

Those native hills pitted with the brown circles of the old Maori trenches, their wounds not yet quite hidden in the green softening of grass, were not unlike the hills of Gallipoli that now slid out of the sheath of the morning mist. But where New Zealand hills hide under the grey-stemmed manuka bushes, with their pungent flower-cups brown and white or delicate peach-colour, the Gallipoli hills were covered with a little shrub of somewhat darker green, its astringent leaves bitter with a flavour of quinine.⁹

Possibly only an author like Hyde, with her interest in social justice and sympathy for Maori, would juxtapose the shameful New Zealand Wars with the more

⁷ Fussell, p. 29.

⁸ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, pp. 79-80.

⁹ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 80.

respectable Gallipoli. Her use of the word ‘trenches’ to describe Maori fortifications is accurate, but also provocative in the context of a First World War novel. Trenches are associated with the bitterest, most wasteful, and ironic of wars; and yet, here are some trenches of our own, in New Zealand. Not only that, but they are also ‘wounds not quite yet hidden’ – something few non-Maori would recognise in the 1930s. It is as if Hyde’s war novel, rather than building on the national myth, criticises it instead. One of the reasons Anzac Day is preferred by some commentators – such as Paul Holmes – to Waitangi Day as a ‘national day’, is because Maori played a much smaller role in the former.¹⁰ But Hyde upsets that notion, even before Starkie and his comrades get off the boat.

The Maori Pa is also referred to in Deborah Challinor’s *White Feathers*, as ‘a recess gouged into the back of one of the terraces at Number One Outpost, an area that soon came to be known as the Maori Pa.’¹¹ It is worth noting that the ‘pa’ reference is not meant to be literal, but is more likely an acknowledgement of the similarity between hillside entrenchments and Maori fortifications (just as one might nickname a large stone building ‘the Castle’). Significantly, Challinor also chooses to emphasise the Maori presence on Gallipoli, conveying the experience through the perspective of Joseph, one of the novel’s Maori characters. Furthermore, it is Maori deaths, and Maori cultural concerns, which are at the forefront of her depictions. After the death of a comrade, Joseph considers the many unburied dead at Gallipoli:

He imagined that, like him, his men would probably not mind if their earthly remains lay around for a while, as long as they stayed more or less in one piece, because the flesh was not considered sacred. But who would collect the bones of the warriors after the weather had stripped the meat from them and bleached them white? Who would come back to this harsh, isolated corner of world to carry them back home to New Zealand where they could be buried with honour and in peace next to their ancestors?¹²

¹⁰ ‘Our national day is now Anzac Day. Anzac Day is a day of honour, and struggle, bravery and sacrifice. A day on which we celebrate the periods when our country embraced great efforts for international freedom and on which we weep for those who served and for those who died.’ Paul Holmes, ‘Waitangi Day a complete waste’, *New Zealand Herald*, 11 February 2012 <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10784735> [accessed 21 April 2015].

¹¹ Deborah Challinor, *White Feathers* (Auckland: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 73.

¹² Challinor, p. 71.

This is the closest Challinor comes to indicating Gallipoli's importance; but it is so intertwined with the personal culture of Joseph, a Maori (rather than the more national culture of Pakeha) that one cannot help but read it as a subversion of the classic Gallipoli myth, in which Pakeha soldiers and values generally supersede those of Maori participants.

In *Man Alone*, the war is very much in the background. It is mentioned only occasionally by characters, and even when it is, the conversation is brief. Gallipoli itself is only mentioned once, by Johnson's employer, Stenning:

'You always been farming?' Johnson asked.

'Ever since the war,' Stenning said. 'Before that cabinet making. Father was a cabinet maker. He was a German.'

'You go to the war?'

'Sure, everybody went to the war, one side or the other. I was at Gallipoli.'

'I've been knocking around on this game ever since the war myself,' Johnson said. 'I never tried for a farm of my own.'¹³

Nothing is made of Stenning's participation at Gallipoli. Perhaps this is down to Johnson's nationality – he is technically English – but Johnson does often express an understanding of New Zealand culture, or at least an interest in it. So it is strange that he does not even acknowledge the significance of Stenning's Gallipoli experience, or appear impressed. It is even more unusual if we consider *Man Alone* to be a seminal text on New Zealand identity. Surely, if Gallipoli was such a formative event in our nascent nationalism, and *Man Alone* is such a significant text, then the two should intersect strongly at some point? Yet, they do not. Like his contemporary Hyde, Mulgan seems to problematise Gallipoli – in this instance, by simply gliding over it without a second glance.

Hamish Clayton has called 'the relative absence of Gallipoli in our national literature [...] remarkable.'¹⁴ It is remarkable, as Clayton says, because the Gallipoli myth has loomed so large for so many years in the collective memory, and has been touted as such an important strand of the fabric of our

¹³ Mulgan, *Man Alone*, p. 86.

¹⁴ Clayton, p. 250.

national identity. Surely, such an event would feature prominently in our fiction, given that ‘local fiction has been peculiarly given over to the calibration of New Zealand identity.’¹⁵ But it simply does not. Certainly, in *Passport to Hell* and *White Feathers*, characters go to Gallipoli, and we are provided with details of their experiences. But there are no grand proclamations regarding its significance, nor are any implied. Hyde devotes more energy to examining the relationships between men and women, or the motives of the Good Friday riot in Cairo, than she does to Gallipoli. Challinor, too, does not repeat the myth, but merely describes the Gallipoli experience with facts and details of life in the trenches. *Man Alone*, of course, glosses over the matter, its narrative remaining locked in the ‘present’ of the story. Clayton attempts an explanation for the absence:

Perhaps the lack of Gallipoli in the fictional record preserves the sacrosanct ground of those beaches for New Zealanders, or at least its fictional writers, who spy there the ground they fear to tread. Perhaps we have found that the horror of those trenches and gullies are beyond our reimagining.¹⁶

The idea of Gallipoli as ‘sacrosanct ground’, or a literary taboo, might have some credence, and may go a long way towards explaining its absence in our fiction. If we consider Gallipoli to be as integral to our national myth as the Crucifixion is within Christianity, then it is understandable that those who possess a nationalistic bent, and for whom Anzac Day is of great import, might struggle to denigrate the ‘true’ experience of Gallipoli by correlating it with something fictional; much as a Christian might find the notion of a non-Biblical account of Christ’s death to be blasphemous.

And yet, when writers do mention Gallipoli, they hardly treat it as ‘sacrosanct’. Hyde and Mulgan, in particular, seem to eschew Pakeha myths about the place. Even Maurice Gee, writing years later in his short story ‘A Glorious Morning, Comrade’, has Charles Pitt-Rimmer dismiss the whole affair. ‘He walked on and the cape came into sight, standing up like Chunuk Bair. He had no wish to be reminded of that. That had been a very great piece of

¹⁵ Clayton, p. 250.

¹⁶ Clayton, p. 251.

nonsense.’¹⁷ Possibly, ‘nonsense’ is a euphemism here; a description employed as means of self-protection from the trauma of the experience. But it also emphasises the military travesty that was Gallipoli, particularly the infamous Battle of Chunuk Bair, the bitter details of which are sometimes glossed over in memory. One would hardly say that Charles Pitt-Rimmer thinks of Chunuk Bair as ‘sacrosanct ground’. In stark contrast, the very place and battle that Pitt-Rimmer considers ‘nonsense’ receives an almost religious treatment in New Zealand’s most famous play about the war.

ONCE ON CHUNUK BAIR

Maurice Shadbolt’s play *Once on Chunuk Bair* is one of the first literary explorations of the Great War by a New Zealand writer not alive during the conflict. As such, it lacks the veneer of authenticity one might attribute to works like *Civilian into Soldier* or *Passport to Hell*, whose authors either served in the war, or lived with, and experienced, the immediate consequences of it. Shadbolt’s chronological distance from the war also gives him something like breathing space, where he can perhaps be more inventive. In fact, the ‘second-hand’ nature of the conflict and the period means he has little choice but to invent, and imagine, despite his thorough preparatory research.

Of interest, first and foremost, is the title, particularly its use of the adverb ‘once’, which carries certain lofty connotations. Consider the Oxford English Dictionary’s (OED) definition of ‘once’:

At one time, on one occasion (as opposed to another). *Obs.*¹⁸

This seems to fit with Shadbolt’s use of the word. He wants the reader to understand that what occurred on Chunuk Bair with New Zealanders was a one-time event; never to be repeated, and without precedent. But the OED also advises

¹⁷ Maurice Gee, ‘A Glorious Morning, Comrade’, in *Some Other Country: New Zealand’s Best Short Stories*, ed. by Marion McLeod and Bill Manhire (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2008), p. 224.

¹⁸ OED, ‘Once’

<<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/view/Entry/131320?redirectedFrom=once#eid>> [accessed 21 April 2015].

that this particular usage is *Obs.*, or obsolete. It is almost an archaism; certainly, it is an example of the ‘high diction’, prevalent before the war, which Fussell claims was ‘not the least of the ultimate casualties of the war.’¹⁹ Fussell presents his readers with a table of words belonging to this mode of ‘high diction’, with the more common, ordinary translations alongside. ‘Once’ does not feature, but it would sit easily alongside such terms as ‘naught’ and ‘ardent’ and ‘deeds’.²⁰ It is part of the same ‘raised, essentially feudal language [...] the old rhetoric.’²¹ Fussell rightly calls this language a casualty of the war, and yet, here is Maurice Shadbolt, more than six decades later, employing it for grand effect. There is also another definition of ‘once’ in the OED, more closely related to storytelling:

once upon a time: at some time in the past (freq. as a conventional opening of a narrative), *esp.* a long time ago.²²

Shadbolt’s use of ‘once’ in his title fits well with this definition: his play does indeed occur ‘at some time in the past’; it is the opening line of his play (as all titles are the ‘opening lines’ to their respective works); and the setting, more than just being in the past, is also ‘a long time ago’, both at time of writing and for the remainder of its printed existence. But when does a writer employ ‘once upon a time’? Often, it is the opening to a fairy-tale; but that might be a trivial, cynical, and potentially blasphemous label for Shadbolt’s play. Rather, a reader might turn to a cousin of the fairy-tale – the myth. Myths, like fairy-tales, can be fantastic and implausible, but they often deal with more serious subject matter: the founding of nations, the origin of man, etc. They are fairy-tales for adults, but they can just as easily begin with ‘once upon a time’. Or merely ‘once’, as Shadbolt’s play demonstrates.

In the Author’s Note preceding the Introduction to the published text, Shadbolt explains his motivation for writing the play. ‘My initial motive,’ he writes, ‘was no more than a desire to persuade Gallipoli to give up its New

¹⁹ Fussell, p. 22.

²⁰ Fussell, p. 22.

²¹ Fussell, pp. 21, 23.

²² OED

<<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/view/Entry/131320?redirectedFrom=once#eid>> [accessed 21 April 2015].

Zealand dead, and make the living listen.’²³ This fits with the idea of war fiction as commemoration. Shadbolt also draws on history, and past writers of war, in his authorial preface – what Kate McLoughlin refers to as ‘the irresistible influence of the “strong” war stories.’²⁴ Shadbolt, in thanking the ‘elderly Anzacs’ who helped his research, states that ‘Thucydides surely had such men in mind when he wrote, 2400 years ago: ‘They dared beyond their strength, hazarded against their judgement, and in extremities were of an excellent hope.’’²⁵ So Shadbolt, like other writers, places the war – and in particular, New Zealanders’ experience in it – in the context of the noble, lofty history of war as a whole.

The Introduction is written by Michael Neill, who mentions some more favourable historical comparisons for the New Zealanders’ experience on Chunuk Bair: ‘Chunuk Bair was a disaster. Subsequently, however, it was to be promoted as New Zealand’s Agincourt, a small nation’s fiery coming of age – our answer to the Australians’ magnificent debacle at Lone Pine and the Nek.’²⁶ If the intention is to identify the New Zealander’s with the *English* at Agincourt, then the comparison with Chunuk Bair is unusual; for although posterity has afforded the New Zealanders a kind of moral or spiritual victory, this is quite distinct from the actual, substantial military victory the English achieved at Agincourt. But the important thing is the historical link, and the literary one; for Agincourt is at the heart of that other war play, the oft-quoted *Henry V*. Another telling remark is the rendering of Chunuk Bair as ‘our answer’ to the Australians. There is more than a hint of trans-Tasman rivalry in that comment, and in others. Neill writes that:

Like Peter Weir’s film chronicle of those events, *Gallipoli*, Maurice Shadbolt’s *Once on Chunuk Bair* is an act of deliberate restoration, re-gilding a legend tarnished by the decay of Imperial ideals; but it aims further than the decorative romanticism of Weir’s film. Weir’s easy nostalgia takes it for granted that old myths deserve refurbishing; Shadbolt insists that, if they are to be useful, they need refurbishing.²⁷

²³ Maurice Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair* (Wellington: Playmarket, 1982), p. 10.

²⁴ McLoughlin, p. 12.

²⁵ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 10.

²⁶ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 11.

²⁷ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 11.

In other words, Weir's attempt was good – but Shadbolt's (and, therefore, *ours*) is better. According to Neill, *Once on Chunuk Bair* 'aims further than [...] decorative romanticism' and eschews 'easy nostalgia'. But does it?

On the surface, it would appear the play does reject a 'romantic' interpretation of the war. From the first page, the language of the soldiers is crude, and often peppered with blasphemies, bastards, and bloody hells.²⁸ Even the distinctly unromantic 'fuck' appears as noun, verb, and adjective. Shadbolt's soldiers are roughly-hewn types, who get 'the shits' and must dodge sniper fire as they relieve themselves.²⁹ They are certainly not intended to be noble heroes. Two of them, Porky and Smiler, have a conversation about getting into 'the books' – history or fiction – as a result of their participation in the war. Porky dismisses the notion, because 'books are about gallant buggers', the implication being that he and Smiler are not.³⁰ Smiler asks, 'How do you tell gallant buggers from other buggers?' to which Porky replies, 'If you read the books you'd bloody know. They don't have to shit and scratch. Heroes, mate.'³¹ This rejection of traditional romanticism, so early in the play, suggests an intention by Shadbolt to tell the story of Chunuk Bair 'warts and all', or 'how it really was'. As James Bennett has said, Shadbolt 'opts for a gritty and unsentimental approach that foregrounds lice, flies, dysentery (the 'Gallipoli gallop' as he dubs it), and other atrocious conditions that plagued the men throughout 1915.'³² There are no clean-cut saints in his version; no Rolands or Galahads. It is interesting, too, how 'gallant heroes' are found in books, and this is a play; Shadbolt's only play, in fact. Why this medium, then, to tell this story, when Shadbolt had found the novel adequate before and subsequently? Perhaps theatre offers a tantalising rawness and proximity that Shadbolt could not resist in his determination to, literally, 'make the living listen.'³³

But there is another kind of romanticism at work in *Once on Chunuk Bair*. The myth of the nation's birth at Gallipoli – and in particular, on Chunuk Bair – is strong in Shadbolt's play; almost pungently so. It comes through in the dialogue,

²⁸ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 19.

²⁹ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 21.

³⁰ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 24.

³¹ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 24.

³² James Bennett, 'Man Alone and Men Together: Maurice Shadbolt, William Malone and Chunuk Bair', *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, 13 (2012), p. 55.

³³ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 10.

whenever a soldier says ‘rattle your dags’ or remarks that a comrade ‘must [have] been the biggest dag in the shearing shed.’³⁴ But by far the most patriotic New Zealander is Colonel Connolly, through whom Shadbolt articulates some rather unsubtle ideas of national identity. Upon arriving on Chunuk Bair, Connolly remarks that ‘we’ve knocked the bastard off.’³⁵ Here, Connolly reaches forward through time to pluck Edmund Hillary’s famous quote from the top of Everest, applying it instead to a much smaller hilltop. It almost goes without saying that the playgoer is meant to draw parallels between the two stories. Both of them involve a New Zealander (or New Zealanders) beating their British counterparts, or achieving something their British counterparts could not. Hillary’s ascent to the summit of Everest in 1953 is perhaps our country’s fondest collective memory, and Shadbolt naturally wants to imbue his own work with the same mythic qualities. In any case, the phrase is ‘a perfect Kiwi-ism, unthinkable in the mouths of the British’, as one journalist described the famous quote.³⁶

The foil – and fuel – for Connolly’s nationalism is Lieutenant Harkness, who still thinks of England as ‘Home’:

CONNOLLY: Home?

HARKNESS: Britain, sir.

CONNOLLY: Pity.

HARKNESS: Yes, sir, I should have liked to have seen the old country.

CONNOLLY: I mean a pity you don’t know your own. Sheep crossing the hills on a misty summer morning mean nothing to you, eh? [...] Or a hot pool among fern at the end of a day’s ride?

HARKNESS: Regrettably not much, sir.³⁷

In preparing for an ambush of two Turks, the following dialogue takes place between colonel and lieutenant:

³⁴ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, pp. 20, 32.

³⁵ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 36.

³⁶ Anthony Hubbard, ‘Sir Edmund Hillary: Kiwi Legend: 1919-2008’, *Sunday Star Times*, 1 January 2009 <<http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-star-times/features/feature-archive/212689/Sir-Edmund-Hillary-Kiwi-Legend-1919-2008>> [accessed 12 May 2015].

