Not to Exact a Full Look at the Worst: (Mis)representations of State-Sanctioned Violence in New Zealand Poetry

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Abstract

This thesis examines how local poetry written between the First World War and the early twenty-first century has represented state-sanctioned violence done in Aotearoa New Zealand and on the state's behalf overseas. Although this period is marked by the emergence and consolidation of a distinct New Zealand literature and the New Zealand state's deliberate involvement in major overseas conflicts, surprisingly few poems directly represent such violence. This thesis identifies and analyses poems written in English by Māori, Pacific, and Pākehā poets that do represent state-sanctioned violence: Donald H. Lea's "Gold Stripe" from *Stand Down!* (1917); Allen Curnow's *Island and Time* (1941); Kendrick Smithyman's "Vignettes of the Māori Wars" from *Flying to Palmerston* (1968); *Māori Battalion: A Poetic Sequence* (2001) by Alistair Te Ariki Campbell; and *Captain Cook in the Underworld* (2002) by Robert Sullivan. I use a form of mimetic close reading to examine their sources, spatial and temporal renderings, attribution of agency, prosody and modes of representation, construal of legitimacy, and violence's uses and effects. I determine how poetry's conventions, licenses, limitations, and omissions have helped or hindered naming, understanding, and owning Aotearoa New Zealand's state-sanctioned violence in these five poetic works. The evidence from this poetic archive testifies to a radical disjunction between state-sanctioned violence's historical realities and how these examples of New Zealand poetry have represented of it. They have largely failed to give voice to what poet Geoffrey Hill called "the world's real cries" by refusing to address directly the social, political, and legal sources of state-sanctioned violence's meaningfulness and legitimisation.

Preface

I am the child of a refugee who was born in a German displaced persons' camp in 1946 after her parents had walked from their home in Lithuania across what have been called Europe's "Bloodlands": the area encompassing the Baltic states, Poland, Ukraine, and Belarus, where millions have violently died for policy's sake and borders have been redrawn with callous frequency. Her family were part of the post-war influx of the "Beautiful Balts" into Australia as the Chifley Labour government continued the longstanding "White Australia" policy. Like the world's polities, I am violence's child.

Parallel life paths have led me to the disquieting point where art, violence, law, and politics meet: an education in art theory and political philosophy, a profession writing military doctrine and studying military history, and a vocation in poetry culminating when my collected poems were published in 2020. I have arrived at Lionel Trilling's "bloody crossroads", where politics, violence, and art meet and where there are always more questions than answers. New Zealand has its own such junction, but too few travellers are prepared to go there. At these crossroads, law looms large, as does the state: each eclipses poetry. Lonely, we struggle to see how words can speak for wounds. But we are not alone: Ghosts loiter there; amongst them are a handful of poets. I am standing alongside these New Zealanders listening to their stories about how and why those ghosts got there and wondering where we choose to go from here.

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Introduction: Dried Blood Under the Nails

Lord of our world, take off your velvet

mask. Remove your gentle glove, disclose

the claw-like hand, the dried blood under the nails,

the murder print that never shows.

—A.R.D. Fairburn, "To a Millionaire"

* * *

Violence has been habitual in New Zealand statecraft. Governments have used it for establishing and maintaining today's nation, whether through warfare—including against its own citizenry—, policing, or punishment. But such state-sanctioned violence has been almost invisible in local poetry; the few poems that do represent it avoid its reality, including its physical and psychological effects and its legal and political licencing and justifications. This has created a cultural void, a silence tacitly promulgating the state's muteness about functional and structural violence's reality. Scrutinising poems that do turn towards state-sanctioned violence reopens them to the world and makes them mutually accountable to us and each other. And by attentively reading them and discovering what they have in common despite their apparent differences, I can contribute to understanding why such an important part of public life has so little intruded on our literature.

This thesis explores how conventions, licenses, limitations, and omissions as well as poetics and prosody make politicised extreme human experience meaningful in five examples of New Zealand poetry. Exploring disjunctions between state-sanctioned New Zealand violence's historical realties and how this sample of New Zealand poetry represents it, I consider if it gives voice to what Geoffrey Hill's poem "Funeral Music" calls "the world's real

cries" along with how much meaningful authority it accedes to what Allen Curnow characterised as "the reality prior to the poem" ("Introduction" 62) and how much it withholds. It illuminates language's uses and misuses when expressing belonging and exclusion, construing identity, demarcating victim from perpetrator, and understanding legitimacy. Using modernist close reading and exemplars, I provide a fresh and apposite perspective on these New Zealand poems.

I am focussing exclusively on violence politically sanctioned when and where it was done: violence done by perpetrators acting for the authority to which they are obliged and from which they derive their rights. This only includes violence done by agents enforcing the state's or an Indigenous authority's monopoly of force (such as to exercise mana whenua) as well as violence used for establishing and maintaining it. I am not considering assault, rape, and murder as well as suicide, all of which are perennial topics for poetry. I turn instead to warfare, policing, and punishment. Focussing on violence that is authorised and communal rather than illegal and interpersonal means deprioritising psychological explanations for violence. I foreground culture, collective practice, formal expressiveness, and wider discourses while maintaining the poems' primacy, which studies of New Zealand poetry have neglected to do. Literary scholars have largely seen literary nationalism as determining New Zealand's modernist poetry, especially that of the so-called Caxton poets of the 1930s-60s; for example, Stuart Murray's *Never a Soul at Home* (1998), Lawrence Jones' *Picking Up the Traces* (2003), and John Newton's *Hard Frost: Structures of Feeling in New Zealand Literature, 1908–1945* (2017). Limiting discussions about poems' violence to poets' personalities avoids wider discourse about historical violence and the local poetry community's legitimising prerogatives. This thesis presents an alternative way to read these poems. Rather than

understanding poetry's political aspects through authorial identity, I reconnect poems with broader communal questions of political legitimacy and formal poetic practice.

This thesis is exclusively about New Zealand poetry *qua* poetry. It considers how uniquely poetic devices, licenses, and generic conventions represent intimate inflictions and articulate their authorities, justifications, and historical and social complexities. This means looking hard at how physical rupture brings meaningfulness into poems and how poems make wounding meaningful. Significance exchanged between violator and victim is crucial: What transformation or metamorphosis comes from the transaction? What happens to subject and object? Are act and effect independent from the agents involved? How does when an injury happens relate to before and after it? Is the focus microscopic, telescopic, or kaleidoscopic? How does the poem configure these dimensions? My answers depend on identifying who is doing what to whom and why, how, when, and where they do it, none of which are self-evident. The poems often construe them markedly differently from historical record. Confronted by a partial and contested but generative and constitutive violent past, these New Zealand poems often take creative license to re-substantiate it—fill in the gaps—or reorientate it for artistic or political ends, which I identify and assess.

Beyond Aotearoa New Zealand, this thesis contributes to literary studies more broadly, including twentieth century poetics, by exploring conjunctions between the aesthetic and political in close reading and textual criticism, modernist mimetics, witness and imagination, and pain and trauma's literary representation. The most sustained war poetry studies emphasise work written by participants, especially poems written during the conflicts in which they fought, such as Jon Silkin's *Out of Battle* (1972) and Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975). This experiential privilege means scholars have seldom discussed

work attempting to re-imagine such violence by writers who did not directly experience it in the same terms used for combatants' work, for example. Consequently, memory's and imagination's relative strengths for articulating violence's reality have been given little attention.

Violence in New Zealand poetry matters because violence made New Zealand. My hope is that this work will contribute to a "new kind of criticism, its horizon the precarious life" (Duffy 63), in which critical readers balance life and death as well as aesthetics by paying equally close attention to text and world. I do not believe violence is the key to all mythologies, including New Zealand's. But given how this country and its literature were established and the crucial role state-sanctioned violence has played in forming collective selfhood, it demands greater scrutiny than readers have given it until now. I am addressing these questions with the conviction that "Language, and especially poetry, opens the common world, a clearing in which we can meet in mutual understanding and concord" (Dowden 5): if the "clearing" that a poem opens is the site of trauma, it may, too, be a place where restitutive and healing work can begin. I believe that honestly answering these questions, even when limiting my answers to poetry, can contribute to New Zealanders' self-understanding and historical awareness.

Given how populism, nationalism, and opportunism debase political, historical, and poetic speech, holding New Zealand's poetic language to account can meaningfully contribute to revealing and rebuilding on stronger foundations the nation's cultural architecture. Bringing to light language that poems have used for acknowledging or denying responsibility for violence committed in the state's name, this thesis contributes to finding better and more truthful ways to understand the past, negotiate the present, and build the

future in partnership. Using an interdisciplinary approach combining close reading, including scrutinising the peculiarly poetic procedures and historical usages of poems, with methodologies derived from literary criticism, political science, and history, I propose a modernist framework for more richly describing and meaningfully evaluating aspects of violence and power that have effectively been hiding in plain sight. My study directly bears upon the contradictions and dividedness within the broad New Zealand Left-liberal tradition vis-à-vis New Zealand's foundational violence: notably, how such violence is only partially acknowledged or is qualified thereby contributing to its hiddenness. The divinely violent Dante, having toured Hell, ascended to Purgatory, a mountain in the Southern Hemisphere. I will do likewise, look down, and describe what I can see. If Curnow's resonant phrase is true, that it is a "stain of blood that writes an island story" ("Landfall" 139), this thesis explains why it he and other very different poets have not been more specific.

* * *

Violence is a brute fact of the Animal Kingdom and so it persistently determines the human condition. It is one of art's immemorable preoccupations from Lascaux's cave paintings to the John Wick film franchise. Kai Evers has noted that "detailed descriptions of war, murder, and punishment are at the centre of the most revered works of Western literature. Few topics could claim a literary tradition as long and continuous as the representation of physical violence" (xi). This is especially true of poetry, including such germinal poems as the Homeric epics, *Beowulf*, *The Song of Roland*, the *Mahabharata*, and Dante's *Inferno*, all of which confront readers with explicit representations of physical violence. Homeric violence, however, is paradigmatic. A notorious passage in Book 22 of the *Odyssey* relates how Telemachus, after

his father's long delayed homecoming, slaughters the housemaids who had consorted with Penelope's suitors as if he were trussing up birds:

> ….taking a cable used on a dark-prowed ship
> he coiled it over the roundhouse, lashed it fast to a tall column,
> hoisting it up so high no toes could touch the ground.
> Then, as doves or thrushes beating their spread wings
> against some snare rigged up in thickets—flying in
> for a cozy nest but a grisly bed receives them—
> so the women's heads were trapped in a line,
> nooses yanking their necks up, one by one
> so all might die a pitiful, ghastly death….
> they kicked up heels for a little—not for long. (491-99)

Homeric representations of violence are startlingly immediate and intimate: they are filmic close-ups' poetic equivalents. Lingering in slow motion, we witness the women's twitching and the poem tells us how long it lasted. It makes us present but mute, implicating us as bystanders to horror. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1941) called this quality *impassibilité*: unflinching impassivity in evocating sickening reality (61). They are also moments when layers of signification—the victim's past; his extra-martial loves and loyalties; the future where he has no place; determining political, theological, and heroic positionings—irrupt into the poem's present. Evers argues this polyvalent contextualisation and disinterested viscerality is a literary perennial, noting the "strong continuities in the literary representation of violence" (5). Homeric violence is an inglorious but telling Western literary lodestar.

All the same, violent literature has only intermittently used the Homeric mode. Horkheimer and Adorno contended it reemerged in the late nineteenth century and became an essential element of modernity as the state used violence to justify its ostensibly rational and therefore objective—that is to say, technocratic—'solutions' to subjective problems. Evers stresses its importance for understanding how modernist texts figure violence, many of which were directly concerned with modernity's violence, including in industrialised warfare and state building. These modernist and post-modernist representations typically involve deepened interiority and subjectivity such as stream-of-consciousness and unreliable narratology married to increased environmental specificity. They are exacting about time, place, mise-en-scène, and phenomenal objectification: description becomes an end rather than merely setting scenes for character development or story-telling. One finds all such characteristics in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1920) and many in novels such as Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930) as well as poems such as T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" (1922). When such texts involve bodily violence—and sex to a lesser degree, although it is often violent—it is a forced injunction where modernist interiority and exteriority collapse into nullity or incoherence as happens to Christopher Tietjens in Ford Madox Ford's *Parade's End* (1924-1928).

Although poetic violence's frequency and immediacy lessened during the Renaissance until the end of the nineteenth century, it unsurprisingly reemerged between the start of the First World War and the end of the genocidal conflicts in the former Yugoslavia—a period characterised by Eric Hobsbawm as "without doubt the most murderous century of which we have record, both by the scale, frequency and length of the warfare which filled it" (13). Applying technocratic solutions such as mass conscription and industrialised weaponry to

perennial and often emotive internecine political rivalries had startlingly sanguinary results. They have been represented in works by Wilfred Owen, Issac Rosenberg, Robert Graves, and Sigfried Sassoon during the First World War and Keith Douglas, Sydney Keyes, and Alun Lewis during the Second World War. Amongst other Anglophone poets, directly depicting contemporary and historical state violence is common in W.B Yeats, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Ted Hughes, Christopher Logue, and Geoffrey Hill, amongst others. Violence conspicuously marks some national poetries: twentieth century Irish poetry, for example, is notable for how much it articulates everyday life's violence as well as that used for establishing, maintaining, and destroying social and political order (Hufstader). Overall, canonical Anglophone poetry written during the "murderous" twentieth century includes many poems directly responding to its large-scale state-sanctioned violence.

Although New Zealand's modern experience of violence is different from Ireland's, it has not proven itself to be an exemplarily peaceable place. New Zealand life, its collective sense of self, and how it has made its way in the world from its beginnings have all involved violence. James Belich's *Making Peoples* (1996) climaxes in a desideratum of revisionist historiography and myriad gerunds—"slaving, fighting, fornicating, lying, striving, changing, transforming, converting"—that characterise New Zealand at the close of the nineteenth century (*Making Peoples* 450). It was marked by "Violence in bulk, from the casual fist, husband to wife, mate to mate, stranger to stranger; through to the horrors of the Musket Wars to the most modern conflict people had yet died in" (*Making Peoples* 450). For example, the nineteenth century's New Zealand Wars involved Crown forces with peak strength of some 18,000 against no more than 4,000 Māori,[1] who according to James Cowan suffered 2154

[1] I have modernised Māori spellings, including book titles, to include macrons throughout.

killed compared to 745 British ("End of the New Zealand Wars"). New Zealand has an inarguably violent history.

New Zealanders do not restrict their violence to battlefields, even if they are renowned for what they do on them. New Zealand James and Jane Ritchie note that "Statistically, New Zealanders display very much the same range of violent activities as any other Western industrial society"; namely, homicide, assault, rape, and other prohibited activities (48). New Zealanders' experiences during expeditionary wars contributed to "simplified but powerful myths" that have become essential to our "national identity" (89) even though—according to them—"when it comes to warfare we are not actually very good" (109). But as discomfiting an authority as the German General Erwin Rommel famously thought otherwise. During the Second World War's North African campaigns, he found the New Zealanders exceptionally ferocious, pitiless, and efficient killers; so much so that Rommel felt they often skirted illegality (240, 81). Unsurprisingly, his unpitying perspective has not shaken the truism that New Zealanders—at least Pākehā New Zealanders—are always measuredly violent during wartime.

Violence in New Zealand is neither endemic, normalised, nor valorised as elsewhere. Even so, it has been routine and formative and it decisively contributed to establishing our current social conditions, political and legal institutions, and more contestably collective self-identity. Governments have used violence and threatening it for state control, discipline, and punishment, ranging from corporal punishment in schools to capital punishment on prison gallows. Such state-sanctioned violence is not unusual but I am not taking for granted New Zealanders' attitudes about their own representatives using it, including the attitudes and perspectives articulated in poems. Dillon Johnston, writing about violence in Seamus

Heaney's poetry, argues that it is important readers "recognise that the issues involved in the depiction of violence may differ from reader to reader or, more generally, from one national readership—in this case Irish, British, or American and other Anglophone readers—to another" (113). Doing so from a local perspective is what James Bertram, the Oxford-educated academic and former prisoner-of-war in Japanese internment camps during the Second World War, attempted in his 1971 address to the Royal Society. He argued that New Zealand literature:

> isn't especially marked by violence, either in manner or content. I suspect it would be rather better as literature, if it *were* more violent. And it wouldn't be difficult to argue that New Zealand writing has become progressively more violent, more frank and brutal and uncompromising, as it has matured … earlier writers don't often shock us, the later ones sometimes do. And the power to shock is surely one of the marks of an adult and living literature. (Bertram 11)

I understand Bertram's mutedly incredulous response to New Zealand literature's lack of violence. Vincent O'Malley in *The Great War for New Zealand: Waikato 1800-2000* (2006) persuasively argues violence has been as instrumental here as anywhere else for creating and enforcing the state's legitimacy and undivided practical political sovereignty. Ready comparison can be made between the Waikato War and the American Civil War: what happened at Meremere, Rangiriri, Rangiaowhia, and Orakau in the Waikato was contemporaneous with the Battles of Chickamauga, Chattanooga, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Courthouse. Even though there were hundreds of casualties in the former engagements and an estimated 108,917 in the latter, each war was a bloodily violent social upheaval involving struggles for legitimacy of similarly formative national significance. Even

so, the realities of New Zealand's foundational violence—whether of encounter or colonialism—and the individuating violent acts they forced upon participants—soldiery, warriors, and non-combatants alike—have only seldom intruded on New Zealand poetry. Likewise, despite the poems examined in this study having been written when New Zealand soldiers earned a reputation for efficient, concerted, and often pitiless violence, this period, too, has seldom impinged on our poetry when compared to other participants' national literatures.

New Zealand poet and critic Kendrick Smithyman sharply diagnosed this lack of collective self-ownership of our violence, noting that the "skeletal dance of our dry bones is blooded with violence … a feature of our viewpoint, an inherent if frustrate [*sic*] thing in our thought" (*A Way of Saying* 183). This unexpressed inherence makes it unsurprising scholars have given little attention to violence in New Zealand poetry, particularly state violence, because that poetry so seldom concerns itself with it. Bertram's talk was suggestive but neither systematic nor sustained. He emphasises evocativeness and intellectualised viscerality and gives a workable taxonomy of violence: cosmic ("man against the gods"); natural ("man against nature"); human (mixed-motive and interpersonal); and social (organised and "in some sense licensed") (12). I am exclusively concerned with the last of these, about which Bertram says "considering our relatively brief history, and our relatively small population, New Zealanders have had a pretty fair dose of this. And most of it has been of our own choosing" (12). From this category the only poem Bertram mentions—amongst prose works by Dan Davin, Katherine Mansfield, and James Mulgan—is Alistair Campbell's "Sanctuary of Spirits", which is noted as "a splendid evocation of the blood-boltered ghosts of Kapiti … a good deal more successful than anything before it in suggesting the explosive, obsessive

violence of Māori warfare in the old feuding days" (13). Bertram does not say how such "social violence" was "in some sense licensed" or who did what against whom and why they did it.

Focussed considerations of violence in New Zealand poetry amount to studies of a few poets, usually reviews of collections and occasionally monographs, articles, or theses. These studies seldom examine how poetic capabilities can represent violence. Instead, they foreground imagery, event, rhetoric, fictionality, and normative positioning. Curnow's work is the most frequently examined of any New Zealand poet. Alex Calder, Edward Burman, and James Norgate have all drawn attention to its violent imagery and content. Each reads the violence in Curnow's poetry to diagnose the poet's and his milieu's attitudes and prerogatives, even while admitting the stylistic and reflexive ends to which poems put the violent imagery. Burman, for example, asserts "Moro Assasinato" resulted from "religious anxieties" (23) and suggests the closing lines of "Landfall in Unknown Seas"—"The sailor lives, and stands beside us, paying / Out into our time's wave / The stain of blood that writes an island story" ("Landfall" 139)—"sums up Curnow's attitude towards historical sacrifice" (25) (I discuss Calder's reading of Curnow later in this introduction). They stress the exceptionalism of Curnow's poetic violence and how it is a point of difference but they do not examine critical allowances made for it and how it reflects constitutive tendencies in New Zealand poetry. Campbell is Curnow's only real competitor for frequent and intense violence. Frank McKay treats the violence in Campbell's 1963 book *Sanctuary of Spirits* as Romantically expressing the poet's inner world, which is schematised by McKay in quasi-Jungian terms. McKay assumes the poet's testament gives credence to his reading: it "confirmed an interpretation of the poem to which I had been led"; namely, that "Sanctuary of Spirits resolved a personal problem for Campbell" (285). However, it disregards the historical Te

Rauparaha's agency, his policy and statecraft, and how he deliberately and concertedly used violence.

The Penguin Book of New Zealand War Writing (2015) informatively shows how violence's reality can be obfuscated where one might most expect to find it most explicit. Harry Ricketts's introduction, selections, and accompanying notes reflect surprisingly little on experiencing violence. Ricketts claims that "few of whatever persuasion"—those who view New Zealand as either reluctantly or enthusiastically participating in war—"would disagree … that war has in the past much to do with the construction, and maintenance, of our national self-image" ("Introduction" 9). For example, war forged the "idea of the good Kiwi joker (brave, unflappable, generous, can-do, laconic, a bit of a larrikin)" in Pākehā minds, which has proven itself a surprisingly enduring measure of masculinity ("Introduction" 9). How Ricketts's characterises the war experiences creating this impracticable standard—"shared dangers, fears, grief, excitement, boredom, vexation, relief" ("Introduction" 11)—conspicuously omits actual violence, wounding, and death. The anthology fails to penetrate the clipped silence that enclosed Second World War veterans when my generation asked them about what they did and what was done to them. Unsurprisingly, the anthology is elegiac, condemnatory, diaristic, and rhetorical. Little in it directly confront readers with what authorised use of weaponry does to human flesh and bone, although New Zealand literature's violent deficit makes this inevitable.

Key survey works also largely overlook New Zealand's violent realities and their literary representations. In *Picking Up the Traces*, Lawrence Jones emphasises social and literary historiography rather than textual analysis: when it does discuss poems, it scans them for evidence of personal or coterie attitudes, influences, and exclusions. As Jones puts it, the

book is about "themes concerning these authors' relation to their society and to social and historical phenomena … textual analyses enter where necessary to make a point in the general argument" (16). He notes "European 'rational violence' is an integral part of New Zealand and Pacific history that must be faced" (207) but the observation is marooned in a discussion about Curnow's "themes". Kendrick Smithyman's *A Way of Saying* (1965) is an idiosyncratically modernist survey of theme and style, which frustratingly does not elaborate the provocative passage quoted earlier. Other books have offered period or genre surveys. Alex Calder's *The Settler's Plot: How Stories Take Place in New Zealand* (2011) rereads Curnow, Frank Sargeson, Janet Frame, and others to find out how politics and imagination—including violent literature—claim and make place in New Zealand. It is around Curnow, again, that violent ideas most densely constellate. Writing about *An Incorrigible Music*, Calder notes the poet's serendipitous postretirement trip to Italy: "sacrificial themes and political violence he had been writing about were unfolding in a real-life drama involving one of Italy's most senior politicians, Aldo Moro" (*Settler's Plot* 238). Calder attentively reads Curnow's sequence, concluding it:

> began as a study of the place of ritual in scenarios of violence, and of the way ritual, like language, is a system of arbitrary signs that articulates a real world. Curnow was able, later on, to find he had set himself a series of parameters within which he could see the ordinariness in an act of extreme political violence, and see through to its far side, in … spontaneous rituals of grief and sympathy with which ["Moro Assasinato"] closes. (*Settler's Plot* 238)

Calder's reading is perspicacious but it erects authorial intention and biography as the best point-of-view from which to understand the poem, which undermines mimetic authority. I

will emphasise, instead, my chosen poems' formal qualities and their mimetic relationship to the world of physical fact and history.

Although violence largely goes unmentioned in John Newton's *Hard Frost*, which focusses on sexuality, individual agency, and personal identity, it nonetheless creates opportunities for freshly reading canonical New Zealand literary texts. Anna Smaill reads it as "chiming the death knell for New Zealand literature" (162); or at least knelling it for the hitherto prevalent idea of New Zealand literature, particularly from the 1940s and 1950s. Mid-century texts by Curnow and Sargeson, for example, are not what need to be killed off; scholars should do so to moribund ways of reading them. Newton argues we need to adopt "more wide-ranging and curious ways to engage with it" (14). He sees New Zealand literary nationalism as unique because its national building mythos was concurrent with modernism rather than Romanticism, as for example the nineteenth century poet Adam Mickiewicz's work served for Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus. This comes down to timing but Newton astutely argues modernism shaped literary nationalism as much as the latter shaped the former. When reading poems such as Curnow's "The Victim" and Smithyman's "Vignettes of the Māori Wars", one must vigilantly guard against assuming either nationalism or modernism decisively determined a constituent utterance's 'meaning'. Readers cannot take it for granted that poets' feelings, beliefs, and ideas—rather than modernist *topos* and *techne*—led to poems expressing settler-colonialism *bien pensées*. This thesis accepts Newton's invitation to use "wide-ranging and curious ways" by using modernist close reading for modernist and post-modernist poetry.

I accept Newton's invitation knowing violent texts confront readers with language's inadequacy or nullification by pain and trauma. Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* (1985)

remains a touchstone for considering how language can represent bodies *in extremis*. She states at the book's beginning that "Physical pain has no voice, but when it at last finds a voice, it begins to tell a story, and the story that it tells is about the inseparability of … three subjects"; namely, "the difficulty of expressing physical pain … the political and perceptual complications that arise as a result of that difficulty; and … the nature of both material and verbal expressibility or, more simply, the nature of human creation" (3). Scarry's ratiocination is acutely relevant and I hold each issue in view when reading texts representing violence. Often, they cannot express pain's interiority and isolation other than by negative correlation. Scarry, however, while acknowledging reciprocity's importance, does not explore empathy's expressive potential and how texts can ground mimesis in it. If one forensically describes what happens when a tooth gets extracted without anaesthetic—breaking bone, severed nerves, the pressure and force, haemorrhaging, lacerations—, anyone who has suffered similarly would understand extreme 'incommunicable' experience's overwhelming reality.

Scarry also does not account for how poetry's formal differences from prose influence how it can represent violence. Instead, she emphasises differences in purpose, suggesting "the poet is working not to make the artifact (which is just the midpoint in the total action), but to remake human sentience; by means of the poem, he or she enters into and in some way alters the alive percipience of other persons" (307). Scarry sees poems as conveyances for transmitting meaning between two parties. However, poems can also create verbal equivalences for physical life-worlds, including their physical, political, social, and ideological dimensions; for example, by establishing ordered subjectivity and submitting it to linguistic violence, as one finds in Paul Celan's work. Poems can also reestablish ordered subjectivity by asserting integrated self-sufficient formality as actively resisting objectification, as with

Geoffrey Hill's early work. Although Scarry rightly emphasises the value of "making" when it comes to poetry, she provides little detail about how poems are made or how they can be made violent. Finally, Scarry's discussion is decisively informed by the conviction that art, including textual art, is also "overtly unreal"; furthermore, "Poems, films, paintings, sonatas are all framed by their fictionality: their made-upness surrounds them and remains available to us on an ongoing basis" (314). Confronted by poems about historical events in which real people experienced physical pain that we can empathetically imagine, knowing they are fabrications opens us to non-denotive expressiveness, such as sound patterning. But automatically ascribing "fictionality" to them becomes a hinderance for understanding their actual relationship to the past and the people on whose behalf they seem to speak.

Jonathan Hufstader takes a different approach in *Tongue of Water, Teeth of Stones* (1999), a study of Irish poetry related to the Troubles. He attempts "to determine how poetry has most effectively dealt with violence within its artistic domain" (2). He strictly delimits social and poetic to avoid subsuming Irish poetry into wider postcolonial debate. Hufstader' readings see physical violence and its political justifications as provoking poets' questions about inherited ways of articulating enduring social realities: the Troubles are "outside" poetry; the latter responds to them but it is not part of them. Unsurprisingly, Hufstader's argument most easily accommodates Seamus Heaney, a markedly politically ambivalent poet. Hufstader contends Heaney "has so often returned to the task of understanding violence as a fact about the self" rather than as a structurally reflexive and institutionally directed activity performed by the state's agents. (289). Heaney's 'personalism' matches Hufstader's, whose book is more about poets than poetry: again, it reads poems to prise open the poet's privacies. When violence sufficiently intrudes on poetry, Hufstader argues, poets can hardly help but

include it in their poetic lifeworld. And *Tongue of Water* justifies focussing on violence in Irish poetry because Irish society's history is so violent, particularly how sectarian political violence disrupted everyday life. My study will show how even in relatively non-violent societies like New Zealand where resistance to the prevailing powers has been largely peaceable, poetry has directly contributed to foundational violence's hiddenness.

Sarah Cole's *At the Violet Hour: Modernism and Violence in England and Ireland* (2012) is an important study of violence in literature. Her work provides a useful precedent in its periodic, generic, and geographic topical framing. For Cole, modern society's violence, particularly the First World War, served simultaneously as a "crucible for a culture's highest values (in war, especially) and a force radically to undermine those ideals" (3-4). The idea that the First World War served as a cultural "crucible" is particularly relevant to New Zealand, for which the conflict has been construed not only as refining but formative. Cole's study, however, has a tighter focus: it argues violence necessitated literary modernism; responding to war and revolution required new aesthetic forms. Although it can be objected that poets and artists frequently resorted to older even archaic models (such as Ezra Pound's using Old English conventions in "The Seafarer" and "Canto I") and themes (for example James Joyce's *Ulysses*), Cole rightly concludes modern history's violence played a significant role motivating writers "to answer its challenges, to seek out new representational strategies, to find a conceptual register cued to its brutalities" (5). Whether New Zealand poets have done likewise for New Zealand's state-sanctioned violence is precisely the problem that this thesis will answer.

How Cole reads violent modernist texts depends on her claim that enchantment and disenchantment interpenetrate aesthetic, social, and political realms. Posited interchangeably

as polarity or dialectic, these terms derive from Max Weber characterising disenchantment as modern society's secularization by industrial capitalism, materialism, and scientific rationalism, which led to the First World War's technocratic violence. Cole recasts Weber's idea and equates it with death's emptiness and finality, which she argues literature represents with maimed bodies and corpses. As such, it refutes violence's generative force such as asserted by Georges Sorel, for whom proletarian violence was "a very fine and heroic thing" because it served "the immemorial interests of civilization" (85). Cole calls violence's "transformative power" or "magic" aspect enchantment, which manifests in artistic works that "imbue the violent experience with symbolic and cultural potency" (39). Disenchantment works against this by "stripping away … idealizing principles" from violence and insisting "the violated body is not a magic site for the production of culture" (42–43). Crucially, however, Cole demonstrates that in modernist literature these seemingly contradictory positions frequently combine to achieve a "disenchanted state of awe", such as in Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est", which "exults in its ability to make the language of enchantment do the seemingly contradictory work of exposing and rejecting violence" (64).

How much poems use violence—particularly historical violence rather than mytho-poetic violence such as in W.B. Yeats' "Leda and Swan"—for enchanting or disenchanting is concomitant with how much licence they concede to the world where real people like you and me are hurt and killed by the state. Violence's reality is stomach-turning: it is messy, smelly, and often emetic. State-sanctioned violence has added dimensions of realpolitik, ideology, governance, and policy. Of the latter, Carl von Clausewitz argued "War … is an act of policy. Were it a complete, untrammelled, absolute manifestation of violence (as the pure concept would require), war would of its own independent will usurp the place of policy the moment

policy had brought it into being". He continues "war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means" (87). Political violence's reality includes such dimensions, which richly mimetic poetic accounts would include. If violence's function or purpose in a poem—for example, an uneducated Dutch sailor becoming verbosely articulate after death and magically seeding another empire's colony—is categorically different to how it works in the world—such as an Indigenous people rationally defending its territorial integrity by painfully bludgeoning into silent death an uneducated Dutch sailor crewing an expansionist empire's ship—, the problem of enchantment and disenchantment becomes morally urgent. More enchantment requires proportionately abnegating reality to accommodate its expansion. Reality's vestiges become cipheric: vehicles for anachronistic conveyances, totems for summoning resonance by association, or topical material for moulding into initiatory and self-reflexive imagoes.

This thesis, then, builds on Newton's, Scarry's, Hufstader's, and Cole's work by broadening the mimetic catchment, deepening textual attentiveness, and foregrounding poetics, interrogating inconspicuousness, and prioritising direct representing physical violence. I do so grounded in two fixed and inescapable facts about New Zealand: its geography and location; and the relationship between the crown and its Indigenous tangata whenua. I believe that these primary facts have determined secondary ones, such as regular participation in expeditionary warfare, Polynesian immigration, reliance on tourism and primary industries, and linguistic formation. Questions about geography and Indigeneity also have implications for understanding national literature.

* * *

Violence often comes as a shockingly disordering irruption and yet it also seems ubiquitous, mercurial, and essential, which makes it "one of the most elusive and most difficult concepts in the social sciences" (Imbusch 13). Victims and perpetrators alike might find this assertion difficult to credit, but in reviewing relevant literature across the social sciences as well as literary studies, such heterogeneous perspectives and conclusions make plain fundamental disagreement about "an appropriate definition, substantive differentiation, socio-political assessment, and moral evaluation of violence" (Imbusch 13). As Evers notes, the social sciences seldom directly describe physical violence, which tend to subsume it into a generalising theory, such as Émile Durkheim's critique of modernity, Sigmund Fraud's postulation of trauma, or Georges Bataille's notion of sacrifice (Evers 19-20). Benjamin Noys argues that this is because "Theory, which refers to those positions that were inspired by paying attention to the sign and the signifier, directs its attention to this 'primary' violence at work in the sign" (12). Not only is "a dematerialized, structural notion of violence . . . at risk of losing conceptual and descriptive precision" (Beck 347), minimising physical phenomena and violent experience—especially how it looks and feels—makes it unsuitable for understanding literary representations of violence, particularly poetry. Slavoj Žižek's *Violence* (2007) amply demonstrates such reductionism and anti-empiricism. Radically devaluing witness and description, Žižek sees actual experienced violence as "subjective" and privileges instead "objective" violence, which is not a physically observable phenomenon (9-14). For these reasons I will not be using such sociological models or theories of violence.

I will be using a commonly understood meaning of violence: "The deliberate exercise of physical force against a person, property, etc.; physically violent behaviour or treatment" ("Violence, N., Sense 1.A"). I am absolutely prioritising physical violence: like Cole's *At the*

Violet Hour, this thesis focusses on "works or episodes that consider infliction, those moments when the body is attacked, violated, or killed— … texts and characters as they witness a profound intimacy with violence" (6). I do not deny we can understand violence more widely, but even the language for describing it—more trivially we talk about our *wounded pride*, *hurt feelings, bruised egos,* and so on—is figurative and frequently more directly appropriate for physical injury. My emphasis is somatic and on dynamic interactive relationships between subjects and objects. I am supplementing this definition with perspectives drawn from the Henrich Popitz's philosophical anthropology. Popitz defines violence as primarily causing bodily harm to others, whether as an end, a means to an end, or for systematically establishing, preserving, or furthering power relations. When connected with a territorial authority using its monopoly of violence, we can focus on pain, injury, death, and trauma's physical and psychic realities, even when legitimate or monopolising powers have caused them. A body is no less maimed or violated when an authority sanctions it than when it does not. Legitimate or otherwise, even if violence irreducibly and radically denies subjectivity, observers and memorialists, including poets, can scrupulously describe it in physical terms.

But because this study is about state-sanctioned violence, it cannot limit itself to physical description. Politics, governance, and law are as mimetically relevant as broken bones and bullet holes. The task is difficult because people seldom do political violence for its own sake. Description needs to bring competing discourses into view. Hannah Arendt emphasised that:

> Violence … is distinguished by its instrumental character. Phenomenologically, it is close to strength, since the implements of violence, like all other tools, are designed

> and used for the purpose of multiplying natural strength until, in the last stage of their development, they can substitute for it. (46)

How the state uses violence depends on what it wants to achieve. Walter Benjamin postulated three kinds of political violence: law-making, law-preserving, and law-destroying. Law-making violence concentrates or distributes power, law-preserving violence maintains a concentration or distribution, and law-destroying violence diffuses power ("Critique of Violence" 239-52). Law-making violence is initiatory or revolutionary: it is an almost inevitable prerequisite for establishing a state. It is what the curiously resuscitated German theorist Carl Schmitt understood as sovereign violence, which enables nascent or expanding state powers to achieve effective sovereignty, including colonial and imperial states' self-assumed prerogatives. Schmitt's and Benjamin's related ideas about sovereign violence subsequently informed the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's theory of sovereignty as articulated in *Homo Sacer* (1998), *State of Exception* (2005), and elsewhere. Agamben argues that initiatory sovereign violence becomes constitutional: the state's law-preserving violence throws the polity back into the ungoverned crisis preceding the state's territorial monopoly of violence. Norbert Elias contends "rulers have at their disposal specialists authorised to use physical force in emergencies and also to prevent other citizens from doing the same" (172). Agamben, however, argues that the state exists in a liminal zone between "emergencies" and legitimacy: in fact, the law sovereign violence makes is *in reality* negated by the state delegitimising itself through its law-preserving violence, which are constant innumerable emergency actions. During such uncertainties, the state becomes self-aware of its negative capabilities and irreconcilable internal contradictions: by suspending its ostensible *raison d'être*—assuming a monopoly on violence for protecting its constituents from interpersonal

violence—at its most powerful it becomes most vulnerable. The state's violence preserves law while throwing people and their lifeworlds back into a Hobbesian state of nature, but one where they are vulnerable to a state acting as if it were an all-powerful person unrestrained by the very law it claims to be preserving. Although I will examine how the poems account for states' violent purposes and their associated justifications, I am assuming the Agambenian legal negation's reality. I am treating state-sanctioned violence as a brute fact.