³⁷ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 59.

CONNOLLY: You'll have your chance, Harkness.

HARKNESS: Sir?

CONNOLLY: In sight of Troy.

HARKNESS: It's difficult to imagine Achilles and Hector just crouched, hiding.

CONNOLLY: So imagine Te Rauparaha. Cunning old devil. Deadly in ambush. Dogged. Never said die.

HARKNESS: Don't know much about him, sir.

CONNOLLY: Pity, Harkness. Pity.³⁸

Harkness knows all about the *Iliad*, but not Te Rauparaha, the Maori warrior-general and composer of the 'Ka Mate' haka, whom Connolly appropriates as a cultural icon, akin to Hector and Achilles. And yet, there is a hint that, like the New Zealand soldiers, Te Rauparaha is just a little better, for he – unlike his Homeric counterparts – is 'deadly in ambush', and does not die in battle, but outwits and outlives his enemies. He of the New World is superior to him of the Old, perhaps. The most telling line, though, is Connolly's reply to Harkness confessing ignorance of Te Rauparaha's story: 'Pity, Harkness. Pity.' It is never pitiable, in this play, to be a soldier, or to die. The pity is that Harkness does not know his own history; his own stories. And they are his, too, or so Shadbolt would have us believe. They are his and Connolly's, as much as Chunuk Bair will be, or Everest to come.

It is worth noting that Connolly's Te Rauparaha reference is inspired by the arrival of a member of the Maori contingent, Otaki George, who is, naturally, a bit cheeky, and liberally peppers his speech with 'eh'.³⁹ He is also dissatisfied with his role in the war, as a simple sapper; hence, the abandoning of his post to join the Pakeha soldiers on Chunuk Bair:

CONNOLLY: We're still brothers in arms.

³⁸ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 60.

³⁹ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, pp. 53.

GEORGE: Then hullo, brother, where's the arms? Eh? Never mind. Brought my own. I think you buggers are still frightened of us pointing them at you, eh.⁴⁰

Connolly is wonderfully inclusive of Otaki George, recognising him as a comrade, a brother in arms. George, in return, is a little mischievous in his reply, delighting in a pun and making a gentle jibe about unfinished business in New Zealand. But he is friendly, and there is only one of him, so he is perhaps an acceptable Maori character. One can imagine him played by the late Billy T. James; in fact, the comedian may even have been an inspiration. How true, though, is this bicultural amicability of 1915? Indeed, how true is it of 1982? As for the Te Rauparaha reference, it emerges from George's genealogy:

GEORGE: Hey, what about me? I'm Ngati Toa.

FRANK: You telling me something?

GEORGE: Ngati Toa was Te Rauparaha's tribe.

CONNOLLY: Te Rauparaha, eh? There, by God, was a warrior.

GEORGE: Ngati Toa was a tiny tribe, eh. But no bugger ever stopped us. Not even you Pakeha, at Wairau, when you tried stealing our land. We left you all dead.

GEORGE *jabs his rifle in the direction of CONNOLLY'S midriff with some enthusiasm.*⁴¹

'Toa', of course, also means 'warrior'. But the rest fits with the story of the play very neatly: how fitting that, within New Zealand's own history, there is a metaphor for a country that punches above its weight. Of course, even George's brief story of Ngati Toa falls prey to mythologising and romance; for Ngati Toa and Te Rauparaha were the aggressors, who stole the land at Wairau and elsewhere during the Musket Wars. Myth, one might say, is history pruned of problematic facts. George certainly does this with his 'history' of Ngati Toa, just as Shadbolt does so with Chunuk Bair.

⁴⁰ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 54.

⁴¹ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 56.

Colonel Connolly is intended to be a cipher for the real commander of the Wellington Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel William Malone.⁴² But how much do they really have in common? Consider Connolly's masculine bravado when conversing with Harkness:

CONNOLLY: Even if you're randy, Harkness, never rush a woman. Check on when the husband's home. And little local hazards. I don't want to be bare-arsed out the back door in five minutes. Strangled by some bloody washing line. I speak from experience, Harkness.⁴³

To be fair, Connolly does go on to transform this into a metaphor for the Gallipoli campaign, with Mustafa Kemal as 'the damned husband.'⁴⁴ Nonetheless, though, it is a little crude, and certainly unromantic, particularly when one considers the real Malone was married. His letters and diary entries are much more sensitive and refined than the dialogue of his fictional counterpart. Consider these lines from his final letter to his wife, dated 5 August 1915:

Sweetheart,

[...] Yes I do want you. I long and long and am beginning to lose my enjoyment of this life, as it entails separation from you. You are, in all my spare time, in my thoughts, and I do so look forward to our reunion. I do think much and have time to do so every night and day. [...] I do know all your feelings and I reciprocate them, but do not be sad. All will be well and our future life together will be all the sweeter and better for this separation. [...] My candle is all but burnt out and we will soon be moving. So good night, dearest one. With all my love.

Your lover and husband

x__x__x

Love to Norah and the little ones⁴⁵

My candle is all but burnt out... Malone's allusion to the literal circumstance (he was writing late at night) becomes a perfectly ironic metaphor when one considers this was his last letter, and that he was to die in a matter of days. That aside, the

⁴² Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 13.

⁴³ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁴ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 40.

⁴⁵ *No Better Death: The Great War diaries and letters of William G. Malone*, ed. by John Crawford (Auckland: Reed, 2005), pp. 298-299.

letter is also replete with examples of his unashamed love for his wife, which is consistent throughout his correspondence with her. In an earlier letter, of 4 July, he promises her that ‘we will have another honeymoon together, sweetheart when the war is over.’⁴⁶ As well as writing to his wife, he also found time to write to his children, including this letter to his six year-old son while in Egypt:

My dear Barney,

A bee is flying about me as I write to you in my tent in the desert here. I have some nice flowers on my table and the bees are visiting them. I expect they are hungry as in the desert there are no flowers, grass, trees or shrubs, sand and stones as far as you can see N + E. On the W + S, I can see date palms and houses and gardens and farms, green and flourishing.

Goodbye. Give your mummy a good love for me.

Your loving father⁴⁷

One can imagine him writing this; and indeed, one can see his wife reading it to their son, or helping him read it. Of course, how a person presents themselves in the privacy of letters and diaries can often be distinct from their outward façade. But it is difficult to reconcile this Malone with Shadbolt’s macho Connolly, who thinks only of forging ‘our own legend’ on Chunuk Bair.⁴⁸ It is possible that Shadbolt, in his preparatory research, came across Malone’s private correspondence, and found the man not suited to his purpose. How could a sensitive, caring, even romantic man like Malone stand among Shadbolt’s cast of Kiwi blokes? How could such a man *lead* them? A playgoer would have to suspend their disbelief too much. So, enter Connolly, from whom all of Malone’s un-masculine deficiencies are excised. He is all hero, and no complexity. More than that, he seems to be at least a first-generation New Zealander, for he describes his father thus:

CONNOLLY: A New Zealander, Harkness. A bloody-minded bastard. A bog Irishman who made himself from the bootstraps up,

⁴⁶ Crawford, p. 264.

⁴⁷ Crawford, p. 106.

⁴⁸ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 96.

and knew why. He had soil he could call his own. A country. Didn't let me forget it.⁴⁹

The real Malone had no such distinction. He was born in England in 1859, and did not immigrate to New Zealand until 1880.⁵⁰ He was also far from being a staunch nationalist. In his final letter, he makes reference not to New Zealand, but another country:

Dear old England. She is a muddle right enough, but comes out all right in the end. And there is no country like her. If only we can knock a bit more thoroughness into her, as a matter of course it would help wonderfully.⁵¹

These remarks are far too complimentary: Connolly would be much more severe on old mother England. Gallipoli does not 'make' him a New Zealander; it simply gives him a platform – or a *stage* – on which he can confirm it, and play the role. Charles Ferrall has also highlighted these differences between Connolly and the 'real' Malone, and was even told by Christopher Pugsley that Shadbolt 'changed his name from Malone at the request of the latter's family.'⁵² In turn, James Bennett asserts that Shadbolt's play 'sought to rehabilitate William Malone, an outstanding leader and exceptional New Zealander; the man whose reputation had been unfairly sullied by his malign commanding officers.'⁵³ While Malone's military prowess may have been revived, his complexity and sensitivity as a man has been thoroughly savaged by Shadbolt. It is no wonder Malone's family preferred to distance their ancestor from Shadbolt's creation.

The character of Connolly – and, really, *Once on Chunuk Bair* itself – is an example of the urge to fictionalise the war to meet the demands of the author and the present. Real people (even real men) are sensitive and frail, and this never really comes through in *Once on Chunuk Bair*. Even the play's conclusion reflects not on the waste of war, but rather the folly of the British commanders, who

⁴⁹ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 59.

⁵⁰ Chris Pugsley, 'Malone, William George', in *Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 12 November 2013 <<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3m40/malone-william-george>> [accessed 13 May 2015].

⁵¹ Crawford, p. 299.

⁵² Charles Ferrall, 'Maurice Shadbolt's Gallipoli Myth', in *How We Remember: New Zealanders and the First World War*, ed. by Charles Ferrall and Harry Ricketts (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2014), p. 103.

⁵³ Bennett, p. 52.

somehow ‘cheated’ the New Zealanders out of victory. ‘The Turks couldn’t do us,’ Frank says, ‘only *they* could.’⁵⁴ He leaves Chunuk Bair with a bent bayonet, and the slightest hint of vengeance. So there is no mourning. This is a play about classic Kiwi blokes; the sort of men you might meet on the rugby field, or down at the pub. They are clichés, really, which were already being challenged by the anti-Tour protestors in 1981, and in plays such as *Foreskin’s Lament* (1981). But, just as there were a number of New Zealanders who were ‘pro-Tour’, or indifferent to the presence of South African sports teams in the country, there would have been conservative audiences for Shadbolt’s play who did not recognise the characters or the dialogue as cliché, in the 1980s and even today. Although Shadbolt may have wished to avoid romanticism, he still presents a story that is romantic, perhaps in a ‘Kiwi’ sense. Kiwi blokes and sheilas have no time for the sensitive (or sensual) aspects of romance, or even the nobility of romantic heroes. But they understand the ruggedness, the ‘hard yakka’, the anti-authoritarian attitude. Jane Stafford, reviewing Shadbolt’s work, summarises *Once on Chunuk Bair* thus:

I am not a military historian and have no intention of belittling the courage of William Malone, but it seems to me that the claims we came of age on the slopes of Gallipoli, shrugging off colonial deference and standing up as true Kiwis, are a means of dignifying present-day independence by inventing a history configured by and responding to the demands of the present. And there is nothing wrong with that – all societies invent themselves, and their past is one of the sources of that invention. *Once on Chunuk Bair* was about Shadbolt’s vision of New Zealand at the start of the 1980s rather than in 1915 – a society which was egalitarian, courageous in a straightforward sort of way, efficient, suspicious of rhetoric, effortlessly bicultural and implicitly masculinist.⁵⁵

Despite striving for more than ‘decorative romanticism’, Shadbolt has still presented an idealised, ahistorical account of Chunuk Bair, which serves a purpose for a modern audience; much as *The Song of Roland* would have when it was first written. But it also resets the literary depiction of Gallipoli, in a way, eschewing Hyde and Mulgan’s nuanced, ironic commentaries in favour of

⁵⁴ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 100.

⁵⁵ Jane Stafford, ‘Tickling history’, *New Zealand Books: A Quarterly Review* <<http://nzbooks.org.nz/2005/literature/tickling-history-jane-stafford/>> [accessed 21 April 2015].

something that makes more sense to a generation for whom the war had already been distorted by time.

A WAR POET

The absence of any New Zealand war poets – or at least, any of renown – is in itself interesting, albeit sometimes frustrating for literary critics and cultural nationalists. Indeed, Dean Parker, bereft of real war poets, resolved to invent one for his essay ‘What if a poet had taken us out of the Great War?’ in the counterfactual collection *New Zealand As It Might Have Been 2*. Parker’s poet is Rufus Dewar, whose poetic themes were ‘war, war stripped of heroics, war as true horror!’ as a counterfactual Karl Stead asserts.⁵⁶ Parker gives Dewar a brief but convincing biography – ‘his father was a school teacher, his mother a well-known landscape artist’ – before enlisting him with ‘the Infantry brigade of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force’ and sending him off to Gallipoli.⁵⁷ There, Dewar, disillusioned by the ‘carnage’, begins writing war poetry; or, rather, anti-war poetry. Parker even includes some of these verses:

There are no birds on Gaba Tepe
The guns have seen to that
But to have birds would crowd the skies
For look above, so many souls
Like geese migrating home
And more to follow you can bet
The guns will see to that⁵⁸

Such lines could sit convincingly alongside the work of Wilfred Owen or Siegfried Sassoon. Certainly, a similar sentiment to the British greats is present, particularly in another of ‘his’ poems:

Beyond the bloody first objective line
Beyond the bloody pounding five-nine
Beyond the bloody sodden sap
Beyond the bloody bullets spat

⁵⁶ Dean Parker, ‘What if a poet had taken us out of the Great War?’, in *New Zealand As It Might Have Been 2*, ed. by Stephen Levine (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2010), p. 40.

⁵⁷ Parker, pp. 40, 41.

⁵⁸ Parker, p. 42.

Beyond the bloody desolation
Beyond the bloody sniper's station
Beyond the bloody madman's flash
Beyond the bloody cordite smash
Beyond the Pale
Beyond the limit
The total bloody failure of the human spirit⁵⁹

Dewar's vision of Gallipoli, with its 'total bloody failure of the human spirit', is about as far from *Once on Chunuk Bair* as one might get; for although the characters in Shadbolt's play die, 'failing' in their military objective, there is a sense they have triumphed in spirit, having fought nobly and forged their national identity. There is no such sentimentality in Parker's narrative; the triumph of the human spirit occurs not at Gallipoli in battle, but back home in New Zealand, through protest and an anti-war movement.

Dewar is soon wounded, and evacuated to Alexandria, where he meets 'Cissie Kerrisk' in a 'British hospital.'⁶⁰ Cissie's occupation is never divulged, but, in considering the increasing literariness of Parker's scenario, she is likely a nurse. Cissie, naturally, falls in love with Dewar. Parker references a counterfactual Marilyn Duckworth, who writes that:

The military isolated him because his [anti-war] views were having such an influence. But he was still free to take exercise. He'd take walks and Cissie Kerrisk would join him. By this time she was falling in love with him. They would go along the Corniche at Alexandria and somewhere near the water's edge they had a place where they could hide and make love.⁶¹

Dewar persuades Cissie to not only embrace his anti-war stance, but to slip away with him and return home to New Zealand. This occurs December 1915, when 'the Dardanelles Expedition was slipping away just as furtively from the Gallipoli Peninsula.'⁶² Parker writes that 'it's hard not to see the parallel' between the two departures.⁶³ The parallel is important, of course, because it adds to the 'literariness' of Dewar's story. Symmetry is one of the structural tools of the

⁵⁹ Parker, p. 43.

⁶⁰ Parker, pp. 43-44.

⁶¹ Parker, p. 44.

⁶² Parker, pp. 44-45.

⁶³ Parker, p. 45.

author, and helps to create the illusion that an individual character's story is as grand and significant as the story of a military campaign, or the war as a whole.

'The intention of Rufus Dewar and his lover Cissie Kerrisk,' Parker writes, 'was to return to New Zealand and convince the New Zealand people to abandon the war.'⁶⁴ This forthright, and explicit (as opposed to subtle), approach from Dewar immediately contrasts him with his real-life English counterparts, who, while happy to communicate war's horrors through poetry, did not actively try to stop it. Although Siegfried Sassoon did make his famous 'Soldier's Declaration' in defiance of military authority and continued participation in the war, he did not rebel to the extent of the fictional Dewar; while Wilfred Owen famously returned to the front, where he died in combat on 4 November 1918. Dewar's anti-war stance manifests itself as a hastily-published collection of his poetry, simply titled *Gallipoli Poems*. Poor reviews – the poems were 'odious and unpatriotic' – quickly see the publication 'ruled obscene [...] the first and only time a book of verse has ever been banned in New Zealand.'⁶⁵ Thus, Dewar takes his first important steps to becoming a counterfactual cultural rebel; a heroic Kiwi battler, even. He gives speeches for the Anti-Conscription Campaign, calling himself 'a hero' ironically, and reminding listeners of the lesser known aspects of war: 'I'm a hero who's been in a queue of 150 other men waiting outside a brothel in Cairo each to have his five minutes with one of the three women inside.'⁶⁶ Dewar is possibly being hyperbolic here, but hyperbole is a classic rhetorical device, and this is classic anti-war rhetoric. Most significantly, he is problematising the public's image of the New Zealand soldier as a 'gentleman', which was, as Jock Phillips points out, the predominant impression of the time.⁶⁷

After this point, though, Dewar begins to steadily accumulate more characteristics which mark him out as more of a twenty-first century construct, rather than a plausible figure of the Great War. Travelling down to the Waikato, he meets with 'one of the most influential figures in the area, Te Puea Herangi. There weren't many Pakeha at the time who spoke Maori, but Rufus Dewar was

⁶⁴ Parker, p. 45.

⁶⁵ Parker, p. 46.

⁶⁶ Parker, p. 46-47.

⁶⁷ Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? Images of the Pakeha Male – A History* (Auckland: Penguin, 1987).

one.’⁶⁸ So, not only is Dewar anti-war, but he is also bilingual (and therefore, implicitly bicultural in his outlook). By this stage he is being pursued by the police, of course, for his seditious poetry; and therefore, Dewar embodies something of the ‘outlaw’, like Hyde’s Starkie. Eventually, Dewar’s anti-war stance mingles with the anti-conscription movement, and he begins to embrace ‘the socialist politics of the anti-conscription campaign.’⁶⁹ He also embraces a certain socialist, namely Michael Joseph Savage, with whom Dewar has an implicit homosexual relationship. Parker writes that ‘Savage had been organising the Auckland Labour Representation Committee and Dewar was frequently visiting him, surreptitiously, of course. So the opportunity was there.’⁷⁰ Savage’s copy of *Gallipoli Poems* even has the following inscription:

To MJS. War’s confusion is nothing to love’s. Rufus.⁷¹

Thus, in a single page, Parker gives his hero the fashionable, twenty-first century attribute of bisexuality, which, coupled with his anti-war socialism, and his bilingual sensitivity to Maori, renders Dewar a most appealing character to left-wing fantasists. But his sexuality is reminiscent of that other war poet, Wilfred Owen, who is sometimes thought to have been homosexual, and in whose poetry ‘impulses of Victorian and early-twentieth-century homoeroticism converge.’⁷² Therefore, if anything, Parker is further aligning his counterfactual hero with the very real Wilfred Owen; although Owen’s life seems a little more nuanced than that of his fictional, antipodean counterpart.

Eventually, the law catches up with Dewar. At a meeting of anti-war and socialist advocates, a constable appears ‘from the shadows and [smashes] a baton down on Rufus Dewar’s head.’⁷³ He dies; but his death is the catalyst for mass demonstrations and rioting, which lead to the first Labour government being elected on 23 April 1916, and New Zealand’s subsequent exit from the war.

⁶⁸ Parker, p. 48.

⁶⁹ Parker, p. 49.

⁷⁰ Parker, p. 52.

⁷¹ Parker, p. 52.

⁷² Fussell, p. 286.

⁷³ Parker, pp. 53-54.

Counterfactual history is essentially fiction, particularly when it is imbued with the kind of literary qualities Parker applies to his scenario. In fact, counterfactuals themselves are inevitably imbued with literary irony, because they ask *what if*, which is related to the ‘*if only*’ that Fussell identifies as a marker of irony in war recollections.⁷⁴ Counterfactuals, or alternative histories, are often ironic because they present alternative realities in which characters are ignorant of the ‘true’ reality (that of the reader). For instance, an alternative history in which the Great War really did end before Christmas 1914 would be ironic. Had the war unfolded that way in reality, though, it would not have been considered ironic, because that was what was hoped for. ‘Irony is the attendant of hope,’ Fussell writes, ‘and the fuel of hope is innocence.’⁷⁵ What is more hopeful or innocent than a fantasy, particularly one in which the Great War, essentially, never occurs? But this is also true of the scenario Parker provides for us. Anzac Day, in his history, is remembered as ‘the day we stood on our own feet, the day we claimed our own sovereignty, the day we announced we were mature enough to chart our own course in world affairs.’⁷⁶ But this is not because New Zealanders received a baptism of fire at Gallipoli; it is because, on 25 April **1916**, New Zealand’s new Labour government ended the country’s participation in the war – ‘the day we brought the boys home.’⁷⁷ The irony comes from the fact that, in Parker’s story, the ideas of nationhood and sovereignty are still tied to 25 April, but for different reasons. It is further compounded when he muses on what might have happened if New Zealand had not pulled out of the war (a kind of double-counterfactual):

Had we carried on in that war, we would have ended up sending tens of thousands of young men to the slaughter, wiping from them all that life had to offer. Given our craven propensity for gamely accepting death at another man’s beckoning, we probably would have ended up with the highest casualty rate in the British Empire. [...] No doubt some desperate militarists would probably have claimed [Anzac Day] as a mystic blood-sacrifice, the birth of a nation, but who would listen to such Aryan claptrap?⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Fussell, p. 31.

⁷⁵ Fussell, p. 18.

⁷⁶ Parker, p. 55.

⁷⁷ Parker, p. 55.

⁷⁸ Parker, p. 55.

Despite the provocative misappropriation of the term ‘Aryan’, Parker’s musings essentially describe how events unfolded in reality. But it is the incredulity with which this scenario is greeted (‘claptrap’) that makes it ironic, for that is precisely how things did unfold in the world of the reader, where the birth of the nation at Gallipoli is, for many, far from claptrap. Certainly, it is anything but for Maurice Shadbolt, or Paul Holmes.

Parker’s story, like Shadbolt’s play, is a kind of myth-making, albeit inverted. The mythic quality of Dewar comes from his strong participation in New Zealand’s national story. He serves at Gallipoli, where our nationhood allegedly came into being. He speaks Maori and meets Te Puea Herangi. He becomes the lover of Michael Joseph Savage, one of our most influential and deified prime ministers. He is martyred struggling for peace, and his death helps to usher in a ‘purer’ first Labour government. What greater hero could a left-wing, twenty-first century reader hope for? He is the ‘hope abridged’ for pacifists throughout the country, who might wish for a less-bloody history. He is the strange reflection of Connolly, advancing the cause of nationalism and biculturalism, but through peace, not war. This is not the first time Parker has produced a counterfactual counterpart to a New Zealand legend. His play, *The Man That Lovelock Couldn’t Beat*, centres on the fictional Tom Morehu, who always beat the more famous Jack Lovelock whenever they raced. In 1936, Lovelock goes to the Berlin Olympics in Nazi Germany, while Morehu goes to the People’s Olympics in Barcelona. As Parker writes:

Again, there are fictional elements to this play. But what it's saying is true. It's saying that when Lovelock shook hands with Hitler, the first casualties of World War II were already falling in Spain struck down, as often as not, by German weapons.⁷⁹

Like Dewar, Morehu is a New Zealand hero, this time of our other great passion, sport. Like Dewar, he is much more acceptable to a contemporary reader, with his social conscience and unwavering anti-Fascism, than his real-life counterparts, who may be indifferent to our modern values, or even in opposition to them. Like Dewar, and Connolly, he is also fictional. These works are examples of the need,

⁷⁹ Dean Parker, ‘Olympic dreams: fiction to explain fact’, *Sunday Star Times*, 30 March 2008 <<http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-star-times/entertainment/more-entertainment-stories/336267/Olympic-dreams-fiction-to-explain-fact>> [accessed 13 May 2015].

the urge, to fictionalise history in some way, to make up for perceived deficiencies of the subject matter in the modern mind. Shadbolt and Dewar's respective treatments of Gallipoli are our fullest fictional examinations of that event, and its meaning, although they sit at opposite ends of the spectrum – one sincere to the nationalist myth, the other ironically inverting it.

Chapter III: Worlds of the War

THE WORLD BEFORE THE WAR

With few exceptions, New Zealand fiction concerned directly with the First World War generally begins *in medias res* (*Civilian into Soldier, Once on Chunuk Bair*) giving a sense of immediacy and immersion in the events of the war. Occasionally, though, they begin in peacetime New Zealand, prior to the commencement of hostilities. Often, the intrusion of the war into the lives of characters acts as the impetus for the story, wrenching them from their homes and dropping them into the conflict half a world away. Inevitably, there is a contrast between the world of peace these characters leave, and the world of the war in which they find themselves. And if the war is generally envisaged as the nightmarish culmination – and military application – of the Industrial Age, then the obvious contrast is unblemished nature, the pastoral ideal of literary tradition. As Fussell writes:

The Golden Age posited by Classical and Renaissance literary pastoral now finds its counterpart in ideas of “home” and “the summer of 1914.” The language of literary pastoral and that of particular rural data can fuse to assist memory or imagination.¹

Pastoral purity comes to represent the time before the war, both in fiction *and* memory, because it makes such *literary* sense. It provides a pattern, neatness. Drama, when graphed, curves upward as the story unfolds, peaks at the narrative climax, before falling away to a denouement. Tonally, such a story might resemble a solar eclipse: light, then dark, then light again. J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of Rings* is an example of such a narrative. Incidentally, Tolkien himself was a veteran of the Great War, and his work praises the pastoral, and rallies against industrialisation (most notably in the clash between the treelike Ents and environmentally-devastating Saruman). His grand fantasy novel also begins in the Shire, perhaps Middle Earth’s most quiet, pastoral, and English corner, before taking the heroes on the journey which concludes with a visit to Mordor, the Black Land, whose ashen landscape is not far removed from the bleakness of No

¹ Fussell, p. 235.

Man's Land. So there is a literary precedent, even outside the scope of traditional war novels.

Passport to Hell presents the reader with one of the best examples of this 'before' and 'after' delineation. In the novel, Hyde gives Starkie an idyllic youth to contrast with his hellish adulthood in the war:

The New Zealand bush world was as disorderly as himself. [...] Wild mint, flowering purple and with the cleanest of odours, grew into the rims of the little river-pools in whose mud the eels might be sought for, sometimes in the gorse-gold and sleepy warmth of a day's sunlight, sometimes with torches after nightfall, Maori fashion. The world was happy; and moreover, the problems of boots did not arise. His toes enjoyed an Arcadian existence of muddy freedom.²

The final line is imbued with irony, when one considers how Starkie's 'muddy freedom' will soon give way to the muddy hell of the trenches. But for now, his world is 'happy', filled with water and 'wild mint, flowering purple', as pastoral as anything one might find in an Elizabethan sonnet. Later on, New Zealand nature intermingles with female friendship:

This green world where the boy and girl went riding was a self-contained kingdom of eminently simple habits. There were no entertainments, neither in the station-owner's house anything more elaborate than his upright piano. Hospitality and their own self-reliance were the only suggestions the inhabitants could offer to a swifter-moving outside world.³

This 'green world' becomes 'a self-contained kingdom of eminently simple habits', insulated – crucially – from 'a swifter-moving outside world.' Like Tolkien's Shire, this slice of rural New Zealand feels very far away, both from the industrial cities on the coast, but also the industrial war of the future. Starkie is protected by distance of both time and place; for it is towards the Great War that the outside world is moving so swiftly.

Later, Starkie leaves this chaste friendship behind for the older, more sensual May Simms. She is described as 'a lissom brunette whose little silk frocks

² Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 17.

³ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, pp. 24-25.

– she ran them up herself – clung affectionately to the lines of a slim body made for tennis, dancing, and surf-boards.’⁴ In other words, she is ‘made’ for innocent, pleasant pastimes, which have no place in war, or the soldier’s experience. She is ‘summer’s girl’, a notion which seems to echo the ‘romantic retrospection’ applied to Europe’s ‘benign last summer before the war.’⁵ Fussell writes that ‘for the modern imagination that last summer [before the war] has assumed the status of a permanent symbol for anything innocently but irrevocably lost.’⁶ Although the southern summer is not quite as neatly juxtaposed with the beginnings of the war, the sentiment is much the same. Summer is good and peaceful; winter is dark and dreadful. The former, if not the latter, is strongly emphasised in these youthful chapters of Starkie’s life. In fact, the section in which we encounter May is titled ‘Good-bye Summer’, which is as much a farewell to the literal season as it is to the metaphorical summer of Starkie’s youth.⁷ After this point he is incarcerated in Invercargill gaol, and says ‘good-bye to civilian life.’⁸

It is in gaol that Starkie is truly tested, and prepared for the war that nobody sees coming. The chapter is titled ‘Ring and Dummy’ the ‘second-best’ and ‘best’ institutions, respectively, in New Zealand gaols.⁹ Hyde describes the former thus:

The Ring is in the prison yard and about thirty feet in diameter. The game is to try to find the end of it; but you never do, although you are marched around it from eleven in the morning until five at night – the close of the convict’s long day.¹⁰

There are clearly parallels between this relentless marching, and the way a soldier is expected to move. For readers familiar with the route to the Western Front, the ‘Ring’ also echoes the military training camp at Étaples, known to soldiers in John A. Lee’s *Civilian into Soldier* as ‘the Bull Ring [...] because the sergeants are mad bulls and you’ve got to bloody well hop to keep clear.’¹¹ The bull ring – or any sports ‘ring’, for that matter – is also a place where one’s mettle is tested,

⁴ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 27.

⁵ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 28; Fussell, p. 23.

⁶ Fussell, p. 24.

⁷ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 26.

⁸ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 38.

⁹ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁰ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, pp. 39-40.

¹¹ Lee, p. 39.

further emphasising this stage in Starkie's life as a test of his mettle, and whether he is ready for the war to come. Even the mud of the trenches is foreshadowed here, when the prisoners are 'marched out to the swamps where [they] were reclaiming land, shovelling reeds and tons of stinking blue mud.'¹² The mud here has lost any Arcadian properties, and is fast taking on the grim qualities it would become infamous for during the war.

As well as enduring the Ring, Starkie serves time in the Dummy after falling foul of prison authorities. 'It is always dusk in the Dummy,' writes Hyde, 'which lies underground. A vague ghost of daylight slips through from the corridor, but there is no window, no ventilator.'¹³ This is the hole, or the pit, or the dungeon, or whatever dark, oppressive setting an author might thrust their hero into, to test him. It is the arena where the hero must face mental as well as physical challenges, and Starkie's time in the Dummy is no exception. Hyde writes that:

Starkie invented a game to keep him warm at nights. It was a very clever game. He pulled a button off his shirt, flicked it as far as he could between finger and thumb, then knelt down in the darkness and groped for it on the concrete floor. Finding it in the pitch-black of the cell took an astonishingly long time, and when he did feel it under his fingers he stood in another corner of the cell and flicked it away again. It was a simple recreation, but it was his challenge to the ponderous four-walled darkness which told him, in that oozy voice of a silence, that he was no longer a man. Flick... grope... button between your fingers. Somewhere perhaps in the darkness of his cave, starving Neanderthal found a way to take his mind off the stinking flames of his last fire.¹⁴

Starkie endures several agonising days in his personal prison. He endures the 'figure eight', described (with a deliberately military comparison) as 'a mild version of the French Foreign Legion's beloved torture, *le crapaud*.'¹⁵ In this torture, 'the prisoner's arms are doubly handcuffed across the small of his back, wrist and elbows forced together [...] wriggle or twist as he likes, he can find no position to ease that red thrust through the muscles of shoulder and neck.'¹⁶ This

¹² Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 40.

¹³ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 42.

¹⁴ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, pp. 42-43.

¹⁵ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 44.

¹⁶ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, pp. 44-45.

is as much a mental as physical test for Starkie, which leaves him feeling dehumanised. After being released from his restraints, he creeps ‘into the back of his kennel like a sick dog.’¹⁷ He ‘laps’ up his daily ration of water, and gnaws his bread ‘like a rat.’¹⁸

Starkie’s arduous prison experience is an important part of *Passport to Hell*, because helps shape the myth of its central character, transforming him into someone almost ‘made’ for war. The chapter is also significant in that it is just after the completion of his sentence that Starkie enlists, and thus his real war begins. It serves as a line of demarcation, between the ‘peaceful’ *before*, and the ‘hellish’ *after*. His entry into prison is portrayed as a kind of ‘bridging course’ between youth/summer and war/winter, and might be described – in keeping with the seasonal metaphor – as autumnal.

NATURE’S BEST

Fussell has written of ‘Arcadian recourses’ as a contrast, and retreat, from the ravages of the war.¹⁹ Soldiers, faced with the grime of the trenches, and industrialised death of the battlefield, would naturally find solace in the cleanness and purity of the untouched rural landscape. For New Zealanders, this contrast is accentuated by the distance from their pastoral ideal. Fussell, in his consciously Anglocentric study *The Great War in Modern Memory*, asserts that ‘what makes experience in the Great War unique and gives it a special freight of irony is the ridiculous proximity of the trenches to home.’²⁰ He is, of course, referring of the experience of the British soldier. But for the New Zealanders, the experience was more akin to that of the Second World War soldier, who Fussell describes as enduring ‘dire long-term exile at an unbridgeable distance from “home.”’²¹ For New Zealanders, their pastoral ideal did not exist in a short trip across the Channel. It was somewhere at the bottom of the world, several time zones away. For the British soldier dreaming of green English fields, an Arcadian excursion was a real possibility, if he managed to not be blown up. For the New Zealand

¹⁷ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 45.

¹⁸ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 45.

¹⁹ Fussell, p. 231.

²⁰ Fussell, p. 64.

²¹ Fussell, p. 64.

soldier, their Arcadia remained a true fantasy until the end of the war – and even then, they may have been disappointed upon their return. But what makes the contrast even greater is the antipodean nature of the New Zealand soldier's Arcadia. For in the hot summer at Gallipoli, when the flies were everywhere, a soldier might think of mild, wintry New Zealand lying halfway around the world. Likewise, in the cold, muddy trenches of winter on the Western Front, what New Zealand soldier could help thinking of their homeland, basking in sun, with white sand beaches and red pohutakawa trees? That is a unique contrast, shared only by the Australians. It makes the longing for home, and peace, even more severe.