My understanding of violence as state-sanctioned derives from Weber's classic formulation of states' "monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" ("Politics as a Vocation" 78).[2] I am expanding this basic understanding with Agamben's idea of the state of exception, which derives from his dialectical understanding of law and its suspension in the moment of resistance or insurrection (*State of Exception*). Within exception, law cannot retain its legal form and employs its own exception: law's suspension. At its limit, law reveals its emptiness, its kenomatic state. The state of exception comes about when the presiding authority releases cases from applying law and authorities judge them by their particularity: that is to say, on a case-by-case basis. Although the state seeks to "maintain the law in its very suspension", it invokes a naked violence that has "shed every relation to law" (*State of Exception* 59). No longer exceptional, necessity becomes law's ultimate ground.

Agamben's position on the state of exception is directly relevant to New Zealander's constitutional fetishism. This is most marked vis-à-vis our ad hoc constitution, which Claire Charters sees as amounting to "the judiciary … silently upholding the myth of the legitimacy of the state" by simultaneously incubating constitutional law while not fully attending to

[2] This begs the question, how does the United States justify its state-sanctioned violence when it does not have a territorial monopoly on it, given the constitutional right of its citizens to keep and bear arms? Unfortunately, providing answering is beyond the scope of this thesis.

politics and civil discourse, which have often proven themselves to be far more determining of the nation ("Elephant in the Court" 2). Charters attributes this effacement to the common law principle of non-justiciability, whereby "some issues, such as sovereignty, are best left to the political arms of the state" ("Elephant in the Court" 3). Te Tiriti o Waitangi, read together with subsequent constitutional statutes, states succinctly the crown's obligations and its sovereignty's limits. As the New Zealand Government *Cabinet Manual 2023* puts it, "The Treaty of Waitangi … may indicate limits in our polity on majority decision-making" (2). However, politics, whereby the "the government rules", has predominated and during crises legal limits have seldom constrained its actions. Successive governments have either changed laws or ignored constitutional elements, most notably te Tiriti. They have habitually and sometimes reflexively operated unconstitutionally for over 150 years.

Waitangi Tribunal reports attest to these routine and ongoing breaches. For example, 2014's *Whaia Te Mana Motuhake / In Pursuit of Mana Motuhake: Report on the Māori Community Development Act Claim* and *He Whakaputanga me Te Tiriti: The Declaration and the Treaty* each detail over a century of unabashed treaty breaches by governments led by all the major parties. By common legal measures, they have not had constitutional legitimacy. Charters suggests:

> In appropriate cases, where the issue arises, courts should explicitly acknowledge that the legitimacy of the New Zealand state is suspect. "Appropriate cases" are those in which the legitimacy of the state is squarely implicated and would likely include those engaging with or involving tikanga Māori, te Tiriti o Waitangi, Executive decision-making that impacts on Māori rights and so on ("Elephant in the Court" 9).

The problematic elephant, however, remains in courtroom and cabinet alike: an unconstitutional and illegitimate state remains so for all New Zealanders whether the judiciary conscientiously makes piecemeal accumulative precedent for Māori. Even so, this fact has little affected the state's social licence.

This dubious de facto sovereignty makes "sanctioned" the strongest possible term I use. It is a weak source of right, much less so than legal or legitimate. According to Weber, "the most usual basis of legitimacy is a belief in legality, the readiness to conform with rules which are formally correct and have been imposed by accepted procedure" (*Protestant Ethic* 131). Legality and legitimacy are not equivalent; if a government is illegitimate, its laws are normatively depleted but if it has effective sovereignty, it follows the state must be able to enforce them. The need for such a definition is clear when confronting the New Zealand state's dubious legitimacy. Stephen Windsor, for example, has drawn legal attention to its dubiously claimable constitutional unitary sovereignty. Charters suggests "the most honest assessment" is that "sovereignty was legally acquired by the Crown simply by the unilateral declaration of sovereignty, and then given effect under the act of state prerogative power", an assumption to which generations of New Zealanders tacitly acquiesce continuously ("The Myth of Sovereignty" 3). On this view, sovereignty is the highest exercisable authority; the state maintains an effective monopoly of violence. It is practicable de facto sovereignty, rather than the normative consensually derived *de jure* variety, which is polities' presumptive legal and legitimate supreme authority.

The only reasonably confident determination about these poems' violence—whether in New Zealand's, the United Kingdom's, the Dutch Republic's, Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri, or Hawaii's service—is it was *at the time* politically sanctioned and probably 'legal'. In this

context, state-sanctioned includes that authority by which Māori, for example, legitimately resisted Tasman's landing with authority Ian Kawharu understands as "'unqualified exercise' of … chieftainship" (Waitangi Tribunal). It also applies to Māori who fought against the Crown's 1863 Waikato invasion, which itself had extremely dubious legitimacy, as the Government's 1995 apology as part of the Waikato-Tainui made clear when describing the Crown's actions as:

> wrongful and totally unjustified … the confiscations were unjust, and … Waikato-Tainui, far from being in rebellion, were in fact defending hearth and home … The Waikato war and the confiscations that followed caused devastation …The people were dispersed, and there was widespread suffering, distress and deprivation … The land of their ancestors had been taken from them with the stroke of a pen. ("The Waikato-Tainui Claim")

I understand all such monopolies on violence, whether from consent, custom, or coercion, merely as social facts. I am not considering what Joseph Raz characterises as the "normative situation" (109–10), including the radical disjunction between the territorial mana established by the Waikato Kingitanga and the undivided sovereignty demanded by the colonial Governorship in 1861. In other words, sanctioned does not imply moral rightness.

By 'reality' I mean simply that on which mimesis is predicated: how things are or how they were; or, to adjust Ludwig Wittgenstein's terminology, everything that has been the case, the totality of facts at *a given time and place*. This is adequate as a working definition and ontological argufying about it would not contribute to this study. As mentioned above, reality includes legal, political, historical, and poetic discourse. Whether this poem's or that statute's contents are 'real' is another matter. Attending to a richer reality than, say, logical positivism

allows, requires what I call thick mimesis rather than thin. The latter I characterise as imagistic, impressionistic, personal, physical, individuating, descriptive, and denotative; thicker mimesis adds psychological, legal, political, social, and communal dimensions along with re-presenting them denotatively, connotatively, and aurally. It uses poetry's equipage to delve deeper into and range wider across mimetically accessible reality.

The historical reality poems mimetically represent is neither directly nor immediately translated into it. People always either remember or imagine reality, whether collectively or individually. Memory and imagination are cross-contaminating and complementary. However, there is much that can be reliably known including what the living can find in archives, scholarly histories, diaries, oral histories, archaeology, and so on: everything specifically relevant to the wider reality—the period's and place's discourse, its social conditions, and so on—of the Battle of Towton, the Russian Revolution, and the 1981 Springbok Tour protests. These sources of reality include what is always true of violence: what happens when a broadsword connects with a person's unarmoured leg just below the knee, when a 7.62 mm Nagant bullet enters the back of a person's neck on an upward trajectory, and when a heavy wooden police baton strikes the bridge of a person's nose. We can describe the various physical effects; and when they are fatal, the objectifying consequences for human subjectivity are uniformly ascribable. There is what we can know, what we can remember, and what we can empathetically imagine—which is as close as we can get to knowing the past—, and the vast amount we can neither know, remember, nor imagine. Understanding what poetry *qua* poetry, not more generally as literature, does in this lacuna is part of what I explore in my readings.

* * *

In this thesis, I use a blended methodology to follow state-sanctioned violence's trajectory from the world (a factual event) into the poem (where it is mimetically reconfigured and repurposed) and back out into the world (as social discourse). By closely reading canonical poems that derive themselves from state-sanctioned violent incidents, I explore how they contribute to avoiding ownership and responsibility for what the titular character of W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001) calls "the marks of pain which … trace countless fine lines" through New Zealand's history (14). This involves articulating the relationships between poem, history, and reality. Stephen Dowden's modernist mimetics provide my pivot between text and world. As I outline more fully below, I use Dantean (meaningful and enchanting) and Homeric (meaningless and disenchanting) paradigms of poetic violence as the polarities on a representative continuum. Popitz's descriptive anthropology of violence provides a worldly hermeneutic horizon. Finally, Geoffrey Hill's and Charles Reznikoff's violent modernist poems provide exemplars for responsibly engaging with historical state-sanctioned violence, including its physical and discursive dimensions and lacunas.

I scrutinise the poems with mimetic close reading, which makes formal textual analysis accountable to the physical, social, jurisdictional, and discursive realities that give the respective poems their occasions and to which I hold them to account. Close reading means applying the same discipline and principles used by I.A. Richards, William Empson, and T.S. Eliot: practical criticism accounting for how using and misusing form and conventions make texts meaningful. Such practices were modernist ways of reading and emerged concurrently with modernist fiction and poetry. Ane Ohrvik characterises it simply as "reading attentively … through three methodological steps: establishing the text's readability and the purpose of reading it, exploring the text, and interpreting the text" (241). The gist is in the detail. In part,

close reading began as a riposte to so-called "impressionism", which emphasised affective reading. One could characterise recent studies of New Zealand literature as impressionistic, as far as they emphasise what a text is or might be saying—its message—and its significance while paying little attention to how it is saying it. This is true, for example, of Newton's *Hard Frost*, which concerns itself with "structures of feeling" rather than poems' prosodic and formal elements. Consequently, New Zealand literary studies' impressionism tends to flatten poems and prose of all genres into homogenised texts. Further afield, Kate McLoughlin's ambitious study *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq* (2011) is generically agnostic: novel, story, and poem flatten and merge into text. These studies largely elide respective authorial licenses, allowances, and prohibitions—which is to say, the rules of the language games in which the writers participate. This is what close-reading champion Max Saunders bemoans as "treating texts en masse as 'big data' rather than as individual encounters" (19). But poems convey meaningfulness as well as messaging in non-connotative ways, such as rhythm, rhyme, and metre as well as by intimating, corrupting, or absenting them. Because poetry has license to employ maximal linguistic resources, it is uniquely able to describe such extreme experiences, which is why I am only examining poems. Poems' formal dimensions are—or can be—more than decoration, convention, generic markers, and *jeux d'esprit.* They can convey relational significances as much as *le mot juste*, so my close reading includes these dimensions along with how the poems contain, attract, and project meaningfulness.

At the same time—and in contrast to the famously ahistorical approach to the text adopted by New Critical close reading—I adopt an approach that denies poems absolute imaginative sovereignty and instead holds them to historical account. This involves

scepticism about reading poems as self-expressions, including ones setting civilising virtues against implicit barbarism. I am following Christopher Middleton's dictum that "to recapture poetic reality in a tottering world, we may have to revise, once more, the idea of a poem as an expression of the 'contents' of a subjectivity" (283). Deemphasising subjectivity allows me to highlight how "poetic reality" can represent historical violence in ways prose cannot, including rhyme, metre, rhythm, syntax, diction, form, and structural allusion. I proceed from Michelle Leggot's intuition that "Poetry … shelters other, older ways of registering violence and beauty in its preceptors" (Leggot). I will be assuming that everything is relevant. I will take such things as metre, epigraphs, and allusions as seriously as direct statements of opinion or fact. However, I will indicate when these elements are not contributing to the poem's meaning or significance as well as when they distort it. They can dilute intensity and distract from or contradict other elements; they could be irrelevant or ancillary. Whatever the case, I will try to establish what all the poem's elements are doing to articulate meaningful relationships with historical people, events, and physical facts.

Rather than authorial intention or critical psychologism, my "source of truth" is mimetically mediated historical reality. My understanding of mimesis primarily draws on Stephen Dowden's recent work on modernist poetics. Noting many modernists explicitly sought to directly represent reality in language, he emphasises strangeness's importance for evocatively doing so (6-16). This agrees with Paul Valéry's statement that unless the representation is *in itself* "new and strange, every visualization of the world of things is false. For if something is real it is bound to lose its reality in the process of becoming familiar. Philosophic contemplation means reverting from the familiar to the strange and, in the strange, encountering the real" (39-40). Dowden posits modernist mimesis as an attempt to

avoid pure "subjectivity, but without succumbing to realism's false solution: i.e., an idealized observer whose detached precision of representation in painting and literature comports with the ideals of reason and scientific objectivity" (8). Grounding my readings in such modernist mimetics means looking hard at how the poems articulate structures of meaning for representing human lifeworlds rather than quantifying how much information or data they contain.[3]

Dowden's, of course, is very far from the first word on mimesis. It has been deeply discussed across millennia from ancients such as Plato and Aristotle to post-modernists such as Guy Debord and Homi Bhabha. Common to all is trying to understand how texts represent reality. This can mean seeing the world comprehensively: both richly and understandably. In Dowden case as noted above, it is imitation in equivalences. Plato was deeply suspicious of poetry's shadow puppetry, having his Socrates say that "poetry and mythology are, in some cases, wholly imitative". Especially concerning are those cases "in which the poet is the only speaker—of this the dithyramb affords the best example; and the combination of both is found in epic, and in several other styles of poetry" (Plato 25). This is a problem because dithyrambics involve poets' personae speaking; they are imitations of imitations. Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, however, makes the *Iliad* one of his two mimetic paradigms along with the Hebrew Old Testament:

> We have compared these two texts, and, with them, the two kinds of style they embody … to reach a starting point for an investigation into the literary representation of reality in European culture. The two styles, in their opposition, represent basic types: on the one hand [*Iliad*] fully externalized description, uniform

[3] I will return to this point later in this section when discussing genre.

> illumination, uninterrupted connection, free expression, all events in the foreground, displaying unmistakable meanings, few elements of historical development and of psychological perspective; on the other hand [Old Testament], certain parts brought into high relief, others left obscure, abruptness, suggestive influence of the unexpressed, "background" quality, multiplicity of meanings and the need for interpretation, universal-historical claims, development of the concept of the historically becoming, and preoccupation with the problematic. (23)

The foregrounding that Auerbach associates with the *Iliad*, however, does not necessarily lead to superficiality: structures of meaning—politics, law, and so on—are embodied and enacted and therefore knowable. Readers see Telemachus as a prince dispensing justice with authority. We know why and how he can act as he does. As Auerbach emphasises, typically poets render such Homeric foregrounding *in media res*—it is a fully manifested ahistorical situation—and without mental interiority. Modernist psychologism foregrounded that dimension, too. Nonetheless, such mimesis does not recreate real-world perception: the reader always knows more than, for example, a bystander at an Ithacan palace stumbling on the Odyssean slaughter.

I will, then, be using an idea of mimesis that balances foregrounded immediacy with embodied structures of meaning that *can* exceed uncontextualized direct physical witness. Writing about the extra-judicial hanging of the *Odyssey*'s handmaids, Adorno notes that the "exactitude of the description, which already exhibits the coldness of anatomy and vivisection, keeps a record, as in a novel, of the twitching of the subjugated women, who, under the aegis of justice and law, are thrust down into the realm from which Odysseus the judge has escaped" (*Dialectic* 61-62). This is mimesis that includes "the aegis of justice and

law" that has subjugated "the twitching … women"; poetic reality is as much constituted by political sanction as it is by pained bodies, and a record of the world can—perhaps should—include as much of each. Adorno and Horkheimer, however, do not concern themselves with poetic *techne,* which is one of my central concerns. If I have a *beau idéal* in what follows, it is a mimetic one, in which modernism's maximal linguistic resources enable the richest representations of reality—including historical violence—using *energeia* and impassibility to make us see the familiar afresh. Strongly mimetic poems are those that register multiple planes of signification—physical, psychological, social, political, legal, and so on—and the relationships between and complexities within them. Mimetic strength comes from articulating such structures of meaningfulness rather than exhaustive data or information. I will proceed from Dowden's ideas while including consideration of each poetic text's articulations of diegesis and mimesis and political impingements on aesthetics.

Given this thesis is concerned with representing reality in words—poetic mimesis—it also involves negotiating the vexing relationship between poetry and history. It is easily associable with Adorno's often (albeit frequently selectively) cited and variously interpreted injunction that "The critique of culture is confronted with the last stage in the dialectic of culture and barbarism: to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric, and that corrodes also the knowledge which expresses why it has become impossible to write poetry today" (Adorno 30) The dialectic of culture and barbarism bears directly on my concern with poetry and state-sanctioned violence. But I would suggest Adorno was asserting that it is impossible to write lyric poetry—poetry predicated on individualised subjective utterance. Adorno is suspicious of poetry, in other words, of the kind Aristotle distinguished from history:

> The difference between the historian and the poet is not merely that one writes verse and the other prose—one could turn Herodotus' work into verse and it would be just as much history as before; the essential difference is that the one tells us what happened and the other the sort of thing that would happen. That is why poetry is at once more like philosophy and more worthwhile than history, since poetry tends to make general statements, while those of history are particular. A 'general statement' means [in this context] one that tells us what sort of man would, probably or necessarily, say or do what sort of thing, and this is what poetry aims at, though it attaches proper names; a particular statement on the other hand tells us what Alcibiades, for instance, did or what happened to him. History is figuring out what motivated Alcibiades to undertake his Sicilian expedition in 415 B.C; poetry is about the nature of a man such as Alcibiades. (Aristotle 102)

Nowadays, however, neither history nor poetry would reach for transcendence of particularity by seeking universals, especially the *Grand Récit* kind. Aristotle's poetic universality, too, rather deals in specifics: "how a person of a certain type on occasion speak or act". Margaret Hubbard comments on the passage above that for Aristotle:

> The historian must not suppress the fact that does not fit in, he must not bridge the gaps in his evidence with plausible conjecture presented as a statement of fact. The poet, on the other hand, cannot say anything that his audience will not take to be relevant to the picture they assume he is presenting, and this picture is an investigation of moral possibilities. Poetry is therefore like philosophy (or like science); its statements, though in form the same as the historians', are in fact taken to be statements of the greatest generality that its subject-matter allows. (105)

Aristotle might have thought he was describing something universal—Poetry with a capital P—but he was describing poetry at a given time and place. What we now call poetry does different things and for different reasons, changes that are partly but significantly attributable to literary modernism.

The Aristotelian idea of unity is very different to Joycean and Eliotic ones. So, too, are their respective views on mimetically representing reality. Poundian and Eliotic mimesis informs the preponderance of variously conceived modernist epics over tragedies, most notably Ezra Pound's decidedly pluralistic, historically invested, and intermittently strongly mimetic *Cantos.* Pound's poem, as Charles Olson's later modernist *Maximus Poems,* engages with history not as past events but as coinhering temporal simultaneities. For Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, this is what fundamentally distinguishes how poetry and history articulate their relationships to what has happened in the world:

> For as similar as history and poetry are in their realizations, poetry does not have to do something that is indispensable for history: marking the border between past and present. Maybe poetry comes to what it reveals because of the possibility of being a point of view indifferent to time. History, especially cultural history, has to build solid walls between what is past and what is present. It helps that time passes and that before long everything is memory, evidence, or forgetfulness … the boundary must be established, and that is done by the imagination trying to rid itself of the straitjacket of the present. That is, imagining the line between past and present is, first, a constant reimagining. (31)

Today, then, historians, not poets, must carry the imaginative burden. They must imagine the demarcation between past and present, on which Enlightenment notions of freedom and

progress—the idea of the nation and its political state—depend. But Tenorio-Trillo's poets are more realistic and discomfiting. The expectation is that poets are allowed to get into language how people as embodied subjects experience time, whereby the real dead, all of them, are separated from us categorically but no more or less depending on when they happened to die. In a poem, Alcibiades and one's recently deceased next-door-neighbour are equally immediately re-presentable. Even so, this temporal coinherence does require concerted designs on language. Terry Sturm discusses the relationship between poetry and history in relation to the New Zealand historian J.G.A Pocock's response to Allen Curnow's collection *Island and Time*, which over time he saw as suggesting the "practice of a new kind history" (*Simply by Sailing* 151). Myth, in part, bridges poetic imagination and historiographic facticity. Pocock read Curnow's poetry as resulting from being open to finding being "not fully at home … not an unhappy or impotent condition, but one intensely stimulating to the imagination it challenged" (Pocock qtd. in *Simply by Sailing* 151). I discuss how this poetic-mythical reconciliation prioritises mimesis or morality throughout this thesis.

Rather than submitting the New Zealand poems I examine to the unrealistic standard of Aristotelian unified history, I follow Achille Mbembe's idea of concurrent histories for an age when "the postcolony encloses multiple durées made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another" (14). Mbembe calls this time "an interlocking of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts and futures, each age bearing, altering and maintaining the previous ones" (16). Poetic non-linearity and expressive maximality makes such texts able to articulate such complex realities. What poets do with this historical licence is a less easily settled issue. Historical poems can involve naming names of embodied subjects who have suffered and

died and whose own lifeworlds are somewhat knowable and whose actions are somewhat verifiable. They are poems that involve themselves in responsible public speech: their subjective referentiality has moral implications. W.B. Yeats's "September 1913" asks:

> Was it for this the wild geese spread
> The grey wing upon every tide;
> For this that all that blood was shed,
> For this Edward Fitzgerald died,
> And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,
> All that delirium of the brave?
> Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
> It's with O'Leary in the grave. (120)

Likewise, in "Easter, 1916" we encounter "MacDonagh and MacBride / And Connolly and Pearse / Now and in time to be", men who "Are changed, changed utterly" (205); changed, that is, completely from living to dead and again from literal men-of-the-world into words by the poem's public speech. Yeats does something different for similar ends in "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death", written within a few years of "Easter, 1916":

> I know that I shall meet my fate
> Somewhere among the clouds above;
> Those that I fight I do not hate
> Those that I guard I do not love;
>
> My country is Kiltartan Cross,
> My countrymen Kiltartan's poor,

> No likely end could bring them loss
>
> Or leave them happier than before. (152)

Each poem summons into itself historical reality. However, "Easter, 1916" involves public utterance of historical persons' names and derives verisimilitude from their presence. does not and so must rely on other means for its truthfulness to history. Do poets have a moral responsibility to be accurate in rendering the lifeworlds of those whom they represent and sometimes seem to give voice, especially the victims and perpetrators of violence? Such questions of poetry and history are what this thesis will explore.

How poetry mimetically represents history, including the personal and political dimensions discussed above, requires accounting for assumptions about limitations and licenses of genre. My first point is that genre need not necessarily set fixed—indeed, Aristotelian—limits to readers' textual expectations:

> each genre is composed of texts that accrue, the grouping is a process, not a determinate category. Genres are open categories. Each member alters the genre by adding, contradicting, or changing constituents, especially those of members most closely related to it. The process by which genres are established always involves the human need for distinction and interrelation. Since the purposes of critics who establish genres vary, it is self-evident that the same texts can belong to different groupings and serve different generic purposes. (Cohen 203)

In other words, genre depends on neither Platonic forms nor ahistorical rules. Genre is about manipulable conventions, which I, like Cohen, see as mediating readers' expectations and the world's facticity. Cohen's position is akin to T.S. Eliot's modernist tradition:

> The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. (Eliot 44-45)

Tradition and genre are changeable; how much so depends on the force of poems' newness. Eliot's position is, of course, a modernist one, in which poets assert the "novelty" of their poems: they—qualifiedly—set the conditions and context in which their poems ought to be read.

My general expectation, then, is that poems informed by modernism, such as those I am examining, are less constrained by genre than, for example, nineteenth-century poems. Modernism was (and occasionally still is) an effort to escape, change, or combine genres. Modernist poetry was especially set against the nineteenth-century lyric: for example, Hilda Doolittle's (H.D.) developing "a verbal and imagistic lexicon shaped by the poetry of Greek antiquity to push beyond the romantic expressivist lyric" and Pound's "intricate personae in poems such as Homage to Sextus Propertius and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley", which he deployed "to supersede the limits of the romantic lyric 'self'" (Davis 12). Chris Jones notes of *The Cantos*, the modernist epic ur-poem, that it is a "fusion of Homeric Greek epic and Anglo-Saxon lyric" (93). Modernism, as Davis suggests, involved "the development of lyric towards new narrative and sequential possibilities and political engagement" (Davis 14) even as the modernist epic's "hybridity of its use of documentation, prose, quotation, song, translation,

makes a decisive break with the lyric" (Mellors 482). I do not, then, read my chosen works as generically limiting representativeness.

While noting it is nugatory to attempt establishing unbroachable distinctions between, for example, lyric and epic, I do not read each poem *sui generis*. Alastair Campbell's *Māori Battalion*, for example, does not use Homeric rhapsodies but rather is an epic similarly constructed to Ovid's *Metamorphosis*—it is a "series of thematically-connected yet self-contained narratives (epyllia)" (306). A nominally lyric poem, such as Curnow's "The Victim", has characteristics commonly associated with epic poetry. As I stated above, brevity is not a necessary limit on mimetic representativeness. The modernist epic, notably in large discursive tranches of *The Cantos*, is frequently less mimetic than the modernist lyric, for example short poems by William Carlos Williams or George Oppen. As my readings will make clear, I am reading decidedly mixed-genre short poems, long poems, and sequences. I will deal with the "genre-bending quality of modernist artworks" (Davis and Jenkins 7)—how the poems I have selected use or abuse lyric, epic, and narrative conventions to represent state-sanctioned violence—on a case-by-case basis.

My approach is also attentive to poems' orientations to two dominant poetic traditions for representing and valuing violence: Dantean particularity and purposefulness and Homeric indifference and meaninglessness. Studies of Dante's violence emphasise its meaningfulness in relation to its symbolic and metaphorical dimensions, as in Gordon Teskey's *Allegory and Violence* (1996); or its historical contexts and sources, such as Brenda Deen Schildgen's *Dante and Violence: Domestic, Civic, Cosmic* (2021). Dantean poetics of violence are also related to agency, witness, and justice—its sources of meaningfulness. As Schildgen's book's subtitle suggests, Dantean violence is interdimensionally purposeful: it invests each

instance with hierarchies of immemorial meaning both specifically tailored to the victim—such as in Hell's second circle, where a whirlwind perpetually drives the lustful around a circuit—and in relation to divine justice. Violence is precisely proportionate to degree of sinfulness. Purgatorial violence has added corrective and restorative meaningfulness. Dante, too, is the paragon of violently refiguring history into myth. His poetry changes disreputable often violent figures—who would have been known, sometimes personally, by his contemporary readers—into a higher purpose's unwitting agents. We frequently find this trope, which is steeped in unreality, in poems of violent enchantment, such as those Cole examines. By contrast, Homer portrays violence as senseless: it is a source of progressive immeasurable and irreplaceable loss culminating in death's nothingness. Dead men speak in Dante and—depending on the justice dispensed—walk about in fine clothes; in Homer, they are utterly silent and they do not move because they are corpses. Aside from this ultimate disenchantment, Homeric representations are notable for the sensory clarity used to maximise their horrific verisimilitude, which the Greeks called *enargeia*, a descriptive technique much prized in Antiquity and which the Homeric poems frequently use. Graham Zanker characterises *enargeia* as "the stylistic effect in which appeal is made to the senses of the listener and attendant circumstances are described in such a way that the listener will be turned into an eyewitness; he will inevitably see the events … and, as it were, feel in the presence of the characters he introduces" (297). For my purposes, whether texts are fictional or documentary, however, it is essential that the reader "believes that such violences could actually happen" (Fraser 50); that is to say, they are mimetic and historical. This is especially potent when readers identify with victim and perpetrator alike, which involves "penetration into and empathy with other consciousnesses in action" (Fraser 53), particularly vis-à-vis their respective vulnerability and ordinariness. Monsters and martyrs let readers maintain psychic

distance and categorical identity differentiation. The greatest shock comes from implicating readers in perpetrators' motivations and justifications. Furthermore, the violence should not be bestowed with symbolic and secondary significance: "the truly shocking and cruel in art … occurs when the artist's gaze has been turned as firmly and, in a sense, disinterestedly as possible on concrete human behaviour" (Fraser 116). It forces readers "to reaffirm or reassess one's own values and to acknowledge the necessity of having as strong and clearly articulated a value-system, as sharply defined a self, as much alertness to others, and as firm a will as possible" (Fraser 157). The Homeric paradigm is intimate disenchantment whereas the Dantean is hierarchical enchantment.

I am grounding my readings in Popitz's philosophical anthropology, which sees violence primarily as causing someone else bodily harm, whether as an end, a means to an end, or for systematically establishing, preserving, or furthering power relations. Whatever the case, violence radically denies subjectivity; *pace* Simone Weil, it turns people into things ("Poem of Force" 45). However, Popitz stresses violence's non-'necessariness': violence has no potential cause that necessarily leads to it. Humans are needlessly and causelessly violent in any conceivable situation under any constraints or allowances, whether singly or collectively (50). Because violence can be a non-instrumental end and have self-sufficient causality, rather than postulating explanatory models, Popitz insists on closely observing and describing violent acts and their self-dynamic processes, including their justifications and sanctions. Such licencing can be given before, during, or after the fact so it has no necessary explanatory worth. But accounting for it is an essential descriptive element and a prerequisite for understanding and justice. The New Zealander Alexander Aitken wrote in his much praised First World War memoir that "horror, truthfully described, weakens to the merely

clinical" (171). This is true when we limit description to the physical. Transcending the "merely clinical" requires accounting for other dimensions, most meaningfully the psychological, political, and social, all of which I incorporate into my readings. However, I have prioritised forensic scrutiny because there is a dignity, albeit a discomfiting kind, which comes with detail given to the body if not the person. It might require time for these details to formally register as compassionate rather than horrific or sickening. But descriptive itemisation is humanising even post-mortem. Homeric violence is exemplary: it fastidiously, forensically, and specifically describes physical details; it is alert to perpetrators' and recipients' interiority; and it establishes who has sanctioned and enabled violence. Imagination is essential for describing violence, which is exceeded only by the illimitable human capacity for imaging acts of violence: "representational violence can imagine everything" (Popitz 50). Because Popitz calls for ethical and epistemological descriptions of self-dynamic and often irreducible violence as well as its imaginative dimensions, his model is well-suited to analysing poetic representations of violence and the historical violence to which they refer.

Violence's reality is physical, psychic, and geographic: it concerns wounding, pain, and trauma, whether personal or intergenerational. This reality is always somewhat incommunicable: time, pain tolerance, and suffering's inherent interiority belie spectacles of injury and violation. Victims of sustained, focussed violence, such as torture, have emphasised real-life suffering's interiority and almost immediate personal anachronism. Jacobo Timerman, for example, who suffered torture in Argentina, testified that "In the long months of confinement, I often thought of how to transmit the pain that a tortured person undergoes. And always I concluded that it was impossible. It is a pain without points of

reference, revelatory symbols, or clues to serve as indicators" (qtd. in Mayerfeld 65). I believe that even when confronted by information's desperate incommutability, unknowingness, or relative paucity, poems can re-substantiate events with imaginative compensation or sceptical documentation. Neither option involves avoidance. Geoffrey Hill's "Funeral Music" is an example of the first kind. A sequence of unrhymed sonnets attending to the Wars of the Roses, empathetically but acknowledging its temporal and experiential remoteness, the poems articulate "a florid, grim music broken by cries and shrieks … ornate and heartless music broken by mutterings and blasphemies and cries for help", amongst which readers survey body-strewn Towton—dead "men in such array"—as well as scaffolds where erstwhile nobles are witnessed being "Struck down into a meaty conduit of blood … Spattering block-straw with mortal residue" ("Funeral Music"). Charles Reznikoff's sequences *Testimony* (1978) and *Holocaust* (1975) are examples of the other approach, in which poems are formed archivally and documentarily from primary sources:

> They were led up a hill.
> Here they were told to chant their prayers
> and raise their hands for help to God
> and, as they did so,
> the officers poured kerosene under them
> and set it on fire. (*Holocaust* V.5)

First-hand accounts of violence are recontextualised and shaped "so as to allow the event itself to speak, as if without interference, without teller" (Bernstein 223). Copley notes "Funeral Music"—though it is also true of Reznikoff's very different work—constitutes a "warning against the urge to memorialise and subsequently forget the dead" and that it requires "the

reader to come to his or her own conclusions as to the relevancy of this vision to contemporary life" (Copley 65). Hill's and Reznikoff's poems are exemplary in their different but specifically modernist ways of bringing language to bear on the kind of violence with which I am concerned. My answer to Christian Moser's question "Is it possible … to render the suffering body visible without relapsing into the spectacular representation of torment that is associated with the display of sovereign power?" (60) is a qualified and hesitant but somehow still insistent yes: it can be done.

* * *

I have included only poems directly depicting violence and excluded those about it. Poems about violence inevitably shade into explanation, of which condemnation is a variety. Given Popitz's dictum that description should take precedence for the reasons noted earlier, I have excluded them. The poems selected all reference actual historical events or social contexts: they are 'based on real events', as the hackneyed cinematic disclaimer puts it. They must only represent violence that the effective political authority has socially or politically sanctioned at the time and place people do it: in other words, legitimate violence done by perpetrators acting within the allowances of the given authority to which they have obligations and that grants them their rights. As noted earlier, I am not considering assault, rape, and murder as well as suicide. A less tightly enforced criterion was canonicity, which for my purposes simply meant the poems were in collections published by established mainstream presses and had been anthologised. Typically, too, there is significant secondary literature about them. I slightly loosened my strictures to include Lea's "Gold Stripe" but even then it was in a collection published by London's Elkin Mathews, which also published books by Robert

Bridges, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and W. B. Yeats; and it was later included in Harry Ricketts and Gavin McLean's anthology *The Penguin Book of New Zealand War Writing*.

I made the selection after exhaustively surveying books published by mainstream poetry presses, of which the most rigorously scrutinised were The Caxton Press, Pegasus Press, Auckland University Press, and Victoria University Press / Te Herenga Waka University Press. The survey period was from 1935, when The Caxton Press was founded, until 2021. The process began with anthologies, including the Caxton Press's *A Book of New Zealand Verse: 1923-45* (1945); Allen Curnow's *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* (1960); Oxford University Press's *An Anthology of Twentieth-Century New Zealand Poetry* (1970); Ian Wedde's *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* (1984); and the Oxford University Press's *An Anthology of Twentieth Century New Zealand Poetry* (1987) and *An Anthology of New Zealand Poetry in English* (1997). I also surveyed more specialist anthologies, such as *The Penguin Book of New Zealand War Writing* (2015) and *Big Smoke: New Zealand Poems 1960–1975* (2000). I then assessed individual poetry collections published by the presses noted above.

Despite my survey's breadth and my limited criteria, I found very few New Zealand poems that directly depict state-sanctioned violence. The ones that I have included involve either warfare or the less easily categorised—but no less qualifying—violence between Māori and the explorers Abel Tasman and James Cook, which were neither quite martial nor policiary. I have not found any qualifying poems representing state violence used for incarcerating, policing, or punishment, though again some reported it. For example, all the poems in *Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance* (2001) did not meet my conditions. Likewise, I found no qualifying poems representing violence associated with significant events such as the 1913 waterfront strike and "Massey's Cossacks", 1951's waterfront dispute—

notwithstanding Bill Sewell's *The Ballad of Fifty-One* (2017)—, the 1974-6 dawn raids, the 1981 Springbok tour protests, the 2007 anti-terrorism police raids targeting Ngāi Tūhoe, or the anti-mandate protests in 2022. *Licence to Kill*, an RNZ investigative series on police shootings, reported that New Zealand police have killed 39 people since 1990, which is 11 times greater per capita than the rate of shooting fatalities caused by police in England and Wales (Espiner). Even so, I found no qualifying poems about police shootings. If there are poems I have overlooked about such state violence in New Zealand, they either have not been included in anthologies or lie secreted in the few poetry collections published by mainstream presses I have not accessed. Certainly, they would be rare exceptions to the overwhelming rule that one almost never finds directly depicted state-sanctioned violence in mainstream New Zealand poetry.

I have excluded colonial poetry from my investigation primarily for reasons of mimetic engagement. C.K. Stead notes that "New Zealanders … for most of the first 100 years of settlement (1820–1920), had to make conscious efforts to relocate the imagination and adapt the literary tradition to its new home" (Stead). This effort, for Stead, meant that "the most notable 19th-century writing is found not in poetry and fiction but rather in letters, journals, and factual accounts" (Stead); for example, Frederick Maning's *Old New Zealand* (1863). Stead's position depends on modernist assumptions about the relationship between text and word: "notable writing" finds textual equivalences for the world rather than imposing preconceived forms onto it or articulating ideas about it. Diaristic writing, then, is only structured by its circadian episodes and its conventional privacies allow its writers more licence than regulated public speech, including that of official verse culture. In other words, nineteenth-century diaries are more like modernist poems than is Victorian poetry. Even so,

there is "abundant literary and poetic content of early New Zealand newspapers and reading journals, largely of minor and non-canonical poets" (Stafford 12). I largely agree with Stead that these poets "were competent versifiers and rhymers, interesting for what they record". And what they recorded did include state-sanctioned violence. An example is Jessie Mackay's Tennyson parody "The Charge at Parihaka":

> Children to right of them,
>
> Children to left of them,
>
> Women in front of them,
>
> Saw them and wondered;
>
> Stormed at with jeer and groan,
>
> Foiled by the five alone,
>
> Never was trumpet blown
>
> O'er such a deed of arms.
>
> Back with their captives three
>
> Taken so gallantly,
>
> Rode the Twelve Hundred (31-32)

Whatever this poem's merits, amongst which is a well-aimed *coup de poignard* at Victorian verse pieties, it is not much concerned with getting reality into poetry. This is a problem with colonial verse in general, which is preoccupied with getting attitudes, usually correct or proper ones, about reality into verse; it is about putting things into perspective. Physical messiness is secondary to motivations; types trump particularities. MacDonald P. Jackson argues that Mackay "and too many of her fellows were apt, shunning observation and description of the particulars of their colonial environment, to indulge in … 'the sentimental

escape to the infinite'" (406). Jackson neatly summarises nineteenth-century New Zealand poetry's mimetic deficit. And this almost complete lack of direct engagement with lifeworlds' realities makes such poetry ill-suited to this study.