This wistful nostalgia for New Zealand's landscape is a recurring theme in our literature of the war, beginning with *Civilian into Soldier*. In Lee's novel, the protagonist John Guy muses on the antipodean contrast in the middle of a cold northern winter. 'Down under in New Zealand's January warmth, insects would sing to the moon, the fresh scent of cut hay, of wheat and oat sheaf, would cause nostrils to distend, warm air would invite love-making and rollicking beneath hedge and stook.'²² The picture Lee paints is almost the perfect antithesis to the war. New Zealand, physically, is as about as far from the Western Front as one can get; while the descriptions he chooses (insects singing to the moon, 'the fresh scent of cut hay', 'warm air') suggest a kind of peaceful stillness, a pleasant rural evening. The possibility of 'love-making and rollicking' further separates this fantasy from the reality of the war, in which sexual liaisons were less effortless, and less idyllic, than in Lee's romanticised peacetime. Later, on his return to London from the front, Guy finds peace that reminds him of his antipodean home:

There was a touch of home, of New Zealand, about the Club in the heart of Empire, and reactions of subtle nature were evoked. It was as if he had caught a glimpse of a Golden Kowhai, or a tussocked hill, or a fern-clad gully in his native land.²³

Yet again, when thinking of 'home' (New Zealand), it is unspoiled nature that is emphasised – 'Golden Kowhai', 'a tussocked hill', and 'a fern-clad gully' – even in the heart of industrialised London.

²² Lee, p. 38.

²³ Lee, p. 249.

War and the Gallipoli front dominate in *Once on Chunuk Bair*. ‘Home’ (which is certainly New Zealand, in Shadbolt’s view) is rarely evoked as an ideal Arcadian counterpoint to the conflict, because in Shadbolt’s narrative, Chunuk Bair is the best place to be. In his vision, it is the hilltop where heroes and history are made, and therefore far preferable to the ignominious trenches of the Western Front, where one might understandably wish to be at home instead. But it is evoked, if only briefly, by the nationalistic Connolly, who asks the less fervent Harkness, ‘Sheep crossing the hills on a misty summer morning mean nothing to you, eh? [...] Or a hot pool among fern at the end of a day’s ride?’²⁴ Connolly does not evoke New Zealand with references to shops along Queen Street, or the cathedral in Christchurch. He conjures it up with images of untainted nature, perhaps because these things seem more enduring: the hot pools were there before us, and they will remain long after we are gone.

The Great War is not the focus in *After Z-Hour*, but there are passages devoted to the experiences of Mark, a New Zealand soldier who survived the ordeal, and whose ghostly presence seems to be felt by the other characters. Upon returning to New Zealand after the war, Mark finds himself in the beloved countryside of his youth. Surveying it all from atop a mountain, he muses:

This was the world I had wanted to explain to Alan, showing him, telling him. This was what I had longed to run back to, out of the war zone, invisibly past the Redcaps, their revolvers and their law. This I wanted to share with him when it was all over and we stood together on the crest of Flint Peak. *This* I carried around inside me like folded wings.²⁵

It is not a person, but a place, that Mark carries inside himself ‘like folded wings’. This simile is of great interest because of what it implies: that the New Zealand landscape is something which is liberating, like wings, but which necessity dictates must be kept ‘folded’, or hidden, until the war’s end. Knox’s italicised emphasis on *this* also suggests exclusivity: it was *this*, and not anything else, which kept him going. The same idea appears in a short story by Maurice Shadbolt, ‘The People Before’, in which the narrator’s father expresses how important faraway New Zealand was to him:

²⁴ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 59.

²⁵ Knox, pp. 196-97.

‘So I made up my mind, boy,’ he told me as we rode along together, ‘I made up my mind I’d never be like that. I’d bend my head to no man. And you know what the secret of that is, boy? Land. Land of your own. You’re independent, boy. You can say no to the world. That’s if you got your own little kingdom. I reckon it was what kept me alive, down there on the beach at Gallipoli, knowing I’d have some land I could call my own.’²⁶

The connection is made between New Zealand as sanctuary, but also between land and independence, or freedom. For the soldier who is essentially a slave to the military system, even more meaning can be derived from this pastoral recourse. If identity is built on personal experience and memory, then it makes sense that Mark, and the father in Shadbolt’s story, carry these places within them as a means of not losing themselves to the totality of the war. As with Connolly in *Once on Chunuk Bair*, nature serves as the ultimate referent for personal identity, because it is unchanging; it will be here, the same, when the war is over.

In *Mansfield*, the titular character goes to France to meet her French lover, a soldier serving in the war. In describing him, she connects him with the region in which she was born and raised:

Witty, amusing, knowing, clever, a writer like herself, and like herself from the South Pacific, so they had been able to reminisce [...] about warm beaches and wild coasts, she pretending that New Zealand was “one of those islands”, spoken of in the same breath as semi-tropical New Caledonia.²⁷

Stead’s version of *Mansfield* struggles to embrace her New Zealand identity in the novel, although her personal journey towards writing about her homeland is one of the novel’s principal themes. Thus, the passage above is perhaps the closest she comes to reminiscing fondly about the *landscape* in particular. Can it be construed as a mental retreat from the war, though? It seems likely. *Mansfield* is only a few miles from the front when she has these thoughts, when she herself is serving as a kind of retreat, or sanctuary, for her French lover. The war has not, at this stage, affected her deeply; but it is inching ever closer. And while not strictly pastoral,

²⁶ Maurice Shadbolt, ‘The People Before’, in *Where’s Waari?* ed. by Witi Ihimaera (Auckland: Reed, 2000), p. 145.

²⁷ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 14.

the image Mansfield conjures up is certainly unspoiled and pleasant – ‘warm beaches and wild coasts’ – which she pretends are akin to those in ‘semi-tropical New Caledonia’, a more obvious paradise. Although she seems to need to ‘legitimise’ New Zealand, in a way, by associating it with what she perceives as her lover’s more glamorous homeland, she has nonetheless taken the first steps towards creating New Zealand as a sanctuary in her mind – a process that will be accelerated after the wartime death of her brother, Leslie.

Not all imagery of the New Zealand landscape is idyllic, however. Often, it is the distance from home that inspires idealistic nostalgia in characters – a false vision which is rarely undermined before the narrative’s conclusion. In a text such as *Man Alone*, though, which is set in post-war New Zealand, the far-reaching impact of the Great War takes shape in the landscape. The main character, Johnson, observes certain parts of New Zealand with military comparisons in mind:

They were travelling along over desolate country where the great bush-fire of the early ‘twenties had been. Blackened trees still standing, blackened, unrotted logs on the ground gave the hills the derelict air of a battle-field.²⁸

The application of such wartime imagery to the New Zealand setting is a way of conveying the hardships of the period, particularly once the Depression takes hold. Later, the Rangipo Desert, which Johnson crosses, is described in bleak terms one might associate with No Man’s Land:

He came to a strange and desolate country. What he saw was a waste of scarred and pitted desert, bare of all growth for long stretches, loose scoria and pumice powdered to sand by years of weathering, and lifting now, as the gale came violently, so that it rose in swirling clouds that wrapped him round and blinded him.²⁹

Key adjectives – ‘desolate’, ‘scarred and pitted’ – conjure up imagery of ravaged France, if one reads with an understanding of Johnson’s wartime service, and its quiet impact. Perhaps the greatest intertextual significance of this passage lies in the fact that, when Peter Jackson made his films of *The Lord of the Rings*, he

²⁸ Mulgan, *Man Alone*, p. 74.

²⁹ Mulgan, *Man Alone*, p. 135.

chose the Rangipo Desert as the place to film scenes set in Mordor – which, of course, was Tolkien’s version of No Man’s Land.

Even Johnson’s odyssey across the desert and through the thick bush after killing Stenning can be construed as a metaphor for the struggle through the First World War. In particular, the difficulty in making progress is reminiscent of the slow crawl of trench warfare:

Following the creek bed was difficult and exhausting, but gave some hopes of progress with its occasional short stretches clear of over-growing trees. As he followed it in, going for five days laboriously forward, making at best not more than eight or ten miles each day, the hills seemed to close round and over him until he felt himself to be farther than anyone could ever follow him, surrounded and drowned in the hills and bush, safe and submerged.³⁰

Although it is hard going for Johnson, nature does admittedly provide some respite for him, leaving him feeling ‘safe and submerged’, rather than, say, claustrophobic. So, even in a novel which occasionally problematises the idyllic New Zealand landscape, a character can still find some peace in it.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Perhaps the Great War’s most enduring contribution to New Zealand culture is as a touchstone for national identity. Gallipoli has often been pinpointed as the moment New Zealanders ‘came of age’, and achieved their elusive identity, separate from Britain. However, this myth – prevalent as it is – has sometimes come under criticism, with some going so far as to dismiss the war’s impact on New Zealand identity entirely. But in our fiction of the First World War, the growth of national identity and its manifestation within characters remains a significant feature.

In *Civilian into Soldier*, Lee does not hesitate to emphasise the differences between New Zealand and elsewhere, particularly England. Rarely is the latter seen as better – rather, the New Zealand countryside and culture are held up as superior. Very early in the novel, he compares his penniless protagonist, John

³⁰ Mulgan, *Man Alone*, p. 139.

Guy, to Thomas Babington Macaulay's future tourist from New Zealand. 'Macaulay's New Zealander philosophically contemplated the ruin of London, but as a lesser New Zealander he would sneak under the bridge to sleep.'³¹ This reference, well known at the time, comes from a remark Macaulay made in an 1840 review of Leopold Von Ranke's *The Ecclesiastical and Political History of the Popes*, in which he posited that the Catholic Church 'may still exist in undiminished vigour when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's.'³² Macaulay envisages a future where the ruins of London are akin to those in Rome, and where the young nation of New Zealand assumes the mantle of tourist, archaeologist, and perhaps even imperialist. It is essential intertextuality on the part of Lee, because it establishes early the theme of New Zealand's nationalistic challenge to the mother country.

Describing London, Lee emphasises its inferior environment. 'Smoke rose from a chimney and lost itself in the haze,' he writes, 'where on a still New Zealand day it might ascend in a straight pillar to heaven.'³³ In this description, London is associated with vagueness – 'lost [...] in the haze' – while New Zealand is associated with clarity, 'a straight pillar.' The use of lofty 'heaven', rather than the simpler 'sky', indicates a desire on Lee's part to elevate the New Zealand setting into something nobler, more paradise-like, than its Old World counterpart. Later, in France, a kind of cultural colonisation takes place, in which the naming of front-line features by New Zealanders is partly an assertion of their own burgeoning identity:

In the rear Hyde Park Corner and Red Lodge told of earlier English occupation, and now New Zealanders had arrived to create Otago Trench and Wanganui Avenue, to scatter a wealth of Maori names trying to the tongue of Scot or Cockney.³⁴

As with Hyde, Lee employs aspects of Maori culture as a point of difference between New Zealand and the rest of the world, particularly Britain. Names like

³¹ Lee, p. 7.

³² 'New Zealander', *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* <http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/new_zealander> [accessed 28 October 2015].

³³ Lee, p. 11.

³⁴ Lee, p. 85.

‘Otago’ and ‘Wanganui’ are derived from the Maori language, which is of course indigenous and unique to New Zealand. Importantly, too, they are ‘trying to the tongue of Scot or Cockney’ – in other words, difficult for Brits to pronounce, but presumably effortless for New Zealanders to utter. It is a kind of verbal one-upmanship, in which language itself becomes a point of difference; another arena in which New Zealanders can best their British counterparts.

Perhaps the most overt example of Anglo-Kiwi tensions appears in the first part of the book, set in Sling Camp in England. Here, John Guy squares off against the sadistic regimental sergeant-major, Anglely, whose very name evokes *England* and *Anglo-Saxon*. In one scene, he threatens a disobedient New Zealander with gaol, confidently asserting that ‘they tame lions in those places.’ The New Zealander replies, ‘We eat ‘em in Wanganui.’³⁵ The particularly New Zealand flavour of the retort is a subtle reminder to the reader that the differences between the sergeant-major and the privates run deeper than his manner towards them. No comparable hostility is shown towards New Zealand NCOs, and there is much relief when the New Zealanders finally depart Sling Camp and leave Anglely – and his English domination – behind.

After Z-Hour touches a little on the same theme, this time with officers. A New Zealand soldier, Alan, speaking to some English relations, narrowly avoids causing offence:

‘Almost all our officers are New Zealanders –’ Alan refrained from adding ‘thank God’. ‘Lieutenant Given and our Captain are both Anzacs.’³⁶

It is a small detail, but a telling one. The implication of the unspoken ‘thank God’ is that New Zealand officers are somehow preferable to their British counterparts, and that this preference is influenced by superior execution of officer duties. Why else say ‘thank God’? We thank God for the way things are when the alternative would be dreadful; thus, the inference is that it would be dreadful to be led by officers who were *not* New Zealanders – in other words, British (the only real alternative for Imperial troops). Subtly, Knox is presenting her characters as subscribers of the myth of the superiority of the New Zealand soldier over their

³⁵ Lee, p. 28.

³⁶ Knox, p. 145.

British counterpart. In this instance, Alan displays a preference for the New Zealand way of doing things (i.e. soldiering), just as his comrade Mark expresses an attachment to the New Zealand landscape of his home district.

In *White Feathers*, New Zealand identity is present and remarked upon, but it is almost taken for granted, too. Early on, the character Joseph – incidentally a ‘half-caste’ Maori – returns from life overseas at the outbreak of the war, musing that ‘at heart he was a New Zealander, and by all accounts New Zealand would have her work cut out in the very near future.’³⁷ Joseph is perhaps unique, in the sense that his identity is already formed, even before entering the crucible of war (much like Shadbolt’s Connolly). He later explains to his parents, ‘I was thinking of enlisting in Australia but I’d rather go as a New Zealander.’³⁸ With Joseph, Challinor seems to be problematising the common myth that Gallipoli was the event from which New Zealanders’ self-identification grew. Joseph, with his Maori heritage, perhaps serves to remind readers that the indigenous population of New Zealand had felt a deep sense of belonging to the land for centuries. As a result, although Joseph is seriously injured at Gallipoli, and sent home afterwards, the campaign itself does not take on such nationalistic symbolism, for him (or indeed, any character in the novel). There is no sudden appreciation for home; it is present from the beginning.

Elsewhere, Joseph’s mother, Tamar, is portrayed as adopting a greater degree of New Zealand identity as the war progresses, which is curious considering her status as an immigrant, having been born in England. In a letter to her son, she writes that the handing out of white feathers on the home front had made her feel ‘ashamed to be a New Zealander.’³⁹ This elicits surprise from Joseph:

Joseph’s eyebrows went up: this was the first time he had ever heard Tamar refer to herself as a New Zealander. Usually she staunchly insisted on calling herself a Cornishwoman, despite the fact that she’d been settled in New Zealand for over thirty years. She must really be annoyed.⁴⁰

³⁷ Challinor, p. 12.

³⁸ Challinor, p. 17.

³⁹ Challinor, p. 121.

⁴⁰ Challinor, p. 121.

Joseph suggests ‘annoyance’ as a trigger for Tamar’s sudden transition from ‘Cornishwoman’ to ‘New Zealander’, but why would she adopt that identity when chastising members of her community? Surely, with New Zealanders handing out white feathers (which she finds abhorrent), wouldn’t she prefer to distance herself and remain a Cornishwoman (even if Cornishwomen themselves were handing out white feathers, half a world away)? Perhaps Challinor is suggesting that it takes dark cultural shifts to make us appreciate what we see as a communal, or national, identity. Tamar sees this behaviour as contrary to her own values, making her feel ‘ashamed’ to be a New Zealander. Implicitly, she was once ‘proud’ to be a New Zealander, or will be, once the war is over. Rather than a soldier pining for the comforts home, Tamar is pining for a *better* society, which she hopes (like so many others, for so many different reasons) will come at the war’s end. It is an example of identity forming more subtly on the home front, geographically distant from the war, while still being influenced by it.

In the first few pages of *Mansfield*, Stead reminds the reader, and the eponymous heroine, of her connection to New Zealand. T.S. Eliot raises the subject while in conversation with her:

“Speaking of homelands,” he said, “did you know that I sometimes use *Apteryx* as a pseudonym?”

“*Apteryx*?”

“You don’t know the word? It’s the Latin name for a New Zealand bird – the kiwi.”

It was meant to please her, and it did.⁴¹

Mansfield is ‘pleased’ by Eliot’s choice of pseudonym, perhaps suggesting a little patriotic thrill at an esteemed poet appropriating part of her culture. But she is also in two minds about her homeland. When Eliot asks her if she ever thinks of returning home, she replies, “To New Zealand? Oh, I think of it, not always with pleasure. But sometimes, yes.”⁴² As mentioned previously, Mansfield’s journey towards a greater identification with New Zealand is one of the novel’s thematic strains. Naturally, in the beginning, she is somewhat ambivalent. But as the novel

⁴¹ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 5.

⁴² Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 7.

progresses – and particularly after the loss of her brother – she begins to think of New Zealand more.