I have selected five poetic texts for this study: Donald H. Lea's "Gold Stripe" from *Stand Down!* (1917); Allen Curnow's *Island and Time* (1941); Kendrick Smithyman's "Vignettes of the Māori Wars" from *Flying to Palmerston* (1968); and the book-length works *Māori Battalion: A Poetic Sequence* (2001) by Alistair Te Ariki Campbell and *Captain Cook in the Underworld* (2002) by Robert Sullivan. This selection includes a range of historical events and modes of representation: Lea's deceptively populistic balladeering; Curnow's modernism of mythical nationalist germination and Smithyman's revisionist, sceptical, and apocalyptic response to it; Campbell's colloquial Romanticism; and Sullivan's post-modern rhapsodism. However, all the poems either are about Weberian modern warfare or use modernist poetics to rearticulate historical violent encounters, so I will submit all of them to modernist close reading.

I should note some omissions. I considered James K. Baxter's "A Rope for Harry Fat" and David Mitchell's "My Lai / Ponsonby" but omitted them for poems that more directly dealt with violent New Zealanders and that could generate sufficient richness of meaning for sustained close examination. Why have I not included anything from Tusiata Avia's 2021 collection *The Savage Coloniser Book* (2020), which included "250th anniversary of James Cook's arrival in New Zealand", the poem that became the political right-wing's bête noire for its violent imagery and rhetoric? I read it partly as a sharp riposte to Curnovian violence as a timeless, placeless, universal human trait, which informed my reading of Curnow's *Island and Time*, particularly "The Victim". Curnow's cathexis on violence is most intense in *An*

Incorrigible Music (1979), which hymns that "All the seas are one sea / the blood one blood / and the hands one hand" (Curnow "Moro Assassinato"). The inference is that all violence is one violence: local instances, such as in 1970s Italy or Aotearoa during the eighteenth century, manifest a constant universal or as the poem resonantly puts it "Ever is always today / Time again" (Curnow "Moro Assassinato"). Avia's book rails against erasing difference and its attendant near-nihilistic cosmopolitism. Instead, *The Savage Coloniser Book* insists that people are not ciphers: they are communally constituted and have potentially decisive personal agency and concomitant rights, duties, and responsibility for their actions. In this view, we can only understand violence when we localise it. However, none of Avia's poems qualified for selection because their occasions were either illegal violence—such as "Massacre"—or they do not directly depict state-sanctioned violence. And because I have wanted to include poems based on different historical events, I have omitted the poem closest to eligibility, "250th anniversary of James Cook's arrival in New Zealand", because I included Sullivan's *Captain Cook in the Underworld*.

* * *

Each main chapter addresses its poetic work's sources (historical, philosophical biographical, literary, and so on) and examine contextualisation (how they register place, time, and sometimes quantity), agency (who is doing what to whom), representation (how the poem uses its allowable poetic resources to represent violence), and violence's legitimacy and purpose. This study does not concern New Zealand poetry's historical development, so I have arranged the poems, sequences, and collections chronologically by the events they are about.

Chapter 1 looks at Allen Curnow's *Island and Time* (1941), which includes "The Victim", a poem dramatizing the ambiguously violent encounter between Ngāti

Tūmatakōkiri and Abel Tasman's Dutch maritime expedition at Mohua in 1642, New Zealand's earliest documented state-sanctioned violence. Reading *Island and Time* as a unified poetic work, this chapter foregrounds the book's investments in the ideas of Henri Bergson, particularly *la durée*, which provide *Island and Time* with ways to critique New Zealand reality and settler consciousness as well as an imaginative alternative to violence. However, "The Victim"—an extraordinarily intense modernist poeticization of Bergsonian thickened time with generic and prosodic simultaneities—, is the collection's only poem that directly depicts state-sanctioned violence. Although policy-directed state-sanctioned violence loosed the 'blood' steeping the collection, *Island and Time* represents it as stemming from technicalised hubris, unattendance to Bergsonian duration, etiolated emotive adherence to transplanted imperialism; or in the magically anachronistic and capsular epic world of "The Victim", a quasi-spiritual sacrifice made by a pseudo messiah.

I examine in Chapter 2 Robert Sullivan's book length poem *Captain Cook in the Underworld*, which concerns Captain James Cook's expeditions to the Pacific and Southern Oceans in 1768 and 1779. Originating as a libretto, its pan-temporality, choric speakers, and confected pastiche and open form strongly contrast with the deterministic narrative, monovocality, and formal compression of Curnow's "The Victim". Various voices sing about the historical punitive violence and violence of encounter done by Cook and his crew to Māori and other Pacific peoples, which is contextualised in an atemporal psychic zone under Jungian *aegides* of Orpheus, Venus, and Maui. The poem emphasises Cook's need for personal absolution, refiguring the historical personage as a semi-mythological antihero with distinctly Ulyssean characteristics, whose violence is de-corporatised. Agency shifts from that objectively authorised by the British Crown to a more generalised Eurocentric subjectivity

whereby Cook's individuality becomes a synecdoche for colonial trespass. The poem transforms his victims into Jungian shadow-projections even as they give voice to real-world trauma. It ends with Cook voluntarily shedding his guise as adventurer-hero of empire and allowing himself to become a character in the Pacific's story.

Chapter 3 moves to the nineteenth century and the state's forcible imposition of its sovereignty on tangata whenua. Kendrick Smithyman "Vignettes of the Māori Wars" is a triptych of poems about the Crown invading the Waikato in 1864. Smithyman's modernism eschews Curnovian myth and fantasy. Smithyman's syntactically and dictionally complex anti-lyrical poems are made from contingent facts and linguistic bricolage. The poems' form, syntax, and diction re-enact disjunctions and discordances of antithetical political and social processes, state-sanctioned violence's contradictory justifications, and the settler state's hypocrisy and bad faith. The sequence sees selfhood as performative, a dynamic process depending on people doing things in definite places: it has much in common with Martin Heidegger's and Alan Tate's regionalist understandings of being and place. Violence is an extreme trespass that does not unify the colonial dominion but rather causes an allusively cosmic apocalypse.

The final two chapters consider poems about expeditionary warfare. Donald H. Lea's "Gold Stripe", the subject of Chapter 4, is a poem about the First World War written from a working class enlisted man's perspective. "Gold Stripe" combines stoical disinterest and Homeric verisimilitude to bring industrial age warfare into view. Its unnerving account combines descriptive exactness and creative figurativeness with a sophistication belying the poem's colloquiality. Violence in "Gold Stripe" is an inhuman objective phenomenon like the weather or disease. It is something the soldiers suffer rather than something they do or that

others do to them. "Gold Stripe" uses Homeric *impassibilité* and *enargeia* to analogically assert war's interpersonal affective incommunicability: we can understand war but not how it *feels*. The soldiers' spiralling cynicism enables them to keep horror at a distance but it also prevents readers from imaginatively empathising with them. War's violence is pointless and unmotivated: "Gold Stripe" creates an inhuman world from which the state's historical prerogatives and compulsions have been erased.

Chapter 5 considers Alistair Campbell's sequence *Māori Battalion,* which episodically retells the eponymous unit's Second World War campaigns in sixty-six poems. The sequence combines influences from mid-century Anglophone poetry, the Homeric epics, and te ao Māori to fashion a picaresque epic but one in which violence—modern mechanised warfare—is only intermittently seeable. Although *Māori Battalion* is grounded in verifiable fact—including interpolated close paraphrases of historical records—the sequence filters it through a cast of self-effacing yet loquacious interlocutors who insistently assert their unreliability. Even so, they unwaveringly maintain their violence has been sanctioned by the state and commanded by Indigenous authority personified by the Māori deity Tūmatauenga, to whom the poems almost exclusively limit expression of te ao Māori. Violence legitimises the men in mutually antagonistic ways: it seemingly realises their enfranchisement as New Zealanders while simultaneously decolonising them by re-essentialising them as toa.

Chapter One: Through the Black Swoon – Allen Curnow's Island and Time

Allen Curnow's poetry is exceptionally and insistently violent. The epithets Ciaran Carson applied to Seamus Heaney when his collection *North* was published in 1975—"the laureate of violence—a mythmaker, an anthropologist of ritual killing, an apologist for 'the situation', in the last resort a mystifier" (183)—are even more fitting for Curnow and his oeuvre. The prodigiousness of Curnow's literary violence is utterly unavoidable:

> One poem after another hones its point of unexpected death, inescapable violence. One of his last poems takes its epigraph from Pascal: "The last act is bloody, however fine the rest of the play." That's how we are. You'd better get used to it. There's a kind of unsettling glamour in the way Curnow writes about such things, an even more disturbing aesthetic kick to it when, so to speak, the knife goes in. A defining aspect of his poetry is precisely that exuberant ruthlessness. There are not many poets (are there any?) who carry such responses so far. (O'Sullivan)

One encounters poems where violence is their raison d'être, amongst them "Landfall in Unknown Seas", "Then If This Dies", "A Leaf", "Cristobel", "A Family Matter", "A Framed Photograph", and "The Kindest Thing". Other poems, most notably "Spectacular Blossom", use violent metaphors to potentise meditations on natural phenomena and linguistic representation. This preoccupation was most concentrated in the 1979 collection *An Incorrigible Music*, an almost unrelenting poeticising of violence across history, including the sequences "In the Duomo", which revived Dantean terza rima to describe a political murder in fifteenth century Florence, and "Moro Assasinato", occasioned by the terrorist group

Brigate Rosse's 1978 kidnapping and murder in Rome of Aldo Moro. These poems, along with others in the collection like "Dichtung und Wahrheit" and "Bring Your Own Victim", articulate frequently sexualised rituals of violation and sacrifice imbued with pitiless thanatotic fatalism. The poems' local detail, whether Karekare's or Lazio's, is incidental to the book's contention that there is nothing unique about any given perpetrator or victim (apart from their beauty). The proem to "Moro Assasinato" directly asserts violence's impersonal homogeneity: "All the seas are one sea, / the blood one blood / and the hands one hand" (34). The poems deny politics, social, and economic structures and power relations all explanatory, motivating, or determining significance.

Curnow connects violence most intimately with New Zealand's colonisation and settlement in his collection *Island and Time* (1941). Curnow has been said to have written against "the sanitising occlusion of the reality of past violence", whereby discovered "territory has somehow been damaged, not 'enlarged'" (Calder "Sacrifice" 6). *Island and Time* sees territory as dense with temporal meaningfulness. The past thickens into an unpredicted ever-enlarging present rather than the now simply being an effect caused by directed past decision. Curnow's poems understand New Zealand's violence as localised, constituent, and unpredictably determinative. But originating violence, such as at Mohua in 1642 and Tūranganui-a-Kiwa in 1769, ultimately creates something *Island and Time* suggests nobody wanted: New Zealanders with no sense of time or place, figurative islands made by literal violence.

This chapter reads *Island and Time* as a sequence to widen its scope beyond the mimetic and representational constraints imposed by the lyric on individual poems. It foregrounds the book's investments in the ideas of temporality advanced by Henri Bergson at the turn of the

twentieth century, in particular *la durée* and *elan vital*. These ideas provide *Island and Time* with ways to critique New Zealand reality and settler consciousness as well as an imaginative alternative to violence. The chapter examines how the sequence's Bergsonism anticipates ideas of geo-trauma, in which violence indelibly marks places with psychic pain. After examining the different types of agency *Island and Time* attributes to Europeans, Māori, and Pākehā as well as 'Time' and 'Island', I turn to the book's ways of saying and seeing reality, particularly in "The Victim": an extraordinarily intense modernist poeticization of Bergsonian thickened time with generic and prosodic simultaneities, which is the collection's only poem that directly depicts state-sanctioned violence. Although the 'blood' steeping the collection came from policy-directed state-sanctioned violence, *Island and Time* represents it as stemming from technicalised hubris, unattendance to Bergsonian duration, and etiolated emotive adherence to transplanted imperialism; or in the magically anachronistic and capsular epic world of "The Victim", a quasi-spiritual sacrifice made by a pseudo messiah. Curnow's book sees state-sanctioned violence as purposeless and its results unpredictable, despite it largely achieving its tried-and-true colonising policy purposes: a territory unified by force under the state's centralised authority and the British Crown, albeit one populated by sleepwalkers.

* * *

Island and Time was published by The Caxton Press as New Zealand's involvement in the Second World War was intensifying; the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force would arrive in Egypt in April 1941 before deploying for the costly failure to defend Greece from Germany's invasion. It is a collection in which the personal and public collapse into each other under the urgencies and pressures of war. A collection of twenty-four poems that includes some of Curnow's best known and frequently discussed (such as "House and Garden" and "The

Unhistoric Story"), *Island and Time* explores New Zealand's constitutive relationship with what Curnow's book construes as the unpredictable but irresistible flow of contemporary events, in which violence is the primary driver of change.

Understanding how *Island and Time* represents state-sanctioned violence depends on first understanding how it represents the world's temporality and spatiality as well as how humans, particularly New Zealanders, experience and understand them. The collection's twenty-four poems are prefaced by an extract from D'Arcy Cresswell's memoir *Present Without Leave* that sets the scene and intimates the distempered settler *genius loci* dissected in the subsequent poems:

> The air of their islands is mainly fresh from the sea, and the rainfall abundant from the mountains whereon it condenses, from which, in some places, a violent sirocco results. Their present condition depends on the state of peoples a great distance off, and their communications with these. As yet they have no future of their own; and when at length one confronts them, they shall awake to find where they lie, and what realm it was they so rudely and rashly disturbed. (21)

This "present condition" is one in which settlers misguidedly depend on an imperial elsewhere that can give them neither surety any about the future nor establish them in an alien and hostile environment. The first poem, which serves the sequence as an overture or proem, "The Unhistoric Story", declares this future that confronts New Zealanders shall be—or at least what it shall not be—"something nobody counted on" (8). Indeed, the final iteration of refrain is refigured into the present tense; the future is now and it is not what we intended.

Literal minded readers would wonder why it was something that nobody counted on. Taking only the British Empire as an example, Nicholas Carney dates England's first colony

to the Norman Invasion of Ireland in 1169 (7). By the time of the 1840 Charter for Erecting the Colony of New Zealand, lands in British possession were found around the world:

> Great Britain made its first tentative efforts to establish overseas settlements in the 16th century. Maritime expansion … accelerated in the 17th century and resulted in the establishment of settlements in North America and the West Indies. By 1670 there were British American colonies in New England, Virginia, and Maryland and settlements in the Bermudas, Honduras, Antigua, Barbados, and Nova Scotia. Jamaica was obtained by conquest in 1655, and the Hudson's Bay Company established itself in what became northwestern Canada from the 1670s on. The East India Company began establishing trading posts in India in 1600, and the Straits Settlements (Penang, Singapore, Malacca, and Labuan) became British through an extension of that company's activities. The first permanent British settlement on the African continent was made at James Island in the Gambia River in 1661. Slave trading had begun earlier in Sierra Leone, but that region did not become a British possession until 1787. Britain acquired the Cape of Good Hope (now in South Africa) in 1806, and the South African interior was opened up by Boer and British pioneers under British control. ("British-Empire")

The number of British settlements, colonies, territories, and dominions is staggering and difficult to fix with certainty; however, "By the end of the 19th century, the British Empire comprised nearly one-quarter of the world's land surface and more than one-quarter of its total population" ("British-Empire"). So, if one takes "The Unhistoric Story" at its word, why was the future "something different something / nobody counted on" (8) when the world

abounded so many similar examples of the settler-project and its endgame, which almost always involved violence?

The answer lies in the desiccated selfhood of Curnow's implied "somebody"—the settler—, who as Cresswell contends "[has] no future of their own", which is necessary for them to discover where they are. In other words, immanent time makes the island a home. Curnow's diagnosis and treatment used ideas derived from Henri Bergson. Bergson's work was a significant philosophical influence on literary modernism, including writers as different as T.S. Eliot and Henry Miller,[4] and he has been discussed alongside William James and Sigmund Freud as one of its key non-literary influences (Paul Ardoin, S. E. Gontarski, and Laci Mattison, 3). Mary Ann Gillies, for example, has persuasively drawn connections between Bergson's ideas and Joseph Conrad, Eliot, James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf (25–7). Bergson's philosophy was partly an attempt to free continental philosophy from then predominant positivism, which stringently eschewed any knowledge that could not be scientifically verified (Abrutyn). Bergson sought to ground philosophical inquiry in temporally dependant subjectivity. He distinguished between abstracted time submitted to measure and parcelled into moments—the stuff of positivism—and time as humans experience it. Abstract time imposes artificial spatiality on human experience: it is a technicisation of human subjectivity; it quantifies something that is inescapably a quality known intuitively as an uninterruptable indivisible flow. By contrast, human subjects experience such Bergsonian real time as duration— *la durée*—even if it seems to be divisible into specifiable sequenced moments. The human experience of real time involves "several

[4] See, for example, Paul Douglass's *Bergson, Eliot, and American Literature* (University of Kentucky Press, 1986).

conscious states … organized into a whole". Becoming consciously aware of reality's poly-temporality enables human experience to "gain a richer content" (*Time* 121). The past thickens the present through memory and environmental change: "Every duration is thick" and "real time has no instants" (*Time* 122). Time 'thickens' in one sense because subjective narratives, often conflicting or contradictory, accumulate within and between people in any given place. Even when a given narrative becomes predominant, the others are not annulled. Awareness of *la durée* means seeing how meaningfulness increases and how this accumulation gives the lie to intentional cause and effect. Seeing time otherwise, for Bergson, is treating it as if it were space.

How does Curnow use such ideas of ideas of Bergsonian temporal thickening? Curnow's impishly titled capsule essay, "A Job for Poetry: Notes on an Impulse," is where he most explicitly states his version of Bergsonism and what it means for an undefined 'we', who:

> can no longer trust in some rearrangement of now-observable elements to bring us to some clearly desirable end. In the first place, we doubt even the existence of ends—that is, ends causally related to our present decisions and desires. We are faced with what Bergson calls "real duration, that duration which gnaws on things and leaves on them the mark of its tooth." Faithful to mechanism, we can say that we knew what was coming (at least we could or should have known); but the mark of the tooth is unmistakably there, giving us the lie. (*Look Back*, 24)

Curnow is quoting from Bergson's *Creative Evolution:*

> Real duration is that duration which gnaws on things, and leaves on them the mark of its tooth. If everything is in time, everything changes inwardly, and the same concrete reality never recurs. Repetition is therefore possible only in the abstract:

> what is repeated is some aspect that our senses, and especially our intellect, have singled out from reality… We do not *think* real time. But we live it, because life transcends intellect … Mechanism and finalism agree in taking account only of the bright nucleus shining in the centre. (46)

Mechanised or otherwise, what people do does make the "now-observable" accumulative present. As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to understand the Curnovian disavow of intentionality, which logically makes law and politics unaccountable for unintended consequences. People made in the United Kingdom made sanctioned "decisions" to fulfil their "desires" for a colony in New Zealand, and they violently achieved those ends. The psychological wellbeing of third- and fourth-generation settlers were unlikely to have been discussed at Westminster.

Island and Time sees 1940s New Zealanders' unsettled inner-worlds as caught between, on the one hand, Bergsonian real-time and the nowness as thickened simultaneities, and on the other, quantified and historicized subjectivity necessitated by the colonial project and its attendant myths of intentionality and progress. This Bergsonism is most evident in portrayals of the general thrust of time as *la durée*. "The Unhistoric Story", for example, suggests the story is not truly historic but rather one of duration open-endedly thickening into the unattended present:

> Whaling for continents suspected deep in the south
> The Dutchmen envied the unknown, drew bold
> Images of market-place, populous river-mouth,
> The Land of Beach ignorant of the value of gold.
>
> Morning in Murderers' Bay,

> Blood drifted away.
>
> It was something different, something
>
> Nobody counted on. (8)

"It was something different"—*it* being the future—in a Bergsonian sense because history's cause-and-effect paradigm disregards *la durée.* The clock can always be reset but the historical slate is never wiped clean. The ignorant Dutchmen are acting according to a mechanistic false consciousness ("Images of market-place") in wishing to impose their envious chronology on a future that they could not determine. It was "something / nobody counted on" not only in the crude sense that actions have unintended consequences, but also punningly but tellingly because the future is unquantifiable, neither enumerable nor objectifiable: people experience as accumulative flow; they do not know it as successive events.

Island and Time sees this false consciousness of quantifiable cause and effect as creating illusionary history. "The Unhistoric Story" presents one parcelled historic moment after another: Cook's "measuring mission"; the "hungry whaler" epitomising feral types who "lusted, preached as they knew"; "Vogel and Seddon howling empire"; and "chemical farmers and the fresh towns" (8-9). Supposedly epochal discovery, cartography, settlement, politics, and industry and urbanisation are given the lie in turn by "Time": each implicit sequenced *then* between successive stanzas becomes a Bergsonian accumulative *and.* Such accumulation is a *leitmotif* of Bergsonian temporality:

> For our duration is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there would never be anything but the present—no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration. Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances. And as the past grows

> without ceasing, so also there is no limit to its preservation. … In reality, the past is preserved by itself, automatically. In its entirety, probably, it follows us at every instant. (Bergson, *Creative Evolution* 4)

For Bergson reality is a constantly changing and increasing nowness comprising all previous actions and unrealised possibilities that constantly and automatically increases in density which can only be intuitively—which is to say, imaginatively—known. In New Zealand's case, Curnow's poem suggests, the mechanisation of duration turns people into islands:

> Measurement of mountains, measurement of waters,
> Power pulled from the lake,
> Where never trod centaur nor strolled satyrs
> Creating and mocking man's measureless shape.
> Who mustering up creeks saw the lion leap?
> Who in the riverbed
> Saw earth open and shake?
> Such instants hover at the fringes of trade
> As ships swim and aircraft out of Time like birds;
> Passion, pity, and dread
> Consigned south out of Time, for islanders made
> Whom the world's waste so royally rewards. ("The Scene" 23)

Here those who set themselves to "measurement of waters" and by implication circumscribing *la durée* are made mythically equivalent with centaurs and their composite existences. The geographers and cartographers deny man's "measureless shape" by packaging human subjectivity into parcels "Consigned south out of Time, for islanders",

people compartmentalised from real duration—into "islands"—and who therefore act in ignorance of the subjective fact that one thing does not lead to another and cannot erase what came before it and make the world anew. "The Scene" relentlessly catalogues quantification given the lie by nature's qualities: "the difficult acres / devoured by rivers", and "Man's still equivocal face / brave in cloudbursts, disordered by figures / when clerks confirm what the winds overthrow" (22-23). Colonialism is an experiential category error.

Curnow, however, does not completely do away with historically mediated time. For example, paraphrase aside, there is little historical detail in "The Victim" not found in Beaglehole's *Discovery of New Zealand*, an essay published in 1939 as part of the government's Centennial Survey series. Curnow himself admitted as much: "I owe the occasion, if not the impulse, and most of the material of this poem, to his account of Tasman's voyage and the portion of Tasman's journal quoted by him" ("Notes" 45). Later accounts of the events at Mohua in 1642 —such as Vincent O'Malley's *The Meeting Place: Māori and Pākehā Encounters, 1642-1840* and Anne Salmond's *First Contact*, both published in 2014—concur with Beaglehole on fact but diverge from his interpretation. Contemporary records are exclusively Dutch, although these are remarkably frank and unalloyed. As O'Malley notes, "[l]ittle trace of the events that took place at Mohua survived into later Te Tau Ihu (northern South Island) iwi oral traditions, perhaps because Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri had themselves been conquered and absorbed into other iwi by the early nineteenth century" (*Meeting Place* 18). Curnow poeticises Beaglehole's history by imagining the events at Mohua as inaugurating concertinaing "explorations" that eventually thicken into real duration's colonialist *fait accompli*. The failure to acknowledge experiential reality manifests in Bergsonian settler anxieties of identity,

culture, and locale. The unresolved tension between physical emplaced 'feeling' and historical abstracted 'fact' energises the poems of *Island and Time*.

* * *

The problem of violent colonising emplacement—between *Island* and *Time*—is central to these poems' construal of Pākehā lifeworlds. Tam Vosper contends Curnow's poetry is "deeply invested in the relationship between place and self-construal" (143). I would qualify Vosper's position with Lawrence Buell's injunction that place is "space that is bounded and marked as humanly meaningful through personal attachment, social relations, and physiographic distinctiveness. Placeness, then, is co-constituted environmentally, socially, and phenomenologically through acts of perception" (145). Self-construal depends on place being *positionally* perceived; that is to say, it is as much a cultural act as it is a sensory one. Curnovian self-construal is neither inclusive nor communal: the self that Curnow "proudly and confidently puts in the agentive position" in such perceptively bounded territory "is the Pākehā poet," albeit one who in *Island and Time* asserts its temporal sovereignty (Kennedy 39). And assuming reflexive localising selfhood, in which person and place mutually form, sustain, and strengthen each other, comes at a significant cost to whomever prepopulates a given place. What makes a poetry that "belongs, here, uniquely to the islands of New Zealand" is blood (Curnow, "Introduction" 17). Beaglehole puts it in more Gibbonian but still mutedly sanguinary tones:

> The tenderness of place, the *genius loci*, in no large sense it appears, is part of the life of the European born in our country—for the Māori, the ancient conqueror, it is different—the sense of intimacy, quietude, profound and rich comfort is not yet indestructibly mingled with the thought of a native soil, an habitual and inseparable

> surrounding. There is glad recognition, there is love even; but there is not identity. Not enough men have died in this land. (*Short History* 159)

Māori in this view have aligned—by default and unawares—subjective temporality with embodied locality: presumably, enough of them have died here. Contrariwise, setter consciousness sullies the environment. When Harry Ricketts writes that "The world of Curnow's poems is … in a cultural sense, intensely Christian—especially his Christianity-saturated New Zealand—but it is a world palpably empty of God" ("Post Christian" 150), we can read that "saturation" of place ('Island') as Bergsonian temporal thickening. Curnow, however, replaces Bergsonian surfeit with desiccation. As "Sestina" declares, "Wreckage mocks history" (34). Bergsonism rejects historical narrative and momentisation alike: perpetually thickening duration gives the lie to each abstraction. Time is ruinous, plans go awry, and their consequences pile up, like Selwyn's apparent folly that made "St Thomas's Ruins" (14).

Place's vital importance in Curnow's 1940s poetry intimately connects to violence. As Burman argues, "In *Island and Time* (1941) and *Sailing or Drowning* (1943) the muse of geography predominates, but there is simultaneously—in the midst of concern with the 'island'—an increasing use of images of blood, violence and sacrifice" (31). Indeed, "blood, violence, and sacrifice" become necessities for transforming space into place. Like Wallace Stevens' empty Tennessean jar, which "made the slovenly wilderness / surround that hill" on which someone placed it, making "the wilderness … / no longer wild" and taking "dominion everywhere" (Stevens), the Dutch vessel—ship or sailor—of "The Victim" subdues the wilderness and decisively takes ownership of it. "The Victim" adds to Stevens' sovereign act the kenosis of blood and spirit, whereby a real broken body fertilises land and sea for ideas of

colonial order to take root and enter its currents, coagulating as it circulates.[5] New Zealand is only conceivable at the site of death and trauma, from which a local reality is inferred, one which Kennedy suggests for Curnow incorporated "both a recognizable locale and persona: a truly national literature predicated on a defined and definable New Zealand location and peopled by New Zealanders" (39). Selfhood, then, depends on emplacement, which is the violent transformation of an elsewhere into a time and place of one's own.

And so, in *Island and Time*, place is frequently particularised: its poems constantly say *this is happening more and more and over and again here*. An almost redundant footnote to "St. Thomas's Ruins" specifies the ruins are located "By the St. Helier's Bay Road, Auckland" (14) before prosaically paraphrasing the poem. "Crash at Leithfield" and "Lake Mapourika" situate themselves by their titles. In "House and Land", the latter is noted as extending from "Waiau to the mountains" (20). The *mise-en-scène* of the North Canterbury "Country School" is environmentally particular: "Pinus betrays, with rank tufts topping / the roof ridge, scattering bravely / Nor-west gale as / … magpies hoot from the eaves" (31). Such exactitudes require time and settlement, which transform colonisable elsewheres into such as Leithfield and Auckland. When settlement is still prospective, however, as in "The Victim", the poem carries the reader from cartographic territoriality's certainties into an uncanny and uncertain space where everything seems unnamed. It uses proper place names to credential poetic geography: Batavia, from where Tyssen shipped aboard the Zeehaen; and "Java to Mauritius were orders, then Southward" (32). "The Victim" establishes Aotearoa as a weird elsewhere, a geographical other. The poem primarily does so simply by not naming it: it remains *Terra Incognita*, an unknown and unknowable place, even as the poem's first line fixes it as *Terra*

[5] I return to blood's significance in *Island and Time* later in this chapter.

Australis, "the south / We found" (32). The poem does not describe this *almost* negative space from a vertical perspective, such as on a map, but rather horizontally, as if a periplum: how land looks when approached from a point at sea.[6] The poem's perspective is that of an embarked sailor. However, the poem situates itself with geographical contingent exactness: its epigraph locates the events in "Murderers' Bay". But neither at the time of the events it describes nor three hundred years later when Curnow wrote the poem did the place bear that name. Tasman only christened it *Moordenaers Baij* following the incident at Mohua; Cook applied the English version during his second voyage of 1773. In 1827 D'Urville recorded it as Massacre Bay, by which it was known until it was rechristened as Golden Bay following discovery of the Collingwood Goldfields in 1857. "The Victim" reverts to a name that inconveniences such provincial proprieties, as if an apparent murder has indelibly stained the geography.

The Bergsonism of *Island and Time*, particularly in "The Unhistoric Story" and "The Victim", is essentially a nascent geo-traumatic position on historical violence, which imprints itself on place and person. In this view the past has more than a linguistic existence but it requires sovereign poetic imaginations to summon them into view. Just as geo-trauma attempts to understand "violent inscriptive processes . . . and the traces left by such acts," so *Island and Time* asserts something that happened then and there is present—if insufficiently acknowledged—here and now (Merola 123). "The Victim", for example, suggests how violence endures "in psychic and worldly realms simultaneously" (Pain 3). But Tyssen's monologue makes this trauma necessarily institutive, which benefits "the unborn", a

[6] That is to say that a cartographer often draws maps from a bird-eye view and not from the perspective as the land would actually appear from the crow's nest or deck of a ship. A periplum would theoretically be drawn as if the cartographer were out to sea so that sailors could know which land or port they were approaching.

constituency extending into an illimitable future, even if the fruits of Tyssen's "sacrifice" are the shrugging cowman in "House and Land" and his countrypeople. But the only time Tyssen speaks in the present tense is when asking readers to "Remember me, a fourfold breath / Yielded to Time, struck for the living" (33). *Island and Time* attempts to articulate why "the living" live as they do—unintentionally islanded outside real time—despite successive so-called sacrifices that had been intended to make their lives meaningful.

* * *

Who lives and dies in *Island and Time*? This is difficult to say because answering depends on who lies behind the ambiguous "nobody" of "The Unhistoric Story". "Nobody counted on" it; which is to say, none of *them*—or *us*—counted on it. The book's Pākehā cast includes Vogel, Seddon, Bishop George Selwyn, the historian, the cowman, old Miss Wilson, Harriet's youngest, Will, farmers, merchants, agents, the Icarus adjacent aviator, the barman, the victim Jan Tyssen, the Māori people. Of these, Tyssen and the aviator die; some are likely dead; and presumably some of the young men photographed going off to war in "A Scene" will die, too. But apart from Tyssen's 'reality' established by a fastidious *curriculum vitae*, which I discuss later, Pākehā in *Island and Time* are little more than Bergsonian ciphers. In "The Unhistoric Story", for example, one finds Julius Vogel—New Zealand's first Jewish prime minister, instigator of public works, and science fiction novelist—and William Seddon, New Zealand's longest serving premier, introducer of old-age pensions, and foreign policy imperialist. The poem conflates these two very different men into a settler-state synecdoche "howling empire from an empty coast" (9), as if their respective policies were inconsequential. George Selwyn, the first Anglican archbishop of New Zealand, is lampooned in "St Thomas's Ruins", which retells how the eponymous church was abandoned fewer than 20 years after consecration.

Selwyn was a complexly ambiguous figure: he staunchly advocated for Te Ati Awa after the government had imposed martial law on it, writing to the colonial secretary that Māori deserved the government's "respect and gratitude … [rather than] ... bullets" (qtd. in Stenhouse 25). However, later he was seen to have supported the Crown's Waikato invasion in 1864. In "St. Thomas's Ruins" he is merely a cipher for Anglican false-consciousness. Of course, a lyric or satirical poem no doubt cannot account for all such personal complexities or potential structures of meaningfulness. However, completely ignoring historical persons' complexity creates a significant mimetic deficit.

The most elaborate human characterisation is in "The Victim", which casts Dutchmen as progenitive New Zealanders, spiritual predecessors of such types who 300 years later will be found poetically "Walking weary / By the Waimakariri" ("It is too Late" 38). The old Zealanders are specifically and sharply articulated as purposeful agents: men with a mission whom the poem names, characterises, and enumerates. Along with the Zeehaen's master Gerrit Janz, Tyssen itemises "Bully Tasman" (32), an anachronistic epithet referring to Tasman getting charged with exceeding his authority by attempting to hang two men who disobeyed his order to go ashore at the Babuyan Islands on 28 August 1649, seven years after Tyssen's death at Mohua. Unsurprisingly, the most clearly particularised character in "The Victim" is the eponymous speaker himself. His bone fides are plainly stated and verifiable biographical facts are given as if for deposition: first person singular, Christian name and surname, role and employer (The Dutch East India Company), his assigned ship and the port from which it went to sea, his superior (also given both his names), indication that his enlistment was voluntary, the mission's captain, and the reason for the expedition:

> I, Jan Tyssen, company's sailor,
>
> Shipped aboard Zeehaen from Batavia,
>
> Gerrit Janz master; signed to follow
>
> Bully Tasman, lands to discover. (32)

These particulars establish Tyssen as the supra-fictional "I, Jan Tyssen, company's sailor" (32). His personhood derives from witnessable fact. Following a trajectory from time into history, Tyssen then moves from verifiably particular selfhood through identifiable but less specific individuality (the unadorned "I, Tyssen" (32)) onto merely an item ("I, one of seven" (33)) until his resuscitation as necessary historical phenomenon ("I, Tyssen, first blood to the south" (33)). His existence gradually becomes divested of biographical particulars and gets reinvested with general meaning under imperialism's culminating violent sign.

However, the major characters in *Island and Time*—those who exercise the most agency—are the capitalised Island and Time, each of whom has speaking parts. Island is person-as-island, objectified personhood as abstracted from intersubjective reality. More particularly, it is the settler's parcelled and distanced state of being. Time, by contrast, contains multitudinous potentialities. In "Time", the eponymous character variously proclaims itself to be a phenomenon ("the nor'-west air nosing among the pines"), direction and decay ("the water-race and the rust on railway lines"), industry ("the slap of the belting and the smell of the machine"), and the movement through space implied by human measure ("the mileage recorded on the yellow signs") (12). This quantification—objectifying subjective experience of the world—is what Time most rails against: the sums sole-charge teachers teach", "nine o'clock in the morning" (12). Time sets itself against all pretensions of succession, sequence, and quantity because:

I, Time, am all these, yet these exist

Among my mountainous fabrics like a mist,

So do they the measurable world resist. (12)

Time is more than our "conscious carrier"; humans are where time condenses and, as it were, becomes self-aware. So although Time and Island are the sequence's prime movers, they only fully manifest in human subjectivity. Elsewhere, Time and Island are distinctly at odds, staking opposing claims for human subjects:

Island: You think you have frightened me.
I demand the glory and the tragedy.
Call me New Zealand. The name
And the endless war I claim.

Time: But your desired safe direction,
Fair weather and sky's protection?
The land was promised and is given, it will be the worse
To fabricate a promise that turns a curse.
("Dialogue of Island and Time" 42)

Island demands bounded certainties and finds them accordingly, saying "Look, History has given me a book / Brighter than this ghostly conversation: / Land, power, and love of nation" (43). But for Island, the historian is a "blasphemous interpreter / Pretending Time's ghostly sight". Island exasperatedly asks the obvious question: "Then, sir, if the books are lies, / What better can you advise?" (43) Naturally, Time provides neither clarity nor consolation, only "In what wild waters God's chosen are thrown" and "By what traces of torment a nation is

known." (43). And these "traces of torment" reside in settlers' minds and seep into the land itself.

Could Māori have something to say or do about these islanders' residually tormented condition? Curnow was critical of colonial poets appropriating Māori voices and perspectives and his own poetry scrupulously omitted them. "A Note on New Zealand Poetry and Māori Tradition," from *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* (1960), is his most direct statement on Pākehā using Māori as decorative localisms or a *tabula rasa* for settler projections. Curnow justifiably preferred to let Māori speak for themselves albeit through translations:

> The first poems in this book are from the Māori tradition, which is rooted in the antiquity of New Zealand and its ocean neighbourhood. … Distinct as they are ... the Māori poems nevertheless represent a significant part of our commonly diffused consciousness of ourselves as New Zealanders. I think readers of both races will recognize the propriety of including them, for the first time, in a New Zealand anthology. (*Penguin* 73)

Curnow contrasts his propriety with appropriative settler poets and their "imported insipidities … mixed with puerilities of local origin" (*Penguin* 73). He singles out Alfred Domett for having assumed a "poetic *persona*, the Byronic rover Ranolf" for "instructing his beautiful 'Māori' savage Amohia in the marvels of the Age of Steam" (*Penguin* 74). For Curnow, this "pseudo-hysteria of the creative faculty" exemplified by Domett's *Ranolf and Amohia: A South-Sea Day-dream* (1872), led to two "generations of enthusiasts … abusing Māori matter in much the same spirit", which was "more than enough to discredit the whole enterprise" (*Penguin* 75). It is not clear if Curnow's objection stems most from "enthusiasts" doing the work of serious poets, "pseudo-hysteria", poems abusing "Māori matter", or poems

including it in any way at all. *Ranolf* is surely not bad because it attempted to represent Māori, which its phantasmagorical subtitle "A South-Sea Day-Dream" suggests was not mimetically motivated but rather fantastically conceived. The puerilities peddled by Domett and his ilk result more from method—what Curnow damns as "imported insipidities"—than matter. There is—unsurprisingly—little of Browning's metrical ingenuity and self-interruptions, narrative experimentalism, or complex play of persona and disguise. Domett's epic, too, has no room for the plainspokenness and ironies of Tennyson's dramatic monologues.[7] Nevertheless, *Island and Time* is reckoning with a settler lifeworld where Māori matter, at least insofar as their enduring presence represents a Bergsonian temporal thickening. And rejecting representing Māori—or even Pakeha relationships to te ao Māori—because Domett's poem was bad in Curnow's justifiable view leaves *Island and Time* with a mimetic deficit.

However, Curnow's wholesale rejection of mimetically risking to register Māori in any way at all means that when *Island and Time* reckons with reality, it does so with extreme ambivalence. The disillusioned "It Is too Late" suggests its readers:

> Discard the highest
>
> Mountain, the dryest
>
> Summer,
>
> the coppered steeple,
>
> And the Māori people:
>
> For these are only
>
> Games for the lonely;

[7] Hugh Roberts' "Chance, Providence, and Imperial Ennui in Alfred Domett's 'Ranolf and Amohia: A South-Sea Day-Dream'" is a thorough account of Domett's much maligned poem and its relationship to Victorian poetics and later ways of reading it.

And the trader in freaks

Lost bottom seeks. (38)

The poem assumedly wants to do away with pretensions of furbishing mid-twentieth century colonial selfhood by conquering nature, importing empire's verities, and parasitically identifying with romanticised tangata whenua. Māori also appear via catalogue in the fourth stanza of "The Unhistoric Story", which begins by either lapsing into or dryly subverting a more dynamic version of *Kowhai Gold* localism: "Green slashed with flags, pipeclay and boots in the bush, / Christ in canoes and the musketed Māori boast" (9). How Māori are braggards is not clear; what is apparent is that they are now armed *du jour* and hazarding the ensigns and standards strung like bunting in the bush. Despite the imported Good News, they have been armed and made dangerous by Cook—likewise musketed in the same poem's first stanza—and his ilk. Musketed Māori are but one of the accumulating Bergsonian unintended consequences in "The Unhistoric Story".

Māori in *Island and Time* are most violently compelling in "The Victim". Its headnote mentions them in stating the poem's purpose: "Jan Tyssen, one of the four Dutch killed by Māori when Tasman called at Murderers' Bay in 1642, sees his death as a ritual sacrifice reconciling the unborn with Time" (33) However, Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri, the Indigenous historical agents at Mohua in 1642, are absent from "The Victim." The poem denies its antagonists the historical verisimilitude it gives to the Dutch. Its tactics are a poetically intense version of what Franchesca Walker identifies as one of colonialist ethnography's key tactics: "Driven by a need within the growing colony to both justify the impact of colonization and construct the Pākehā sense of self, Māori were depicted as the Other: as animalistic, barbaric, and mythical" (7). "The Victim", aside from the headnote, does not name its other as either

Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri or Māori. This omission mimetically fits with the quasi-historical hermeneutic horizon limiting "Tyssen": he cannot name that for which he has no words. But Tyssen speaks from the time and place where the poem's "unborn" are living—1940s New Zealand, when by poetic fiat the illiterate Dutchman is *au fait* with Henri Bergson.

Denuded of nominal identity, Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri become phenomenal or metonymic, appearing only as the "fang'd event" (32). Alternatively, they are derisory epithets of the historical time: "devils" and "savages" (33). The most historically cogent, discursively significant, and poetically privileged characterisation is "a monster risky to rouse" (32). This recycles tropes of Old English poetics, such as *Beowulf*'s hero confronting his community's foe: a monster with a singularly destructive purpose. Such transformative displacement endured, entering early-modern European exploration's and conquest's rubric. Gananath Obeyesekere notes how "monsters of the imagination" were "projected onto the psychic or cultural life of the savage" (13-14). In 1519 the Portuguese-born Spanish explorer Ferdinand Magellan described Tierra del Fuego's indigenous peoples as "of a prodigious stature, fierce, and barbarous, [who] made a horrible roaring noise, more like bulls than human creatures" (Smith 54-62). More pertinently for this poem, Sam Ritchie notes that misread evidence suggested to Tasman that monsters guarded the western entrance to the Pacific: "After three days at anchor in Van Diemen's Land in early-December 1642, although no Aborigines were encountered, Dutch explorer Abel Tasman's crew reported finding foot notches cut into trees spaced five feet apart. Tasman fled eastward, having concluded that giants lived on the island" (30). Historically and in the poem, the Dutchmen found what they expected to find—monsters—and Curnow's poem characterises Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri

according to modernist mytho-poetic prerogatives, which disquietingly conform with Early Modern period discourse about "savages".

Along with pseudo-scientific and fantastical characterisations, the poem represents Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri by their sounds, as when Tyssen hears a "hollow voice cry" and "hoarse shouts" (33). These characterisations draw from historical record and give the poem mimetic strength: "the men in the two prows began to call out to us in a rough, hollow voice, but we could not understand a word of what they said. We, however, called out to them in answer, upon which they repeated their cries several times, but came no nearer than a stone-shot" (Tasman 18). However, the historical Dutchmen were also acutely aware of the physicality of the people whom they had encountered:

> As far as we could observe, these people were of ordinary height; they had rough voices and strong bones, the colour of their skin being between brown and yellow; they wore tufts of black hair right upon the tops of their heads, tied fast in the manner of the Japanese at the back of their heads, but somewhat longer and thicker, and surmounted by a large, thick white feather. … For clothing, as it seemed to us, some of them wore mats, others cotton stuffs; almost all of them were naked from the shoulders to the waist. (Tasman 19)

Tasman is plainly more able to describe a reality that includes Māori than Domett and he does so while avoiding either "imported insipidities" or "puerilities of local origin". However, Curnow's mimetic catchment excludes such direct and comparative description, which could bring historiographically mediated reality into *Island and Time*.

As Salmond notes, Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri were more justified to see the Dutchmen as monsters than vice versa. The Europeans, after all, had already encountered Pacific peoples:

"To the coastal people these vessels must have seemed fantastic and more on the scale of islets than of boats, with their high-looming sides, flagged masts, tangled rigging and square, bellied sails. The figures on the decks must also have seemed extraordinary, with their weird hats and clothing just visible from the shore" (Salmond). However, the poem makes no empathetic concessions. In its world, monstrousness is unequivocally non-European. Julia Kristeva suggests humanity's desire to separate itself from natural orders resides in archaic memory: "primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove it from the threatening world of animals or animalism, which were imagined as representatives of sex and murder" (12-13). "The Victim" goes further: it reassigns its antagonists to non-human realms. Māori are the poem's decisive agents: had they not killed Tyssen, there would be neither poem nor its occasion. All Tyssen does is die. But in "The Victim" they are summary shadows, disenfranchised but necessary voids into which European providence gets emptied. The poem defines Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri solely by darkness and murderousness. They are a disembodied and fickle force of circumstance, as if a storm at sea through which pilots must navigate their courses. The historical Tyssen "Victim fell" (33) to peremptory defensive actions by Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri but the poem's Tyssen succumbs "to the fang'd event" (33). Manifest destiny and Bergsonian poetics elide Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri defensive actions, which the only directly registerable sanctioned violences in *Island and Time.*

It is speculative to read back from Curnow's attitudes in 1960—when the *Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* was published, including Curnow's "A Note on New Zealand Poetry and Māori Tradition"—to those he might have had twenty or more years earlier when writing the poems in *Island and Time*. But Hugh Roberts reads Curnow's poems as evidence that the poet:

> does not presume to speak for the Māori victims of colonial violence, to be the prophet/sage … whose poetic consciousness can enter into all human perspectives regardless of time and place, regardless of history. . . . For Curnow, far from resting content with a national 'myth', our role as responsible citizens—which is to say, as responsible readers—is to see our history as presenting us with a series of unanswered questions, unsettled problems. We must always remain unsettled, questioning, working to save poetry from itself. ("Unsettler Poet", 137-138)

Curnow, however, is more qualified in opposing the settler-poets' relationship to Māori. Writing of Domett's *Ranolf,* Curnow suggests "Nobody questions the total inadequacy of the poem as a representation of the Māori people" ("Pakeha Bards" 148-9). For Curnow,

> the pakeha (European) has generally felt his own New Zealand tradition to be enriched and dignified by association with those older Pacific navigators and colonists, his forerunners and fellow-citizens—though the feeling has not always been happily or becomingly expressed. ("Pakeha Bards" 135)

It seems clear to me that Curnow is opposing the way of saying—"pseudo-hysterical" expression—rather than what is being talked about—the "Māori matter" Domett and his poetical *confrères* "abused"—, which makes the omission of Māori from Curnow's 1940s poetry problematic. After all, Māori do provide the essential quickening of *Island and Time*. Its poems' motivations are persistently sanguinary: *blood* or *bloody* appear in ten of the book's twenty-four poems, including in initially seemingly innocuous ones like "Quick One in Summer", where drinkers come to "lean and laugh" but in a pub located in "that strange sea dimension / where Time and Island cross" and "Blood runs away like sand" (29). All that

blood must come from somewhere; or, to be exact, from *somebody*. And it was, historically, mostly Māori blood, even if in the only poem in *Island and Time* where violence is being done—"The Victim—the blood is European. So, along with the characterisations given above, Māori are reduced to an inscriptive bodily fluid. Even if granting Roberts's position that Curnow "does not presume to speak for the Māori victims of colonial violence", readers are left to wonder why all the blood in *Island and Time* was not even attributed.

* * *

Helen Sword notes "New Zealand literature from the 1920s onward was deeply influenced by Anglo-European modernism, often in ways that belie its seemingly provincial character and realist bias" (Sword). *Island and Time* is undeniably *"echt* modernist, or, more specifically, late modernist, akin to poems being written elsewhere in the English-speaking world in the 1930s and 1940s" (Reed 55-56), particularly in the poems' admixture of newness and archaicism, syntactic and semantic estrangements, and complex historiographies. Such modernist poetics enable complex formal reticulations and coexisting and interplaying lexical strata in single poems: they can express divergent and antonymous social and temporal realities within lyric constraints. For Geoffrey Hill, the modernist poem is "a unit comprising antithetical, even mutually repellent, forces, in which the calculated is at one with the spontaneous: integration that is simultaneously diremption; a kind of monad of linguistic energy" ("Postscript" 577-78). Such manifold modernism can mimetically represent first encounters' collisions of antithetical *Weltanschauungs* in poems' structure and prosody. However, New Zealand poetic modernism and *Island and Time* especially derived from more formally, structurally, and rhetorically conservative international exemplars, notably such metrically traditional poets as W. B. Yeats (such as the dialogical "Time and the Child") and

W. H. Auden (most obviously in "Sestina"). When confronting history, such poets' poems tend to re-substantiate events with imaginative compensation and dramatised lyric rather than using archival and referential modalities found in T. S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" or Pound's "The Cantos".

I discussed earlier how Bergsonism provides the *Island and Time* poems a way to diagnose settler consciousness. Bergsonism also shapes *Island and Time* mimetically, particularly in the collection's short narrative poems. Such poems enact the Bergsonian present's poly-temporality, whereby subjective experience of *la durée* means emplaced awareness of multiple pasts thickening into the present and continuing into the future. However, all poems are "instants": both in their own duration and because they parcel human experience into variable measured moments, whether epigram or epic. So Curnow's modernist short poems are places and times where the tension between Bergsonian mimesis as fidelity to thickened duration and the historicised moment come into direct opposition. Curnow's 1940s poems, even when they are most programmatic, as in "The Unhistoric Story", add a dimension markedly similar to what Joshua Landy has theorised as formative fiction, in which "aboutness is only one of their features, and they instigate a process (an artwork, as John Dewey and others have noted, is not an object but an experience); and they have an effect that goes far beyond the mere delivery of information … but is, instead, 'an event'" (9). Formative fiction reintegrates what happened into the world through readers' imaginative recreation. A symbol such as 'island' points beyond itself to its real-world manifestation, in this case mid-century anxious Pākehā reality: "a symbol is first and always a sign, something which reaches beyond itself" (Brooker 49). The poem is not simply an autotelic linguistic

artifact: it has "real-world" implications. As Jeff Barash has written about W.G. Sebald's fictions:

> Sebald's narrative in *Austerlitz* suggests that the real density of the collective past persists in the present, even where awareness of it has been obstructed. This is indeed a manner of response, reaching perhaps beyond Sebald's own intentions, to scepticism regarding the ongoing reality of the historical past, toward which the historian claims to direct her analysis. At the very least, it provides matter for further reflection concerning the assumption inspired by Nietzsche and propagated in fashionable theories during the decades directly following World War II that the facts of the past … are figments of the historian's imagination. (210)

Such density and simultaneity are *bone fides* of Bergsonism and 1940s Curnovian poetic imagination and they are intimately connected to the formal strategies of *Island and Time.*

Island and Time is Curnow's most formally varied collection. Brian Reed suggests it has three types of poems. The first type is short-lined and flexibly versified "songs and song-like lyrics", such as "Too Late" and "Wild Iron" which for Reed:

> …. are a showcase for his talents as a versifier. They tell readers about his vocation as a poet and about the nature of his commitment to the art. Like Roethke, when he sings Curnow is engaging in a high-level defence of poetry, a demonstration of how and why its sound and word play not only organizes 'time' into 'beat[s]' but also 'beat[s] time', overcomes or transcends it. Singing, he provides access to verities that are not easily containable or explicable within national and imperial narratives. Lyric sheds the limits of story. (56)

Such poems "all have four stresses or fewer per line" and their "versification is free and flexible" (53). They are, Reed contends, the most purely poetic. The second type concern themselves with "historiography and myth" and are "discursive and philosophical, with a tendency toward apocalyptic pronouncement" (52). They include the Yeatsian dialogues "Time and the Child" and "Dialogue of Island and Time" along with the Audenesque "Sestina". "The Unhistoric Story", which in part concerns itself with the violence at Mohua, is included in this category. Formally they use largely tetrameter or pentameter in often elaborate stanzas *à la* Herbert or Donne, as one finds in "The Unhistoric Story" or "Scene", which Curnow uses to "unspool his thoughts about temporality, identity, and destiny." The third type concern moments in specifically New Zealand times and places, including the seemingly autobiographical disenchantments of "Country School"; the ironically rhapsodised "Crash at Leithfield"; the decidedly John Crowe Ransom-like satire of "St. Thomas's Ruins"; and the violently mythopoetic but historically referable "The Victim". They are essentially short narrative or ballad-like poems, likewise in tetrameter or pentameter but usually employing simple modular quatrains.

The prosody of all these categories has little significance for representing violence, which is a matter of mention not mimesis. In "The Unhistoric Story", violence is rhetoricated reportage, real world events made into memorable phrases: "Blood drifted away" from Mohua; Cook "showed what the musket could do" (9). Elsewhere, violence is residually detected as when the weary riverine walker of "It is too Late" "cannot colour that stream / with wrecks red steam" (38). The same poem minimises colonial violence by wondering if a "dropped cream-can / Will rouse Japan" and expecting soon to hear the country "Cry, kill boys, kill" as it worries about the bigger picture, "what the films show, / what the wires know

/ Is real" (39). When nominal violence is most 'real', it is in the incredulously pitched description of "Crash at Leithfield":

> And the crash, how queerly gentle, how cool the cloud
>
> Black-billowing like loam, and silent—
>
> Ah, silence queerer than all—how small, not loud
>
> When this was, we thought, to have been so violent. (28)

The spectators' idea of violent death, its expected loudness and spectacularity, is misaligned with its reality. It turns out to be "queerly gentle"—at least from their point of view. The driver, who we are told had "sped to be in at the kill", as if he were excitedly rushing to join a pack of ravenous wolves, on arrival reverts to the provincial onlookers' disbelief, apparently surprised that dead people do not move. The parenthetical vocative indicts the crowd's lack of engagement with the events that in Bergsonian terms are literally taking place as much as it expresses bemusement at the crash's subduedness. The poem, then, is a commentary on thinking about "what the films show, / what the wires know / Is real" not a representation of it.

Bergson himself provided two suggestions for how to get reality into words. The first involves rearranging the stock of written realities made by "predecessors and stored up in … language … in a new way … reshaping them to make them fit into his combination" (*Two Sources* 254). This equates to modernist juxtaposition and bricolage much like Ezra Pound's ideogrammatic approach in his *Cantos*. The second way is more ambitious. It requires accepting uncertainty and immersing oneself in "a unique emotion, an impulse, an impetus received from the very depths of things"; new words and new ideas would be imagined for unparaphrasable ideas in an "attempt to realize the unrealizable" as writers are driven to

"strain the words, to do violence to speech" (*Two Sources* 253–254). This linguistic strain and violence in service of Bergsonian mimesis of thickened time is exemplified in "The Victim". The poem relates the violent death in 1642 of Jan Tyssen, a crewman of the Zeehaen, one of the two ships that moored at Mohua during the exploratory expedition led by the Dutch mariner Abel Tasman under the Dutch East India Company's auspices. These events are related by Tyssen in a posthumous dramatic monologue framed by a single-stanza prologue and a two-stanza epilogue speculating on his death's metaphysical and historical significance. "The Victim" is a poem of almost over-determined "national and imperial narratives" and not at all a "high-level defence of poetry" like the self-referential and slyly virtuosic "Too Late" or "Wild Iron".

The first level of Bergsonian mimetic thickening is generic. "The Victim" interleaves simultaneities of lyric, narrative, dramatic monologue, and epic conventions. Its quasi-heroic protagonist, Tyssen, is centralised and he ironically and unknowing embodies the compromised values and ideals of a bloodily seeded culture having undergone a storied navigation "ignorant of the value of gold" as if a pressganged Argonaut. He does so presciently for an unborn nation guided by unseen forces that shape a collective destiny. His monologue's rhetoric is formal, elevated, and grave, pitched to stress the predestined importance of what it conveys, with a typically epic orality replete with embellishment and adaption of historical record. But the poem is also a lyric, albeit one that has been put under modernist pressures. Much of lyric poems' strength and utility comes from its "way of decomposing as it illumines moments of the past" (Jackson and Prins 529). In "The Victim", nevertheless, such decomposition and illumination depend as much on epic conventions as they do on lyrical ones.

In "The Victim", prosodic facility is fully given over to intense Bergsonian mimesis, where violence devolves from image into sound. Rather than reporting or commenting on violence, as in "Crash at Leithfield", "The Victim" enacts it—especially in its diction. Its lexicon is predominantly monosyllabic and consonantal:

> No prey for prowling keels, the south
>
> We found a monster risky to rouse
>
> That at the first approach bared teeth
>
> And slew four with terrible blows. (32)

All the stressed words etymologically derive from Old English/Old High German, apart from *found*, *risky*, and *approach*, which are derive from French-Italian/Anglo-French-Latin.[8] Even these exceptions are aurally similar short-sounded verbs of struggle: *rouse, slew, spat, bore, plucked, drove, caught, fell, yielded, struck.* Archaic diction displaces the language of rationalised civility and everyday life—contemporary New Zealand spoken English and the Latinate derivatives common to legal, philosophical, and scientific discourse—to articulate a disordered, violent, and fate-governed world.

This lexicon is set in a loosely managed long hymnal measure: four-lines of tetrameter rhymed ABAB. It is a stanza is common in English church song, such as Isaac Watts's "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross", an Easter hymn replete with violent resonances:

> See from His head, His hands, His feet,
>
> Sorrow and love flow mingled down!

[8] For example, keel from Middle English *kele*, from Middle Dutch *kiel*; akin to Old English *cēol* ship; first to Middle English, from Old English *fyrst*; akin to Old High German *furist* first, Old English *faran* to go; and slew to Old English slēan; related to Old Norse slā, Gothic, Old High German slahan to strike.

> Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
>
> Or thorns compose so rich a crown? (Watts)

Curnow thickens the metre by simultaneously using a measure adapted from Old English poems: a four-beat line with a strong caesura and alliteration linking stressed syllables across the half-lines. It is particularly effective for depicting physical force because flexible stress distribution can be used to increase and decrease narrative tempo:

> When a chance came, he caught the hero
>
> in a rush of flame and clamped sharp fangs
>
> into his neck. Beowulf's body
>
> ran wet with his life-blood: it came welling out. (*Beowulf* 2690-93)

The poetic maximalism of "The Victim"—its manifold prosodies and levels of diction—demonstrates how modernist poems can incorporate coinhabiting and sometimes archaic prosodies when confronting the violent modern world "to answer its challenges, to seek out new representational strategies, to find a conceptual register cued to its brutalities" (Cole 5). By simultaneously employing different poetic precursors closely associated with violence, "The Victim" goes beyond Pound's adoption of accentual metres to translate Homer: it exemplifies what Hill characterised as modernist "composition on a multiple plane" ("Postscript" 573). The poem embodies a history of violent poetics, which it enfolds into its form, metre, and structurally integrating mnemonic devices until it is formally overdetermined. "The Victim" confects accentual syllabic metre, which when it was composed was still predominant in Anglophone poetry, and almost moribund alliterative accentual devices, while also carefully regulating its diction between Anglo-Saxon

monosyllables and Latinate polysyllables. It is a linguistically violent poem drawing from deep currents in English poetry.

What is the effect of dictional and metrical violence taking precedence over actual violent imagery? The poem summons a world where violence is constant and pervasive: it is a condition of existence. "The Victim" uses maximal poetic language for a simple narrative. Readers hear violence—if they are sufficiently sensitive to etymology, consonantal patterning, and metrical interleaving—but do not see it. We feel its presence but it remains hidden just as Tyssen's feelings are made known but we do not see Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri. Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri's invisibility comes from the poem actively forgetting them. It intimates trauma, specifically a head injury, in the second parenthetical aside—"(Ah, with what bells is my brain filled / That I forget!)" (33)—where concussive noise nullifies the speaker's memory. But what has he forgotten? The answer, lost in the mist of Bergsonism, is politics, law, and state-sanctioned violence, in whose service he had sailed and by which authority he has been killed.

* * *

Island and Time has little time for the state's designs on the world. Norgate suggests that in "'The Unhistoric Story' and 'The Victim', there is an almost naïve sense of stunned surprise at … the brutality of the encounter between European and Māori cultures" (67). As noted earlier, the poems' incredulity is odd given the extent and duration of colonial expansion and the violence used to further and maintain it. Sturm suggests Curnow asks how "does one escape the unending cycle of violence bred of the desire to control events?" (144). I would argue that people, especially politicians, are violent not to control events but to control people: violence is the event. *Island and Time* insists violent means never create their intended ends: the refrain of "The Unhistoric Story" reverberates through *Island and Time.* But Māori, Abel Tasman's

Dutchmen, and Cook—amongst many other violent New Zealanders—did have intentions for their violence. The collection limits violence's efficacy to clotting the historicised present with settler false consciousness and cognitive distortion. Aside from that, one should:

> Expect no settlements or certainties
>
> From volleys in deserts, explosions by rivers;
>
> By no such loud and bloody exorcism
>
> Will thunder quit the hills, sourness the plain;
>
> Now hopes go little beyond remission of taxes
>
> Dangerous are tongues that wag of the desperate coast
>
> To which all bear their obsolete equipment. ("Expect No Settlements" 26)

The poem then asks "Do you think there is energy unspent in battle?" Either all our energy, our Bergsonian *élan vital,* gets spent in battle or the energy of battle always exhausts itself. Something changes, but not by design. Spontaneous morphogenesis—in *Island and Time* a cancered consciousness begetting a colonial tumour—is the engine of purposeless 'progress'. Such undirected increase inevitably means "No place I visit but has twist or scar of violence, / Though here's no war gear, regimental number, / Or picking over of the dead for burial" (26). Expectations must be radically adjusted to reality, builders must "Anticipate ruin" and petitioners to higher authorities must face the prospect of "blank reversal of prayer". *Island and Time* petitions readers to intuit wisdom from the dead as much as they should consult the living for a way forward:

> Be safely enlightened
>
> By ghosts, by actual presences.

> Live and build, build and live,
>
> Sing, repair your fences. ("Dialogue of Island and Time" 43-44)

New Zealanders should go in fear of mutation, not suffer quantifying dreamers, eschew newness, reject imaginary communities, and reconcile themselves to Bergsonian temporal plenitude. Above all, they should remember that Time will undo their designs on Island.

Nevertheless, violence does change things; in New Zealand, it made them "different". Gilles Deleuze reads Bergson as insistently asking questions about what people need to do for something new to come into being. The relevance of such a reading to the mid-century New Zealand colonial situation and indeed to its 21st century situation is striking, not least of all to the anti-anti-Bergsonian conceit of full and final Treaty settlements. For Deleuze, Bergson's conception of novelty depends on intuiting that "the past does not follow the present that it has been, but coexists with it" and that "what coexists with each present is the whole of the past, integrally, on various levels of contraction and relaxation" (Deleuze 61). But is "something different, something / nobody counted on"—something that violence brought into being—novel or new? Writing about "Landfall in Unknown Seas", a Bergsonian Curnow poem contemporaneous with *Island and Time*, Calder suggests:

> the poem … warns that discovery can never be simple or predictable and will probably unleash new forms of violence, yet in the moment what the discoverer most knows is elation. Now that the old knowledge has collapsed, who can release its current? 'Landfall in Unknown Seas' leaves the question open ("Discoverer's Elation" 164)

In *Island and Time* "old knowledge has collapsed" and left nothing more than the mockable ruins implicit in Bishop George Selwyn's Solomon-like desire for a church made from "permanent materials, / Home comforts for his traveller God" (14). The current of blood unleashed, tapped mostly from Māori, made for the pitiable newness of a survivalist settler who has uselessly "emplaced cannon at all my windows, / At midnight sharpened arrows with a carpenter's file" ("Expect No Settlements" 26). It also created the transplanted exertions of a cowman who can only reply to an historian's question about his place of work "I just live here" ("House and Land" 20). Each is merely an unimaginative monad literarily going through the motions of existence.

Bergson limited purposeful violence to the linguistic and cerebral realms but it was nonetheless curative and transformative. The ego for Bergson is nothing more than "a sign … which has furnished the psychologist with his subject matter … it is only a word" (*Metaphysics* 36). Only "violence to the mind" would enable humanity to understand newness meant recognising that what seem to be repetitions are never-before experienced concentrations of the past *in toto* now (*Metaphysics* 31). Imagination is needed to know reality, and for Bergson:

> The whole history of humanity, in space and time, is one immense army galloping beside and before and behind each of us in an overwhelming charge able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death. (*Creative Evolution* 286)

How does the modernist poem make newness from the world's violent repetitions and coagulations? Sturm wrote of later Curnow that reality meant "naked events: utterly new, distinct, and unpredictable" (29). These descriptors also befit *Island and Time* but it confects them altogether less scrupulously. Curnow's 1940s response to the reality of state-sanctioned

violence, which in New Zealand was the means—"Green slashed with flags, pipeclay and boots in the bush" ("The Unhistoric Story" 9) and killing its own citizenry—that largely achieved the Crown's ends, was to use an ignominious occasion of European expansionism to imagine it as something different: "The Victim"—or at least its 'Jan Tyssen'—sees such violent death as apolitical blood sacrifice.

"The Victim" construes Tyssen's death in decidedly sacerdotal terms. The poem uses a sacrificial paradigm familiar from a key modernist poetic anthropology of sacrifice: T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland". Eliot's poem derives from James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, particularly the hanged man Tarot card, which for Frazer symbolizes the fertility god's self-sacrifice: the community kills him so that his resurrection may bring fertility once again to land and people. Freud's Oedipal conception of sacrifice articulated in *Totem and Taboo* is also relevant to Tyssen's death. Oedipal sacrifice intimately connects to the sex and death drives. Tyssen's death is a literal one made symbolic *post factum*. The poem's ostensible rite has a Freudian ambivalence. Tyssen accepts his death's necessity but regrets unwittingly participating in the events leading to his ritual sacrifice: not because he died but because the mooted reconciliation and communion through him with "Time" has not happened. Tyssen's death has been forgotten and not become symbolic so it has no cultural value. History, the narrative connecting what has been to what will become, is the dead's dominion demarcated from the present where the previously unborn have become the forgetful living, anxiously un-blooded by Tyssen's propitiatory martyrdom. The poem configures Māori as *in loco parentis,* but it reverses the sacrificial relationship: tangata whenua slay the child, Tyssen, on Time's altar—but to serve the victim's interests.

Is Jan Tyssen cast as a Christ-like or Messianic figure? One must distinguish between the violent death suffered by the historical Jesus and the kenotic sacrifice undergone repeatedly by the Christ of faith. The poem forcefully makes the messianic correlation by claiming the uniqueness of Tyssen's violent death and not mentioning three other Dutch sailors who also died. The Gospels portray a victim-God lynched by a unanimous crowd, an event commemorated by Christians through symbolic ritual sacrifice in the Eucharist. Such mythical accounts usually build on the lie of the victim's guilt by seeing events from the anonymous lynchers' viewpoint. This ignorance is indispensable to sacrificial violence's efficacy. But "The Victim", like the Gospels, "will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Mat. 13.35). The evangelical "good news" affirms the victim's innocence just as the poem figures Tyssen's pure victimhood in the Pacific's cleansing waters washing away workaday state functionality. The poem transforms him from empire's tool into a spiritual vehicle.

"The Victim" makes the Dutchmen's violence invisible. Readers encounter a text where "certain types of violence are made invisible in the context of ongoing colonialism in white settler society" (Holmes, et al. 539). As O'Malley points out, "according to one account, the ship's cannon was fired, causing Māori to 'rage terribly' before retiring" (O'Malley *Meeting Place* 17). Tasman's sequence of violent events is as follows: Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri knocked overboard Cornelis Joppen, a quartermaster in the cockboat of the *Zeehaen*, after striking him with blows from a long blunt pike (a tewhatewha or taiaha). The other Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri in the waka then attacked the remaining Dutchmen, likely with patu or mere as well as their hoe (paddles), killing three and mortally wounding another. Another sailor drowned. The *Zeehaen* and *Heemskerck* opened fire but failed to cause any retaliatory casualties. After the Dutch

weighed anchor and set sail, they loosed a second fusillade against approaching waka, which in Beaglehole's reading saw them "hitting only one man and rattling about some canoes" (*Discovery* 30). The poem forgets all these incidents apart from Māori killing Tyssen and his three crewmates.

Curnow's portrayal of Tyssen resembles the passive Pākehā personages one often encounters in twentieth century New Zealand poetry—for example, Denis Glover's "Harry" frozen in remembrance and James K. Baxter's youthful early speakers overwhelmed by nature's sublimity—who make easy targets and unlikely perpetrators. These poems show violent acts from victims' perspectives, men who never see the "sudden blow" coming (33). Tyssen dies without explicit or comprehensible warning. His killing happens in "a bay / calm where canoes slid slim at sunset" (32), a picturesque almost touristic setting without "omen of onset" (32). Tyssen says the Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri defenders "drove / sudden on us" (33), which is followed after a semi-colon's separation by "Blows" meted out by "the dark-limbed crew" (33) and Tyssen's germinative blood instantly blooming. Such violence is prefigured in Yeats' "Leda and the Swan": "A sudden blow" coming literally from nowhere as the first words of a poem describing an indifferent divinity's progenerating rape of an unsuspecting mortal and the violation's quasi-historical consequences:

> A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
> Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
> By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
> He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.
>
> . . . . . .

A shudder in the loins engenders there

The broken wall, the burning roof and tower

And Agamemnon dead. (Yeats "Leda and the Swan")

But rather than engendering "The broken wall, the burning roof and tower / And Agamemnon dead", sudden blows at Mohua create an enchanting portal through which the poem projects mid-century Pākehā cultural anxieties onto the documented past. "The Victim" like "Leda and the Swan" concatenates sexual and violent imagery, rhetoric, and functions. The imagery of Tyssen's death is plainly sexual: he remembers "all thickly through the black / Swoon of the savage's thrust" (32). This is simply crude modernist cultural stereotyping, whereby the "erotic is often connected to primitivism, for example, in Paul Gauguin and Otto Mueller, in Schiele and much of Picasso, as is the painting of nature" (Dowden 112-13). The passive *petit mort* of "The Victim," however, becomes piquant and purposeful beyond sexual exoticism: he spills his seed and births a nation. Even if that nation was "something different, something / Nobody counted on", it is something *somehow* new.

But newness and initiatory sacrifice—"a fourfold breath / yielded to Time, struck for the living"—comes to nought. *Island and Time* suggests that its beneficiaries, New Zealanders, are dulled by repetition into somnolence—like the cowman—, deluded into measuring the immeasurable—like the historian—, or, like Vogel and Seddon, thrown into inchoateness by frustrated ambition. So whose interests does such enchanting violence serve? Curnow equated imaginative fabrication with conjuring an internalised communal reality: "It is possible to think that we live by fictions which we tell ourselves about ourselves, by a kind of magic. For most people, or enough people at a time, they are true. … If today's fiction wears thin, there will be a replacement tomorrow. … The experts in a more potent magic have

prevailed" ("Preface" 11). But whereas *Island and Time*'s enchantment for the most part is somnambulance, rage, or scientism, the enchanting violence of "The Victim" is initiatory: it re-categorises individuals from being self-directed—if anxious—particulars into representatives of a subsuming community. Benedict Anderson suggests imagination is what makes a nation:

> it is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (6).

But the life of this "image of … communion"—such as Tyssen as proto-Pākehā resurrected in formalised language—must be recognisable and believable. Curnow has been construed as a poetic magus who "had a long career as a magician, a maker of fictions, yet always in the language of 'reality' or 'truth'" (Horrocks). The proto-Pākehā's self-image is magical victimhood even if its Bergsonian reality is marooned in unimaginativeness.

So poetic enchantment begets rural and suburban automatons. Horrocks suggests it stems from settler insecurities about Māori, who "knew all about magic and reality, but their magic was one thing the Pākehās could not take from them. Curnow was extremely sensitive to this issue. The Pākehā poet had to create his own New Zealand magic, which he preferred to think of as reality rather than magic" (Horrocks). Writing of the arch poetic enchanter Stephane Mallarmé, Landy suggests:

> Poetry … resembles magic by setting up a protected space—in the case of poetry, that delimited by end-rhymes—and by using it in order to create something out of nothing. … Like an alchemical combination of solutions, a poem's words yield clear

> silence, with idée as their by-product. Poetry thus remains what it has been since its origins: incantation. Poetry has the power to re-enchant the world. (78)

"The Victim" establishes a formalised linguistic site to summon an idée. Unlike Mallarmé's crystalline invocations, Curnow's poem needs violent words and deeds to catalyse the reaction for making base matter—real human minds and bodies—into something enduringly precious: a national home. The Mallarméan poetic grimoire would "permit us to do something by its means, just as books of spells permit their users to transform friends into gods and foes into frogs" (Landy 78). The witchery of "The Victim" transforms Māori into monsters, Aotearoa into New Zealand, and victors into victims. But, like Prospero's Island in *The Tempest*, the poem is a magically violent enclave, whose intensities, richness, and strangeness are utterly isolated from the orderly impositions of the surrounding world where New Zealand premiers use violence to police, punish, and profit empire. Violence in *Island and Time* creates desiccated settler consciousnesses. If purposeful state-sanctioned violence created the colony and the colonial mind, that same mind "must do itself violence, reverse the direction of the operation by which it ordinarily thinks, continually upsetting its categories, or rather recasting them" (Bergson, *Creative Mind* 190), which is what Tyssen does in "The Victim", even if in so doing it means disavowing enduring physical and governmental realities.

* * *

The Bergsonism of *Island and Time* is ultimately politically naïve and mimetically reductive. Creating the 'island-ed' Pakeha consciousness Curnow adroitly represents and sometimes sings in poems such as "House and Land" involved careful planning based on methods that had succeeded elsewhere in the terms of the British Empire, whether by the New Zealand Company, missionaries and the Anglican Church, or the colonialist state on the periphery and

the British Crown at the centre. The plans and actions of the latter, especially, involved violence directed to specific ends, which were frequently achieved, most obviously unified territorial authority and control and an effective monopoly on violence. But the battlegrounds of *Island and Time* are not Hingakaka or Rangiriri or even Gallipoli: they are mid-century settler consciousnesses, which are impoverished and shrunken by scientism, positivism, and text-book history, and clotted and bloated by unlet duration. The Curnovian poeticisation of the settler condition reduces it to philosophical and psychological dysfunction while erasing political and legal agency and mimetic inclusivity.

Island and Time meaningfully asserts that trauma inheres in place and conditions duration and presence. This is the bloody stain that writes an island's story: transformative intergenerational trauma making spaces into places and travellers into residents—or castaways who cannot leave. Rachel Pain has noted violence's temporal and spatial effects. She argues that "trauma may be understood beyond individual minds and bodies, not only shaping but as part of place" (2). The poems are deeply invested in ideas of forcible emplacement but the violence that makes it possible is almost exclusively displaced beyond the book. If Calder is correct to say Curnow set his work against "the sanitising occlusion of the reality of past violence" ("Sacrifice" 6), where in *Island and Time* are we clearly shown its adulterated damaging reality? There are no bodies, broken or otherwise, in *Island and Time*. Only in "The Victim" is violence admitted into poetic presence as a moment suffused with Bergsonian simultaneities and thicknesses. Although the poem evokes a partial reality, it accedes no authority to it but prefers to renovate history and create a Pākehā mythology from which Māori agency is scrupulously absented. It fully invests in enchantment and musicality rather than ethically engaging with pained bodies and affrighted persons.

Curnow's modernism was sensitive to time and place but not overwhelmed by it. The poems of *Island and Time* are rhetorically, descriptively, and formally multifaceted. But they never dare to show what has been kept secret since the foundation of New Zealand even as they dance and sing about its mis-directions, isolation, and false-consciousness, the fruits of the blood the poems insistently hymn:

> These poems are modernist, without a doubt, but … they wear the imprint of their place and time of origin lightly, and they disport not in ideas but in music. They can be disembedded from anthologies and polemics that try to pin them down and instead be sung, recited, and choreographed. They bring 'island' (New Zealand) and 'time' (judgment *sub specie aeternitatis*) into relation but not for the purposes of celebrating the island's glories. The island is merely where one dances. Readers are invited to dance, too, wherever they may stand (Reed 65).