Leslie is almost a living symbol of his and his sister's homeland (and therefore, Mansfield's childhood, too). When he arrives in London for the war, he has a strange thought about English fruit: 'These were London pears – like London people (or some of them) – that didn't seem quite to reach their full potential.'⁴³ On the surface, it seems like a bizarre comment, for what would Leslie, visiting London for perhaps the first time in his adult life, know about the people? If it is read, however, as a comment about his *sister* (whose love of the city could render her a 'London person'), then his remark might be intended to mean that she has not yet reached her full potential, which will only come when she writes about their homeland.

In any case, Leslie's death becomes the impetus for Mansfield to return, at least in her writing, to New Zealand. 'Writing,' she thinks, 'has become the promise to her dead brother and there is now in her a confidence, very nearly a sense of certainty, that it will be kept.'⁴⁴ Her lifelong artistic passion has now become a way for her to commemorate her brother, which is most apparent in the following passage:

She looks up at the photograph of Leslie above her desk, stares into his eyes until it seems there is a momentary flicker, a living response. She knows what he wants of her – that she should write recollections of their own country. In the past she has avoided New Zealand; rejected it. Since Leslie's death the memories, the sense of places and people, have filled her consciousness. There is a "sacred debt" to be paid because of Leslie; and the idea of it no longer goes against the grain of her ambitions.⁴⁵

It is in this paragraph that Stead most clearly associates the impact of the war on Mansfield's burgeoning (or perhaps, resurgent) New Zealand identity. Mansfield looks at her brother's photograph and imagines that 'she knows what he wants of her'. The fact that this thought comes after she thinks she sees, in his eyes, 'a momentary flicker, a living response' suggests a connection, in her mind, between writing about New Zealand and bringing him back to life. She considers 'there is

⁴³ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 58.

⁴⁴ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 102.

⁴⁵ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 103.

a “sacred debt” to be paid because of Leslie’ – an acknowledgement of her need to atone for *surviving*; for the future he lost, in which he would have returned home. How true is all this, though, to the *real* Mansfield? This can be an inevitable question after reading biographical novels. Factual or not, however, the fact that Stead chooses to associate the war, and Mansfield’s personal connection to it, with the development of her deeper identification with New Zealand, seems to be an endorsement of the Great War’s far-reaching impact – no matter how obliquely – on national identity.

LICE AND LITERARY INFLUENCES

One ‘world’ of the Great War is that of the wider world of wars to which it belongs – the very history of human conflict. Naturally, New Zealand literature of that war also fits into the wider context of literary representations of war itself, often consciously. Like the pastoral world, the literary world can also serve as both a cultured, pleasant contrast to the unimaginative brutality of the war. The point is perhaps best made by Alexander Aitken in his memoir, *Gallipoli to the Somme*, which, while not fictional, nonetheless evokes the importance of art and literature:

Slight incidents engrave themselves on the mind when great events are forgotten, and impressions of this journey stand out for me with peculiar colour; chief of all a level crossing between St. Omer and Audruicq, where a dog-cart carrying two girls was waiting for the train to pass. They had distinction, and one was beautiful; and I had the sudden vision of a lost former world, containing poetry and the music of Chopin, to which mud and dust and khaki were strangers and unknown; the incident of a moment, a spark in the night at once extinguished but never to be forgotten.⁴⁶

This ‘lost former world’ is one of the casualties of the war, but it may be reclaimed. Indeed, the considerable amount of literary references found in our fiction of the war suggests that it has not only been reclaimed, but that the Great War itself has been ‘repackaged’ in literature, and is as much a mythical conflict of the past as the Trojan War.

⁴⁶ Alexander Aitken, *Gallipoli to the Somme* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 115.

In *Passport to Hell*, Hyde presents Egypt as an old place, whose history – particularly its martial history – is apparent to the visiting soldiers. Hyde writes that:

The lice were encountered as soon as the New Zealanders settled down in the tents. Lice are really Egypt's oldest soldiers, with more martial blood in them for their size than any Ajax that ever strutted. These had been reared on soldiers' blood for a hundred generations, and liked it; their descendants would be reared in the same tradition, and when one regiment moved on from their tents to the clutch of the larger leeches, the death-dealers waiting beyond the horizon, Egypt's lice would turn to and prepare a welcome for the next batch.⁴⁷

Hyde identifies lice as a commonality between all wars, past and future. It is one of the 'common elements' referred to by Kate McLoughlin in *Authoring War*, the conveyance of which 'comprises a shared set of challenges, the responses to which emerge as similarities in representations across periods and cultures.'⁴⁸ In fact, one of the literary examples McLoughlin draws upon is George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, in which Orwell supposes that 'the men who fought at Verdun, at Waterloo, at Flodden, at Senlac, at Thermopylae – every one of them had lice crawling over his testicles.'⁴⁹ McLoughlin also writes that 'perceptions (as well as representations) of warfare are shaped by previous representations'; the phenomenon Fussell refers to as 'literature [...] rushing in and [taking] over.'⁵⁰ Therefore, it is quite natural, and almost expected, for Hyde to reference Ajax. Later, she refers back to the Crusades when describing 'the great black flies – not hundreds but millions of them. Once, in Crusading days, there was a place of an evil name, the Tower of Flies. All ill was supposed to spread from there; and Satan, who was stoned, in the East is the Lord of the Flies.'⁵¹ The *Iliad*, the Crusades – these lofty references to myth and history, interspersed with Starkie's story, seem to elevate the latter to the esteemed ranks of the former.

It is not only Hyde who employs this technique. Lee, of course, has his Macaulay reference in *Civilian into Soldier*, but sometimes intertextuality

⁴⁷ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 69.

⁴⁸ McLoughlin, p. 12.

⁴⁹ McLoughlin, p. 12.

⁵⁰ McLoughlin, p. 13; Fussell, p. 173.

⁵¹ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 74.

manifests itself less obviously.⁵² In his novel, Lee refers to a sniper's bullet leaving 'a mark like a small blue dot.'⁵³ The description is very similar to how Hyde writes of a soldier's death at Gallipoli:

Somebody turned the man over on his back. Right between his eyes there was a little blue mark, like a dot made with a slate-pencil. Death had given him no time to change the expression on his face – a boy's look of interest and curiosity. He was left lying where he fell.⁵⁴

This is, of course, not an example of plagiarism, but rather, employing common details of war to create a feeling of verisimilitude. Like lice, the effects of a sniper's bullet are part of the common soldiering experience (although perhaps the bullet applies only to more recent wars). In these little details, authors give their stories and characters a greater impression of authenticity, allowing them to rub shoulders with other great literary interpretations of the war – *A Farewell to Arms*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* – who themselves are considered to be veritable, if fictional, accounts.

As we have seen, Shadbolt's *Once on Chunuk Bair* is replete with historical and literary references. In the Introduction, Michael Neill mentions how the battle has been 'promoted as New Zealand's Agincourt', an analogy Shadbolt hardly opposes.⁵⁵ His characters discuss 'Achilles and Hector' and Te Rauparaha, the 'cunning old devil.'⁵⁶ And of course, the real veterans who aided Shadbolt's research are compared favourably with soldiers described by Thucydides centuries before the birth of Christ: 'They dared beyond their strength, hazarded against their judgement, and in extremities were of an excellent hope.'⁵⁷ Part of the purpose of these references is to elevate Chunuk Bair into a work of art with the same gravitas and merit as, say, the *Iliad*, or something written by Thucydides. It represents a desire on Shadbolt's part to place our history, and his work, firmly within the historical and literary continuum of war, respectively.

⁵² Lee, p 7.

⁵³ Lee, p. 77.

⁵⁴ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 80.

⁵⁵ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 11.

⁵⁶ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 60.

⁵⁷ Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, p. 10.

Agincourt and *Henry V* crop again in Stead's *Mansfield*. Johnson, a friend of Fred Goodyear, quotes the play, when considering why men persist in risking their lives in the war:

“And gentlemen in England now abed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.”⁵⁸

There is a suggestion that Shakespeare is not employed here as a sincere literary influence (as one might say of Homer in *Once on Chunuk Bair*), as Johnson tries ‘to make it clear this wasn't offered as a solemn expression of feelings.’⁵⁹ ‘But,’ as Goodyear notes, ‘the lines caught at something.’⁶⁰ He is, of course, referring to the situation he and Johnson find themselves in. But that remark rather sums up the desire for intertextuality, particularly with older, more established (and respected) works.

Recourse to the pastoral ideal is itself a prominent feature of literary tradition, and so in some ways all of these texts are aligning themselves with older works in their commitment to nature as a symbol of peace. The intertextual references that can be found in much of the New Zealand fiction on the war, particularly to works by Shakespeare or the *Iliad*, are proof of a conscious desire, on the part of authors, to not only imaginatively enter the period of the First World War, but to understand in the wider context of literary representations of war. Like the act of fictionalisation itself, this recourse to the ‘literary’ world is part of the driving undercurrent of Great War writing, which is to give meaning to something that is popularly considered devoid of meaning.

⁵⁸ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 191.

⁵⁹ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 191.

⁶⁰ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 191.

Chapter IV: 'Men Without Women': The First World War and Heterosexual Love

For his second collection of short stories, the post-war writer Ernest Hemingway chose the title *Men Without Women*; a title which hints at the theme and tone of the work as a whole. It suggests stories in which men are sometimes physically without women, but more often, *emotionally* without women. Stories such as 'Hills Like White Elephants' and 'Ten Indians' feature women and heterosexual relationships at their heart – but there is always an emotional disconnection between the key male and female characters (as in the former text) or a disappointment of romantic love (as in the latter). These are classic Hemingway themes, but they are also themes of the post-war era as a whole; a notion reinforced by Hemingway's own war service. There can be no doubt that the First World War, which had such a profound effect on politics and society, also irrevocably altered the relationships between men and women.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

What motivates men to go to war? In Homer's *Iliad*, it is a woman. The Greeks lay siege to Troy ostensibly to reclaim Helen, the wife of the Spartan king Menelaus, and now the lover of the Trojan prince Paris. If the *Iliad* is not a historical account, it is at least symbolic of the causes of war, and the motivations of men who serve. Indeed, the origins of the Trojan War lay in Paris's judgement of three goddesses – Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite. He was tasked with determining which of them was most beautiful, and in order to win, each goddess offered Paris a bribe: Hera promised to make him ruler of Europe and Asia; Athena promised to give him wisdom in war; and Aphrodite offered him the most beautiful woman in the world. Of course, he chose the latter, igniting the legendary conflict. But his choice is even more symbolic than the war itself, for it demonstrates a commitment to love over power. And there is a suggestion that it is love – rather than lust – which Paris chooses; for as ruler of Europe and Asia, would he not have many women vying for his attentions, a great harem? He chooses the love of the individual Helen over the faceless multitudes, which

deepens the meaning of the Trojan War. More than just sex, war is tied to romantic love, too.

In another classical Greek text, Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*, the eponymous heroine rallies the women of Athens to withhold sex from their menfolk until they end the Peloponnesian War with Sparta. Comedy ensues as both sexes struggle with the reality of the protest, but in the end, peace is achieved. The simple message of the play is that human connection – emotional and sexual – trumps human conflict; that men will throw down their arms if they can pick up a woman. It is a notion some might consider too idealistic, or a misreading of the play's basic intention to amuse. But part of satire's potency is its ability to reveal the absurdity of 'normal' behaviour, by juxtaposing it alongside 'bizarre' or 'abnormal' behaviour. In the case of *Lysistrata*, the normal behaviour is war, and the absurd, abnormal behaviour is the sex strike. Yet, by the end of the play, it is apparent to all involved (characters and audience) that it would be absurd to continue the war in the face of forced abstinence. 'War' becomes absurd; heterosexual relations become normal.

Fussell acknowledges the age-old connection between love and war in a chapter titled 'Soldier Boys':

After considering the matter for centuries, the ancients concluded that one of the lovers of Venus is Mars. And Eros, some held, is their offspring. Since antiquity everyone who has experienced both war and love has known that there is a curious intercourse between them. The language of military attack – *assault, impact, thrust, penetration* – has always overlapped with that of sexual opportunity.¹

The subheading under which this paragraph appears is 'Mars and Eros' – not, crucially, 'Mars and Venus'. Fussell's focus is on homoeroticism and homosexuality in recollections of the Great War. And although there is plenty of evidence of such behaviour, surely the heterosexual interactions of soldiers – either in brothels or elsewhere – would warrant greater examination, simply by virtue of it being more commonplace? Fussell concentrates principally on figures of great literary standing, such as Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen, and naturally finds homoerotic subtexts in their work. But these poets of the Great War were

¹ Fussell, p. 270.

products of stifling Victorian sexual mores, which did their best to separate the sexes: first at school, and then (for some young men) in the military. Such rigorous policing of male-female interaction was bound to encourage intense homosocial relationships, for men and women. Indeed, Jock Phillips has observed that ‘Army mateship was generally one of circumstance, not choice’, suggesting that the war compelled associations between men that might normally not occur.² Art, too, has always attracted individuals of different preferences, principally due to its opportunity to *express*, to be oneself; thus, a disproportionate number of artists are often something other than rigidly heterosexual. The comparative lack of implicit or explicit homoeroticism in New Zealand fiction about the Great War means that this thesis will follow the ‘Mars and Venus’ route.

Perhaps the earliest cultural acknowledgement of the ‘Mars and Venus’ connection, in the New Zealand context, is a Maori proverb which reveals the motives behind war:

Ma te wahine, ma te whenua, ka ngaro te tangata.

By women and land do men perish.³

Once again, sex and war are intertwined, with the former presented as one of two reasons for waging war (and dying) for pre-contact Maori. In the nineteenth century, conflict between Pakeha and Maori was principally over land – the so-called ‘Land Wars’ of the 1860s, which now tend to fall under the umbrella term ‘New Zealand Wars’, a broader phrase which invites multiple theories on the motives of the combatants.⁴ Early literature, such as Joshua Kirby’s *Henry Ancrum: A Tale of the Last War in New Zealand* (1872), drew on the wars as a source of plot, but also felt the need to mix in some romance. Kirby’s novel has been described as ‘melodrama, with lashings of derring-do heavily laced with mawkish romance’ – a description that might sum up much of New Zealand’s

² Phillips, p. 180.

³ Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal, ‘Papatuanuku – the land - Women and land’, in *Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 22 September 2012 <<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/papatuanuku-the-land/page-3>> [accessed 31 August 2015].

⁴ The term, originally coined by early historian James Cowan, was popularised by James Belich in his seminal work on the subject. See James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victoria Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986).

literature of that period.⁵ Even in film, historical battles have been overlaid with romantic subplots. Rudall Hayward's famous film, *Rewi's Last Stand*, was a historical drama based on the Battle of Orakau, but also included an interracial romance, and a duel for her affections between the hero and a Maori warrior.⁶

The connection made by writers and artists between romance and war is so prevalent that it could be the subject of a thesis in itself. Naturally, New Zealand fiction concerned with the First World War is no different, and there is a strong undercurrent of heterosexual tension in many of the texts.

The Invisible Mile briefly explores the motives of going to war, particularly the First World War. The narrator recalls the beautiful young women he used to try to impress as he cycled around town, and wonders what caused him to lust after them:

What is it about the shapes bone and muscle make under skin? Why does it reduce me to the grand-king-waster-of-time? Hanker and want; for such things we could go to war, but we are always told it is something else. We were told it was another largely abstract kind of love: The King. The Country. Those marvellous ideas whose scope I have barely considered.⁷

In this passage, contemplation of the mysterious attraction of women leads to thoughts regarding the mysterious attraction of war, and the possible motives for going to war. The narrator does not go quite so far as to declare sexual desire as the sole motive – he says ‘could go’, rather than ‘do go’ – but it is nonetheless a significant conclusion to draw, particularly when coupled with his scepticism of the ostensive reasons ‘we are always told’ (King and Country). Indeed, he himself has ‘barely considered’ such notions, implying that, if *he* were to go to war, the reason might be a more tangible form of love, or sex, rather than the patriotism which is typically associated with soldier enlistment.

If, as Samuel Hynes has said, ‘art and history are not to be separated’, then it is perhaps useful to compare some historical accounts with the fictional, if only

⁵ Joshua Henry Kirby, ‘Henry Ancrum: A Tale of the Last War in New Zealand [Extract]’, in *The Penguin Book of New Zealand War Writing*, ed. by Harry Ricketts and Gavin McLean (Auckland: Penguin, 2015), p. 85.

⁶ Helen Martin, ‘Feature film - Pioneering days’, *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 2014, <<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/interactive/42468/rewis-last-stand-1940>> [accessed 21 January 2016].

⁷ Coventry, pp. 48-49.

to determine whether this sexual motive is grounded in history, or merely fiction.⁸ In William Malone's letters and diary entries, for example, one can find some of his reasons for going to war. On 26 August 1914 he wrote to 'Mrs Wickham':

I feel myself as if at last I could do something for my country. I used to have a feeling that I had done nothing. My dear wife is very brave. She in no way tried to prevent me doing my duty, and would not stop me if she could.⁹

Malone's reasons are ostensibly tied to patriotism, and a perceived need to serve and protect his country from foreign threats. But there is a suggestion of something deeper at work, specifically when he remarks, 'I used to have a feeling I had done nothing.' Does he mean nothing *for his country*, or is he referring to a broader feeling of having achieved little of apparent value in his life? In another letter from the same date he writes, 'I feel that I am just beginning to live. Stodging away money making, was no man's game.'¹⁰ Here, Malone describes his civilian life as 'no man's game', implying that it is a less worthy male pursuit than war. Indeed, later on he writes, 'I feel very well. This life suits me, mind and body. It is a man's life.'¹¹ Soldiering and masculinity are, for Malone, inextricably linked, and he would not have been alone in thinking so. As Phillips notes, 'By 1914, Pakeha men had been taught that war was the acid test of their masculinity.'¹² The consequence of this education was the enthusiastic enlistment of thousands of men at the outbreak of the Great War.