I agree with Reed that the poems of *Island and Time* can be dis-embedded from polemics and their extraordinary linguistic choreography enjoyed for its own sake. But when confronting historical violence and poems' dehumanising misrepresentations of it, should such musical licence be so willing granted? Poems' musicality can illuminate the past's horrors and misalliances. But rather than using maximal modernist poetics to embody violent reality more comprehensively, "The Victim", where Curnow forces a union of extraordinary energy between the poem's momentariness and Bergsonian *la durée*, shies from cultural empathy, physical reality, and contemporary violence. *Island and Time* makes violence a matter of philosophical qualification rather than mimetic embodiment. The book casts Pākehā as the victims of a violence cannot be seen and hardly heard and so is unattributable. Māori, whose blood steeps the collection, were preponderantly those to whom violence was done to make

New Zealand what it is. But whether absented by scruple, incomprehension, or failure of nerve, they are nowhere to be seen in *Island and Time*. And in the space poetically emptied of them, violent enchantments magic a sleepwalking nation into being.

Chapter Two: In the Orphic Undertow – Robert Sullivan's Captain Cook in the Underworld

Pākehā poets have surprisingly neglected the eighteenth-century English explorer James Cook as a subject. There is nothing to match the scale, scope, and ambition of the major Australian modernist poet Kenneth Slessor's "Five Visions of Captain Cook". This inattention might reflect calendrical coincidence between the tricentenary of Tasman's 1642 encounter at Mohua and the poetic maturity of Slessor's New Zealand equivalent, Allen Curnow, who dealt with Tasman's abortive landfall in his poetry, including "The Victim" and "The Unhistoric Story", which I analysed in the previous chapter. However, Cook and his legacy have been the focus of significant work by Māori and Pacific poets, most notably Robert Sullivan's *Captain Cook in the Underworld*,[9] a book-length poem based on a commissioned libretto for an opera by composer John Psathas marking the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Wellington's Orpheus Choir. It is a poem of often competing voices—Orpheus; an "Absolution Chorus"; a sailors' chorus, Māui, the soul of a chief killed in an early encounter, and Venus; and Cook himself—in which violence is determinative and yet largely out of sight. *Captain Cook* is a thoroughly postmodern poem: its indeterminacy is constitutional and it radically prioritises process. Physicality becomes psyche and world becomes word.

This chapter explores how Sullivan's poem relates to its signalled sources and predecessors, which, like its narratology, it interprets through idiosyncratic Jungianism. The poem uses psycho-poetics to refigure the historical Cook as a semi-mythological antihero with distinctly Ulyssean characteristics, whose violence is de-corporatised and personalised.

[9] Hereafter referred to as *Captain Cook.*

Agency shifts from the British Crown's objective authorisation to a more generalised Eurocentric subjectivity. Cook's individuality correspondingly becomes a synecdoche for colonial trespass. The poem transforms his real-world victims into Jungian shadow-projections who seem to vocalise real-world trauma. The poem requires its readers to place Cook in historical context and not to condemn him for his accident of birth. But he realises his violence's cause and effects at the insistence of a polysemic Orpheus/Maui, an authoritative interlocutor situated outside time's and space's constraints. Violent enchantment affectively magics Cook into self-realisation; the Pacific realises its autobiographical agency and absolves him. Cook, depoliticised and ahistorical, becomes a character in Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa's story.

* * *

Captain Cook begins with a proem where the "Absolution Chorus" states its intentions for the eponymous explorer: "we look to redeem from burning / James, a man of his day, in hellfire" (1). They do so with "twenty-first century hindsight" (1), which opposes Cook's historically contingent partiality and ignorance. The Englishman discovers islands that others had already discovered and goes about his navigations and encounters oblivious of "the prejudices of the unborn colony" (1). Nonetheless, the Choir absolves him for "the mores of his age" and for "overlooking the inhabitants" of islands he claimed for "the angel Albion" (1). Given the Chorus's self-proclaimed powers to absolve, Cook's absolution is a *fait accompli*: the poem explains why he needs and how he gets this dispensation.

The poem proper begins in the epic mode: *in media res* and with an invocation. It is not addressed to one of the nine Greek muses but to epithetical "bright Orpheus" (3), a mortal Thracian son of Apollo and the muse Calliope. He is famed for his poetry, song, and auguries; and for his adventures as an argonaut, tragic romance with Eurydice, descent into the

underworld, and riverine dismemberment. Attention shifts without notice to Cook's "first voyage" (4). Orpheus guides Cook's navigations. The undead pilot is a "musical stowaway" whose "fierce spirit" directs the ship on its mission to "glimpse" the planet Venus "in a glass" (4). Cook speaks at length about Tahiti and the enjoyment and respite he and his crew had there amongst the "friendly islanders", whom he reckons as "the gentlest, a breezy caress" while indulging himself in parochial outbursts such as "*Endeavour* / rules the waves, and soon the heavens!" (5). After setting out again, the crew proclaim their steadfastness and loyalty to their captain and declare that they are "disciplined" and "English through and through" (7), to which Cook responds by stating his willingness to "whip them" and comparing them unfavourably to the "gracious / natives" (8). Although he emphasises his priorities are science and discovery, he also suggests he might "take one of their fry / back as a toy" to please "HM" (His Majesty King George III) (8). After failing to sight Venus as had hoped, he retires to his cabin for "a tot" (9), which induces a vision of Orpheus falsely "claiming he's a deity" and instructing Cook "not deny your sadness" (11). Cook sets sail southwards, his crew reiterates its loyalty to him, and Venus apologises for having not appeared while imploring him to "listen to my singing, / for beauty and science intertwined in healing" (12). She announces her intention to "guide him through the shades far / toward the southern land … Aotearoa of white alps and deep harbours, a land [he will] be proud to call [his] own" (13). But she also warns him to "beware your anger", eschew violence, and "remember you are the new ones here" (13). The crew then addresses Cook, beseeching him to recognise that although they are "from the lowest classes" (14), they are blessed with ancestral "Saxon" knowledge of "the stars and fates" (15). They ominously warn Cook of "mad men" who would "capture" him (15).

They are suddenly interrupted by "Young Nick" (15), the 12-year-old assistant to the ship's surgeon Nicholas Young, announcing he has sighted land. Cook, at first "*too frightened to understand*" him, excitedly announces he will claim it "all for his Majesty's domains" (15). He is gratified by not needing "to brood on Venus", prospective "Nuggets to pocket, and women to die for" (16), and fame's beguilement. But he soon reverts to scientism, calling on his draughtsman "to start a map" (16), telling him he wants "every detail of this place planned" (17) until schizophrenically reverting to rhapsody as he praises Britain for being "a star shining on knowledge, a star shining / on kindness, a star shining on the crying / masses ignorant of the wisdom of the West" before again allowing himself and his crew to "Go to Morpheus, gently into the night" (17).

Cook awakens and swoons after "visions / of arching mountains, aeolian breeze, / nubile and agile innocents dotted between the trees" (19). But such bucolics are tempered by knowing that the crew has "rediscovered their lust for life, / and their unfortunate hosts" (19-20). The "peoples of this island" (21) suddenly address Cook, not yet one of the "pillars turned to rubble / in postmodern society" (20) but rather an agent of "flag-fluttering history set in motion" (20). They intersperse their imprecations with Hawaii pidgin English and hip-hop slang: "let's make Cook a deity: Hail Da King! / The biggest kill machine / with a crew to match—just look at that hat, / he's gotta be a god, blat blat blat!" (20-21). They beg him "to stop killing / our people" (21). They end their address in ironic unctuousness; Cook responds with "another volley / to stop their sorry prattle" (22) and in a *volte face* requests more foodstuffs. Remembering the "Admiralty's orders" (23), he notes "They were clear, / 'tis sad, but the shooting, 'twas defence / of the true king's men / against barbarity" before retiring to

parse again "the classics, timely homilies / dredged from antiquity" with Orpheus, his "only friend a shadow" (23).

Two sentences swiftly summarise Cook's subsequent voyages. He casts himself as a tragically overreaching hero: like Dante's Odysseus, he sails "past the Pillars of Hercules where flags mean nothing" (24). He once more soliloquises on his self-ascribed misfortune: he is mistaken for a god, dazzled by what he takes as flattery, and "natives" take advantage of his goods and services, to which his response is to "show them who's boss, a crackdown, / let's toss some gunpowder around" (25). The result is "nine dead in the first couple of days, a sad affray" (25). He absolves himself because "they challenged us and we responded" (25). He is torn between salvation offered by "the gentle Solander / of the library, his botanical perspective" and "that entreating lyre, the Orpheus chap" (26). He continues vacillating between self-righteousness and self-pity as well as between self-recrimination and self-justification, calling himself "a common wooden idol" and "a poor sinner" (27).

His "fate" eventually leads him to Hawaii where "Not a week has passed and they / have stolen our long-boat" (27). Cook decides they "must pay in blood" (33). Again pushed onwards to his "far-flung destiny … far from the altars of my Whitby youth" (33) by forces beyond his keening, he cries out at the last:

> I myself
>
> am felled—I'm felled—
>
> I am lying face down in the water … bleeding
>
> the sea red around me … I am part of the sea! (34)

The Pacific "closes around Cook like a mother" (34). This death is the dissolution of "the old him" (35), the timebound and contingent agent of Eurocentric history. He is purified and

Orpheus gives him "the chance to know / what you have done in life" (35). But Cook's guide has shed his Greek mantle and become "the culture of the Pacific". Taking the vantage of "the Underworld, Rarohenga", now he sings to Cook with his "Māui throat" (35). Cook is resummoned to account "*for the shootings*" not for "redemption, just integrity by chance" (36). Cook submits he "wasn't doing it for the fun" (36); expedience and responsibility drove his actions. Maui tells him if his "soul is to cease wandering" he must "face justice" and meet in "Rarohenga, gross Hades" the victims of his "unequal muskets" (37), which will also allow him "to take away the pain / that [his] descendants will bear" (38). Cook is abruptly overcome with shame and he agrees to the audience.

The poem's reiterations continue as Cook makes another speech excusing himself by claiming his expeditions "were agents / of a greater power" (41-42), which earns rebuke by "the soul of a chief / of the coastal middle east / of the north island" who is Orpheus/Māui's "only witness" (42). The chief scorns Cook for the disease he brought to Aotearoa and for the "people mutilated, murdered, by [his] wormy crew" (43). Orpheus/Māui implores Cook to reject self-pity and say what he has learned. Cook bemoans his hubris and self-serving fealty but complains reciting facts has led him to "learn nothing" (46). But he performs his last *volte-face*: finally casting away his rationality, he decides "to turn to [his] emotions" and weeps, which clears his eyes so he can look upon "the face of the great leviathan, Aotearoa" (47). Finally, he can "understand … // these souls of the shade, these destinies taken / by my shots and my blades" (48). He begs for death. Orpheus/ Māui grants his wish before ending the poem with a rollcall reminiscent of R.A.K Mason's in "A Song of Allegiance" as he says he will:

pluck a line of poets turned in unison to the sun
following the warmth of unseen rays until they splay
on vowels with colours. Homer Curnow Dante
Rimbaud Tuwhare Baxter – Māui and Orphic blood. (50)

* * *

The poem's three epigraphs claim poetic lineage rather than establish meaningful associative context. The first, the third stanza of part four of Coleridge's "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner", is a *cri de cœur*: "Alone, alone, all, all alone, / Alone on a wide wide sea! / And never a saint took pity on / my soul in agony" (268-71). The mariner requires a saint to give him succour because he holds himself responsible for the deaths of "Four times fifty living men" (252) by hubristically flirting with the "Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH" (208). Sullivan's "Absolution Chorus" makes a similarly couched plea for Cook's dispensation:

He didn't know to presume discovery

Was a lie, nor did he know the prejudices
of the unborn colony. Forgive the Ulysses
of his day…. (1)

The second epigraph is from the end of Canto XXXIV of Dante's *The Inferno* when the poet and Virgil emerge from Hell and find themselves in the Southern Hemisphere atop Mount Purgatory. In the previous Canto, Dante and Virgil had negotiated the pit of Hell, its ninth and final circle, where betrayers of family, country, and friends and guests are punished in the frozen Lake Cocytus. Cook likewise finds himself in a cold hell. He, too, has committed fraud against a benefactor—his violence done to islanders who gave him food, shelter, and

human company. The third epigraph is from Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, a book-length epic poem reimagining Homeric archetypes and ideas of heroism and rivalry from a late-twentieth century post-colonial perspective:

> Because Rhyme remains the parentheses of palms
> shielding a candle's tongue, it is the language's
> desire to enclose the loved world in its arms (Walcott 75)

Hilton Als suggests Walcott reimagines the Homeric panoply "with black bodies and black voices" as a "marriage of … classicism and … nativism, and a hymn to the seductiveness of the ancient world" (xx). In Dante we see the poet climbing out of terrible and eternal containment; Walcott shows us creation's linguistic embrace and the shielding of an evanescent flame, two metaphors of protection from the unloving world. Its relevance, however, to *Captain Cook* is merely associative, a gesture towards trans-cultural fascination of myth and Ancient Greece. As far as safekeeping goes, it is difficult to attribute such motivations to Cook. The poem suggests he needs protection from himself and the damage he does to his own psyche. But his victims' need is far more grievous: they plead Cook to stop his actions rather than seek shelter from third-parties, including Orpheus/Maui, the poem's presiding powers. The *Omeros* quotation, like the other epigraphs, neither meaningfully contextualises Cook's violence or his victim's predicaments nor sounds themes developed in the poem. All three quotations are an opening bookend of literary figures (Coleridge-Dante-Walcott) complementing the concluding one ("Homer Curnow Dante / Rimbaud Tuwhare Baxter" (50)). Rather than broadening the poem's hermeneutic horizon, they establish descent.

Sullivan also appends a list of six "Works Consulted". The outlier is Robert Graves's *Greek Myths* (1955), a breezily syncretic if characteristically heterodox account of its familiar

matter. Like the epigrams' unmined potential meanings, it seems to have had little direct influence on the poem, although both texts idiosyncratically read the classical corpus. The others focus on Cook: J.C. Beaglehole's *The Life of Captain Cook* (1974) and Anne Salmond's *Two Worlds* (1991); John Robson's *Captain Cook's World: Maps of the Life and Voyages of James Cook RN* (2000); Gananath Obeyesekere's *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Myth-Making in the Pacific* (1992) and Marshall Sahlins's *How Natives Think: About Captain Cook for Example* (1995). The latter two's authors had an academic anthropological debate about claims that native Hawaiians believed Cook 'was' Lono, an akua deity associated, amongst other things, with fertility, music, and peace, all of which are amongst the poem's recurring motifs. However, I can find nothing in the poem that directly connects with positions argued in either book. I find it likely that the references signal the debate itself, since the poem comprises alternatingly authoritative monologues and *mea culpas* amongst incessant disputation.

The list has notable omissions: for example, even though Cook is the poem's most talkative character, the consulted works do not include Cook's *Journals*, despite their being the best available source for Cook's voice and opinions "as a man of his age" (1). J.C. Beaglehole's *The Life of Captain James Cook*, which the poem's sources include, does use the published *Journals*, such as this account of the killings two days after first landfall in New Zealand:

> I am aware that most humane men who have not experienced things of this nature will censure my conduct in firing upon the people in their boat nor do I myself think that the reason I had for seizing upon her will at all justify me, and had I thought that they would have made the least resistance I would not have come near them, but as they did I was not to stand still and suffer either myself or those that were with me to be knocked on the head. (Cook 171)

Compare this to the tone of voice of the poem's Cook when he reflects on the same events:

> Oh the Admiralty's orders? They were clear,
>
> 'tis sad, but the shooting, 'twas defence
>
> Of the true king's men
>
> Against barbarity, fine barbars
>
> Granted, but nevertheless far from equals—ah, ah,
>
> it is a shame. (23)

Keown suggests "Sullivan is skilful and playful in his manipulation of linguistic register: Cook's voice emerges through a mixture of archaic/formal and contemporary/colloquial English" ("Review" 184). But as the extracts show, neither squares with the historical Cook's manner of speech. The poem supplants the *Journals*' stream of monosyllabic compunction—at the very least intimating that Cook felt professionally discomfited by the deaths his command had needlessly inflicted—with literary usages and archaisms, entirely uncharacteristic disregard for orders, suggestions the actions were defensive rather than offensive, and an entirely ahistorical motive.

Captain Cook fills the void of verifiability with story. Wood has noted the poem's "selective postmodern approach to historical fact" (262). McHale argues that in "postmodernism, narrativity returns, but with a difference. Where modernist poets recoiled from the tradition of the narrative long-poem, postmodernists recoil from the modernist recoil" ("Weak Narrativity" 162). But this reengagement with storytelling only goes so far as "telling stories poorly, distractedly, with much irrelevance and indeterminacy, in such a way as to evoke narrative coherence while at the same time withholding commitment to it and

undermining confidence in it" ("Weak Narrativity" 165). *Captain Cook*, like the postmodern long poems considered by McHale, uses techniques and devices from the postmodern novel for constructing fictional worlds, including temporal pluralization (coinherence of past, present, and future); ontological heterogeneity, whereby beings of different ontological orders coexist (ghosts, humans, gods, and so on); narrative proliferation and stratification (such as by embedding or stacking narratives); foregrounded dislocation of text and the world; and destabilisation, fragmentation, or disintegration of fictional worlds' ontological grounding (*Difficult Whole* 3). Many of these postmodern approaches to fictional world building are also common elements of contemporary Māori literary practice, which Alistair Fox characterises as "hybridity" (152). They also have precedents in what Lachy Paterson has called "the interplay of oral and textual forms" in nineteenth century Māori culture (92). Sullivan's poem uses all such techniques with post-modern novelistic freedom to articulate a multidimensional narrative. I will discuss how these devices shape the poem's articulation of violence and authority later in this chapter.

In lieu of postmodernism's *bêtes noires*—metanarratives such as Christian redemptionism and triumphalist bourgeois progressivism—the poem posits a decidedly Lyotardian grand récit—Jungianism. The epic invocation in the poem's first six stanzas does not mention the muses whereas it twice namechecks the Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst: firstly, as one who "more than a century in the future / argues for the stories of ancient culture / lodestars for the psyche"; and then adjectivally to qualify a "Jungian Olympus", from which the poem issues (2-3). Jungian conceptions of violence manifest most strongly in the poem's understanding of Cook's violence as a vehicle for self-fulfilment, albeit one with significant if

not tragic collateral effects. Jung postulated two types of artistic creation: the psychological and the visionary, the latter of which he describes as:

> a primordial experience which surpasses man's understanding and to which in his weakness he may easily succumb. The very enormity of the experience gives it its value and its shattering impact. Sublime, pregnant with meaning, yet chilling the blood with its strangeness, it arises from timeless depths; glamorous, daemonic, and grotesque, it bursts asunder our human standards of value and aesthetic form, a terrifying tangle of eternal chaos ("Psychology and Literature" para. 141)

These notions of creation and what it creates are fitting for the baroque postmodern fictional massifs of Gass or Pynchon as well as a postmodern long poem such as *Captain Cook*. In this view, creation is inherently violent because it exposes the ego to Dionysian creative forces that would destroy it so it might be born anew. Such "'violence' of the Self is … not malign, as it is not wholly destructive: it does not seek to eradicate all ego-consciousness, but seeks the ego's continual improvement by disrupting its misguided orientations … and forces the ego, often against its will, into a new identity" (Huskinson 438). Cook explicitly undergoes such ego dissolution and reformation: his violence, then, is a prerequisite for self-improvement. The poem can therefore only ambivalently assert his deeds' malignancy.

The poem's perspective on violence squares with the Jungian theorist Wolfgang Giegerich's assertion that "Violence, at least certain instances of it, comes from the soul and is its own authentic form of expression, indeed, at times, a soul need" (1). Here violence is an essential, fundamental, and pre-rational human gesture fulfilling an internal demand made within each subject. Cook, too, is most "real" when rationality's trappings fall away, such as when exploring at sea borne by the wind and tides, obeying authorities deeper than the

Admiralty or Crown; or being violent, about which his crew sing "Our Saxon ancestors knew the stars and fates. / Hear our blood calling you in a dream oh Captain" (15). They are carried on tides of pure, unregulated, and instinctual knowledge against the measured and ossifying rigidity of science and law. "A handkerchief won't hide the blood" (22) and civilisation's trappings cannot hide the essential self, which effloresces in off-stage violence. In the poem's universe, the legitimacy of Cook's violence does not come from the state and the rights it allows and obligations it demands but from his soul's dictates:

> The soul has no room for … childish idealism. It is concerned with its own *objective reality*. It wants a *real* transformation of the constitution of consciousness. And such a change cannot be brought about via the ego's high-flown dreams of what would be desirable, but only from below, through the soul's quasi-alchemical work with real matter, a work that is counter-natural and a *via negativa*, a work of negation and, often, violence (dismemberment, pulverization, flaying, putrefaction, *mortificatio*, burning and cooking, corroding, corruption, evaporation, etc.) (Giegerich 17)

The poem similarly sees the state and its laws and institutions as a carapace over the essential and irreducible personal agent. The proem declared we must see Cook as a "a man of his age", an individual acting on his own behalf. Cook harrows into absolution and the British Crown, at whose behest the historical Cook acted, is absolved from the wings before Cook's personal drama begins.

* * *

Jungianism also manifests in the poem's psychological figuration of space and time. It scarcely registers geographic distance—it does not mention the vastness of Cook's seagoing—or physical proximity—characters are either present or absent for each other and there are no

degrees of closeness. What matters is their relationship, especially symbolically. Eternity fixes this relational symbolism in perpetuity, so duration is inconsequential and time passes without measure: Cook's journeys, for example, seem to take no time at all. All that matters is now, before, and after, like three infinitely broad but infinitely thin sandwiched planes. In *Captain Cook*, time seen horizontally is an unending line; seen vertically, it is two-dimensional space whose centre can be anywhere. This upends traditional notions of cause and effect:

> The course of history itself compels us to recognize the ontological level as the new ground of our existence.…It compels us, figuratively speaking, to abandon our fixation on individual "things" in "space", things that can be demonstrated and encircled, and not even to rest content with a "minor expansion of consciousness" … [T]he task is not only to become aware of it, but also to translocate our being from the level of those things that are always in a space to the level of spatiality itself. (Giegerich 412)

The poem exemplifies Giegerich's compulsion into awareness and translocation. Cook is made aware despite but ultimately for himself that his non-territorial (because interpersonal) transgressions extend beyond delimitation into infinite stasis. They lead him to a realm where neither movement nor measure are possible.

History cannot be plotted in a fictional world that does not conform to everyday spatiality or temporality. Its *mise en* scène is amorphous and distributed in depth rather than horizontally. The reader must negotiate receding layers of essentiality mapped from rationality and language at the most superficial to pure prelinguistic emotionalism at the ground of being, which is where the poem ends with Cook lachrymosely submitting himself to purifying waves of emotion. He reaches these depths through a psychological "mythscape"

of oneiric simultaneities and stratifications; a mental space deriving from an imaginative cultural heritage of folklore and religion, from fairy tales to allegories, from descriptions of the afterlife to prophecies of the end of the world. It is "an ersatz tactical [space] unburdened by adherence to historical realities or … even natural laws" (Harvey). The poem uses this tactical space to arrange discursive strata, which are determined by Cook's receding levels of justification for his violent actions: Kingly authority, his "civilising" mission, military duty and following orders, responsibility to his crew, personal ambition, fate, and awakening a hitherto dormant soul's or subconscious's dictates. The poem exposes and contrasts these "quadrants" but it does not examine or question them. It primarily uses them for establishing polarities across which "Cook's mind" shuttles, instead of representing geographical zones, such as Tahiti or Aotearoa, where physical bodies gain agency or lose it.

The most significant part of Cook's mindscape is "this cold hell" where Cook—having submitted what he calls his "forced evidence"—finds himself despite the Absolution Chorus's intention to "redeem from burning / James, a man of his day, in hellfire" (42). Such cold hells are uncommon but not unprecedented. As mentioned earlier, The Dantean inferno is frozen at its deepest core, where Satan resides with Judas in his mouth. Ranging more broadly, there are the Buddhist eight cold hells (八寒地獄; Japanese: hakkan-jigoku) and the Norse Niflheim, primarily a realm of primordial ice and cold and the dwelling place of Hel and her subjects who did not die heroic or notable deaths. These precedents share the idea that hell is where affective capacities are absent: in Dante's hell, there is no love; in the Buddhist, there is no desire; in Niflheim, there is no heroic passion. As in Dante, Cook's torments are tailormade. Hell is where he reckons with cold calculation, such as the detached instrumental rationality of "the Admiralty"—a kind of hell-on-earth in the poem's terms—and Cook's scientific

mission, which the poem contrasts with salvatory heat, blood, and emotion. Such things constitute the poem's strongest reality and their movement and change animate life. Cook's hellishness is static and it registers only in complaint rather than description.

Even so, when the poem speaks of "these islands" (1), they are not just any islands or islands of the mind. They are the ones "discovered by lovers / Kupe and his wife Kuramarotini" (1). As the "Absolution Chorus" makes clear, these islands are specifiable because they have been claimed: an "innocent slip of land" becomes an "unborn colony" because the "angel Albion" proclaimed dominion over it. Innocence in *Captain Cook* means something or someone has not been assigned to a category; categorisation shades into identity; and mis-categorisation and forcible objectification are colonial prerogatives. Such category errors culminate with people turning into things: when humans are made into "bodies on beaches" (25).

Combining bodily motionlessness—mental rather than physical movement—and metamorphosis—especially from person into corpse—privileges time over space: it is change *in situ*. Time is measured by the "argosy in our Cook's heart" (12), a fixed point transformed in the poem's watery cosmos. An argosy in one sense refers to a type of large merchant ship, quite different from Cook's *Endeavour*. The former has significant Shakespearean cachet: in *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia tells Antonio that "you shall find three of your argosies / Are richly come to harbour suddenly" (5.1.276-277). These ships laden with the fruits of trade suggest the term's secondary meaning: a rich or plentiful supply of a desirable good. Cook's heart, then, contains riches or the means of travel to get them. And while argosy has different etymological roots to the mythical vessel the Argo piloted by Jason in his quest for the Golden Fleece, the pun is plain. Cook, like Jason, is a questing sailor and the poem links him to a

mythological genealogy set in a multipartite didactic and psychological framework. As the subsequent lines remind the reader, "Carl Jung more than a century in the future / argues for the stories of ancient culture / lodestars for the psyche" (3). This tells us we should not measure Cook merely against the mores, conventions, law, and knowledge of his day: ultimate accountability comes from the collective unconsciousness storing universally significant but deeply personal truths. Despite Cook's scientism, his undertaking is guided less by rationality than by emotion. Adventure resides in Cook's "heart", the source of love and life. He travels on the tides and winds that circulate water around the world like blood circulating in the body. Time and space become merely measures of Cook's progress to self-realisation until they fully dissolve into a Pacific nirvana at the poem's end.

* * *

Given the poem's perspectives on time and space, how do its characters relate to corresponding historical people? Orr argues that for Sullivan, "Cook's navigations, however 'drowned … in red' are not the originating acts of a heroic discoverer but a peculiarly violent instance of a well-established pattern of voyaging through the Polynesian triangle" (167). The poem casts Cook as an anti-hero exemplified by Odysseus: one whose 'true' motivations are never clear, not least of all to himself; one whose Aristotelian *hamartia* is confusion, which proves mutually fatal for him and people whom he encounters while blindly pursuing his quest. In one of Sullivan's "works referenced", Sahlins offers the following capsule characterisation of Cook as:

> one of the Enlightenment's great "philosophical travellers", an incarnation of its rationalising project in the scientific sense as well as in the registers of technological improvement and commercial development. An expert cartographer, mathematician,

> and seaman, Cook's machine-like competence, together with his rise from humble origins to high rank and world fame, made him a personal icon of the developing capitalist-industrial order of which he was also the global agent. (10)

This combines decidedly religious ideas—the low-born incarnation of the world's presiding power transformed into an icon—and an image of Cook as automaton: a "machine-like", mathematical, rational, and calculating, but also pre-programmed agent devoid of personal historical agency. The poem takes up this characterisation under the sign of "fate", which it repeatedly uses in connection with Cook in the guise of a robotic Odysseus.

How alike are Odysseus and Cook? The sequence's proem tells us to see Cook for what he is: "a man of his day", who "didn't know … discovery / was a lie" or the "prejudices / of the unborn colony", whom and which we—whether the opening's choral speaker or the reader—can only see with "twenty-first century hindsight" (1). But Odysseus was not an explorer; he was a soldier and a strategist, renowned for his wiles. Cook does share Odysseus' hubris, for which Dante condemns him to Hell, where the poet learns of the Greek's final vainglorious and fatal adventure and his willing participation in the expeditionary violence wreaked on Troy. In *Inferno* XXVI, Odysseus/Ulysses has been assigned to the pit of the Fraudulent Counsellors for his voyage past the Pillars of Hercules into the unknown, where, like Cook, Ulysses endangers his crew by single-mindedly pursuing knowledge to the ends of the earth. Ulysses eventually sights the mountain of Purgatory; but a *force majeure*, a whirlwind against his stratagem is useless, sinks his ship and drowns him. Such martial arrogance—careerist ascension to the chauvinistic and expansionist "mores of his age" (1)—is what outwardly seems to have led Cook into "hellfire" (3), notwithstanding his constitutional fatefulness. But Cook does not breach the Pillars of Hercules for his own

designs: he complains that "admirals will send me on forever" sails "past the Pillars of Hercules where flags mean / nothing!" (24). There are many more differences between the two figures. Odysseus was an amateur sailor who struggled to find his way back to Ithaka; Cook was an expert navigator and cartographer whose successful journeys spanned the globe. Odysseus was a mesomorphic hardened soldier who ferociously, directly, and without fuss dispatched myriad foes; Cook was tall and thin and not especially athletic and does not seem to have personally killed anyone. Odysseus was famous for his cunning, wiles, and self-possession whereas Cook was notable for his adeptness and thorough-going competence. The differences are too numerous to ignore. The poem's Cook is justified in resisting his identification with Odysseus as forcefully as other characters assert it.

Should we instead read "Cook" *pars pro toto* for colonialism and British imperialism more particularly; for its presumptuousness, paternalism, authoritarianism, sentimentality, and violence? Briar Wood argues that Sullivan's poem "condenses Cook into a signifier for English" (262). Sullivan's poem often makes explicit colonialist concomitance of sentimentality and violence: the latter is frequently reported apologetically as if it resulted from regrettable mutual misunderstandings and disproportionate casualties were the lamentable outcome of technological advantage. The poem's representational impotency and indirectness when representing violence is because symbols and synecdoche are mimetically weak. The poem insists violence is fundamentally Cook's personal psychological problem but he is also a synecdoche of empire, a quasi-heroic cipher, without effective subjectivity. This circularity makes impossible to distinguish where Cook begins and Great Britain ends, let alone their respective agency and responsibility. But because the poem so resolutely stresses

the redemptive expansion of Cook's Jungian psyche, it is untenable to see him as a symbol for the English state, which would require an entirely different restorative justice process.

The poem is not explicit about the transgression for which Cook requires absolution, but it is not his scientific curiosity, his "cold hell" and frigid rationality notwithstanding. I noted above Sahlins' religious characterisation of Cook: if he is neither Homeric hero nor Albion personified, is he a scapegoat or a special case, a fallen hero granted divine restitutive privileges inaccessible to mere mortals? The poem does not state if Cook's postmortem dispensations equally apply to all souls of those who behaved like he did in the Pacific; for instance, lowly marines or Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne. Absolution most commonly signifies formal release from guilt, a sentence, or obligation. But it also has a religious denotation: remission of sins by an ecclesiastical authority, which requires the penitent's confession. But Cook issues his defence after the Hawaiians have already (physically) killed him. But his crimes are so bad he must be textually exhumed and reanimated. His violent death was too lenient, too extreme, or too partial; it lacked the conciliation Sullivan's poem enacts on his behalf. Retributive violence is insufficient but *Captain Cook* does not suggest how we might better enact restorative justice: Cook's absolution is utterly monodic.

In *Captain Cook*, killers have names but victims do not; the former are particularised individuals and the latter recede into generality. Cook, the central character, has a name known amongst Thrones and Dominions: "The goddess sings your name: James" (12). Venus's personal address to Cook calls "James" by his forename six times in twelve lines. But beyond the centre-stage (anti)hero are his mortal victims: unnamed, only counted. Cook is incessantly numerical: he says he sailed "ten thousand miles" (40, 12). For him the dead are numbers—"nine dead in the first couple of days" (25)—or a homogenous agglomeration he

identifies with plural pronouns (they/them) and collective nouns ("natives", "barbars", "savages", and suchlike terms) readily reducible to "bodies on beaches" (25). They are never given proper names or even differentiated as "orators / and warriors, artists and singers, laughers and priests" (38, 9-11). We know the names of two Māori killed by Cook's crew: Te Maro, a Ngāti Oneone leader, and the Rongowhakaata chief Te Rakau. But the poem's only Māori speaker is the unidentified "soul of a chief" who is the poem's "only witness" and "share[s] / his story nameless" (42) in two five-line stanzas. Ironically, once Cook can finally see variation and difference—"*fine family men, these carvers and hunters, these wearers of fine cloaks, no blunter / orators, singers of the finest poems of their land*" (48, 8-10)—his becomes uncountable, undifferentiable, dissolved, merged into the ocean. Secreted at the end of his catalogue is his last and most potent admission: it is "their land" he says as he addresses Māui by his name. He has become part of their story; they are no longer part of his.

But how *real* are the poem's victims? Wood notes that "the characters are mythic figures, so that there is not much call for psychological realism" (263). The poem insistently refers to the dead, Cook's crew, Orpheus, and other figures as "shades" and "shadows". Cook says Orpheus is his "only friend a shadow" (23). The poem makes all these players in Cook's psychodrama Jungian shadow selves: "the expression of our own imperfection and earthliness, the negative which is incompatible with the absolute values; it is our inferior corporeality in contradistinction to the absoluteness and eternity of a soul which 'does not belong to this world.'" (Neumann 40) And Cook consistently sees Māori and Tahitians as simple, sensuous, and totemic as well as deficient in civility and grace. Eric Neumann explains the Jungian position that:

> the shadow, which conflicts with the acknowledged values, cannot be accepted as a negative part of one's own psyche and is therefore projected—that is, it is transferred to the outside world and experienced as an outside object. It is combated, punished, and exterminated as "the alien out there" instead of being dealt with as "one's own inner problem. (50)

Cook likewise follows prompts to fight, correct, and kill the shades and shadows he encounters on his "journey". He only stops when he is forced to deal with his "own inner problem": emotional disconnection.

These victimised shadows serve to instigate the absolution and forgiveness announced in the proem: Cook's "shootings" give them little choice. He is likewise compelled to do what he does because if the shadow remains unacknowledged and unintegrated into the conscious personality, it can become an extremely dangerous and destabilizing force, especially for servants of empire like Cook, for whom the projection of:

> evil cannot be acknowledged as "his own evil" at all, since consciousness is still too weakly developed to be able to deal with the resulting conflict. It is for this reason that evil is invariably experienced by mass man as something alien, and the victims of shadow projection are therefore, always and everywhere, the aliens. Inside a nation, the aliens who provide the objects for this projection are the minorities; if these are of a different racial or ethnological complexion or, better still, of a different colour, their suitability for this purpose is particularly obvious. (Neumann 52)

Until Cook plumbs his psyche, he is frequently hysterical, a neurotic blatherskite, a hermeneutic mobius strip extemporising in self-contradictory torrents. The narrative is therapeutic: insightful interlocutors facilitate Cook talking his way towards self-

understanding. He is the analysand; Orpheus is his analyst guiding him towards a place where he can acknowledge his shadow self and the damage caused by his failure to bring it to light.

The reader has been told to remember the argosy is "in our Cook's heart"—not in the Pacific and not in Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa. Cook plainly behaves neurotically and hysterically throughout the text. He can hardly stay awake: Cook longs for "Morpheus / and his retinue" and the text devotes significant space to "the dreaming of the crew, our psyches in flight / while our bodies sleep" (14). Dreams blend with the nominally workaday world; he sees things no one else does; his carers are occasionally insistent but never importune him—they prompt, confront, comfort, and absolve him. There are exceptions, such as when "the soul of a chief / of the coastal middle east / of the North Island" (42) makes his statement for the prosecution in language its addressee can understand but also in language he is unlikely to fathom: "E Kara, tenei te mihi atu ki a koe, te rangatira. Timata to korero pouri. Mauria te wairua o te whenua kauri" (43). But overwhelmingly the poem presents a Cook who, for example, suffers from disarrangement of his senses after retiring "to the great cabin / to tot" (9), which makes him "hear singing, unearthly / music from a lyre" emanating from a Greek claiming he's a "deity" (9) who directly petitions the erstwhile man of science to "go onwards, take your destiny and your fame" (11). Cook is an unreliable narrator and an unswervingly fatalistic navigator.

So Cook behaves—to be precise, speaks—more like a Jungian analysand than an eighteenth-century English mariner. The poem explains this disjunction as Cook failing to recognise his projections, which animates them to act increasingly independently, isolating

him and his illusions from his natural environment. As the preceding discussion shows, the poem configures this misalignment between mind and world in orthodoxly Jungian terms:

> Let us suppose that a certain individual shows no inclination whatever to recognize his projections. The projection-making factor then has a free hand and can realize its object—if it has one—or bring about some other situation characteristic of its power. As we know, it is not the conscious subject but the unconscious which does the projecting. Hence one meets with projections, one does not make them … Projections change the world into the replica of one's own unknown face … The resultant *sentiment d'incompletude* and the still worse feeling of sterility are in their turn explained by projection as the malevolence of the environment, and by means of this vicious circle the isolation is intensified. (Jung *Aion* 9)

The poem's Cook programmatically commits his soul to the "task of ridding itself of "the other" and thereby producing psychology's interiority", which "requires some violence, a violent act, nay, several violent acts'" (Giegerich 4). His crew tells him that they "were lost souls in the shade / until we crewed your ship" (12). Orpheus is his "friend of the vision"—"my only friend a shadow" (23). But he most forcefully characterises his victims as shades and shadows. He says he "cannot share / my reasoning with shadows" because they have no interest in his ratiocinations. As Cook tentatively moves towards vulnerable uncertainty, he cries "How can I profess a strange / god knowing I was equally strange" (46). When Cook reasons that he "can shoot natives clean / through and they die / amazed at our power, no anger, or fright, / they just *die*", (24) his reliability is so questionable and his psychic distress so marked, incredulity is the only reasonable response.

The composite figure Orpheus/ Māui, Cook's Virgilian guide, is also a shadowy figure. Orpheus is the first authority summoned to an audience with Cook and the reader: "bright Orpheus of the singing lyre, / poet exemplar" (3). Such invocations open epics; typically, they summon a presiding muse. But Orpheus is a long-dead mortal and a member of "the cast of shades" the poem calls from the afterlife's darkness. Most ancient Greek sources until Aristotle treat Orpheus as a real historical person[10] whose exploits carried him into the mythical domain. Even the earliest extant mention of him, a two-word fragment of the sixth-century BC lyric poet Ibycus, yokes his name to an epithet referencing his renown: *onomaklyton Orphēn* or "Orpheus famous-of-name". Like Cook, fame serves as his passport from history into myth and between the underworld and the world of real-life violence and poetry. There are more correlations between Cook and Orpheus. The latter was also a sailor of sorts, having travelled with Jason and the Argonauts to find the Golden Fleece; furthermore, he also met a violent and watery death when torn apart by Thracian Maenads for dishonouring Dionysus, his erstwhile patron deity. His head, still singing mournful songs, was cast with his lyre into the Hebrus river, down which it flowed into the sea. Each man's words and deeds, transmitted by the oceans around the world, resonate even after death.

Understanding Cook's potential for miraculous self-realisation and rebirth through violence requires identifying him with his Orphic projection. The Jungian Orpheus symbolizes the potential within persons "'that for a certain length of time almost miraculous effects can be produced by the strength of the imagination, by the exercise of the right kind of art, by the beauty and measure and proportion of music … the art of feeling" (Jung *Visions*

[10] See, for example, Freeman, Kathleen and Hermann Diels, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Harvard University Press 1966.

1293). This power has a cost: even when Orpheus was "doing the right things in the right way and having the right imagination … he lost his soul", as, too, can the human subject, which means "one must return to the life of the earth, or to the cauldron to be made over" (Jung *Visions* 1293). Sullivan's Cook certainly conjures rich and strange things with his imagination. It happens involuntarily, induced by trespass and hubris, each of which pain his soul into phantasmagorias with real world consequences, however ambivalently the poem makes this distinction. Cook, too, is neither poet nor musician; he hears the lyre but cannot sound it. More pertinently, Cook returns to the cauldron, where he undergoes a katabasis to a redemptive underworld.

The poem casts Māui, Orpheus's Janusian alter ego, as an avatar of postmodern lucidity. He is "Good Māui who stalled / the racing sun of heaven" (39), whose power is drawing emotionally authentic speech from those who answer his summons. His role is to "Call them talk" (39) in the revealing light of the stilled sun. It is Māui who calls the poem's "only witness, the soul of a chief" (42), commands Cook "to stop your turning , face me, and tell me what you've learned" (45), and finally facilitates Cook's emotive redemption. The heroic *bone fides* of this "Māui of the page" (47) are unimpeachable:

> He fished up islands everywhere he went. He snared the sun in its path. He called up the several winds. He made fire and invented cookery … he fought and killed several ogres that had eaten almost everyone. He introduced kava. Some see [him] in their dreams, and the occasional … spirit medium … tunes him in during waking hours … [he] is a shape shifter. Sometimes he passes as a caring grandfather, but he also comes as a small boy, although one with astonishing strength. (Lindstrom 20)

Elsdon Best asserted Māui was:

> assuredly the personified form of some phase of light, and so relates to, or represents, life; for, in Polynesian concepts, light and life are intricately connected. Apparently Māui has, in the past, been a vernacular term for "life", or some similar meaning, as witness the Māori expression whana Māui (=to regain life, to cause to live, as of a person rallying from a severe illness)". (43)

Māui in *Captain Cook* represents an alternative Enlightenment, which gives the lie to objective truth and champions emotional authenticity as the only effective source of personal atonement. The proto-European hero the voyaging Māui most resembles is Odysseus. Gunson suggests that Māui is a "common shaman, the trickster noted for shape-changing and cunning" (2). But as the poem's closing strophes assert, the interlocutory 'I' is "Orpheus and Māui" (50), a composite and contradictory character who emotionally cleanses Cook's soul in an affective flood while imploring Cook to "cease to wonder" and to "Know anything" (50). Such contradictions, the strongly emphasised likenesses shared by Cook and his interlocutors, Cook's self-obsession, and the poem's Jungian architecture suggest that as his apparent victims are aspects of himself, so, too, are his mythical guides.

* * *

Captain Cook is a stanzaic pastiche and its prosodic effects are localised. It most often uses verse paragraphs of five lines, which range from three to fifteen syllables, in which the even numbered lines are heavily indented:

> for the greater good. Our expedition
>
> Would take the Māori to the world!
>
> To risk us would be to risk your heralds!

We discharged our mission

So well we were returned anon

On the third trip—hurled into the cannon

by the greed of admirals

exploring good news, an adorable

Distraction from America. What's past

is past but yes I tired, lost my temper, blasted

broadsides instead of talking. (41)

These are representative: run-on stanzas with widely divergent syllable count; irregular but frequent rhyme (lines 2 and 3 in stanza 1, lines 4 and 5 in the next); run-on rhyme across stanzas (anon/cannon) including internally (world/hurled); diacopic internal rhymes (*risk* in line 3, *past* in lines 9 and 10); near rhyme pairs (*admirals/adorable*); frequent consonance (for example *greater good*; *well we were; greed/good* across lines 6 and 7). None of these effects are structural: they are exclusively local intensifications when Cook is piqued, frustrated, or muddleheaded, as in the stanzas above, where he offers no fewer than nine distinct excuses for his conduct, running the gamut across imperial cosmopolitanism (1-2), obeying orders and discharging duty (4), exceeding expectations (5), political covetousness (7), political expediency (8-9), personal fatigue (10), ill-temperedness (10), and martial instincts combined with taciturnity (11). Sullivan's stanzas are a visual pastiche of the elaborate ones used by poetic technicians from Edmund Spenser to Dylan Thomas (and Smithyman), which created complex artifacts and demonstrated their virtuosic mastery of their medium. Cumulatively, Sullivan's are a pasquinade lampooning illusions of linguistic and cultural order: regularity

and predictability is entirely superficial; the deeper reality, the poem suggests, is effluvial, whether of language or emotion.

Captain Cook does register raised narrative intensity with corresponding localised prosodic effects. Such aural intensification frequently happens when Cook remembers the violence for which he is responsible, which usually induces aurally imitative indignant agitation, such as the alliteration of "my blankets black with the blood" or the harsh internal near-rhymes of "I hate quick deaths, can't stomach that / mismatch" (29). Repetition comes in passages of action rather than self-reflection, such as anaphora ("Discovery. Discovery again" (16)) and conduplication (for example, "Ahoy, land ahoy, captain, land ahoy" (15) and "How rugged, oh ho how rugged exploration is!" (16)) This last example is one of the poem's frequent puns, riffing on the fictional song "Dead Man's Chest" ("Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum") from Robert Louis Stevenson's 1883 novel *Treasure Island* to create an ironically pantomime tone. Such effects set the poem's emotional polarities: allusive rhetorical jollity representing the deering-do of boys' own exploration on one hand; and gnarled alliterations echoing Old English prosody as in *Beowulf* for registering the disenchanting "reality" of sanctioned violence. Taken together, they extend the poem's aural and emotional range beyond its preponderant discursiveness so it can immediately register Cook's fluctuations between complacent enchantment and self-disgusted disenchantment.

Despite such prosodic expressiveness, the poem is remarkably desensitised because it only ever reports violence rather than represent it. Most frequently, Cook retells the events:

….these natives were scary,

they gave no quarter, were daring

in the way they fell – weren't easily scattered

by cannon, not that it mattered

to the bloody business of death.… (26)

This is assessment not forensic. Given the emphasis on speech and things heard throughout the poem, things are seldom seen. However, things heard pass through generic filters, such as anachronistic pseudo hip-hop markers: "Muskets blatting like ghetto blaster, pow!" (20); "Hail Da King! / The biggest kill machine / with a crew to match – just look at that hat / he's gotta be a god, blat, blat, blat!" (20-21); and the nursery-rhyming of "Bang! They all fall down!" (20). Representing maimed bodies' reality would be utterly rebarbative in a poem so invested in psychological action and spokenness. Its Jungian symbolic orders, mediated through Cook's spiritual *umwelt*, make such forensic realities untenable.

Sometimes the effects of violence are related in a plain-spoken first-person plural voice: "We aren't gods. We bleed / when you whip us, we scream at your fire sticks" (21). But when Cook talks about a cannonade's aftermath, he worries about decorum wilting at unseemliness because a "handkerchief won't hide the blood" (22). Elsewhere Cook has less compunction: "let's toss some gunpowder around – / load balls not shot, I want bodies on beaches, / just like in New Zealand … it was easier for them / to die from ball than bear the scars from shot" (25). He sometimes has a childishly incredulous tone: "I can shoot natives clean / through and they die / amazed at our power, no anger, or fright / they just *die"* (24). Cook proclaims "I have turned / my blankets black with the blood of these almost men" (29) but maimed, dying, or dead bodies does not intrude into the poem. Cook, far from the detached man of science or hardened Royal Navy veteran of the Seven Years War, behaves like a toddler: occasionally suffering from nightmares but more often incredulous and churlish.

Captain Cook originated as a libretto. According to the book's jacket copy, Sullivan's poem "is a highly stylised, 'operatic' account of the voyages, with similarities to the musical structure of Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' and opera". Briar Wood is more specific, speculating that "At times the musical model seems to have been Offenbach, at others it might have been Gluck" (262). Offenbach is best known for his "opera fantastique" *The Tales of Hoffmann* (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), whose central character is a fictionalised version of German gothic horror and fantasy writer E.T.A Hoffmann. One of the opera's stories is based on Hoffman's "Der Sandmann" ("The Sandman"), which makes much of its protagonist's internal psychological conflict, his difficulties discriminating between hallucinations and reality, and contrasts between Romantic emotionality and Enlightenment rationality. The poem's connection with Gluck is more obvious. Gluck's most famous opera is *Orfeo ed Euridice* (*Orpheus and Eurydice*), an opera on a mythological subject with choruses and dancing. Gluck's *Iphigénie* operas (*Iphigénie en Aulide* and *Iphigénie en Tauride*), hinging on Agamemnon's daughter and the Trojan War, directly deals with state-sanctioned violence and personal trauma. The proposed sacrifice of Iphigénie so the gods will send winds for the Greeks to sail to Troy has obvious resonances with Sullivan's poem.

Such associations aside, do Captain Cook's operatic beginnings have any relevance to its erasure of violence's reality? *Opera director Christopher Alden, in a series of dialogues about violence curated by the Los Angeles Review of Books, notes his medium's capacity for accommodating violence because it is* "a dream-like, non-naturalistic art form with greater similarities to ritualistic Asian theatre than to the Western kitchen sink realism tradition"; or, more simply put, "because of its poetic nature" (Alden). Certainly, Sullivan's poem is "dream-like" and "non-naturalistic". It assumes licence for exploring aleatoric and fatalistic cause and effect

relationships, especially ones without intention and agency. Cook's active subjectivity and his actions' effects seem random or predestined. His subjectivity is decidedly Oedipean: he is existentially ignorant and does not know what he is doing. However, these are not operatic conventions. *Captain Cook* is so phantasmagorical it would be almost unstageable; it is questionable, too, how singable it would be. The poem makes scant use of operatic conventions and knowing it originated as a libretto does very little to aid understanding.

Apart from when the poem assumes a tone of pantomime jollity, it is feverishly oneiric. It most vividly dreams when Hawaiians kill Cook and he disinterestedly experiences death as an apotheosis and dissolution of his contingent selfhood into a Pacific nirvana. The poem's penultimate scene is a scripted Jungian unmasking:

> The marines are nearly ashore. I raise
>
> my arm, cock the pistol, aim
>
> and shudder from the report, and then I myself
>
> am felled—I'm felled—
>
> I am lying face down in the water … bleeding
>
> The sea around me … I am part of the sea!
>
> The sea closes around Cook like a mother,
>
> Takes him in as another
>
> drop in the ocean, speck in the sea,
>
> A bit of flotsam floating free
>
> in the wreck of a dissolving dream …

Out of body, out of breath, Cook joins Orpheus

at the lyre—his friend's chorus

a song to torch the watery pyre

that is Cook's fate, that gyres

up a spout to take our great Cook's soul

down into the great sea. And so goes the old

him….(34-35)

Cook's speech is far more lucid and succinct describing his own death, the only one described in the poem, than it is anywhere else in *Captain Cook*. It is a series of simple declarative statements in temporal and syntactic alignment. Cook looks out into the world and witnesses his men purposively moving in a specifiable location. He unambiguously narrates his own actions and his body's shock at his pistol firing. After a parenthetical double take—"I'm dead"—he cooly describes himself "lying face down in the water". Ellipses, intimating lapsing consciousness, precede a Cunrnovian image of the slain mariner "bleeding the sea red around", another echo of the familiar "multitudinous seas incarnadine" from *Macbeth* (2.2.63).

But while Macbeth is lamenting that all the oceans in the world could not wash the blood from his hands, Cook can cleanse himself. The sea is a body of water, a life-source maternally reembracing him; it is also life's end, a *mater mortis* readmitting him like spermatozoa into her unfathomable womb. Cook, in his "strange and unusual" way, succeeds where Maui failed: this is Hine-nui-te-pō, which Orpheus (singing in his "Maui throat") confirms: *"like Maui, you too have been wreathed in red / by the goddess of death"* (35). Cook

reemerges from his brief annihilation, an eternity rendered with an ellipsis, "Out of body" (34) but with his essential self—his soul—intact. He is "out of breath" (34) and momentarily speechless. He "joins Orpheus / at the lyre" (34): death has made him a fellow poet of the Katabatic mysteries.

How did Orpheus and Māui die? Māui died after attempting to overcome death by changing into a mokomoko (lizard) to enter the vagina of the sleeping Hine-nui-te-pō, the goddess of death and ruler of Rarohenga, where Cook testifies in the poem. Laughing tīrairaka (fantails) woke Hine-nui-te-pō and she crushed Māui to death, which brought mortality to humankind. Orpheus, mourning for Eurydice, nursed a death wish, which he got when he was either torn apart by wild beasts or frenzied women, or Zeus killed the poet to stop him revealing the underworld's secrets to mortals. Like Māui and Orpheus, Cook undergoes a katabasis, descending into the realm of the dead. And like Orpheus, his fatal flaw is not obvious. But Orpheus's song undoes Cook's brief apotheosis: it summons him into more profound underworld, Rarohenga, one which opens onto possibilities rather than eternal closure but at the cost of "the old / him" (38). As Orr puts it, "'Cook/Kuki/Lono' is both symbolically and literally absorbed by Moana Nui a Kiwa (the Pacific Ocean) and her people" (167). The poetic Cook's death serves Pacific history and he becomes part of its people's story, a figurative drop in the ocean.

* * *

Chance, luck, and fate frequently and decisively outweigh personal agency and even when Cook has volition it is illusive. Sometimes *Captain Cook* is explicit about it, as when Cook gets the "the chance to know / what you have done in life" (36): he is fortunate to be given an opportunity most people do not get. When he explains "the shootings", divine justice

promises not "redemption, just integrity by chance" (36). Orpheus/Māui does not question the sovereign authority that sanctioned Cook's violence. Instead, the "peoples of this island" rail against Cook by saying "We bleed when you whip us" (21), terms that strongly echo Shylock's "If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that" (*MV* 3.1.59-63). Cook has overlooked their essential likeness: they are saying *imagine how you would feel if this happened to you—you would feel like we do*. As Orpheus puts it, "these were men, people, humans" (38). Cook confirms he knew as much: "We knew that / you were human, our kind" (41). Any alterity, whether Cook's or theirs, is not relevant to their condemnation. He has not misapplied sovereign authority in a domain of difference; he has erred in simply being violent; by not following the golden rule. He was, in short, acting inhumanly or being inhuman. His actions are crimes against humanity—of which, it is important to remember, he is a member, despite having failed in his duties as such. When he transgresses against them, he does so against himself even while following orders:

> Oh the Admiralty's orders? They were clear,
>
> 'tis sad, but the shooting, 'twas defence
>
> of the true king's men
>
> against barbarity, fine barbars
>
> granted, but nevertheless far from equals (23)

Cook bemoans "ah, ah it is a shame" but the "admirals will send me on forever, / waving on their flag-bearer, / past the Pillars of Hercules where flags mean / nothing!" (24). This conveniently transfers Odyssean hubris from the sailor to his higher authorities. However, if Cook's actions are authorised and legitimate by one source, given Cook stands trial for these

same actions, what is this alien but presiding power? Who gave it authority to judge Cook? What is the justice it dispenses? Why is Cook absolved when others are not? On all these questions, the poem is silent.

All Cook's justifications and explanations dissolve with his self-realization: the primary function of the poem's violence is Cook's therapeutic "absolution". A Jungian understanding of violence—not least of all political violence—assumes its source is the unconscious. It might seem instrumental—for conquest, social order, law enforcement, and so on—but it is a mechanistic "projection of the shadow". As Bellinger puts it "Since the shadow is that part of the personality which contains repressed feelings of inferiority and guilt, the ego attempts to reinforce its positive self-image by projecting the shadow onto other human beings" (18). Cook uses ill-discipline, carelessness, and frustration as excuses but his violence is always dishonourable: not because it is morally errant or illegal but rather because the British firepower advantage is so great, using it is unsightly and egregious.

Given the poem's polysemy, counter-factuality, and anachronism, it is worth asking how the Cook *of the poem* might have gone about things differently to avoid his violent misadventures' evil consequences. The poem's unequivocal answer is he could not have done anything differently. Using a grimly Hardyesque double negative, because the events have happened, they cannot have not happened. Cook situates his violence in a past twice removed from the reader's present, which is governed by the usual physical laws. Cook's Jungian trajectory is similarly irrevocable. Indeed, history refracted through Cook's maddened consciousness becomes synonymous with his individual eschatological self-fulfilment. The Chorus's promised absolution promised is exclusively personal. It depends on Cook's postmortem catharsis, the matter of a moment when he suddenly decides to "dissolve this

stage / and listen. I will listen to the ocean. / I will turn to my emotions" (47). He does not listen to his accusers or the testimony of his victims. Cook simply lies back and lets "the surf of an emotional flood" wash him clean, which lets him finally "understand" what he has done and feel "disgusted / at the sight of the killing of such men" (48). Rather than interrogating the structural justifications of his actions, Cook slips into a state of Kristevan abjection in which his stomach turns when confronted by something that is repugnantly:

> Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A "something" that I do not recognise as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. (Kristeva 2)

Disgust's viscerality belies its ambivalence: distance from the disgusting object can be gotten by substitution, as when "in close proximity to a disgusting object, say, a rotting carcass, we try to distance ourselves by vomiting and are then disgusted by the vomit itself" (Vaziri 234). Cook's self-sickening does not unsettle the hallucination hypothesis discussed earlier. As Colin McGinn notes, one can "be disgusted by an object in whose existence one does not believe. That is to say you could believe yourself to be merely hallucinating a disgusting object and still be disgusted by it" (8). At Cook's last albeit disembodied breath, he is no closer to his actions' reality than he was earlier. And the sanctioning authority that granted him qualified freedom to kill on its behalf—his rules of engagement, his license to kill—remains aloof and entirely untouched by reproof.

* * *

Sullivan's poem asks itself an appropriately metatextual question: "Is this a book / or the journey of a mind that was Cook's?" (28). The answer surely is the former: the "mind" through which the reader journeys is neither the historical Cook's nor one the poem conjures. Are the islanders shadows that Cook projects? Do they represent a kind of self-hate on Cook's part? My answer is a confident yes, but given Jungian and postmodern uncertainties, I cannot be sure. Cook is a decidedly unreliable witness. Ghosts and visions beset him: as Bellenger puts it, the "process of projecting the shadow outward onto others makes it impossible for the people who are projecting to see reality clearly. They live in a fog of illusions created by their own minds, changing "the world into the replica of one's own unknown face" (18). Cook repeatedly contradicts himself on crucial points: "There was no thrill" when he gave the order to "shoot to kill" (30) but earlier in the poem he said it was "thrilling to kill" (21). He also demonstrates presentiment, such as complaining about his death in Hawaii eight pages before it happens. Cook shuttles between emotive outbursts and ratiocinations that orders and duty led to the violence. Orpheus/Māui makes no determination either way. Besides, utterly emotive immersion is what saves Cook. His explanations are inconsequential.

As with Curnow's "The Victim", Sullivan's poem involves a proto-Pākehā killed in a littoral zone posthumously addressing the reader. Sullivan's poem shares with Curnow's a disconcerting contradiction: Cook's violence is not aberrant; it is ordering; it is procedural and systemic; it is, as its self-doubting agent sees it, generative violence, even as his self-deception blinds him to its psychological usefulness. He sees violence rupture uncolonized worlds; he sees blood come out from living bodies at his bidding. For the people on whom Cook turned his guns, his violence is deviant; it breaks apart and reduces to brute bareness not only a particular form-of-life but also the naked life common to perpetrator and victim. The poem

alludes to the richness and complexity of Indigenous Pacific lifeworlds by referencing tikanga Māori and te ao Māori, which for Cook signifies likeness rather than difference: they, too, have poetry, martial discipline, hierarchies. His violence connects him to the depths they represent.

Could the poem's Cook have done things differently? It does not seem so. His accusers and absolvers do not provide him with any alternatives. The historic Cook sailed at the behest of the Admiralty and the Royal Society, to which the poem adds Orpheus and Venus, who even more resolutely fix his course. Does the relentless but associative logic mean the poem is a dream? If so, whose? Is it all just Cook's projection, a wish fulfilment? It is the latter dyed through with the stain of sanguinary imperialism confronted by "elsewhere" peoples who:

> presented themselves as competing modes of being-in-the-world, and threatened to invalidate the logical or ontological annihilation of the sacred and imaginal, for in these civilizations it obviously still flourished. By means of imperialism and colonialism, the Western soul then tried to prove to itself the impotence and inferiority of these non-European cultures and their contents. And when Europeans … hunted and shot down aborigines … as if they were wild beasts, then the Occidental soul, brutally turning against itself, also reduced to a mere beast the primitive man in itself and, in killing him, sealed this reduction. (Giegerich 264)

This dynamic drives Cook's poetic psychodrama: the "external violence Cook wrought" created his "internal turmoil … as he infracted his own culture's most deeply held beliefs" (Orr 171). Unmoored, Cook collapses into dysfunctional hysteria. Cook's toddler-like attitude to his superiors—the King, the Admiralty—is obsequious and animadvertive: he submits solely to his roiling mind's fickleness. He is a shapeshifter shuttling between his various

loyalties and identities (Captain, Lono, Kuki). Cook at the outset appears the protagonist of the poem and its central character, even the prime mover in the poem's universe, but he is finally revealed as its antagonist. The poem's hero is the Pacific but it is an ocean in a madman's mind. By the poem's reckoning, Cook's violence done under a British flag in a Jungian phantasmagoria is therapeutic self-harming no matter whom the historical Cook wounded in the real world.

Chapter Three: By Bullets Undeceived – Kendrick Smithyman's "Vignettes of the Māori Wars"

Scott Hamilton suggests three ways of reading Kendrick Smithyman's poetry. The first is found in Peter Simpson's introduction to Smithyman's *Selected Poems*, which Hamilton in his essay "Reading Kendrick Smithyman" believes sees Smithyman as "a realistic poet whose career was a dogged struggle to 'investigate' New Zealand" (Hamilton); dogged, and for Simpson successful. However, Hamilton argues that the "reality Smithyman investigated was complex, and sometimes recalcitrant, and this accounts for the obscurity of much of the poetry" (Hamilton). The second agrees with the first's premises but adds a caveat: what readers get from the poems is not worth the effort. The poetry is too cerebral and abstract; logocentrism is blamed for its "lack of hard clear image, anything lucidly seeable" (Crisp 365). The final position, according to Hamilton, champions Smithyman's "difficultness" as an independent virtue. Smithyman's poetry is "difficult for difficulty's sake" (Hamilton): negotiating its allusiveness and syntactical counter-intuitiveness is nonreferential fun and games, like solving a cryptic crossword. The poems are self-signifying; their meaning is neither here nor there.

Smithyman wrote "Vignettes of the Māori Wars" in 1959 and they were first published in *Flying to Palmerston* (1968). A triptych of poems about the Crown's invasion of the Waikato in 1864, they certainly provide many opportunities for puzzling meaning out of them, recognising allusions, and frissons of deference and deflection. But they are also serious attempts to understand historically major events from a Pākehā perspective, including dispossession, atrocities, and their extra-judicial and illegal authorisations. They must be

taken seriously and carefully scrutinised. Whatever *jeux d'esprit* one can play with them must be weighed against the real pain and suffering caused by the actions they describe.

Smithyman's modernism, however, can furnish readerly pleasure while maintaining moral seriousness and historical responsibility. The "Vignettes" turn from Curnovian myth and imagination towards contingent facts, anti-lyricism, and linguistic bricolage, in which the poems' form, syntax, and diction dramatize their poetic processes. They discursively and formally re-enact political and social processes' disjunctions and discordances—especially when and where state-sanctioned violence is used. Hamilton correctly stresses Smithyman's poetry involves the "recognition that 'there is / a rabid violence / in the earliest stories,' the violence of colonial settlement and expropriation" (Hamilton). This chapter explains how "Vignettes of the Māori Wars" uses its historical sources, particularly James Cowan, and how Smithyman's modernism reconciles incertitude and truthfulness. It considers how the poems depict settlers, soldiers, and Waikato Māori, particularly how the "Vignettes" personalise Pākehā and phenomenalise Māori. These characterisations extend existentialist assumptions about place and being much like those of Martin Heidegger and Allen Tate. The poems see colonialist inauthenticity as provincialism imposing administrative location; and Indigenous authenticity as regionalism deepening lived placehood. But Smithyman's self-interrogatory sequence is dubious about how much language can reveal about either. Innocence, however, is prelinguistic purity: a maiden state. Violence is trespassing it. The "Vignettes" culminate in a shabby and allusive apocalypse that elevates statecraft's misadventure to a cosmic scale.

* * *

"Vignettes of the Māori Wars" is a group of three poems concerning events during the Crown's invasion of the Waikato. These incidents happened between 12 July 1863—when

Crown troops initiated the invasion by fording the Mangatāwhiri Stream, thereby breaching the autaki set by the Kīngitanga—and 21 February 1864, when troops commanded by Lieutenant-General Cameron attacked, sacked, and razed the lightly defended village of Rangiaowhia in an extra-martial massacre of its inhabitants.

"Mangatāwhiri Stream", the sequence's first poem, describes the British troops crossing the eponymous waterway. It begins with the appearance of the "frontier", which the speaker deems "shabbier" than one might expect, and the aging general who is "not up to his job", a job he nonetheless does by "stumping ahead with his walking stick" (23). The reader, addressed as if present at arms, is ordered to "Stand prepared / … to hear his enemy's retiring signalled" while being reminded despite seeming success and martial disciplines, the crossing was indeed "shabby" (23)—not because the stream was neglected but because the expedition is morally contemptible. They are agents of settler "statecraft": the Kingitanga's whenua is "trespassed by fashionable regiments" serving political expediency and who are the topic of "debate in families" (23). The poem notes that "much talk" preceded the "crossing sped", along with "invention" used to explain the "act" (23), one of the poem's Empsonian ambiguities punning on something done, a pretence or subterfuge, and a section of a play—dramatic, tragic, comedic, or otherwise. The poem contrasts military manoeuvres' complexity and their esoteric terminology—"trenching, fascining"—with simply needing to move personnel from "*here*" to "*there*" (23). The speaker drolly alludes to likely casualties involved in such relocation by noting the men "simply run with a jump / across the stream. A few will not be / jumping back" (23). The speaker suddenly refers to himself in the first-person and signals he had retold the preceding passages in fictive hindsight. He wonders to whom belonged "that voice / I thought was heard"—one of the poem's habitual passive

constructions—" … years past, in blank late night of an early winter" (23); but he cannot attribute it to anyone despite its disconcerting significance. The final stanza returns to the past, anthropomorphically reconsidering the natural environment: the stream is "furtive" while the river of which it is a tributary is "swaggering" (23). The speaker regrets their politicisation in a tone reminiscent of Simone Weil's wistful imprecation that human subjects need "to see a landscape as it is when I am not there" (*Gravity and Grace* 42): the poem's speaker muses the stream "was never designed to be important; merely, wished to ride unnoticed" (23). But "low ambition" has made this impossible by inflating things "larger than lifesize" (23). He ends bemoaning the lack of natural agency in the face of human misadventure and reprising his charge against its "violator" (23), wearily castigating him for being an aged passionless drudge.

"Baptism of Fire 1862" uses the so-called Venus and Adonis stanzas (*ababcc*) and like that poem, it concerns a hunter—of a kind. It begins *in media res* with an Ovidian but distinctly colonial rape scene. We see "a girl running from him … .fall / on her back … her knees open" having "wasted the maiden state she sped" (24), echoing the crossing of the stream. The sleeping soldier forgets significant details while tranquilly recalling the events: he cannot remember if she was "a blonde lass, or black" (24). He is callously indifferent about the pain and distress he caused by seizing this "forbidden delight", which admittedly was not the "praised / catching … virtuous ladies die for" (24). But he implies that she should not have expected sentimentality from the "raw recruit" he had been (24). A young soldier not yet blooded in combat, he merely "rehearsed" military life "as he walked his beat or roved / on store piquet" and imagined self-serving scenes of martial glory: "the final charge / a palisade stormed, a wound which fancies enlarge" (24). The poem suddenly makes a cinematic jump-

cut "to the end-all" (24): a crowning scene of august mourning earned by a brave death and attended by admiring comrades, a warranted privilege they "admire / and envy" (24). But this, too, is fanciful. When the end comes, it is at "morning's first ragged fire" when the company is ambushed "as they wade a bog and insignificant stream" (24). It is not an occasion; simply, "It comes" (24). And it was "awkward" and "messy" (24), the same terms he used to describe the rape he committed. Even so, it is neither "pleasant" nor "dreadful" but merely "a thing to discover" at the proper time (24).

The last poem, "The Attack on Rangiaowhia", is the longest. It begins with images of immolated churches, whose bells sound when loosed by the flames. The ringing is "maudlin" (25), a charge of effusive sentimentality, even amongst desecration and destruction. And it is not entirely undeserved because the "alien" bishop had prayed for "a Queen's queer justice" (25), perverted administrative authority by "Terry carbines" (25), which the poem damningly contrasts with evocations of simple human charity. The next stanza compares the spiteful maelstrom with its bucolic and industrial recent past: "a small mill's grinding", a "peachgrove's banding", and "the beanvine's blossom" (25). The inhabitants working and living there will not "simple occupation in their least defend" (25). Resisting the lesser evil has raised the stakes to destruction by "irregular cavalrymen" whose "soured guiltiness" will "ripen / rot-red" (25), contrasting with the orchards' fruit and pastures' crops. Ironic questions follow, mocking "God's just hands", imprecating the bishop for his ineffectual "kindness", and condemning the "General" for his commands' dubious legality, all of which add up to "mocking history" from which the "meek" must resile themselves (25). Again, sentimentality is anathemised: it is the refuge and privilege of "institutional historians" with "muttonchop whiskers white" recoiling from successive "ultimate disaster[s]" and offering "faithful

service" not to truth but to their careers (25). They exhibit an "excited conscience" when such so-called inevitabilities happen, as if natural phenomena without human agency, but they always prioritise "honour" over "honesty" (25). The final two stanzas return to Rangiaowhia, beginning with "foolhardy Nixon" and Von Tempsky leading the "last stupid charge" towards a burning house from which "the dead alone could emerge" (25). Directly quoting James Cowan's *The New Zealand Wars: A History of the Māori Campaigns and the Pioneering Period*, the poem shows us an unarmed "*tall old man*" emerging from the building with "upstretched arms" and wearing an "*expression of calm sad dignity*" until "the good Queen's riflemen" shoot him (26). Contradicting Von Tempsky's report that the old man had a "sad and disappointed smile" (26), the speaker wonders "how far he was disappointed" after the troops turned the harvest "brown / or plague black" (26). The "dazed and sullen" riders quit the scene in distaste (26). The sequence concludes with a densely apocalyptic convergence of Shakespeare and Marlowe: "The pyre of their Christ encarnadined night's blind sky" (26).

* * *

Smithyman's poems are complicatedly sceptical about their historiographical source, namely the work of James Cowan. Reviewing *Flying to Palmerston* in *Landfall* in 1969, Roger Oppenheim wrote about the "Vignettes" that:

> as in his earlier work, the subjects are scenarios around which an intricate structure of meaning is built. It is the idea that counts, rather than subjective feeling, and Mr Smithyman does not, overtly at least, attempt to create in his readers a subjective awareness of mood. In his use of language it is meaning rather than an evocation of feelings parallel to his own which is important. The poem is an extremely complex coded message which does not yield up everything in a quick reading. (199)

According to Oppenheim, these "subjects" or "scenarios" are "war, the banality of a young soldier's death and as contrast the death of a single old man" (199). The poems build "an intricate structure of meaning" using "the Waikato War as setting for the discussion of war in our native context" (201). Attending to the causes and results of historical events—variously "subjects", "scenarios", and "settings"—creates a "structure of meaning" not meaning itself, which Oppenheim sees residing in "subjective feeling" or "subjective awareness of mood" (199). Smithyman's poems are about "ideas", particularly ones about how "historical occurrences are related to our perceptions of the past" (201) and how such ideas might resist received understandings of heroism. In the "Vignettes" these "historical occurrences" are violent acts: the passivity and victimhood of "a young soldier's death and as contrast the death of a single old man" (199), and the active, concerted, and orchestrated killing that led to these deaths. They include "structures of meaning" accepting or rejecting and justifying or condemning such violence, including law, politics, religion, economics, military prerogatives, social norms, psychology, and discursive disciplines like history and poetry.

The "Vignettes" substantiate these "structures of meaning" with then-available histories of the New Zealand Wars, most notably James Cowan's *The New Zealand Wars: A History of the Māori Campaigns and the Pioneering Period*, particularly "The Attack on Rangiaowhia", which as noted quotes directly from Cowan. Three small extracts are given in italics: "*A tall old man*"; "*His upstretched arms showed that he had no weapon*"; and "*An expression of calm sad dignity" (New Zealand Wars* 346*).* A further short interpolation comes from Von Tempsky's own account included in Cowan's *The Old Frontier*, where he remembers that the "tall old man … smiled a sort of sad and disappointed smile" (*Old Frontier* 45). Cowan's work is undoubtedly if eccentrically of its time and successive subsequent works have superseded

it, such as James Belich's revisionist study *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* and Vincent O'Malley's series of later work, most significantly *The Great War for New Zealand: Waikato 1800-2000*. Belich finds Cowan's work admirable after a fashion: it displays "quite impressive" balance despite the author's intellectual investment in an "Anglocentric, Empire-worshipping period in New Zealand's development" (*New Zealand Wars* 16). He was able to conduct first-person interviews with participants; and he "showed real sympathy for the Maoris [*sic*]". But Cowan failed to reassess the conflict (though I doubt he intended to do so) and instead sought to "'rehabilitate the 'frontier period' and 'the adventure-teeming life of the pioneer colonists', as an exciting and instructive field of study for the young colonial patriot" by portraying it using American tropes as a South Pacific "Wild West" (*New Zealand Wars* 16). Smithyman's poem responds to Cowan's limitations by sceptically and interrogatively situating them rather than using them as verifiable sources (I will discuss this later in this chapter).

Cowan's frontier romanticism is most pronounced in his treatment of Gustavus von Tempsky, who now seems a ludicrous and sadistic character but was once someone who epitomised the colonialist cavalier. Tempsky was a Prussian who after graduating from military schooling sought his fortune in American, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand goldfields. Following the beginning of the Waikato War in in 1863, he gained a commission in the Forest Rangers, an irregular force formed to counter Māori bush fighting. His soldiering in Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Whanganui, and Taranaki earned him a reputation as "a flamboyant and apparently fearless soldier" (Tonks). Nonetheless, he died at Te Ngutu-o-te-manu on 7 September 1868 after Māori adversaries shot him in the head. Mediated through Cowan, Tempsky provides the poem with its emotional key-tone: "he smiled a sort of sad and

disappointed smile" ("Attack" 26), which is unrepentantly redolent of "dying race" tropes Tempsky keenly sought to realise. His ritualistic self-aggrandisement and confection of Prussian bellicosity and chic derring-do make him a hostile witness. Certainly, questionable historical sources were unavoidable when the poems were written. The "Vignettes" are most fully realised and ethically complex when they re-imagine events, particularly in "Mangatāwhiri Stream", where a droll sceptical tone is wedded to discursive essaying, sensuous particulars, and formal reflexivity. The archival sections, however, are pragmatically bathetic and maudlin, which directly reflects Cowan's limitations.

The poem belittles "the institutional historians and their care" for "respectable conscience committed" to it (25). Their moral prudery is "white" like an old man's "muttonchop whiskers" ("Attack" 25), the erstwhile Crown politician's facial adornment *de rigueur*. The whiteness ethnically and socially refers to British, Pākehā, colonial, and settler and to their assumed unblemished and pure normative right. Smithyman's speaker, too, intimates "whitewashing" in received versions of historical events. His historians are less concerned with history than "the debate / between the demands of a career", such as the "old man" who maintains "faithful service" even when "excited / conscience" means he "sickens of this or that ultimate disaster" ("Attack" 25). *This* ultimate disaster at Rangiaowhia is but another test of his dutifulness and fortitude. He trades in inflexibility and sentimentalism or what passes for "honour", which must be "by honesty spited" ("Attack" 25). The poems, then, depend on "factual" sources but question their credibility, veracity, and impartiality. This self-reflexive interrogation leads to successive unanswered (if not unanswerable) questions asked of the dead in the third stanza of "The Attack on Rangiaowhia": the Māori cut down by "the quick stroke your reaper planned"; the "Bishop"; and the "General" (26). The poems become

breathlessly exasperated with historical record's blandishments and collusions on one hand; on the other, with frustrated desire to hear prosecutors answer for their actions and the prosecuted speak for justice's sake.