How does this relate to back to fighting 'for' women, though? Masculinity, such an important aspect of soldiering, is inextricably linked to femininity; they are defined, in part by their opposition to one another. But they are also assumed to be complementary – two halves of a whole. To embody a culture's definition of masculinity is an implicit appeal to the women of that culture; a desire to achieve union, whether physical or emotional. Why care about the colour black, if there is no white to contrast it with, to emphasise it? And vice-versa. Possibly, such a perspective on gender relations might be criticised as either

⁸ Hynes, p. xii.

⁹ Crawford, p. 45.

¹⁰ Crawford, p. 45.

¹¹ Crawford, p. 52.

¹² Phillips, p. 158.

simplistic, idealistic, or rigidly heteronormative. Evidence of something which is so unconscious can be scarce. But there can be found strong examples of it in the New Zealand literature pertaining to the war.

In *Mansfield*, Stead's portrayal of Katherine Mansfield's brother, Leslie, is an example of how some young men suffered the expectations of a fixed masculine identity:

Still, Leslie would have been glad of longer legs, a stronger body (like his father's), a firmer face. The new moustache was fine and pale. It didn't stand out, but he felt it was an improvement; gave him something more like a look of authority; took away some of the resemblance to Katherine which everyone remarked on. Katie was lovely, but Leslie didn't want to be lovely; he wanted to be strong, handsome, manly, commanding.¹³

Strong, handsome, manly, commanding... these are the adjectives Leslie longs to have ascribed to him by others. They are good soldierly adjectives; even *handsome* is necessary for one seeking to embody the romantic myth of the soldier. In fact, 'handsome' is of particular interest in the context of this chapter; for it implies a desire to be found physically attractive, almost certainly by women. Why else would a heterosexual man want to be handsome? Leslie lists sex appeal alongside other, more obvious soldierly attributes, demonstrating a self-awareness lacking in a more authentic text, like Malone's diaries. Leslie understands his motivations better because he is, at present, *without* a woman. He has no wife or lover to speak of, whereas Malone was happily married when he left for war. Pursuit of love is often more obvious than its preservation; just as the well-fed have different feelings towards food than those who are starving.

The argument that men go to war to 'prove' themselves to women can attract criticism, however. Terry Castle, in *Courage, Mon Amie*, relates this idea to 'evolutionary psychology and selfish genes.' Castle writes:

Given such an intellectual framework, the First World War, like all genocidal conflicts, poses certain conceptual difficulties. How could it have been possible for millions of men to squander their DNA in such a reckless fashion? It's a stumper, I agree.¹⁴

¹³ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 55.

¹⁴ Terry Castle, *Courage, Mon Ami* (London: London Review of Books, 2003), p. 77.

Although Castle is being ironic, she is nonetheless refuting the influence of evolutionary psychology on the motives of soldiers going off to war. What she is forgetting, though, is the phenomenon Leslie is so conscious of in Stead's *Mansfield*. 'He had read [...] that an army going into battle, even against impossible odds, holds together because each man believes he will survive. Leslie knew that feeling. He believed he would survive.'¹⁵ No man believes he will be counted among the dead at the war's end. It is the masculine, youthful delusion which women – Castle, by her own admission, among them – sometimes misconstrue as bravery. By going to war, men like Leslie were conforming to their culture's definition of masculinity, and therefore actually improving their standing as a potential mate for desirable women. Surviving the war would have been a badge of honour, separating these men from those too young or cowardly to serve. Indeed, this sentiment is subtly echoed in Barbara Anderson's short story, 'Real Beach Weather', in which the female narrator, living in post-war New Zealand, possesses a preference for veterans over men like her husband, who 'had been too young for the War, a dubious privilege in the twenties.'¹⁶ It is a 'privilege' because he is alive; 'dubious', because what sort of life is that, in which one must compete with men who have proven their mettle (i.e. sexual worth) in the crucible of war?

Perhaps the most overt example of women's influence over male enlistment was the Order of the White Feather, a predominantly female movement in which women (often young) pressured young men into enlisting by presenting them with white feathers, a symbol of cowardice. Jane Tolerton collected a variety of veteran accounts of the war for her book, *An Awfully Big Adventure*. Among these is Bert Hughes's testimony, in which he recounts receiving white feathers:

I received one or two white feathers from different people. They'd send it by post in an envelope and you didn't know where they were from. Quite a few girls got on to me: why didn't I enlist? I enlisted when I was 19, but they wouldn't take me until I was 20. Women

¹⁵ Stead, *Mansfield*, p. 60.

¹⁶ Barbara Anderson, 'Real Beach Weather', in *The Penguin Book of Contemporary New Zealand Short Stories*, ed. by Paula Morris (Auckland: Penguin, 2009), p. 23.

thought I was trying to get out of the army – but I was trying to get in!¹⁷

This was no isolated incident. Clifford Hingston was initially turned down for service, and was accosted with a white feather while in civilian clothes:

I was going across the street at Karori to visit some friends. I was in ordinary clothes and an elderly person came across the road with a white feather in her hand. ‘Here, young fellow,’ she said, ‘you take this.’

I had the khaki band with crown on it in my pocket. I didn’t wear it on my arm. If you enlist and you’re turned down you had a khaki armband.¹⁸

Even the fear of receiving a white feather was enough to motivate some young men. ‘Girls in those days used to send out white feathers, and I thought I might get one,’ said Frederick Avery. ‘So I went and volunteered. I was only 18 at the time.’¹⁹

Castle refers to the Order of the White Feather as an example of women’s participation in the war, but suggests that it was an unwelcome contribution, disdained by men because of women’s perceived *avoidance* of real war duty. Castle writes that ‘women got to hand out white feathers – notoriously – but the gesture took on its odium precisely because women themselves epitomised ‘cowardly shirking’ so perfectly.’²⁰ Although the handing out of white feathers was occasionally problematic during the war (civilian men engaged in crucial war work were given special badges to wear in lieu of uniforms, the absence of which was always a sure attractor of white feathers), it was not ‘odious’ until later, when the war itself became odious. In fact, at the time it would have been encouraged, ironically, as a way for young women to do their bit, by coercing a man to enlist.

White Feathers is the title of Deborah Challinor’s novel set during the war period, and so naturally the issue affects one of her characters, the peace-loving

¹⁷ Jane Tolerton, *An Awfully Big Adventure: New Zealand World War One veterans tell their stories* (Auckland: Penguin, 2013), p. 158.

¹⁸ Tolerton, p. 108.

¹⁹ Tolerton, p. 108.

²⁰ Castle, p. 49.

Thomas. His mother, Tamar, relates the problem in a letter to another of her sons, Joseph, who is already at the front. She writes:

*What's been worrying us is the fact that he's apparently received several white feathers in the mail. He rang the other night and told us, rather casually in passing, I might add, as if he wasn't too bothered by it. Well, he might not be, but I am! This whole white feather business nauseates me, it really does. It makes me feel ashamed to be a New Zealander.*²¹

Tamar notes that Thomas only mentioned the white feather 'rather casually in passing [...] as if he wasn't too bothered by it.' Why does Challinor characterise him this way? Possibly, such casual dismissal of the white feather – although uncharacteristic in the recollections of real veterans – was historically prevalent. Certainly, conscientious objectors and others opposed to the war would not have been too perturbed (although they would have been in the minority). More likely, Thomas's indifference to the white feather is designed to appeal to the modern reader, for whom such social conventions seem bizarre and trivial. In the end, though, he enlists as a stretcher bearer, which his father laments as being caused by the white feathers, and Thomas being unable 'to set foot outside his front door without someone accusing him of cowardice! And finally, *finally*, it's driven even him away!'²² The use of 'even him' emphasises the far-reaching pull of the war, which, in this case, is aided by the white feathers and the culture of 'shirker-shaming' that emerged during the war. And it seems that women are to blame, at least from Tamar's perspective. Continuing in her letter to Joseph, she writes:

*The feathers, as far as I can gather, come from the women whose menfolk have already gone away. I can understand that they might be upset about being left without husbands, sons and brothers, but the death and maiming of even more men surely won't remedy that!*²³

Tamar recognises that, far from being a misandrist crusade, the handing out of white feathers is more a symptom of loss and loneliness; evidence, on the home front, of the disconnection between men and women. There is the physical

²¹ Challinor, p. 121.

²² Challinor, p. 145.

²³ Challinor, p. 122.

disconnection – ‘being left without husbands, sons and brothers’ – which leads to an emotional or mental disconnection from the non-familial men who remain behind. These men, in the eyes of the women, come to fill the despised roles of shirker and coward, even though, as we see in the examples of real veterans, there were often compelling reasons why these men could not serve. But the war, in its totality, compels all to conform to some role, no matter how insane; the temporary madness of the war.

Robin Hyde is perhaps the New Zealand author who most fully explores these issues, first in *Passport to Hell*, and then in its sequel, *Nor The Years Condemn*. In the former novel, she describes a typical soldier send-off at the train station. Women bid their men farewell, and Starkie has his own brief encounter with a stranger:

Then a young woman in grey tweeds, healthy as a sheep-dog, dashed up to Starkie, flung her arms around his neck and crushed her fresh lips against his mouth. He was taken by surprise, but the whole impulse of his being suddenly and fiercely wanted her. Before he could speak or touch her, she thrust into his hand a little hold-all with cards or darning wool, black and white thread, pins and needles, ran to the next window and repeated the performance. Craning as far from the carriage window as he dared, Starkie saw her breasts taut and her apple-red cheeks streaming with tears as she lifted herself to embrace another man. He felt furiously jealous and contemptuous. It takes a war to get some of them that way about the whole world of men....²⁴

The brief elation Starkie feels at receiving this woman’s attention quickly turns to deflation when he realises he is simply one of many to her. He is another faceless soldier in the crowd, to be kissed not out of love, or even affection, but out of a sense of duty. The young woman in grey is ‘doing her bit’, in a way, to support the war effort; boost morale. Starkie’s feelings, too, seem to suggest the effect the war is already having on relationships between men and women. He feels jealous, but also – crucially – *contemptuous*, a notion which is echoed in *Civilian into Soldier*. As an amateur prostitute says to the protagonist, John Guy, ‘The trouble is you men hate us afterward.’²⁵

²⁴ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 55.

²⁵ Lee, p. 276.

The perceived expectations placed on men by women at home are the initial tremors in their relationships. The fractures they cause, however, are compounded by their war experience, not only by the horrors of the battlefield, but by that other, unspoken aspect of soldiering: prostitution.

THE CHALLENGE TO LOVE

Soldier engagement with prostitutes is perhaps one of the least known aspects of the war, despite its staggering prevalence. James Belich, in *Paradise Reforged*, estimates 75 per cent of enlisted men may have used prostitutes.²⁶ Yet, when one recalls on Anzac Day the sacrifice made by their forefathers, the image is almost entirely of the trenches ('going-over-the-top', No Man's Land, etc.). In between the fighting, they are imagined, and often depicted, grinning with their arms around each other's shoulders. The 'happy' moments away from the front are ones of homosocial mateship. Prostitution is ignored, perhaps out of distaste; dismissed as the collateral damage of war, like the deaths of civilians. But veterans could be surprisingly candid about their thoughts and experiences regarding the matter. When Frederick Avery enlisted, he came home to tell his father, who imparted some advice:

I went home and told Dad what I'd done. He was sitting on a plough. He said, 'That's something I didn't want you to do. It's too late now, so go and God bless you.' He said, 'The Germans won't be your enemy, it'll be women – so be careful.'²⁷

Did Frederick Avery's father really say this to him? It seems rather prescient and worldly. In any case, what matters is that Frederick Avery *remembers* the conversation this way. In his personal narrative, the threat of prostitution is emphasised early on, perhaps as a kind of foreshadowing. Other soldiers received similar advice. One from Tolerton's book – whose name was withheld – recalled the advice his mother gave him before his departure. 'She told me to keep away from women because she said there were quite a few with disease and they would

²⁶ James Belich, *Paradise Reforged* (Auckland: Penguin, 2001), p. 104.

²⁷ Tolerton, p. 108.

give it to us.’²⁸ Despite this warning, and several lectures from medical officers, this same soldier still confessed to having sex during the war, while in England:

It was near a camp and it was late of a night time. She must have had sex before, and I thought to myself, Is she a prostitute – or what was she doing?

That’s what made up my mind to go straight to a blue light – where the medical people would give you a syringe and they’d see you didn’t catch the disease.

I thought to myself, You made a mistake. But you know what it is when you’ve been a long time without it.²⁹

Of significance here is our unnamed soldier’s interpretation of the woman he had sex with. Evidently, she does not behave as a timid virgin, hence his assumption that ‘she must have had sex before.’ But this leads him to assume she is a prostitute, as he cannot conceive of any other reason why a woman might want to have sex with him. Is this evidence of a low opinion of himself, or of London’s women? It is likely the latter. His views, though, are shaped by the culture of the time, and by the war, which essentially presented women as either saintly nurses, or devilish prostitutes – an almost literal application of Freud’s ‘Madonna-whore complex’.

However, not every soldier frequented prostitutes. Beet Algar found the Egyptian whores unappealing:

Men did talk about going to the brothels – but I thought too much of my body to have ever gone there, because imagine the thousands of troops. These prostitutes used to be sitting out at the door, and soldiers would just walk over and pick up one and go away with her. I could never see myself doing anything like that.³⁰

London, too, had its fair share of sex workers. Bill Elder was another soldier who had no time for them. ‘Women would sling off at me because I wouldn’t even

²⁸ Tolerton, p. 130.

²⁹ Tolerton, p. 131.

³⁰ Tolerton, p. 124.

look at them. I'd left a good woman behind. I wasn't going to spoil anything like that.'³¹

Leslie Sargent also resisted London's temptations:

There were times when I was dangerously tempted, but I thought, If I go wrong now, how am I going to face all those people who gave me that lovely send-off when I went away? And I came back home with a clean slate after all the temptations I went through. Which I was very thankful for when I came back and Elizabeth was still here. There were so many fellows got into trouble with those women and some of them never came back to New Zealand.³²

Elder and Sargent are examples of soldiers who had women waiting for them back home; an impetus, perhaps, to abstain during their war experience. In any case, from the examples above, prostitution was an aspect of the war that was difficult to avoid, and which tempted even those who did not indulge. But what of its *literary* significance? Are the struggles that these veterans faced addressed, or glossed over by authors?

Cairo, where many young soldiers would have had their first encounters with sex and prostitutes, does not feature prominently in the New Zealand literature of the Great War. Sometimes – as in the case of Lee's *Civilian into Soldier* – it is not an aversion to the subject matter, but rather, narrative continuity that requires such an omission (Lee's protagonist was not part of that early contingent that visited Cairo). When it is referred to, it is only briefly, and in some cases, matter-of-factly. Consider the following passage from *White Feathers*:

Prostitution thrived in Cairo, and although whores were usually easy to spot, many of the men still apparently had trouble distinguishing between the females who were for sale and those who were not, resulting in many outraged complaints to the authorities about respectable Egyptian women being, at best, insulted, and at worst assaulted. On the other side of the coin, many of the prostitutes were riddled with venereal disease, and had very little compunction about passing it on to their customers. The afflicted troops then blamed the women for their painful predicament and subsequent spells in hospital.³³

³¹ Tolerton, p. 162.

³² Tolerton, p. 199.

³³ Challinor, p. 55.

The influence of Challinor's background as an academic and historian is evident here, in the factual, but lifeless, description of soldier-prostitute interactions. Rather than explore this aspect of the war through the perspective of a character, Challinor instead adopts an omniscient narrative mode, more akin to academic writing.

In contrast, Hyde in *Passport to Hell* conveys Cairo's prostitution through Starkie's encounter (or lack thereof) with it. 'When they struck Cairo,' Hyde writes, 'most of the men from Zitoun Camp headed straight for the Wazza.'³⁴ This was the infamous red-light district of Cairo, where, among other things, the girls 'danced the *can-can* naked'; a performance described as being 'as close an interpretation as possible of the Gippo idea of the sexual act, which is vigorous.'³⁵ The popularity of these prostitutes is evidenced by their innumerability, for 'there were, during the War years, thirty-four thousand licensed women in Cairo, from little girls twelve years old, to women of twenty-five, their cheeks raddled, their youth used up and done.'³⁶ Starkie, characteristically, does not seem to seek out these nameless, faceless women, whose 'animalism [...] is Lilith's challenge to love.'³⁷ Rather, he finds Rada, a Spanish girl in 'a bare little place with cushions silk, flaring orange like the chemise she wore.'³⁸ Although his relationship with her is not explicitly described, Hyde compares it to something called 'the reign of the conjurer and pigeon', and seems to imbue his encounter with her with some sort of exoticness, which is found throughout Cairo and Egypt.³⁹ But it has a happier ending than most, for 'Rada pretty near loved him' – a feeling few other soldiers would have found with their women.⁴⁰ Although Starkie leaves her – as he does with all of the women in his story – it seems important for his own myth that he is loved by them, even if he does not love them as enduringly in return. This is part of the classic romanticism of the soldier, which Hyde evidently cannot resist slipping into the story (or retaining, if was told to her by Starkie himself).