This problematic historiography is refracted through Smithyman's prismatic modernism. For Murray Edmond, "Smithyman belongs centrally to modernism. His work constitutes our most fully achieved modernist output" (Edmond "Divagations"). Edmond justifies this assertion by pointing to Smithyman's consistent adherence to "[i]rony, allusiveness, persona … the major ingredients of the modernist revolution in poetry" (Edmond "Divagations"). Indeed, these characteristics are apparent in the "Vignettes". But Edmond is wrong to suggest Smithyman adopting "liberated verse forms … post-68" maximised his modernism. Smithyman moved from forbidding density to more open textures but in doing so his poetry forewent quintessentially modernist manifold tensions such as in the "Vignettes". I situate Smithyman's modernism by contrasting it with Curnow's variety from 1939's *Not in Narrow Seas* at least until *At Dead Low Water, And Sonnets* of 1949 and qualifiedly up to the new work in 1962's *A Small Room with Large Windows*. Curnow's modernism is synthesising and sometimes homogenising, especially about violence. Despite its partiality and localism, synecdoche and exemplar abound in a desacralized world replete with signs but without wonders. New Zealand, however construed, and mid-century Pākehā angst manifest general "Western" nationalist ructions about identity and community. As the later "Moro Assassinato" (1979) puts it:

> …all earth one island
>
> And all our travel circumnavigation
>
> can be put alongside:

All the seas are one sea,

the blood one blood

and the hands one hand.

Ever is always today. (34)

Smithyman's modernism is determinedly heterodox. It insists on contextual particularity, which makes Curnow's Nietzschean absolutism anathematic to it. Smithyman is alert to perilous temptations "of treating 'place' as a sentimental localism" (Davidson 158). Smithyman's sense of placehood is partly linguistic, including contradictory discourses that lever opposing meaning from it. The "Vignettes" acknowledge such oppositions by being self-interrupting: like Olson's *Maximus Poems*, they are a "collage of dates, facts, historical accounts, maps, self-questionings and admonitions" (Davidson 159) but their syntax and diction is as gnarled and dense as early Robert Lowell or Geoffrey Hill. They insist that any given place is primarily important for the people who live, work, and die there. Smithyman's regional modernism therefore frequently engages—including in the "Vignettes"—with the relationship between tāngata whenua and tāngata Tiriti, which Curnow's universalism either avoids or obfuscates. Curnow, at least during his mid-career modernism, sought answers or antidotes for settler anxieties whereas Smithyman's modernism devotedly exposes wounds and contradictions. It opens enquiries, including into its own presuppositions and ways of saying. The "Vignettes" include direct questions with withheld answers, dramatized self-doubts and internal dividedness, and quotations from dubious witnesses.

The "Vignettes" do contain clear and confronting visual images often charged with *enargeia* but they are embedded in essayistic, self-interrupting, and reflexively sceptical poetic discourse. These images sharply emphasise violence's physicality, as if answering Popitiz's

injunction to account for its effect on bodies, such as when Rangiaowhia's victims get "cured / in unholy smoke" ("Attack" 25) even while the poem bemoans language's inadequacy for representing it. Such doubleness, divisiveness, and dividedness can be misread as indecisiveness or ambivalence. I see it as a mimetic necessity: the "reality" the "Vignettes" represent contains manifold contradictory structures of meaning. These include "what the preacher said", the General's "commands" and their contestable lawfulness, the "Queen's queer justice", "statecraft", the "institutional historians", and "debate in families" ("Attack" 25). The voices do not include te ao Māori and its fundamental concepts such as tapu, noa, mana, wairua, and—the most glaring omission from '"Mangatāwhiri Stream"—aukati, which undoubtedly weakens its mimetic strength. All we find is dubious equivalence made between the "violation" of the stream and that of the "lass" ("Stream 23) as well as between the violent deaths of the young naïve infantryman and the koroua with the "expression of calm sad dignity" ("Attack" 26) killed outside the burning whare at Rangiaowhia. Furthermore, the former is imagined whereas the latter was an actual person from whom someone forcefully and painfully took life. These are serious failings but nevertheless the poems confront us with defiantly inconclusive and provocative indictments of enduring yet dubious social, political, and religious justifications for Pākehā presumption of normative privilege and the right to enforce it.

But the poem does not unquestioningly assert its charges of hypocrisy. It frames them in allusiveness and indirection, which mimetically represent the Pākehā discursive complexities and contradictions I noted in the previous paragraph. Smithyman himself argued:

> Society is complex in its activities and its relationships, and the members of a community are complex. A section of the poetry of an advanced and intricated community must inevitably be complex, and because complex, obscure—which is not to say that most of the obscurity cannot eventually be understood in the major part. … We have to reckon in short that the mirror which art holds to nature may be a dark glass reflecting a paddock where undoubtedly dark horses are capering. ("Dark Horses" 89)

Peter Simpson has noted how this position corresponds with T.S. Eliot's earlier defence of difficulty:

> We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning. (289)

"The Attack on Rangiaowhia" demonstrates Smithyman's manifold allusiveness. We read of the bishop who "alien amid their corn prayed his ruth" (25). Aside from *ruth* as archaically meaning sorrowful pity and compassion, this alludes to the Old Testament story of Ruth the Moabite negotiating a fraught space between sorrow and strength: "And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left" (Ruth 2.14). It is also redolent of John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and its "Perhaps the self-same song that found a path / Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home, /

She stood in tears amid the alien corn". How many readers might detect these references is unknowable. What does matter is that attributions of hypocrisy and cant, which depend on referrable facticity from which the accused has identifiably and deceitfully deviated, are made in complexly allusive poems adamantly sceptical about generalisable truthfulness.

Complexity, as has been emphasised above, is terminologically insufficient when it comes to the vexed multiplicities of the settler state and society. Understanding how those responsible for the violence in these poems justify it is a problem that goes beyond such a short sequence of poems. They intimate what we lose when language gets contorted to euphemistically justify execrable actions by reference to high principles. And they do so in decidedly Yeatsian terms. As the Irish poet declared, "We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry" ("*Amica Silentia* 29). Whether or not Smithyman was arguing with himself is out of scope. But the internal dividedness and self-negation of the "Vignettes" admirably and honestly deny themselves Curnovian resonance and closure. Rather than issuing self-assured answers, Smithyman's manifold modernism limits itself to questioning state-sanctioned violence. It leaves finding the answers to us.

* * *

While the "Vignettes" most obviously establish locations with its titles, they also do so with botanical and geographical detail. Such local colour makes plain that however much discomfit, cynicism, or even shame the poems register about the events, it comes from an indelibly Pākehā perspective. For example, the speaker remembers being "discomforted by antics of teatree" ("Stream" 23)—not mānuka. Like an imperial Adam, albeit one whose self-knowledge has precipitated falling *into* dominion rather than out of it, the speaker of "Mangatawhiri Stream" goes about renaming flora and fauna, remaking the world after his

own image so he can impose meaning on it. In the same verse paragraph, the speaker notes "brown wattle / prevailing at the swamp's embankment" ("Stream" 23). This is common brush wattle, a fast growing and maturing exotic species that flourishes in a range of environments. Now considered pestilent, it spreads in tall stands and negatively impacts low-growing open vegetation, especially in coastal or marginal forest. The implication is unsubtle: planted by settlers, it prevails at the liminal zone between them and the Waikato, spreading over native flora, intruding and encroaching on the Kīngitanga.

Time, too, is central to how the "Vignettes" understand violence as something used to change the present into the past. Their temporal location is complex. The first poem dates to 1864; the next 1862; and the last 1864. All the poem's speakers are not temporally situated. Their points-of-view are omniscient but scepticism, irony, and dubious historiography narrow their hermeneutic horizons. The sequence spatially maps this temporality progressively outwards: from the local, to the global, and finally to the cosmic. Concomitantly, restraints on violence such as local law, religious custom, and public morality fall away. The poem's Mangatāwhiri Stream is demonstrative. It is a tributary of the Waikato River, near present-day Mercer, and it is also New Zealand's Rubicon. In 1863 the waterway marked the aukati—the *ne plus ultra* line—of the European settlement of Auckland. The territory under the Māori King's mana lay beyond it. On 12 July 1863, an invasion force led by Lieutenant-General Duncan Cameron crossed the stream, a day after Governor Grey issued an ultimatum to the Chiefs of Waikato to pledge allegiance to Queen Victoria. Waikato Māori had not yet received this message when Crown forces crossed the Mangatāwhiri Stream. Mangatāwhiri Stream seems less august than a Rubicon ought to be: it is "Shabbier than a frontier ought to show" ("Stream" 23). Crossing a frontier, in a moment people become certifiably—which is to

say politically—other than they were. The soldiers pass from one state where they belong as a citizen or at least a member of a nation or community into another where they become foreigners. Invitation would have made them guests but without it they are trespassers if not invaders. In any case, one would expect a marker of occasion, a physical embodiment of political fact, something not just known but also shown as the poem puts it. But their nominal monument—a stream forming a "natural" boundary—is "shabby" ("Stream" 23). Shabbiness comes from carelessness and neglect, say when a person is ungenerous or dishonourable. But its shabbiness is noticeable because it has become something other than what it had been. Pākehā aggression transforms the environment into a geographical location; or, more especially, a dominion.

Smithyman's conceptualisation of place is not merely a matter of somewhere rather than somewhere else, a given setting where actions happen. It is philosophically mediated, a state of being that reflexively creates place and personhood:

> What *place* means is always a turning
> ignorantly, beyond defining?
> We have no right words to speak by that Bay
> where the dead rise on their hills, looking north. (Smithyman "Bream Bay")

Peter Simpson reads this as a manifesto-in-miniature of a poet "intensely susceptible to place and history" who is "looking north in search of the right words to speak, to define what place means" (17-18). But what Simpson does not signal is the intimate connection Smithyman maps between violence and place and what this generative connection does to the language we use for articulating collective and personal ways of being. Smithyman himself intimates it when suggesting "[t]he skeletal dance of our dry bones is blooded with violence

… [it] is a feature of our viewpoint, an inherent if frustrate thing in our thought" (*A Way of Saying* 183). The cavorting body flensed of flesh jigs the late-medieval *Danse Macabre,* a distinctly political *memento mori* where Death summons representatives from cross-section of society—for example, pope, emperor, king, child, and labourer—and leads them frolicking to the grave. Smithyman suggests initiatory sacrifice bloods New Zealand's death dancers into their respective roles; they step to colonialist drumbeat affirming society's hierarchies. But this foundational truth, which shapes how we see and conceptualise the place where we live, is frustrated and unexpressed. We feel an urge to speak of it but something chokes it.

The "Vignettes" attempt to escape this impasse by grounding charges of violation in an existentialist regionalism valorising the "authentic" lifeworld of "mill's grinding" and "beanvine's blossom" ("Attack" 25) and disparaging the "rehearsed" and "fashionable" one of "statecraft", "marching", and "regiments" ("Stream" 23). Scott Hamilton notes how the reactionary modernist Allen Tate's regionalism informed Smithyman's ideas about place and poetry and provincialism's deleteriousness (Hamilton). Tate, also an important influence on English poet Geoffrey Hill's poetry of formative violence, argued in "The New Provincialism" (1945) that "the West" had allowed itself to become alienated from its history and its culture—understood essentially as T.S. Eliot's "tradition"—, falling instead into arrogant provincialism that asserted spurious uniqueness of experience. Tate's panacea was cosmopolitan regionalism: writers deepen their poetic investments in the knowable place where they live and to which they answer. They make this particularism coherent by drawing on deep and broad currents of Western—which is to say, Christian—culture (Tate "The New Provincialism" 282-89). As Hamilton puts it, such "regionalist literature would be limited by space, but not by time" (Hamilton). Tate viewed his native Kentucky through Christendom's

lens whereas Heidegger intuited answers to existential alienation in small communities in Germany's Black Forest, integrated lifeworlds not found in larger, urban, industrial European cities, which insulated people from needing to confront the realities of human existence—especially death's inevitability. The alternative is authenticity:

> If Dasein [Being-in-the-World] discovers the world in its own way and brings it close, if it discloses to itself its own authentic Being, then this discovery of the 'world' and this disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing-away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way. (Heidegger 167)

Inauthenticity manifests in parochial arrogance, disavowal of nature, self-deception, and abrogation of culture and history. In the "Vignettes", Waikato Māori working the land where they live are nominally regionalist: their place makes them who they are and they see the world from it. This is distinctly Heideggerian: the "Vignettes" identify selfhood with dynamic, corporeal, and locatable being while being sceptical about how authentically language can summon lifeworlds' richness into view.

Tate's and Heidegger's presence is strongest in the "Vignettes" when they assert human tragedy's inevitability. Territorial subjectivity constitutes authentic selfhood; violence, such as the raid on Rangiaowhia, objectively negates it. Because meaning and significance derive from territoriality—which they poems evoke in images of working the land—, lifeworlds' mutual incomprehension becomes certain. The world divides into protagonists—who uninvitedly cross boundaries—and antagonists, whose boundaries, including their bodies, get breached. This unavoidability, the poems argue, must inform estimations of:

compensation in coined suffering
which is required by largest rigid boundaries
dedicated to statecraft, when trespassed
by fashionable regiments or mercenaries. (“Stream” 23)

The “Vignettes” contend evocatively evoked place is more than mere setting; it constitutes the self even as it erects rigid boundaries.

The “Vignettes” are about inevitable violation and uncertainly attributable volition. As noted above, “Mangatawhiri Stream” ends by asking:

Can a stream regret
that on its day it did not rise in spate?
That its violator should have been old,
not happy in his job, just getting on with it? (“Stream” 23)

“Baptism of Fire 1862”, its title presaging the sequence’s culminating inferno, takes up the theme of violation with a scene of pseudo-opportunistic rape:

That girl running from him who happened to fall
on her back, her skirts kilted, her knees open,
wasted the maiden state she sped. Of all
her kind warmth he dusted his hands and, sleeping
now, cannot recall – Was she a blonde lass, or black?
Her country is far. He will not be going back. (“Baptism” 24)

The speaker says she “happened to fall” (“Baptism” 24) into what he sees as a coital posture as if it were circumstantial, merely an accident for her and serendipitous for him, even though

immediately before she had been attempting to escape him. Indeed, it is gymnastically very unlikely to fall onto one's back when running unless impacting something headfirst. His account is not believable. Is it cognitive distortion like the self-deception of "Was she a blonde lass, or black?" ("Baptism" 24), as if a soldier would not remember which it was? Whatever the speaker's reliability, the stream did not rise against its violator and neither does she against hers. The rape, like the invasion, is characterised as "awkward, messy, not pleasant or dreadful, a thing to discover with more amaze [*sic*] than fear" ("Baptism" 24). At an awkward and discomfiting stroke, the violence is minimised. While neither the stream nor the girl "asked for it", they did not "put up a fight" ("Baptism" 24). And it was not as bad as the reader might imagine. It was certainly not "dreadful" ("Baptism" 24).

What is the significance of the girl's "maiden state" or that the soldier who raped her was similarly "virgin" but "of death's correct / taking" ("Baptism" 24)? The poem looks forward to this latter "taking" ("Baptism" 24), lingering on his death's details—the ultimate disillusionment—in the Waikato as a cinematic injunction opens onto his funeral: "Enlarge to the end-all: blank rounds, muffled drums, / his Company mourning while their ranks admire and envy" ("Baptism" 24). His death is entirely inglorious, quite unlike the one he "rehearsed" involving a "final charge, a palisade stormed, a wound which fancies enlarge" ("Baptism" 24). But no: "Not this way it comes" ("Baptism" 24). Instead, death is inconvenient, early in the day, coming when the troopers get ambushed as they "wade a bog and insignificant stream" ("Baptism" 24). It is not the grand set-piece battle of which he had dreamed: "It comes" without warning from an unseen enemy like "a snagging fern, by teatree root, by hayfoot and strawfoot's toss, like a lover getting his way" ("Baptism" 24). The best would have been to have "survived" but how to do so was only "vaguely proposed" when he "walked his beat or

roved on store picquet" ("Baptism" 24). He only knew what to do by inauthentic obedience; his self-deception meant he could not know what would happen no matter what he did.

These stanzas intimate colonialist violation's global scale. This rape happened somewhere else in the world in a "far country" to which he "will not be going back" ("Baptism" 24). It happened when he was a "raw recruit" rather than the "corporal of parts, an infantryman / stumbling bush tracks" ("Baptism" 24) of the present. But the insistent leitmotif of unresisted violation—of the aukati marked by the Mangatāwhiri Stream, which "merely, wished to ride unnoticed" ("Stream" 23) and the "lass" who "happened to fall / on her back" as if allowing a "raw recruit" to rape her ("Baptism" 24)—itself violates historical reality. It conflates an individual's violent criminal act with one demanded and sanctioned by the state to extend its power and control. Are these simply contraventions of different "structures of meaning": one of the young woman's personal integrity protected by the colonial state's prohibitive authority; and the other of the tino rangatiratanga of the Waikato iwi? The violence, rapine, and destruction of the Crown's forces would justify this reading. But the poems leave the significance of the victims' virginity—the stream's, the girl's, and rapist soldier's—to conjecture.

One must acknowledge how egregiously the poems minimise Māori armed defence against the invasion force and the casualties they inflicted on it. Even Cowan, Smithyman's primary source, attests to it when relating "the morning's hot work at Rangiaowhia" (*Old Frontier* 40). Tempsky reported much effective Māori resistance: he noted his men "got a few long range shots from distant whares" and "two shots … rapidly fired" from "a verandah [*sic*]" (Cowan *Old Frontier* 42); "the body of a soldier of the 65th shot through the head", "a volley" given as the "concise answer" to "calls for surrender", "quick shots" likely killing "an

excited trooper" and another being "shot in the head" (Cowan *Old Frontier* 43); Colonel Marmaduke Nixon "who received a bullet" and a "double-barrel" that "thunders a discharge" so "a bullet knocks through Alexander's brain" (Cowan *Old Frontier* 44); and more besides. This litany shows how effectively Māori fought Crown death squads that "hot morning" and that such information was available to Smithyman. But the poems' most explicit references to armed Māori resistance are being told to "refer / the price of loss to men readily defeated" ("Stream" 23) and invisible agents dispatching the young soldier in "Baptism of Fire 1862". "None will simple occupation in their least defend / from the irregular cavalrymen" ("Attack" 25) does the defenders an injustice. Like the defenceless girl, they "fall … clutching at [their] crop and the quick stroke [their] reaper planned" ("Attack" 25), against whom the poem implies resistance is futile. The reaper motif reappears when the speaker says, "I wonder, how far was he disappointed / who went with his harvest" ("Attack" 26), strongly implying the Rangiaowhia occupants' agency was much like that of fruits, vegetables, and grains; something ripe for the taking. Adjectives such as calm, sad, dignified, and disappointed disquietingly echo colonialist peans to a purportedly 'dying race', whereby Māori were expected to "fade of their own accord" (Jane Stafford and Williams 111) helpless against history. Smithyman's available historical record despite its bias and chauvinism quite plainly reveals a reality where Māori determinedly if unsuccessfully used lethal force to fight Cameron's troops. But this does not accord with the poems' theses of resignation and incapacity. Equating innocence and helplessness, the "Vignettes" measure an authorised crime's severity not so much by the perpetrators' culpability but by mawkishly and pityingly idealising the trespassed parties, which revokes their historical agency and ignores their organised lethal resistance.

* * *

The poems specifically name or closely characterise personages in the Crown's service but are not so nominally lavish with Māori. On one hand, we encounter "a General getting on in years and not up to his job", "Militiaman or regular", "Queen's rifleman", and "fashionable regiments or mercenaries" ("Stream" 23); an irregular cavalryman "violator" ("Baptism" 24); and a "preacher", "Bishop", "Queen", "One old man, his muttonchop whiskers white"—likely representing Governor Grey—, "Nixon" and "Von Tempsky" (also nicknamed simply "Von") ("Attack" 25-26). On the other hand, the "Vignettes" limits identifiable Māori to the "tall old man" shot and killed despite being unarmed, unresisting, and plainly surrendering. Cowan's account, on which Smithyman's sequence relies for historical detail, names individuals at Rangiaowhia, including "the chief Ihaia ('Isaiah'), of Ngati-Apakura" and "Hoani Papita ('John the Baptist')" (Cowan *New Zealand Wars* 343). According to Cowan, "Twelve Maoris, including the chiefs Hoani and Ihaia, were killed in the morning's encounter" (*New Zealand Wars* 347). But the "Vignettes" reduce Māori to collective representation by the "brown wattle prevailing at their swamp's embankment" ("Stream" 23). After dispatching the young infantryman, they further recede into a syntactic expletive and a dummy pronoun: "It comes" (Baptism 24). The poems do not show readers Māori actively resisting Crown forces at Rangiaowhia, including those who made "foolhardy Nixon … dead as his doornail" ("Attack" 25). The reality—that someone decided to shoot him for entirely understandable reasons having little to do with Nixon's personality—is occluded by Smithyman's grammar, perspective, and figurations.

The Pākehā personages are what they do. They are men of action who change the world around them. Their identity is dynamically existential, a demonstrably embodied

ongoing event: intuited, recognised, mimicked, rehearsed and, if not perfected, performed to a recognisable standard. These performances, frequently expressed as gerunds ("trenching, fascining, marching and countermarching" ("Baptism" 24)), are cultural enactments, the stuff of self that Elaine Scarry argues deadly violence empties from bodies:

> The boy in war is, to an extent found in almost no other form of work, inextricably bound up with the men and materials of his labor … He is a fragment of American earth wedged into an open hillside in Korea and reworked by its unbearable sun and rain … He is a light brown vessel of red Australian blood that will soon be opened and emptied across the rocks and ridges of Gallipoli from which he can never again become distinguishable. (83)

But in Smithyman's sequence death is not kenotic. The living body does not contain culture; its quickened blood, muscles, bone, and all besides are synonymous with it. Corpses, by implication, performatively embody a saturnine culture's thanatotic aspects as much as living bodies do its pneuma. Spontaneous individuality gets drilled out of the soldiers' regimented bodies on parade grounds and in bivouacs. Their repetitive homogeneity rehearses their ultimate cultural performance: perfectly staged and utterly obedient *tableaux morts* surveyed on battlefields, even if it is "awkward, messy" ("Baptism" 24). Unlike Curnow's decidedly enchanting victim, who seeds culture with his blood, Smithyman's victims do not bleed: the bodies simply stop moving. And in that stillness, culture crystalises.

The poems also give agency to non-sensate objects, usually anthropomorphically and sometimes as personifications. "Mangatāwhiri Stream" ends with its speaker asking two rhetorical questions: whether the stream can "regret / that on its day it did not rise in spate" and why "its violator should have been old, / not happy in his job, just getting on with it?"

(23). The stream has two banks and its lowly motionlessness registers Pākehā compunction for failing to rise against the Kīngitanga's violation and the perpetrators' disinterest and emotional dissipation. Readers have been prepared for oblique *j'accuse* by earlier almost hyperbolic personifications, such as when the poem said:

> The stream cuts furtively into peat swamp,
>
> debouching on the swaggering River.
>
> It was never designed to be politically
>
> important; merely, wished to ride unnoticed. ("Stream" 23)

The tributary's self-desired covertness contrasts with the Waikato's boldness and brashness: the Mangatawhiri wants to be left alone to flow along its 'natural' course. The figure also contrasts the political and designed on one hand and the natural and spontaneous on the other. The Waikato's "swagger" ("Stream" 23) represents the colonial power's mortification at the Kīngitanga's supposed presumption, as if unabashedly asserting tino rangatiratanga were prideful artifice regretfully compared to the modest little Mangatawhiri coursing gently through swampy undergrowth or easily forded when one so wished. Such elaborations are divertingly meaningful. But emotively anthropomorphising antagonists as ancillary watercourses and protagonists as duty-bound functionaries makes mockery of historical agency, especially that of Māori, whose deliberations and strategizing were categorically different to gravity's effects on channelled running water.

* * *

The "Vignettes" establish prosodic expectations and manipulates and subverts them to generate mimetic and expressive effects. '"Mangatāwhiri Stream" is in loose blank verse including perfectly regular pentameter lines such as "to lance all nodes of ambush. Stand

prepared" and "The penalty which low ambition pays" (23). Likewise, one finds fully monosyllabic lines: for example, "as one did, to claim his due of a death's hold" and "How is it to fall from your God's just hands" ("Attack" 26). The poem intersperses such lines amongst the mass of irregular ones, running anywhere from nine to fifteen syllables. Overall, received forms seem to be buckling or crumbling from excessive 'natural' experience. Inchoate and unruly language and experience contradict the orderliness and boundedness of English verse—and other forms of English order.

Disordered lines' incongruity with regular rhyme schemes—as in "The Attack on Rangiaowhia"—likewise embody a superficially ordered polity's inner turmoil and contradictions. Ordering authority belies internecine fractiousness. This is seen in detail, too: near-rhymed structurally ordering pairs—such as mouth/ruth; blossom/lessen; cured/afford; cure/disaster; and charge/emerge—sound out failed consensus and approximate agreement while 'maintaining appearances'. Such untidiness dramatizes the act of writing itself, inscribing haste and provisionality; the unpolished poem makes the finished poem read like draft. The poem, wounded but recognisable, mimetically resembles a body to which violence has been done.

The "Vignettes" also mimetically leverage diction. They have hard contrasts of register. In "Mangatawhiri Stream", for example monosyllabic plainspokenness—"I thought I heard as I walked my beat, years past, / in the late night"—is juxtaposed with aureate polysyllabic Latinate nouns and verbs like "boundaries / dedicated to statecraft, when trespassed / by fashionable regiments" (23). "Statecraft" is a cognate of both sources: Latin, the language of law and governance, and Old English, the language of manual work. This is an opposition frequently made in the poems: between the agriculture and animal husbandry

of Waikato Māori, which is the mark of their Heideggerian existential localised authenticity, and the legalism of settler false consciousness. When speaking about the state's machinations, the poems' diction becomes gilded and the syntax Miltonic, deferring resolutions like an ineptly literal translation of late-Latin prose:

> Flames sprang the bells from their churches to round
> clatter-tongued as twice tolled more than in truth
> dinging maudlin of a day that was to be hereafter
> spiting what preacher said while stud fell and rafter
> racked bleak through his pulpit's belly to the ground. ("Attack" 25)

Such diction distances the reader from the violence, veiling it in generalising language of law, administration, and religion; or forestalling understanding with reconditeness. For instance, we see the Bishop who "alien amid their corn prayed his ruth" ("Attack" 25), the last as noted earlier an uncommon term variously for pity, remorse, and grief. This oddity comes during the final poem's inferno. Where readers would expect immediacy and directness, they find inscrutable syntax and rarified diction, which one must pause to parse. Sometimes, such rebarbative diction results from local variation and jargon. *Fascining*—using bundled brushwood for revetting earthworks—, for example, is a military term chiefly used in New Zealand English. The poem determinedly localises the military activities and the death and destruction in which they culminate, again in direct contradiction of Curnovian universalism. However, it frequently just makes comprehension difficult, notwithstanding the memetic expressiveness of the poems' difficulty I noted above.

Smithyman's syntax is similarly disruptively expressive. Reginald Berry contends "Smithyman's poetry is and always has been about syntax … What makes reading Smithyman

hard yakker is his creative constructing of surface structures which appear to be deviant or ill-formed … syntax is what draws the reader into participating in the conceptual activity of the poem" (404). Certainly, the most profound syntactical "hard yakker" in the "Vignettes" happens at their most intense moments, as when we see the "*tall old man* with a blanket blown like a sail / *His upstretched arms showed that he had no weapon* / on a gust, a draught, let the good Queen's rifleman prevail" ("Attack" 26). For Heather McCann, such syntactical overlapping typifies Smithyman's "poem-as-map" (141). When rival cartographers—or poets; or a poet allowing adversarial perspectives into a single poem—chart the same ground or linguistic terrain with different ideas about what belongs to whom, readers must negotiate poems as palimpsests: overlayed transparencies mapping multidimensional conflict zones (McCann 142-43). Dislocation happens on multiple planes: the soldiers treat the old man *as if* he did have a weapon; the blanket looks like something it is not; quotes from secondary sources irrupt into the verse; and Rangiaowhia's residents are dislocated from their lifeworlds and recategorized *in situ* by the diametrically oppositional Victorian colonial state.

Parsing meaning and significance in a limbo of indistinctness is complicated by preponderant passive constructions, particularly when violence happens. We observe "a palisade stormed" ("Baptism" 24) but not *soldiers stormed the palisade*; we see "there is firing in the fern" ("Stream" 25) rather than, say, *kaitoa ambushed the invaders.* Most baldly, we hear of violent death that "It comes", as if professional soldiers' actions were inconsequential or equivalent to "a gust, a draught" ("Stream" 24) or another change in the weather. Likewise, the "Vignettes" are thick with intransitive verbs isolating effects from causes and eliding subject-object relationships, as if phenomena happened in a vacuum. This is most egregious when soldiers kill the "tall old man" emerging in a posture of surrender from the "house

ablaze" ("Attack" 25)—not *the house torched by Cameron's soldiers*. The intransitive action disconnectedly ending in violent death is merely that "the good Queen's riflemen prevail" ("Attack" 26). The man with "upstretched arms" dies when "bullets chiming … clanged and banged down" rather than when riflemen gun him down. The poem goes on to say this killing was "a Queen's queer justice dearly given by Terry carbines" ("Attack" 26). This yoking of synecdoche and personification even further dislocates action from human agency. The poem secretes violent death in punning personification when the poem wonders how it felt for Rangiaowhia's dead "to fall from your God's just hands / between clutching at your crop and the quick / stroke your reaper planned" ("Attack" 26). Such distancing figurations, passive constructions, and intransitive verbs combine in "irregular cavalrymen descending / to let their soured guiltiness ripen / rot-red in a valley good days abandon" ("Attack" 26). The poem's syntactical passivity makes intended actions into events that happen as if no one could do otherwise.

The "Vignettes" foreground provisionality and uncertainty with rhetorical questions, of which the three poems contain eight. The first three are in "Mangatāwhiri Stream"*:* "Militiaman or Regular, whose was that voice / I thought was heard as I walked my beat, years past, / in blank late night of an early winter / discomforted by antics of teatree silhouetted / against a false crest?" (23). And "Can a stream regret that on its day it did not rise in spate? / That its violator should have been old, / not happy in his job, just getting on with it?" ("Stream" 23) "Baptism of Fire 1862" inquires "Was she a blonde lass, or black?" (24). "The Attack on Rangiaowhia" asks "If there is firing in the fern what may stand safety apart?" (25). The questioning culminates in the third stanza, where three in succession occupy seven of the stanza's eight lines:

> How is it to fall from your God's just hands
> between clutching at your crop and the quick
> stroke your reaper planned? How may these, their brown bodies cured
> in unholy smoke, count the kindness you afford
> them, Bishop? How, General, are your commands
> to read lawful, after; but hereafter grow sick
> of a warring heart's quarrel? An old man
> from mocking history resigns, served to be meek. ("Attack" 25)

Even the questions are self-interrupting, folding back into themselves with multiple clauses and qualifications. The poem answers none of them. The voice asking them is disembodied, hesitant, and unattributable:

> Militiaman or Regular, whose was that voice
> I thought was heard as I walked my beat, years past,
> in blank late night of an early winter
> discomforted by antics of teatree silhouetted
> against a false crest? A Voice I'd have sworn to,
> declaring *It is over*. They go away. ("Stream" 23)

The speaker does not know to whom the voice belongs; but he would swear to it. He is not even sure he heard a voice at all. Neither thought nor sense can be relied on. But this is more than dutifully reflexive scepticism. The "Vignettes" uncertainty is richly mimetic: reality is ineluctably provisional and the "Vignettes" represent it by foregrounding their own discursive "difficulty" even when it prohibits relatability. Questions—not answers—are reality.

Smithyman's violent mimesis also includes confronting detail, such as the hideous conceit of "brown bodies cured / in unholy smoke" ("Attack" 25). Such ghastliness does not depend on terminological accuracy: smoking is not a kind of curing: the former is cooking, and the latter is preservation, usually with brine or salt. But the conceit is potent. Punning on 'cure' adds to the ambiguity: deathly smoke remedies disobedience. *Shabbier*, the sequence's first word, similarly shows how ambiguous meaning and attribution generate layers of significance. As mentioned earlier, shabbiness commonly means in poor condition through long use or lack of care. But how could this apply to a recently established frontier? Does it make sense characterising a natural boundary as ramshackle? Shabbiness also means dishonourable or otherwise contemptible behaviour, specifically the "General" trampling legal convention and established borders. As a comparative adjective, it fits Cameron failing to measure up to his estimable station, as does his "stumping" and quixotic misuse of his walking-stick to *lance* the Kingitanga's defenders, but with the added pun that they are regarded like an abscess or a boil, a site of infection in the body politic that needs draining.

Dissipation and tattiness likewise characterise the poems' violence and those who dispense it. Rather than the battlefield showing "what it ought to show" ("Stream" 23)—dutiful and honourable individuals combined into formations engaged in warfare—the men are untidy, ill-disciplined if not criminal, and inept. Their violence is uncontrolled and ill-directed. They unloose their "first ragged fire / as they wade a bog and insignificant stream, / closing the trees beyond without chance to aim" ("Stream" 23). Luck, rather than strategy or tactics, dictates success or failure. Their "ragged fire" is not what British soldiers "ought to show" ("Stream" 23), which would be the *sang-froid* and marksmanship famously displayed by Maitland's 1,500 British Foot Guards who delivered Waterloo's *coup de grâce* to Napoleon's

feared Imperial Guard. The men in the Waikato fail to meet either ideal or even required military standards. But their failure is symptomatic. Reality in the "Vignettes" *in toto* is tatty: if we see it how it really is, our expectations of clarity and certainty get disappointed.

* * *

The Waikato invasion is a local example of what Agamben has called "the state of exception": politics is divorced from law and sovereignty becomes synonymous with power of decision over life. The state assuming quasi-emergency powers during New Zealand's nineteenth century civil wars enacted a*vant la lettre* Agamben's view that "the sovereign is the point of indistinction between violence and law" (25). As "Mangatawhiri Stream puts it", "So much talk provides its event; at some point / invention matures as act" ("Stream" 23). *Talk* is administrative discourse and performative debate. The *act* is the state using extra-judicial force. *Invention* is the key word: it marks the point where the state breaches legality's limits—Agamben's "law's threshold or limit concept" (4)—and political "facts on the ground" trump public law. Invention shades into fiction: necessity abnegates constitutionality and the state acts *as if* it required martial law or emergency powers before the fact. The Waikato war's *casus belli* was fraudulent even if the government of the day interpreted the Kīngitanga as a direct challenge to the authority of Queen Victoria and the Crown. It precipitated a crisis of sovereignty that led the settler state to try to establish a state of exception in the Waikato: suspend legitimacy derived from the Treaty of Waitangi and establish its authority by force.

The "Vignettes" are ambivalent about law's restraints. "How, General, are your commands / to read lawful, after?" ("Attack" 25) asks the speaker after the commander has acted lawlessly in the settler state of exception. The question is to the "General": Lieutenant-General Duncan Cameron, commander of the Imperial forces in New Zealand and so an

historical person with significant agency. Querying the legitimacy of the General's "commands", the speaker links them to the "just God" ("Attack" 25) who issued the Decalogue from on high to manage Israel's affairs. Poetic justice issues from above, imposing itself on those who live and die beneath it. But more than merely querying him, the poem demands that he justify his actions not simply by whatever law and power that sanctioned them. The poem wants to know how his commands can be "read lawful, after" ("Attack" 25): in the future where present readers live with their consequences. This privileged judgment is the "mocking history" from which the murdered "old man … resigns" ("Attack" 25). Cameron's commands can only be "read lawful" by the letter of the law. Power is what sanctions them.

The poems dramatize the settler state effecting a monopoly on violence power by utterly revoking its legitimacy. Any unconstitutional state action is illegal; for example, when the New Zealand government ignores te Tiriti. The Waikato invasion and subsequent land confiscations are ineluctable examples. The Maniapoto Settlement Bill s 9(5) unequivocally states that during the Waikato wars the Crown's "representatives and advisers acted unjustly and in breach of te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi and its principles in its dealings with Ngāti Maniapoto in sending its forces across the Mangatāwhiri River in July 1863, and occupying land in the Waikato region where Ngāti Maniapoto had interests". Specific injustices and breaches it identifies include "indiscriminate killing of women and children non-combatants, including at Rangiaowhia and Ōrākau" (s 9(5) (b)). The crux of the "Vignettes" is the New Zealand settler state constitutionally delegitimising itself. Nothing can be "read lawful, after" law becomes "talk" and power becomes self-sanctioning.

Order in the "Vignettes" becomes reduced to symbols imposed on precarious lifeworlds. "Mangatāwhiri Stream" notes the "compensation in coined suffering / which is required by largest rigid boundaries / dedicated to statecraft, when trespassed / by fashionable regiments or mercenaries" (23). Statecraft, the art of government, collapses into necessity and caprice, whether enforcing "Rigid boundaries" or making a wilful "crossing sped" of "Mangatāwhiri Stream" (23). Coinage is a marker of such authority: it enables enforceable contracts and compensates mercenaries. The "Vignettes", however, persistently posit an alternative 'natural' normative order: Heideggerian existential dwelling with seasonal rhythms, harvest cycles, and intergenerational localised guardianship of the land exemplified by Waikato Māori. In the poems, the irreconcilability between these Agembenian and Heideggerian orders is Manichean. Conflict is inevitable and shabbiness prevails.