The strongest contrast between Challinor and Hyde, however, is their respective thoughts on the motivations behind the 'Battle of the Wazza' – a riot

³⁴ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 70.

³⁵ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 71.

³⁶ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 71.

³⁷ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 72.

³⁸ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 72.

³⁹ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, pp. 72-73.

⁴⁰ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 73.

which took place on Good Friday, in which incensed soldiers damaged Cairo brothels and caused general disorder in the red-light district, just prior to the Gallipoli landings. In *White Feathers*, Challinor writes:

It all started when his company was on leave in Cairo with others of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and a large party of Australian troops. Like many other soldiers caught up in the event, Joseph was unaware at the time of what had initially sparked the riot. Some reckoned that the debacle had in no way come as a shock, others were surprised that it hadn't happened earlier. After all, relations between the Allied forces and their Egyptian hosts had been strained for some time, both at Zeitoun Camp and in Cairo itself.⁴¹

Challinor goes on to describe the various tensions between the soldiers and the Egyptians, including prostitution, before finally declaring, 'All these pressures, together with the pent-up frustration of waiting to go into battle, fuelled the events of the 2nd of April.'⁴²

Hyde's own explanation is far more emotional, and seems inspired by a deeper appreciation of the complexity of sex. The riot itself is described vividly by Hyde.⁴³ Starkie does not participate; he makes his way to Rada's house and spends the night with her, in an intriguing rejection of chaos and conflict for affection and peace (the former being Starkie's usual mode).⁴⁴ Hyde, in her explanation of the events, suggests that 'in white society, to lose identity is a personal disgrace. One of the penal code's forms of punishment – admitted a barbarous one by most criminals – is to deprive a man of his name and indicate him by a number.'⁴⁵ Ironically, *soldiers* are also given numbers for easy arranging and reference. Inmates of death camps have them tattooed on their forearms. Hyde explains that:

In the Wazza the men who went to appease curiosity or appetite found themselves confronted with the same loss of identity. Women with whom they could exchange no common word of language received them behind doors where, in many cases, they waited in

⁴¹ Challinor, p. 54.

⁴² Challinor, p. 55.

⁴³ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, pp. 75-76.

⁴⁴ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 76.

⁴⁵ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 77.

processions for that curious relief. There was no pretence that one soldier's face differed from the rest. The men were used, especially the colonial soldiers whose countries supported no licensed houses, to more regard for their vanity. Even those women who had played the prostitute's part for them in their own lands had, for the most part, woven the little fables of individual romance and liking. In the Wazza, [soldiers] were nobody; male embracing heterogeneous female. The first shock of this faded from their consciousness, but it waited in hiding – a resentment that they hardly realised, but that could not be placated except by vengeance. The convict becomes accustomed to the loss of his name and citizenship, but the surface resentment wears down into his deeper hatred of Society. So it was with the soldiers in the Wazza. The place stole their sexual identity from them. They had to revenge themselves. The women who had deprived them, the *souteneurs* who shared the spoils, the houses where they had waited, were – in the phrase of that inspired and hysterical soldier – better off dead.⁴⁶

Again, the war comes between men and women, at least in Hyde's interpretation of events. Here, the blame seems to be more on the women, who 'use' the men; whereas earlier, it was men leaving their women for war which 'destroyed' them. In reality, the soldiers consented to their interactions with these women, and so have no one to blame for any subsequent loss of identity, or growing resentment. Whatever the motivations behind the riot, it serves to widen the gulf between men and women as a result of the war. The animalism of Lilith seems to be triumphing over love, even if this does not extend to Starkie's own experience. If it did, would readers still see him as a hero? It is unlikely. Heroes do not often visit prostitutes. They certainly do not riot in brothels and throw belongings out of windows. There is a reason the 'Battle of the Wazza' is not recorded on our war memorials.

Even after the soldiers depart Cairo – and for those who were never there – prostitutes are still encountered, both in France and in England. In *White Feathers*, Ian – another of Tamar's sons – contemplates indulging the services of a French prostitute:

'You game?' Ian said to Owen.

'No, I value my health. I'm particular where I stick certain parts of my anatomy. What about you?'

⁴⁶ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, pp. 77-78.

Ian gazed wistfully over at the women, then sighed. ‘Not sure I’m up to it. Had a bit much plonk, I think.’⁴⁷

None of Challinor’s characters ever actually pay a woman for sex in the course of the novel. But in this instance, Ian’s reluctance is not the result of his commitment to another woman, or even to the notion of romantic love in abstract. Indeed, his desire is evident – he is the one who suggests the idea to Owen (‘You game?’), and he gazes ‘wistfully’ at the women, a key adverb which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as being ‘with expectant or yearning eagerness; with mournful expectancy or longing.’⁴⁸ Of course, the ‘mournful’ aspect of the word perhaps indicates a conflicting desire on Ian’s part, and suggests he knows that coupling with a prostitute would be both satisfying and unsatisfying. Ian gives the excuse of inebriation as why he is not ‘up to it.’ Is it evidence of a reluctance to sever the relationship between sex and love, in his mind? Perhaps more logically, Owen has reminded him of the dangers of where one sticks ‘certain parts of [one’s] anatomy.’ He is afraid of sexually transmitted diseases, not the damage he might do to his unblemished soul – what Leslie Sargent would call his ‘clean slate’.

One of the strengths of *Civilian into Soldier* is its considerable frankness towards the sexual activity of soldiers in wartime. Lee does not shy from depicting soldiers as being fixated by the subject of the sex, discussing it more often than politics, or the very war in which they are involved. John Guy, only a little less obsessed than his comrades, sees women as a natural respite from the horrors of war; and thus, when in France, there is little wonder ‘he heard the talk swing back again and yet *again* to sex.’⁴⁹ Prostitution is the chief source of sexual contact for soldiers, and the army’s stratified approach to dealing with such behaviour is mocked by Guy:

Officers and gentlemen and privileged sergeants got leave passes for Paris Plage, a few miles away, where there were flaring brothels. The private was kept from Paris Plage on disciplinary and

⁴⁷ Challinor, p. 177.

⁴⁸ OED, ‘Wistfully’

<<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/view/Entry/229563?redirectedFrom=wistfully#eid>> [accessed 6 January 2016].

⁴⁹ Lee, p. 66.

not on moral grounds. It was “prejudicial to good order and military discipline” for officer and private to stand in the same queues.⁵⁰

Sex is a constant thread running through the narrative, and there is essentially a subplot wherein Guy struggles to either resist prostitutes, or afford them. In fact, the last few chapters of the book are devoted Guy’s time in London, and the few days he spends with Ann; a woman with whom he supposedly spends only ‘a night of sleep rather than of passion.’⁵¹ Like Hyde’s Stark, or Challinor’s Ian, Lee’s protagonist apparently resists the sordidness of prostitution. His associations with women are more meaningful, and involve conversation, and even affection. He is the novel’s hero, and thus cannot be debased. But Lee is not one to condemn those soldiers who did succumb to temptation, particularly those who contracted venereal diseases. When John Guy encounters men quarantined and punished because of their afflictions, he reasons that:

A jury of the honourably dead would have acquitted their barbed-wire comrades, for they would have made allowances for human frailty. Nevertheless the authority that provided prophylactics provided no pension for casualties broken in breaking the wrong commandment. Lust to know women was more reprehensible than lust to kill.⁵²

Guy’s observations are no doubt close to how many real soldiers would have thought. Phillips, discussing the indifference of ‘good’ soldiers towards their comrades’ associations with prostitutes, argues that these soldiers ‘simply conceded that for men expecting to die, sexual gratification had a ready appeal.’⁵³ In this passage, Lee also makes a fine point about the hypocrisy of the army which encourages killing over sexual relations. For him, it is the military machine that is at fault, particularly as it tacitly condones prostitution through segregated brothels (one for officers, one for the other ranks). Indeed, his use of the term ‘the honourably dead’ resonates today: it is those men who are imagined as the typical soldier, rather than their ‘barbed-wire comrades’.

⁵⁰ Lee, p. 39.

⁵¹ Lee, p. 276.

⁵² Lee, p. 45.

⁵³ Phillips, p. 189.

It seems appropriate to conclude this section by returning to the ‘Battle of the Wazza’, which is such an excellent symbol of the destruction – literal and metaphoric – wrought by prostitution. William White recalled the ‘battle’, and its causes:

I think it was to do with some of the men who got this disease and they went and kicked up a row. [...] The Wazza was vile. There was women there, just naked and really vile, and the men spent their money on them. They had nothing to do with their money and that’s what they did with it.

I saw young men ruined through that sort of thing. Some of them were Christian men and gone to pieces. That’s what war does. War’s a vile thing.⁵⁴

Here, White picks out prostitution and its ills as a key contributor to war’s vileness. It is a notion echoed by Hyde, whose assessment of the subject is perhaps the most closely-observed and considered New Zealand example, fiction or non-fiction. But Lee also addresses the matter with some sympathy, calling it ‘human frailty’. It is interesting that two authors, writing in 1930s (supposedly a time of stricter morality) should address the matter of wartime prostitution in the greatest detail, and with the greatest thought. Perhaps the matter, with its post-war consequences, was a much more pressing issue in their time, when veterans were still alive and struggling through life, and not yet interred in the gilded memory of Anzac Day.

WOMEN WITHOUT MEN

It would of course be remiss not to mention the ways women were left ‘without’ men during and after the war, first physically, then emotionally. Hyde remains the most convincing author of the effect of the First World War on women, which she touches upon in *Passport to Hell*, and goes on to explore more deeply in *Nor The Years Condemn* – so much so that one could almost pick that as the novel’s principal concern.

⁵⁴ Tolerton, p. 58.

In *Passport to Hell*, Hyde offers up the female perspective, when the women wave goodbye to their men, as they set sail for Europe:

Time presaged a disaster for them. They had barely known that they were one flesh, but they knew it now. Torn apart, they would never be joined together again, and consequently they were destroyed. The individuality of the women had become fused with that of the men; it wasn't only their partners who were taken from them, it was themselves: their flesh and spirit and their secret, buried thoughts – the thoughts you do bury in a man when you wake in the morning and find him at your side, his sleeping face a profile upturned in the pale light from between drawn window-curtains, one hand helplessly uncurled on the white counterpane. Father, lover, son, all drawn together in the one person, and the receptacle of your secret thoughts – in God's name, how can you lose that and remain the same? How could the men on the ship expect to come back to the same women when, departing, they had destroyed them?⁵⁵

In this forthright, sensuous section, Hyde invites the reader, through the use of the intimate 'you', to embody a woman of 1914 for a moment. And from *this* perspective, the war is devastating precisely because it sunders the closeness between men and women. In fact, the men, in this instance, are blamed, for it is in *their* departure that they destroy their women. Even more significant is that this passage appears only a few pages after Stark's perspective, in which he expresses resentment towards the woman saying goodbye to men at the train. Thus, Hyde presents two competing perspectives, male and female, in which the blame is almost placed by one on the other. Her point, however, seems to be that the blame of the war cannot be levelled solely against either men or women. It cannot be demarcated neatly along gender lines.

Perhaps the fullest treatment of the female perspective on the war, and its lasting effects, appears in *Nor The Years Condemn*. The novel presents the dilemma of the returning soldier as follows:

Millions of men, after a four years' break which they would never be able to explain, were returned to houses with brush-and-comb bags on the walls, coal fires in leaded grates, and an engraving of a pink emasculate Cupid with bow and arrows: to the immense, uncalculating jealousy of the world, largely a woman's world,

⁵⁵ Hyde, *Passport to Hell*, p. 65.

which had not been able to take part in their four years, and which had learned at last to drag along without them.⁵⁶

Hyde's choice of imagery – 'an engraving of a pink emasculate Cupid' – to conjure a feeling of domesticity is almost unsubtle; particularly as 'emasculate' is included as an adjective. The world these soldier's return to is an emasculating one, mostly because it has 'learned at last to drag along without them.' The usefulness of the men has waned in what Hyde describes as now being 'largely a woman's world.' Hyde also recognises the inevitable disconnection between men and women, and the lack of awareness as to the cause. 'Of course, they themselves, the men and women derailed, wouldn't know what the trouble was; they would shuffle about, ill at ease and slightly ashamed, but they wouldn't know.'⁵⁷ Hyde places some of the blame on the militarisation of the men themselves. 'The most disintegrating thing you can do to any human being,' she writes, 'is to give him a formula to live by: to enforce respect of that formula: and then to take it away.'⁵⁸ The men have adhered to a formula for four years, in which their engagement with women has been limited to either benevolent nurses or lustful prostitutes. Wives, girlfriends, mothers, and daughters would have been on their minds, but crucially, *only* in their minds. Women outside the nurse-prostitute dichotomy would have existed only in the abstract, perhaps as domestic fantasies to return home to, or to fight for. This is precisely what Phillips emphasises when he turns his attention to male perceptions of women during the war:

For those in the Army women became distant figures, almost strangers. [...] As strangers, women became highly stereotyped to the soldier. On the one hand, women were sensual temptresses, alluring, possibly dangerous, ever ready to trap the unwary soldier. On the other hand, they were the pure angelic mothers and sweethearts in that heavenly home across the other side of the globe.⁵⁹

The formula by which these men lived would have had little tolerance for such women shifting from the *abstract* to the *tangible*, however. Such a shift would

⁵⁶ Hyde, *Nor The Years Condemn*, p. 33.

⁵⁷ Hyde, *Nor The Years Condemn*, p. 33.

⁵⁸ Hyde, *Nor The Years Condemn*, p. 33.

⁵⁹ Phillips, p. 189.

have been less conducive to waging war, just as if Helen's peaceful return would not have been conducive to Greeks seeking to conquer Troy outright. Inevitably, this shift does occur, but at the war's end (when it is more tolerable to the military hierarchy). But after four years of idealising the women waiting at home, it is understandable the men might find themselves disappointed. The long immersion in an overwhelmingly homosocial environment would have been devastating, too, for heterosocial interactions. For young men especially, they might have had to 'relearn' how to be around women who were neither prostitutes nor nurses.

But this is true of the women waiting also. The formula by which they have been encouraged to live holds up the fighting man as the ultimate man. Therefore, it is only natural that they encourage their menfolk to serve, hoping he returns a fit, admired member of society: an embodiment of masculinity, well-suited to marriage and his woman's own satisfaction. Inevitably, their men become abstract, too; overly-romanticised, or idealised in the absence of real day-to-day contact. It is made more difficult, too, by the absence of men of quality at home (by which is meant men who can be married). The men who do not serve can be classified as too old, too young, too feeble, too many children, or too cowardly. All of these attributes are unappealing to the single woman seeking a partner. As for those women already married, with husbands serving overseas, or sons – well, there is no substitute. So the thinking about and idealising of these soldiers continues for four years, until they return, shell-shocked or mutilated, or merely different to how they were before. And the disappointment sets in, on both sides, along with the awkwardness of heterosocial interactions.

These ideas, and the female perspective, are perhaps best conveyed in this significant passage from *Nor The Years Condemn*, in which Hyde presents a hypothetical that would have been all too common for the times:

You could get engaged, triumphantly, to a good-looking, fine-faced returned man, give trousseau parties and indulge in the pride of showing your silk and semi-silk things to your girl friends. Then, perhaps on the eve of the wedding, there would be an incoherent note, a policeman around in the morning, and an inquest on a man who had put a bullet through his head. Somebody would explain that he had been badly shell-shocked at Ypres, badly gassed. Poor old Jack, everybody said. Yes, but nobody thought, in the same degree, poor young Laura or Mavis, wrenching on a new hat over her bedragglement, piecing together the bits of her suburban pride

and of her genuine, uncomprehending sympathy, which could only say, in darkness and in light: ‘Oh, however could you do a thing like that? How could you? Why didn’t you come to me and explain? As if I wouldn’t have tried to help. As if I wouldn’t have done *anything*... don’t you see?’ It was no good: bright light, thick dark, the gulf between men and women existed and widened, and after their first shiverings they got used to it, and decided they hated one another.⁶⁰

Hyde uses certain language to great effect when describing the engagement of a woman to a ‘returned man’. ‘Triumphantly’, for example, suggests victory and success, especially after a struggle. And it would have been a struggle for women to find a husband in post-war New Zealand; as one character, thinking of her sister, muses, ‘Vida mightn’t get married for years, boys were scarce...’ Engagement itself was a triumph, made more so by their fiancé being ‘good-looking’ and ‘fine-faced’ – adjectives that imply this woman secured for herself a rare unmarried veteran. She is able to ‘give trousseau parties and indulge in the pride of showing [her] silk and semi-silk things to [her] girl friends.’ Curiously, love is never mentioned as something good to come of the engagement; the focus is on the woman showing off to other women that she is going to be married, and therefore become elevated in social status. It is her ‘suburban pride’ which is damaged by her fiancé’s suicide, although admittedly there is also ‘genuine, uncomprehending sympathy’. It is the lack of comprehension that underpins the widening gulf between the sexes, who, ‘after their first shiverings [...] got used to it, and decided they hated one another’. Hyde presents New Zealand society, at this time, as being unhappy with the disconnection between men and women, but silently enduring it in the absence of any real solution.

There are other, smaller moments in the novel which highlight this divide. When a woman enters a bar to find Starkie, Hyde writes that ‘the men looked funny, their mouths open, their eyes fishy with the changeless disapproval of the New Zealand male who sees a girl in a bar. Pubs are sanctuary...’⁶¹ The use of ‘sanctuary’ is key, transforming the pub into a place men can seek refuge or asylum from women. Hyde’s intention here is likely ironic, but even so, the strong delineation of male and female spaces – in the minds of the men – only furthers

⁶⁰ Hyde, *Nor The Years Condemn*, pp. 118-19.

⁶¹ Hyde, *Nor The Years Condemn*, p. 50.

the divide. It appears again later, at one of the work camps where Starkie finds employment. At the entrance, ‘an official notice was posted: ‘No Women Allowed in Camp.’’⁶² The reasons for this restriction are likely related to order and productivity, rather than signifying a general distaste of women by the male population. But why does Hyde mention it? Why does she choose this detail, as opposed to others, to convey camp life? The answer is that it emphasises the feeling of sexual division. For Hyde, the simplicity of the sign is symbolic of what she feels is wrong with New Zealand society at the time.

Although Hyde is prolific where this theme is concerned, other women writers have explored it. Barbara Anderson, a more contemporary author, chooses the post-war era as the backdrop for her short story, ‘Real Beach Weather’. Like Hyde, she is concerned with the perspective of women, and the effect of the war on relationships. The main character, Lorna, narrates her own story, which is one principally of sexual frustration. She is preoccupied by thoughts of men in the present who either excite or disappoint her, and her reminiscing extends mainly to her previous relationships.

Lorna opens her own story by declaring that she ‘used to be a nice woman, kind and pleasant, a dear girl once’ – the implication being she is no longer.⁶³ The cause of this change is never overtly stated – indeed, Lorna is at odds to explain it herself – but there are clues that it is because of the war. During hostilities, she had a fiancé – Corporal Alan Webster – to whom she became engaged before the conflict, and to whom she wrote every week. But she ‘jilts’ him ‘at the moment of his triumphant return to his homeland’, and becomes ‘flighty, if not wild.’⁶⁴ Webster writes to her soon after, breaking off the engagement:

*Lorna,
I cannot call you dear because you are no longer. Little did I think
as I gazed at the snap I wore next to my heart all those years that
you were bad medicine. I used to think that you had kept me safe.
Safe for what? You are heartless and fickle. You can keep the ring.
I could not take it back if you paid me.
Alan.*⁶⁵

⁶² Hyde, *Nor The Years Condemn*, p. 167.

⁶³ Anderson, p. 17.

⁶⁴ Anderson, p. 22.

⁶⁵ Anderson, p. 22.

Lorna's sudden abandonment of her fiancé goes essentially unexplained, but there is a hint that it is something to do with relief. Lorna mentions something her friend told her:

My friend Nan said when she took off her corsets at the beach and flopped about, the sheer, physical joy of relief, the release from tension, reminded her of the first time she saw William again, alive and in one piece after the War.⁶⁶

'Not so for me' admits Lorna.⁶⁷ Nan's 'relief' is associated with the return of her man, William, 'alive and in one piece', and no doubt ready to marry. In contrast, Lorna's relief is that the war is over, and so, paradoxically, she does not have to marry Alan Webster after all, as she would have had to do if it continued. It is one thing to intend to do something; it is another thing altogether to do it. Perhaps she married him before the war because that was what was expected of her. Now, she is free to make other plans, as women began to do in the post-war era.

These other plans extend principally to social engagements. 'I was a flapper by instinct and conviction, one of the first in the Bay to bob my hair,' Lorna says. 'Straight shifts, shingled hair and high heels suited me. I was a success.'⁶⁸ She goes to dances with many young men, but is unimpressed by them:

I did not go to bed with these young men. They were too young, too gauche. Their hair was plastered with Brylcreem and their hot dancing hands were encased in white cottons gloves to save us from sweat marks on our dresses. Their programmes, their wee gold pencils and their groping, now gloveless hands, bored me beyond words.⁶⁹

But not all men bore her. She recalls: 'The man I did love was married,' but that, 'He is dead now. His shell-shocked mind caught up with him and he blew his brains out in the station woolshed not long afterwards.'⁷⁰ Evidently, this man was

⁶⁶ Anderson, p. 22.

⁶⁷ Anderson, p. 22.

⁶⁸ Anderson, p. 21.

⁶⁹ Anderson, p. 23.

⁷⁰ Anderson, p. 23.

a veteran, and is the first indication of Lorna's preference for men who had fought in the war – her jilted fiancé being the exception.

This preference is most clear in Lorna's descriptions of two men currently in her life: her husband Derek and a man named James Clements. Lorna describes Derek as having 'been too young for the War, a dubious privilege in the twenties. He worked in Dalgety's Stock and Station Agents and studied for his accountancy examinations at night, and had admired me from afar for years, he told me.'⁷¹ Already, Derek is at a disadvantage, having been too young to serve, a 'dubious privilege'. But he has also admitted to admiring Lorna from afar, suggesting a stronger desire on his part, which leaves her with the power in the relationship. She has little complimentary to say about his appearance too. 'He was not a bad-looking man. He had a moustache but he did not, as it were, use it much. It was just there.'⁷² How a man might 'use' a moustache is unclear, but what Lorna might mean is that he did not take full advantage of his masculine traits. In any case, she makes it clear that he does not inspire much feeling in her. 'I did not love Derek Dobson but I was grateful to him.'⁷³ The gratitude comes from the fact she is pregnant (carrying her dead lover's child), and her marriage to Derek saves her from ruin.

In stark contrast is Lorna's description of James Clements, a neighbour, of whom she has much to say. Like her dead lover, he is also a veteran:

James leans against the verandah post and rubs his back against it like some large and beautiful animal. He is incapable of making an ungraceful movement which is unusual in so tall a man. Even the way his heavy cotton shirt hangs from his shoulders moves me. It is James I come to watch. He is the author of the heaviness in my chest, the tightening in the groin. Even, perhaps, the clenched fist.⁷⁴

Implicitly, James Clements 'moves' Lorna sexually: it is his physical movements and appearance that cause 'the heaviness in [her] chest, the tightening in the groin'. So intense are her feelings towards him that she even feels a little anger, frustration – 'the clenched fist'. This not a fleeting desire, either, for Lorna returns to it later in the story:

⁷¹ Anderson, p. 23.

⁷² Anderson, p. 23.

⁷³ Anderson, p. 23.

⁷⁴ Anderson, p. 20.

The smoke rises around James's shadowed head, the light is fading. His face is all angles, hollows, manly beauty at dusk. [...] I wish Mrs Clements and Isobel would go away and I could make things clear, or perhaps clearer, to James. I am not a good woman, though presumably even a good woman may feel this clench, this awareness that her heart has been beating and has been for some time. For her husband.⁷⁵

The addition of the final sentence fragment is almost an afterthought; an acknowledgement that 'good' women in Lorna's time might well feel strong sexual desire, but only for their husbands. Certainly, they would only act on such desire with their husbands. But when she does have sex with Derek, it is described as often unsatisfactory:

Derek is a meticulous lover. Normally he rubs and twiddles and asks me whether I like it and I say yes and I fear he does not believe me, and nor do I. But he tries. And so do I. Sometimes he asks me if I would like to try another way and I say how and he says backwards and I say no thank you as I have said many times before, so he pumps away and I help. 'Help me,' he says and I do.⁷⁶

Lorna does not describe Derek as a good lover, or a passionate one, as she might James Clements. He is 'meticulous', a somewhat cerebral and unsexy word that suggests a gulf of distance between husband and wife, even in this most intimate of acts. He speaks to her during sex, asking questions and expressing uncertainty in a way that the more laconic James Clements might not. Even though he tries to make things interesting by trying it 'another way', Lorna refuses, as she has done so before, suggesting the problem is more with the man than his method. Most telling, though, is when he asks her to help him. It is hard not to read this as a pathetic moment for Derek, who might be expected to take command during the sexual act, to know what he is doing and to do it without asking if his wife likes it. Although Lorna never describes her other sexual encounters in detail, they are probably satisfactory, and thus probably quite different to Derek, as she goes on to say:

⁷⁵ Anderson, p. 27.

⁷⁶ Anderson, p. 31.

But tonight is different. He is excited, perhaps, by the heat, the blackness, the slick of sweat. Union is achieved, fulfilment is given, need assuaged. I have no longing afterwards, as I sometimes do, to leap from the sagging bed and the dead mattress and rush into the still night and scream for a man, any man, to finish me off.

At home it is the milkman. At the beach it is James Clements or occasionally Chris Appleton who is a strong swimmer but leaves the water when people start fooling about beyond the breakers because why should he risk his life.⁷⁷

Lorna describes an occasional need to find ‘a man, any man’ to satisfy her sexually. But this is likely hyperbole, borne of intense arousal. Once such ardour passes, she demonstrates her choosiness: there is James Clements and her unnamed veteran, as we have already seen; but there is also Chris Appleton, whose war record is not mentioned, but is ‘a strong swimmer’, so his manliness is confirmed in other ways. Lorna also mentions the milkman, which is hard not to read as some sort of joke or cliché, considering the many jokes told of adultery between milkmen and housewives. But such stories must have their origins, and in fact, it only emphasises Derek’s failings as a man – he is a joke himself, cuckolded by his wife at every opportunity.

The First World War is by no means the focus of Anderson’s short story, but its impact resonates in Lorna’s relationships and desires. She never outright declares a preference for veterans, and there is at least one veteran she does not want (Alan Webster). But the only man she claims to have ‘loved’, and the man who elicits her strongest sexual response in the story, *are* both veterans. Furthermore, the male character about whom she is most dismissive in regards to his sexual appeal is her husband Derek, who avoided the war. It is difficult not to draw a connection, therefore, between service in the Great War and sexual triumph; one of the central conjectures of this chapter. What is apparent from the New Zealand fiction on the matter is that sex and war are intertwined. This, of course, has always been true, as indicated at the beginning of this chapter. But what makes the First World War such a potent source of sexual tension and conflict is that, historically, it was the first time civilian men and women were sundered on such a large scale. It was the first time men, en masse, left their wives and girlfriends and discovered that little-acknowledged vice of war, prostitution. It

⁷⁷ Anderson, p. 31.

was also the first time women were left, en masse, to their own devices, separate from men. The reunion of these two groups four years later – the former being much depleted, and both carrying their own hidden scars – and the difficulties between them is as much a source of storytelling as the battles and campaigns themselves.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored representations of the First World War in New Zealand Fiction, and highlighted some of the key thematic strains consistent through many of the texts. Established ‘canonical’ texts, such as *Passport to Hell*, *Civilian into Soldier*, *Man Alone*, and *Once on Chunuk Bair*, have been examined alongside more contemporary works, such as *White Feathers*, *Mansfield*, and *The Invisible Mile*. Texts in which the residues of the First World War are felt, such as *Nor The Years Condemn*, *After Z-Hour*, and ‘Real Beach Weather’, have also been highlighted, emphasising the far-reaching quality of this historical event in our literature.

In the first chapter, atonement was suggested as one of the motives for writers turning their attention to the Great War. The need to fill imaginatively the gaps which silence has created, as part of a general – even national – absolution of guilt was one of the driving forces behind our fiction, particularly when we consider the stark difference between how we remember the First and Second World Wars. The concept of hauntology was also posited as an influencing factor, with the First World War fitting the hauntological framework perfectly. Several texts, such as *After Z-Hour*, *Mansfield*, ‘The Fly’, *The Invisible Mile*, *Nor The Years Condemn*, and even M.K. Joseph’s *A Soldier’s Tale*, presented passages intensely imbued with the principal traits of hauntology, suggesting that part of the war’s enduring literary appeal is its perpetually unresolved nature.

In the second chapter, the long-established Anzac myth of Gallipoli was examined in regards to New Zealand literature. It was found that, while Gallipoli features prominently in factual accounts such as Alexander Aitken’s memoir, *Gallipoli to the Somme*, in fictional accounts it is surprisingly absent. When it does appear, it is often problematised, in the sense that it does not conform to typical Pakeha expectations of the Gallipoli campaign. Both Robin Hyde and Deborah Challinor emphasise the Maori presence at Gallipoli, while eschewing any notion of Pakeha nation-birth. In other texts, such as *Man Alone*, Gallipoli is rarely mentioned, and when it is, very little is said about it. From these texts, the suggestion arises that many authors seek a radically different interpretation of Gallipoli to that which is ingrained in popular imagination, and brought to the fore every Anzac Day. However, that being said, Maurice Shadbolt’s *Once on Chunuk*

Bair can be read as a text which serves as a fictional anomaly to this trend. Shadbolt's work focuses heavily on Gallipoli, particularly the Battle of Chunuk Bair, and reinterprets the military defeat as a moral and spiritual victory for the soldiers, who began to identify themselves distinctly as New Zealanders. Although it sets out to present war as superficially unglamorous and rough, the play actually develops into a kind of Kiwi romanticism, in which stereotypes and clichés pertaining to New Zealand identity are brought to the fore. *Once on Chunuk Bair* is condemnatory of the British high command, but not of the campaign itself, which it deems as necessary for the forging of a national identity. In contrast to this is Dean Parker's counterfactual, 'What if a poet had taken us out of the Great War?', in which the Gallipoli myth is cleverly inverted. Parker's hero, in contrast to Shadbolt's militaristic Connolly, is the pacifistic poet Rufus Dewar, who returns to New Zealand to preach the anti-war message; a message that eventually succeeds in ending New Zealand's participation in the war. April 25th becomes the day the war ended, and is commemorated as such. Parker problematises many of the myths which persist in *Once on Chunuk Bair*, but ultimately, like Shadbolt, he merely replaces it with a different kind of myth: a socially-liberal, pacifist vision of what might have been, as appealing to a New Zealand audience today as *Once on Chunuk Bair* was in the 1980s.

In the third chapter, the different 'worlds' of the war were explored. The pastoral purity of the New Zealand landscape was shown to be a common trope in much of the New Zealand fiction about the war, with characters often finding temporary peace by reminiscing of home. The contrast between New Zealand and elsewhere – particularly England – also demonstrated the preference New Zealand characters had for their own culture and values, which were often held up as superior to those of the mother country. The wider 'literary' world into which our fiction fits was also explored, with several authors demonstrating the influence of previous works, and the tendency to make comparisons to history for grand effect.

In the final chapter, heterosexual relationships between men and women in New Zealand fiction of the war were examined. The long tradition of associating sex with war was touched upon, before moving into a discussion on the expectations placed on men by this association. It was posited that the principle motivation of men for going to war was to retain their sexual capital, and to not lose out in the competition for female affection. Texts such as *The Invisible Mile*,

Mansfield, White Feathers, and Passport to Hell demonstrated the influence female expectations had on soldiers, or would-be soldiers, and highlighted willingness on the part of author's to explore this nuanced and controversial motivation. The subsequent section focused on soldier engagement with prostitutes, which factual sources suggest was prevalent. The fiction, however, was shown to mention it very little; and when it did appear in the story, protagonists (with perhaps the exception of John Guy) were never depicted engaging with these services. It would seem that this shadowy, unspoken aspect of the war remains a literary taboo, even today, and that when author's do address it, it is never directly through a novel's 'hero', for fear of debasing the character and rendering him unsympathetic. Finally, in the last section, the female perspective was explored, with texts by Robin Hyde and Barbara Anderson presenting, in detail, the subtle effect of the First World War on women and their relationships with men, particularly after its conclusion. They show a substantial emotional disconnection between men and women, as well as the sexual frustrations and attitudes that remained as residues of the Great War.

This thesis is not the most authoritative examination of these texts, but it has striven to be innovative in its comparisons and questioning. If an overall conclusion can be reached, it is that New Zealand fiction featuring the First World War defies expectations. It generally avoids the Gallipoli myth in favour of new interpretations; it emphasises the pastoral purity of New Zealand, and the superiority of our culture, as a basis for national identity; it is unafraid of addressing the disconnection between men and women as a result of the war, even if the texts do avoid some of the more unsavoury aspects, such as prostitution. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our fiction is finely attuned to the hauntological traits of the Great War, with its *what-ifs*, *if-onlys*, and lost futures. New Zealand writers understand the unique literary position of the First World War as the tragedy, or failure, which preceded the much more definitive and successful Second World War. Through the lens of literature, they both ascribe and derive meaning from the former conflict, highlighting, if nothing else, the burning desire both readers and writers have to find that meaning in history. The writers of these works manage to capture that national feeling and apply it to the personal circumstances of a character, so that we see and feel the war's lasting impact – an admirable quality found in the finest literature.

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