Heideggerian truthfulness as "unconcealment" is constitutional in the "Vignettes". Authentic discourse, especially poetry, responsively and comprehensibly articulates what is understandable and significant about subjects' lifeworlds and fellow beings within these worlds (Magda, 2001). For Heidegger, poetic discourse's fundamental purpose is truth as "unfolding of the self-revealing-concealing of being", which "reveals itself in the presence of entities, while simultaneously withdrawing into the beingness of entities and concealing itself in the process" (Schalow 282). "Baptism of Fire" follows an unnamed man's stumbling progress towards the truth. "Then" he was a "raw recruit" but "here" he discovers himself to be a "corporal of parts, an infantryman" (24). These are merely inauthentic designations on which the physical world impinges: it dirties his uniform and his body rebels against its privations as he feels "his back aching" ("Baptism" 24). His essential being remains concealed but:

He is to be undeceived

yet, having been virgin of death's correct

taking rehearsed as he walked his beat or roved

on store picquet. ("Baptism" 24)

Policing and soldiering routines ready him for the real thing. Going through the motions of violence leaves him untouched but readied for "Death's correct / taking" ("Baptism" 24), the inarguable existential reality of what it means to kill and be killed.

As I have shown, Smithyman's sequence rails against the deceitfulness of misaligned personal consciences and actions, including illegal state-sanctioned violence. W.H. Auden's poetry, a key influence on New Zealand modernists, is preoccupied with deception, especially self-deception. An example is his 1937 poem "As I Walked out One Evening": "But all the clocks in the city / Began to whirr and chime: / "O let not Time deceive you, / You cannot conquer Time". An earlier and even more fitting precedent is Herman Melville's "Shiloh: A Requiem (April, 1862)", which commemorates the shockingly bloody battle between Union and Confederate forces in Tennessee during the American Civil War. It directly concerns how martial violence disabuses combatants of principled illusions:

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,

The swallows fly low

Over the field in clouded days,

The forest-field of Shiloh—

Over the field where April rain

Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain

Through the pause of night

That followed the Sunday fight
Around the church of Shiloh—
The church so lone, the log-built one,

That echoed to many a parting groan
And natural prayer
Of dying foemen mingled there—
Foemen at morn, but friends at eve—
Fame or country least their care:
(What like a bullet can undeceive!)
But now they lie low,
While over them the swallows skim,
And all is hushed at Shiloh. (Melville)

The "Vignettes" likewise evoke a parish pastoral, a desecrated church, hollow principles, contrasted manufacture and naturalness, and violence's disenchantments. They similarly see violence as the ultimate corrective to delusion, cant, vaingloriousness, and idiocy, notwithstanding the shabby fact that it is the people of Rangiaowhia who die to right such wrongheadedness. "The Attack at Rangiaowhia" reports "foolhardy Nixon was dead as *his* doornail, / the house ablaze when Von Tempsky led the last stupid charge" (25): they are men acting as if things were other than they are. Afterall, whatever their justifications, beliefs, or how they construe reality, their actions determine outcomes as they open "the lost door where the dead alone could emerge" ("Attack" 25). Smithyman's violent disillusionment is an artifact of Anglo-modernism and one of war poetry's perennial themes.

Disillusionment is connected with an apocalyptic vision of history as a destructive storm. The sequence's concatenation of religious imagery, symbolism, and references coalesces in a single overtly cataclysmic line: "The pyre of their Christ encarnadined night's blind sky" ("Attack" 26). After three poems replete with serpentine discursive sentences and enjambed multi-clausal questions, the sequence ends in heavenly self-negation. Rigid boundaries—including law and politics—dissolve in unbounded conflagration. All the tortuous "talk" leads to this "act" rendered in a self-contained line thickened by allusive meaning. Thirteen syllables ending with an unequivocal period, the line scans as an English Alexandrine or hexameter. While the first hemistich is regular, the off-verse is anything but:

˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / / / /
The py|re of | their Christ || encarn|adined | night's blind sky.

What happens beyond the caesura is much like Gerard Manley Hopkins' sprung rhythm, such as in the line "Man's mounting spirit in his bone-house, mean house, dwells" ("The Caged Skylark"). After all the emphasis on speaking and problematising of truth-telling, it is noteworthy how difficult it feels to physically *say* it, especially those final four tightly stressed syllables, successive assonances on a long /i/, the first three of which also alliterate on /n/. Reading stutters into speechlessness. The line also rejects the earlier passive constructions and intransitive verbs; byzantine syntax has given way to the simplest Fenollosian or Poundian *ur*-modernist transitive sentence: *x* transforms *y*. But subject and object are complexly qualified nouns. There is a double displacement of subject and object: *their* direct agency transfers to *Christ* and then again to the *pyre*; *night's* transfers to the *sky*. Who is doing what to whom is overdetermined even at the poems' final stroke.

To whom does *their* refer? The plural possessive is the Crown forces: "They their worst of summers burned dry / with distaste. They rode off, dazed and sullen" ("Attack" 26). If so,

the pronoun's alterity is significant: it was *them*, *they* did it, it was *their* Christ; it was not *us*, *we* did not do it, it was not *our* Christ. Who is this *Christ*? Plainly, he is not a universal saviour, a *Salvator Mundi.* This Christ is paganised by how he is sacrificed. *Pyre* derives from the Greek word for fire. It also referred to sacred altar fires on which animal sacrifices were burnt as offerings to deities. God, the source of justice in popular Christianity, resides in the sky, from which he sees and judges all but for Smithyman it is "night's blind sky" ("Attack" 26). The poem ascribes divine dominion of the heavens to the primordial Nyx, Greek goddess of night, mother of Hypnos/Sleep and Thanatos/Death, bride of Erebus/Darkness, and firstborn of Chaos. Nyx is also central to the Orphic theogonies, heterodox ancient mythological accounts of the origins of the gods and the cosmos, where she is sometimes the first being of creation.[11] Most Orphic traditions appear to have made Nyx one of the first rulers of the cosmos and in her oracular guise such she was worshipped at Delphi and in Megara at the temple of Dionysus Nyktelios (Pausanias 1.40.6). Smithyman's figure combines pagan mysteries with Christian apocalypticism. Violence is nihilistic sublimity done in inhuman darkness.

The poems' ultimate violent act comes in an image synthesising two canonical sources: Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. On the one hand, it recalls Faust's pained acknowledgement of his fate when he despairingly cries "See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!" (5.4.147). On the other, it echoes MacBeth's hyperbolic realisation of the reality of regicidally usurping sovereignty:

> Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
>
> Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather

[11] The role of Nyx in Orphic literature is discussed at length in Dwayne A. Meisner's Orphic *Tradition and the Birth of the Gods* (2018).

> The multitudinous seas incarnadine
>
> Making the green one red. (Mac. 2.2.61-62)

Smithyman's line likewise uses en/incarnadine not as an adjective but as a transitive verb, chiefly meaning to redden. Secondarily—but literally—it also means to make something the colour of flesh, *carn* being the Latin for flesh, as one finds in incarnate, by which the word became flesh; as the Latin Vulgate puts it, *Verbum caro factum est* (John 1.14). Again, like Shakespeare, Smithyman's polysyllabic Latinate verb contrasts with a series of Germanic monosyllables. Smithyman's line's trajectory, however, is more complex: real-world violence transforms flesh into word, which then incarnadines it back into word—the reported speech of the poem—, which tells us "the troops left brown / or plague black" ("Attack" 26). Referencing plagues prepares for the culminating paganistic and biblical concatenation when Tempsky and Cameron visit cruelly inverted Old Testament signs and wonders on the Kingitanga. Unlike Exodus 7.3 where Jehovah signals to the Israelites that He will deliver them from Egypt, in the "Vignettes" they are marvels of destruction heralding bondage. The Crown forces are like Old Testament exterminating angels and swarming locusts. They are apocalyptic horsemen clearing *lebensraum* in an already occupied promised land.

The second allusion involves Faust realising the cosmic scale of his Satanic bargain in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*:

> The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
>
> The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.
>
> O, I'll leap up to my God!—Who pulls me down?—
>
> See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
>
> One drop would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ!—

> Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!
>
> Yet will I call on him: O, spare me, Lucifer! (5.4.143-149)

Smithyman's blood-red sky, like the one Faustus sees blushed by Christ's sacrifice, prefigures the "irregular cavalrymen descending / to let their soured guiltiness ripen / rot-red in a valley good days abandon" ("Attack" 26). These avenging angels do not impartially dispense Godly justice according to the rule of law. Instead, they allow their sin to turn rancid and take root, fertilising the land with bad blood. This demarcated earth has reddened; so, too, must the unbounded heavens. Soured ripeness and unbounded power are all. The "Vignettes" begin with "orders" to use "regiments" so rational "statecraft" can establish the "largest rigid boundaries" and "shabby" frontiers ("Stream" 23). But it ends in dissolution and chaos on a cosmic scale. They abandon regional mimesis, their way of saying something real about people's choices and actions in a known place and time—Waikato in the 1860s—, and rise above it all into rhetorical aggrandisement.

* * *

Smithyman's triptych is a howl of te riri Pākehā: the sound and fury white man's anger. Violence comes down from above like the Yeatsian 'sudden blow'. It is violation: the state-sanctioned violence of imperial forces at Rangiaowhia as well as the ambivalently figured rape of the lass in "Baptism of Fire 1862". Each defiles natural boundaries to compensate for frustration and impotence; but the poems say nothing about the likeness's normative significance. Such indeterminacy is frequent in the "Vignettes", an allusive modernist college sacrificing lyrical probity and coherence and embodying contradiction. The decisive opposition is between competing claims for locatable place: the Crown's expansionist provincialism against Waikato Māori's agricultural, industrial, and spiritual regionalism. The

poems probe incongruities between tāngata whenua and tāngata Tiriti lifeworlds; they indict Pākehā religious and administrative duplicity for souring duplicity and brutalising the relationship between settler and Māori. In state-sanctioned violence's aftermath, we see the former "dazed and sullen", the latter "sad and disappointed" ("Attack" 26), and the dead of each spoiling amongst once blossoming bean vines and a burning church.

The poems' resolutely localised modernism is anathematic to Curnow's synthetism and homogenisation. Smithyman's modernism insists on context's defining particularity and the poems make historiographical, jurisdictional, and discursive uncertainties their r*aison d'être*, a strongly mimetic reaction to the violent historical reality they represent. The poems are self-alienating, constantly turning on their own preconceptions, deepening rather than resolving their constitutional dividedness even while condemning the cant, hubris, and wantonness of the violence they articulate. But at the final moment the poems abandon their sceptical yet earthy modernist mimesis for cosmic rhapsody, an entirely personal vision of apocalypse. This apparent *volte face* into poetic incongruity, however, is the logical outcome of a vision of state violence—whether the rape, the invasion, or the sacking of Rangiaowhia—disparaging political deliberations as mere talk. Law does not motivate action. At best, it is an ideal for measuring individuals' turpitude and even then exceptional power can do without it. State sanctioned violence "undeceives" its players about law by making them into Hobbesian brutes or charnel matter. Violence makes legal agents become sullen spectral killers riding back across a shabby frontier as an Agambenian Armageddon rages overhead.

Chapter Four: A Shell-Blast in the Face – Donald H. Lea's "Gold Stripe"

New Zealand literary studies have passed over Donald Lea's poetry in silence. After Lea's three collections published in England—*Stand Down!* (1917), *A Number of Things* (1919), and *Dionè, a Spring Medley* (1919)—none of his poetry was anthologised until Harry Ricketts included "Gold Stripe" (from *Stand Down!*) in *The Penguin Book of New Zealand War Writing* (2015). An essay by Ricketts' in *The Journal of New Zealand Literature* is the only sustained consideration of Lea's poetry. Ricketts contends Lea's poems are "only intermittently memorable": they "are simply not as moving, not as bitter, not as visceral, not as verbally and rhythmically charged as those of the now canonical First World War poets" ("Fear's Head Hid" 54). Ricketts suggests Lea's prohibitively "euphemistically laconic and the whimsicofacetious [*sic*]" tone preclude Owenesque intensities, including in "Gold Stripe", the poem Ricketts most praises ("Fear's Head Hid" 55). That poem is "considerably more graphic" than Lea's other works, particularly two disquieting stanzas where Lea analogously intimates how mechanised warfare unmakes people ("Fear's Head Hid" 55). For Ricketts, they are "the closest Lea comes to an Owenesque or Sassoonian portrayal of unacknowledged suffering, though the homely, grotesque image of victims' eyes like popped cape-gooseberries is quite outside their range, and distinctly Kiwi" ("Fear's Head Hid" 57). Ricketts, however, does not examine the figurative amalgam of coziness and horror or explain how it is "distinctly Kiwi".

This chapter does examine the poem's Kiwi-ness and its analogical tactics because "Gold Stripe" memorably and resonantly represents state-sanctioned violence's personal physical consequences. I agree with Ricketts that its shockingly original figurativeness is

unusual in New Zealand poetry and that of the First World War, including Owen's and Sassoon's, particularly because its analogical sophistication is wedded to colloquiality. As Rickett's notes, Lea "writes in a register quite different from any employed by the poets through whom we now tend to see, imagine and half-create the War" ("Fear's Head Hid" 60). Poets wrote poems about all significant twentieth century wars but they most decisively shaped and sustained collective memories of the First World War. Poetry by middle and upper-class poets—officers such as Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon—was most influential. Lea's "Gold Stripe", however, like Issac Rosenberg's poems, is written from working-class non-commissioned soldiers' perspectives. Mark Pirie suggested Lea is "the closest thing Kiwis have to a Rupert Brooke in New Zealand poetry" (6); but "Gold Stripe" gives an altogether different view of industrial age warfare, one using popular verse forms to depict enlisted men's experience with clinical remove and Homeric verisimilitude.

This chapter explains how Lea's poem exploits autobiographicality by using first-hand soldierly experience to credential shock and stoicism. But it is a negative affirmation: "Gold Stripe" insists war's horrific realities are incommunicable to anyone who has not experienced them. Direct description must cede to analogy and readerly imagination must substitute for apprehended witness. The poem begins in a world where men's vocations make them who they are. Gradually, stratifying military discipline, intensifying privations, and increasing lethality mould them into an undifferentiable soldierly conglomerate bereft of personal identity. The process culminates with either shellshock's twitching silence or violent death's absolute nullity. Despite inculcation into the state's martial service, they are not aggressors. Instead, they appear as exclusively passive albeit stoic victims of naturalistic and impersonal violence. Violence becomes a climatic or pestilential phenomenon without personal, political,

and legal agency. The poem's parenthetical Homeric analogies adroitly oppose figurative likeness and difference to register wounding's severity and its incomprehensibility. Such wounds have no sanguinary germinative potential and their governmental and legal sanction are inconsequential. Maiming and violent death is nothing more than spiralling cynicism's deepest depth.

* * *

After an epigraph declaring "A gold stripe may be worn on the left sleeve by wounded men and by wounded men only", the first two stanzas establish a milieu of men knowable by specifiable and defining occupations, who "left the axe, the saw, the plough, an' put away the shears / … closed the office, shut the desk, left engine mill, and loom" (Lea 27). Although they "came as volunteers", the state "took 'em" and "moulded 'em to pattern in a camp" (27). Authorities consider them good stuff "to make a soldier of": men who "waded in, an' tackled it, an' meant to see it through" (27). But the state's military inexorably begins erasing their individuality. Having come from "every walk in life" (27), they begin becoming homogenised, uniformly marching towards a narrowing end: efficiently killing; or failing that, dying propitiously.

The recruits submit themselves to authority and organise themselves with unwritten affective social norms—"their mates' desires"—and military hierarchies: "'stars' or 'crowns,' an' 'stripes'" (28). Adopted and imposed order belies lingering differences: some take to "slopin' arms an' clickin' heels"; some "seemed to like / the jobs"; some "were not too bad, and some were blasted snobs" (28). They all suffer camp life's disciplines and unpleasantness and confront their first motiveless adversary: a raft of illnesses, "pleurisy, an' coughs, an' chills, an' measles" (28). Although these sicknesses "kin' o' damp / one's burning martial

ardour", they teach the men "to take the rough and not complain" as well as the grimmer lesson that such stoicism will not inure them against the ills: "many o' 'em died" all the same (28). On deploying, their conveyance reaffirms privilege: "A private travels steerage, commissions go saloon, the sergeant blokes go second class" (28). Steerage passengers suffer the greatest misfortune, as "odd 'uns" die along the way and are left at sea (28). Eventually arriving in Egypt, they are "tipped … out" and "left … there to bake" (28). Again, hardships are transformative as "flies, an' sand, an' sweat, 'an dysent'ry" (28) make neophyte soldiers into "proper full-baked" ones (29). Military selection becomes survival of the fittest, which "weeds the weak 'uns out" no matter if "their hearts were stout" (29).

Soon enough, the winnowed remainder get to the "'the real McKay', Gallipoli an' France" (29). As "bomb an' shrapnel, bullet, shell" kill and wound many amongst them, the lucky ones balk when steel and lead "unkindly passed 'em by" (29). They suffer only "little ills" such as "fever, thirst, an' dysent'ry … / An' never getting any sleep" (29). Getting sent to hospital as "lousy wrecks, with constitutions gone" does not qualify them for "bars an' medals" (29). Twisted martial logic has made common sense go "all awry" as surviving passes unnoticed (29); only casualties get recognition. The speaker becomes exasperatedly incredulous and adds to his catalogue of the "lucky" enlisted men's privations—"septic sores … feet … rottin' off, /… an' frost-bite, an' p'rhaps a hackin' cough" (29)—stopping only as he notices that he is repeating himself: "But these was just the little ills, I'd spotted that before" (29). Nonetheless, he continues itemising the men's ailments, which despite becoming increasingly severe still don't "really count" (29). Getting gassed is "just a nark" while getting "crushed between the limbers … was just a bit o' sideplay" (29). But they "raise the curtain" on two viscerally evidential scenes leaving the speaker so horrified that he "ain't got words"

to describe them and asks why the reader "Can't … see it for yerselves" (29). The first is seeing post-traumatic casualties "jumpin' like marionettes", a state "worse than bein' killed", in which a knowable person is reduced to one of many "twitchin' bodies", cases that the authorities call "'cold feet'" (30). The second is a fastidiously hideous account of "the way blokes eyes come out, or burst inside their head, / that catch a 'shell-blast' in the face" (30), which the poem compares to squashing cape gooseberries between one's thumb and finger. The speaker notes disbelievingly that such casualties are blinded and disfigured even though they "never bled!" (30).

Soldiers are not "*special*" (30), the speaker notes, despite their hardships and injuries and nor do they wish to be thought as such. Men who enjoyed the strange good fortune not to have been dehumanised by war merely wanted "to do the best they could" (30). Any glory that might have come from being able to "swarm the greasy pole o' Fame" (31) they would have used to give a fillip to their similarly struggling and afflicted comrades. But military honours are not on offer because they "haven't shed a drop of blood" (31), at least not of their own. Having passed unscathed through all the war's "'little ills'", the poem concludes by laconically bemoaning the "*damned* injustice to them the 'also ran'" (31), survivors and witnesses of horror with neither anything to show for it nor words that could do it justice.

* * *

"Gold Stripe" privileges combatants' direct reportage as its source of poetic truth. First World War poetry is significant because "For the first time, war poetry appeared to stand or fall according to the poet's first-hand knowledge of battle … war poetry is experiential writing, designed to educate its audience to the actualities (by which are meant the horrors)" (Brearton 10). As the introduction to *Stand-Down!* puts it, Lea "as a member of the New Zealand

Expeditionary Force … fought and suffered with that gallant little band which travelled twelve thousand miles in order to stand shoulder to shoulder with the other Sons of Empire" (MacKenzie). More soberly, Lea was an engineer who had emigrated to New Zealand from England. After enlisting in 1915, he went to western Europe via Egypt, serving as a private in the Otago Regiment including at the Somme, where he was gassed. The poem, then, can be attributed to Lea's "lived experience". He writes assumedly from first-hand reality. The poem's speaker stakes his credibility on having directly witness horror; he *describes*—or at least wants to describe—and does not imagine. He represents for the reader his experience's horrific apogee metaphorically because he believes it is otherwise indescribable. War's reality becomes incommunicable when "lived experience" ceases to be a source of transmissible verisimilitude. It is the reader, not the speaker, who must imagine what it was like by construing analogies.

So the poem's reality comes from two sources: the reader's imagination and the speaker's description. But the speaker insists his experience is incommunicable to anyone who has not experienced modern warfare. What is gained in credibility is commensurate with mimetic diminishment. Description, particularly the analogy of the marionettes, *must not* be communicably adequate for it to register the extremity and incomprehensibility of what it describes. Such negative representation's effectiveness depends on how much the reader accedes empathetic imaginative privilege to the inaccessible 'Lea' on whose experience the descriptive dimension depends.

Colloquially, 'you-had-to-be-there' derails communication by asserting an unbridgeable gap between experience and understanding. But poems are—or can be—different: they can attract meaning rather than merely projecting it. In this case, a vast and

unattended source of meaningfulness and understanding is the entire body of knowledge about warfare, including the First World War, and what weapons do to minds and bodies. That is to say, the meaningfulness of "Gold Stripe" and its mimetic catchment is wider than the autobiographical or auto-fictional loci that predicate its credibility. The poem's you-had-to-be-there caveat allows or insists readers ignore general knowledge about violence, warfare, and medicine, which are all potential sources of empathetic understanding and mimetic comprehension. Insisting on personalistic authority severely restricts how deeply poems enter readerly consciousnesses and consciences. I return to this problem of reconciling imaginative reading and caveated poetic description later in this chapter.

* * *

"Gold Stripe" scantly uses local detail for establishing setting. Like an inverted *Commedia*, the men begin in a peaceable state where vocational diversity balances the shared purpose leading them to set down ploughshares and join the army. Unlike Dante's purgatory where souls get refined and readied for compassionate and justified ascension to paradise, the state's limbo winnows, reduces, steels, and sharpens the poem's soldiers for descending into Hell, an underserved fate they cannot perspicaciously anticipate. When they finally encounter the infernal storm, it is elsewhere. It identifiably happens in Gallipoli and France and whatever happened in New Zealand's paradisal civilian or purgatorial camp zones has no bearing in their impenetrable battlefield hell. The *cordon sanitaire* around the "elsewhere" Inferno confines violence's meaningfulness to where it happens. It is impenetrable and nothing outside it—law, authority, administration, command—can influence or even sanction what happens in it. As noted earlier, violence just happens as if according to physical laws that do not respond to human intervention. This siloing radically and counterfactually constricts

explanative authority. For example, one unspoken trajectory of violence, for the poem's soldiers, begins in New Zealand's camps, parliament, and courts, and—for survivors—also ends there, beyond its frame, in hospitals and convalescent homes. Violence might also be plotted in soldierly disciplines, conscription laws, wartime policies, and declarations of war. It can be traced further back into the state's monopoly of force, its pathological need to exercise it, bloody-minded opportunism, and deference to obligation. All these influences not only explain how and why the men ended up in hell but they are also a blueprint for it, giving the historical lie to elsewhere's illusion of containment. Nonetheless, this illusion of containment manifests when disregarding veterans' wounds and trauma and those of families and whānau, which sully home's Edenic good-life. It similarly manifests in hastily preparing for the next war rather than dealing with the last one's ongoing effects. Likewise, memorials' closure projected by marble and granite dictates consoling endings and limits: these wounds and absences we see amongst us happened then and there; they are not something here and now; and these dates and placenames prove it. "Gold Stripe" attempts to articulate compassionately the soldiers' incomprehensible experience, but its hellish fenced-off elsewhere inscribes containment's cheapening solace.

Elsewhere serves the myth of a peaceable New Zealand. Violence gets worse as the men get further from it. Undoubtedly, that is how it was. But this only makes sense if personhood is meaning's exclusive locus. This narrow horizon avoids acknowledging that the New Zealand's state prerogatives—particularly discipline, punishment, waging war—and obligations—especially to capitalism and monetarism—are identifiable with the European powers that have descended into barbarism. As Chapter 3 showed, New Zealand just as bloodily tore itself to pieces in unity's cause during the 1863-1864 Waikato War as Europeans

did at the conflagrations of Solferino (1859), Königgrätz/Sadowa (1866), or Sedan (1870). The difference is only absolute scale. The alignment in "Gold Stripe" of geographic distance with a progression from civility to savagery is merely circumstantial. It just happened to be worse *elsewhere*. The New Zealand Wars involved British expeditionary forces coming here to wage war with the same logic, imperatives, and sanction that carried the Anzacs in the opposite direction only forty-two years later. Such knowledge enters poems without it being invited because readers bring it with them. And when it does enter after the poetic fact, its previous absence becomes conspicuous. It makes plain our knowing or tacit consent for "banishing violence to a contained sphere separated from one's own … maintaining the cherished image of modernity engaged in redeeming the pledge of its own origin" (Hüppauf 3). Arguably, New Zealand's "cherished image of modernity" is a purportedly peaceful social covenant and an undisturbed collective conscience at empire's periphery.

From a population of just over a million, 100,471 New Zealanders served as soldiers or medical personnel in the First Expeditionary Force during the First World War, of whom 16,711 were killed and 41,317 were wounded (*Great War Statistics* 237). When "Gold Stripe" says New Zealand soldiers came "from every walk of life" (27) it does not get across the scale of the nation's commitment: Forty-two percent of men of military age served in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Of those 58,028 casualties, how many does the poem depict directly? None. The poem's exacting descriptive analogies belie the part they play in generalising particulars. It does not, for example, represent a particular shell-burst victim, let alone a named or personally characterised one, whether fictional or historical. The analogy is made to characterise a *type* of injury: it is about what will happen to all men's bodies at given angles and distances from detonating high-explosives at the Somme or Gallipoli. "Gold

Stripe" is not at all intrinsically individual about wounds or death. It instead sees violence progressively emptying everyone's subjectivity and diminishing everybody's agency, pushing men progressively deeper into regimented beastliness until voided of their instinctual self-preservation so that they become "twitchin'" marionettes or eyeless corpses. Until then, they rely ever more on their nervous systems and less on judgement and decision, trapped in a feedback loop of stuttering flinches even as soldierly demands grow. The cape gooseberry analogy goes further: the men are figured as vegetables, internally expelled from the animal kingdom while farcically exhibiting human carapaces to onlookers. "Gold Stripe" does not Homerically mourn a particular person—with a sayable name, describable home, and distinctive loves and hates—and then do the same for another, over and again. Instead, it despairs as humanity's precondition—communicable selfhood—gets destroyed.

* * *

Selfhood and its gradual directed loss are central themes in "Gold Stripe". The poem narrates a deathly pilgrim's progress that begins with individuated persons, moves through communalisation and undifferentiability, and ends in violent nullification. Before the war, identity is vocation: what men do is who they are. They move from disparate civilian working lives into enlistment, where they not only all have the same job, but their functional name becomes identical: Private whomever. Pronouns mark likeness's onset: the first seven lines have nine instances of *they*, including "that they were just the stamp of man to make a soldier of", and "an' they, they thought so too" (27). *He*, *him*, and *his* vanish from the poem's rhetorical universe. The trainees and untested soldiers are like an administrative inversion of the Lernaean Hydra, a monster with thousands of bodies ineptly governed by a single head—the commander who is clueless about what his units are doing. As the process continues, the

pluralistic beast becomes even less differentiated: It is an army of Empire, a Hobbesian Leviathan into which the men have been "moulded" (27), each man identically experiencing "shrapnel, bullet, shell" and "fever, thirst, an' dysent'ry" (29). As more violence happens—rather than is done—to them and their sufferings worsen, the men merge "with constitutions gone" (29) and lose all distinctiveness, including finally consciousness itself. The final and rudest transition is becoming excreta: having lost their minds, what remains of them is useless flesh: either half-empty "twitchin' bodies … in the 'shell-shock' wards" (30) as stuttering signals of seared nervous systems set them jerking like marionettes; or utterly emptied as corpses.

But statehood is made from stronger stuff. The soldiers' nationality endures beyond personal nullification and they never stop being recognisably New Zealanders. Their itinerary in the poem makes them unmistakeably men of the First New Zealand Expeditionary Force, which mustered and trained in New Zealand, sailed to Egypt for further preparation, was sent to Gallipoli, and finally fought on the Western Front in Europe. During their travels and travails, they are iterations of what Stephen Eldrid-Grigg called the "bold boys who embodied … typical masculine traits: laconicism, dutifulness, stoicism, an admixture of egalitarianism and self-reliance, and lack of undue deference to appointed authority" (140). In "Gold Stripe", such are the men who "stuck it out…/ to take the rough and not complain", set stock by "their mates' desires", and disparaged commanders as "blasted snobs" (28). Jock Phillips contends soldiers' writings reveal shared attitudes: "front-line experience is an horrific ordeal, officers are untrustworthy, the English are despised, Aussies are good mates, and the compensations of war come in good times with the boys away from the front. Above all, the heroic image of war was gone forever" (234). The poem's speaker uses a slangy argot but says much the same

of them: they "waded in, an' tackled it, an' meant to see it through" (27). These are men of historical fact, who are implicated in known events and whose behaviour and attitudes conform with cliched blokehood.

"Gold Stripe" conjures a paradoxical world where soldiers are credentialed violent men but are portrayed exclusively as victims. Plucked from civility and vocation, they went to a camp where state-sanctioned authorities and experts "moulded 'em to pattern" (27). This pattern is more than "slopin' arms, an clickin' heels" (28). A "proper full-baked soldier" (29) is a trained killer, someone given skills, resources, and sanction for taking life on the state's behalf. The poem is silent about doing or even learning how to do this core part of soldiering: killing. Instead, the men are exclusively targets: they suffer disease, neglect, want, cant, perfidy, filth, heat, cold, and violence. The suffering and loss they create is inconsequential. Despite Lea eschewing explicit sacerdotalism such as Curnow's, the soldiers are lambs to the slaughter—but in abattoirs rather than on altars. Their attitude to such pointless carnage is like that articulated by another satirist of circumstance, Thomas Hardy:

> We smiled upon each other then,
> And life to me had less
> Of that fell look it wore ere when
> They owned their passiveness. ("The Subalterns")

Lea's men own, if not passiveness, then at least stoic acceptance admixed with dutifulness. But they unutterably own it.

The enlisted men of "Gold Stripe" are quintessential Pākehā victims, but they are not too helpless or ill-equipped to resist the violence done to them. They are not businessmen, farmers, bank clerks, and the like; at least they are not anymore. They are soldiers carrying

within themselves society's executive principles—fairness, justice, progress, liberalism, order, and such like—to which the state has added martial expertise to transform them into functionaries of the state *in extremis*. They must be well versed in killing's arts and sciences; their knowledge, higher service, and selflessness—along with surviving long enough to "get the job done" (28)—make them worthy of a "Gold Stripe". So, too, does the state's estimable monetary and cultural investment in them. The savagery besetting their emblematic selves is indictable for reducing the world's civility. But it also induces the soldiers' representative stoic virtues, which they—if not the state demanding them—believe deserve decoration.

The New Zealanders' victimhood is completely unalloyed because there is no one in the poem whom they can make *their* victims. There is no identifiably human enemy and without enemy agency, the men's experience of violence becomes purely environmental. The men get more imperilled as scenery and weather change: they suffer ocean going's perils while embarked; in Egypt, intemperate heat, coruscating sand, and pestilence "weeds the weak 'uns out" (29); and at the Western Front, they face septicaemia and rot in the trenches' frigid quagmire. When finally submitted to "bomb an' shrapnel, bullet, shell" (29), it as if the weather has worsened into a deadly industrial hurricane, much like Ernst Jünger's *Storm of Steel*, although his enemy was distinctly present and eminently killable. Elsewhere, the poem pathologizes deadly munitions as if more extreme doses of "little ills" (29) like measles and dysentery. The poem implicitly makes weather, disease, and warfare phenomenologically equivalent: they are forces of nature against which men are constitutionally vulnerable and over which they are powerless. The poem neither credits nor condemns the New Zealanders or their German adversaries for what they do. In "Gold Stripe" people are not responsible for violence. It just happens.

* * *

"Gold Stripe" is structured in Kiplingesque couplet quatrains of rhymed fourteeners, an iambic measure often used for popular verse. It was common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but its typically strong caesura reaches even further back into Old and Middle English accentual metres. The fourteener's caesura eventually became a line break, and it morphed into common metre: quatrains of alternating iambic tetrameter (four metrical feet per line) and iambic trimeter (three metrical feet per line) as found in ballads like "Tam Lin", hymns such as "Amazing Grace", and much of Emily Dickinson's poetry. Lea's poem's metre firmly establishes it in the broad church of popular English poetry. It is uncomplicatedly traditional and "Gold Stripe" articulates twentieth century soldierly experience as a continuance of that tradition.

The fourteener is more flexible than shorter iambic lines such as common metre because the caesura can shift from line to line, which allows more metrical substitution. Different concentrations of experience, including violence and disordering, can be more immediately registered. For example, it can shorten or lengthen duration to convey more rapid action; accented syllables can be widely or closely spaced to intimate, for example, narrative simultaneity. In such instances, the fourteener effectively reverts to its Old English accentual origins, a metric of consonantal clangouring and monosyllables suited to physical violence. In "Gold Stripe" this happens in the lines "Well that's the way blokes' eyes come out, or burst inside their head, / That catch a 'shell-blast' in the face—stone blind—but never bled!" (30). The first line is common metre, a fourteener with a strong caesura dividing it into two hemistichs of eight and six syllables. It uses balladlike jauntiness and jocularity to describe hideous disfigurement—a capsule generic satire. The second line also scans as latent common

metre. But clustered stressed syllables (the spondees "shell-blast" and "stone blind", the latter preceded by "face" (30) to make three successive stresses) and the insistent bilabial alliteration explosively imitating the "shell-blast" (30) announce its aural investment in *Beowulf*'s dark sanguinary world. This monosyllabic intensity contrasts with the following stanza's opening: "They don't want reccernition o' any special brand" (30). Here, the turn from brutishness to its implications is affirmed by a concomitant pivot into Latinate diction away from the preceding fourteener's alliteration, density, and mimetic imitativeness.

Lea's poem largely eschews what Paul Fussell called "'raised' essentially feudal language", a "special diction" contemporary readers came "to associate with the quiet action of personal control and Christian self-abnegation" (21). In this received argot, *friends* are *comrades*, *enemies* are *foes*, *soldiers* are *warriors*, *skies* are *heavens*, *corpses* are *the fallen*, and *blood*—as construed by Rupert Brooke—is "the red / Sweet wine of youth" ("The Dead"). Lea's diction is markedly "unpoetic" and workaday. "Gold Stripe" does not use aureate substitutes for glossing the men's ordinariness. Simply, "they closed the office, shut the desk, left engine mill" (27). They exchange "jobs" (27) for other thankless and dangerous ones. They are not *stricken* by illness: they get "pleurisy, an' coughs, an' chills, an' measles" (28). And in a brief rebuff to Brookish feudalism, the speaker notes getting sick will "kin' o' damp / one's burning martial ardour" (28). Such colloquiality is the poem's deepest mimetic investment: how the poem speaks is how men who lived and died in the historical world spoke. It conveys how the soldiers experienced reality and it partly reconstitutes it for readers.

But as the examples above show, the poem's diction is not a straightforwardly working-class colonial English of the early twentieth century. Ricketts notes Lea "was born in Inverness, and Scots dialect poetry was a popular, transplanted strain in nineteenth-century

New Zealand" ("Australia and New Zealand" 290). "Gold Stripe" is recognisably in Scots dialect, most obviously its contractional usages such as *an'* for *and* along with *o'* for *of*. Scottish poetry—such as Robert Henryson, William Dunbar, and Gavin Douglas—has often been plainer spoken than English verse. It had no 'high-style' equivalent to Phillip Sidney. But Scots and Scots English has been put to sophisticatedly literary ends, from Gavin Douglas's *Eneados*—a sixteenth century translation into Middle Scots from the Latin of the *Aeneid*—to Hugh MacDiarmid's kaleidoscopic modernist poem *A Drunk Man Looks at a Thistle*. Lea's Scots dialect prohibits neither complexity nor scope, but it is potentially otherwise forbidding. It casts its speaker as an outsider: as a New Zealander, he is peripheral to the Empire; as a Scottish immigrant or an unassimilated Scottish New Zealander, he is even more marginal to the machinations carrying him to Türkiye and France. Despite his language's intellectual sophistication and allusiveness, it sets him apart simply for its difference. Its alterity deepens his incomprehensibility just as he cannot participate in making violence meaningful because he does not speak the 'civilised' *lingua franca* of the imperial core. If that normative diction codes state-sanctioned violence in formalised euphemisms—such as the recent coinage 'military intervention'—Lea's speaker instead responds with dialect analogousness. Despite his linguistic impotence, he asserts his subjective reality by using his everyday speech and calls civility's bluff with his damningly sophisticated metaphors.

Lea's poem combines figurativeness and directness in an exemplarily Homeric way. Even though corpses can only be inferred in "Gold Stripe", it clinically articulates what it feels like to see them. Its angle on the dead is acutely different from the necrotic pastoralism Rebecca Straple finds in canonical First World War poetry:

> The bodies of the dead in this poetry certainly contrast those of reality. Bodies are rarely depicted being killed or wounded, acting in the thick of fighting, or lying exposed, left unburied; instead, poets usually describe the dead and their bodies long after their deaths. They are portrayed as whole, not missing limbs or riddled with wounds, and are usually buried: stable, protected, and sealed away, not confronting the reader or speaker with the horrors of war. (16)

Straple not only includes poets such as Rupert Brooke and Charles Sorley; she persuasively argues even "Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon—perhaps the most famous voices of bitter, graphic, realistic World War I poetry in the war's later years—project abstract messages of nationalism, heroic sacrifice, courage, remembrance, and the call to continue fighting onto the stable, insulated bodies in their poems" (17). A poeticised soldier's body can magically transform frontiers into dominions: "a dutiful English soldier" will be shown "making the earth around it into England as it lies in its grave, expanding the Empire" (17). Death, then, is not waste: like Curnow's bludgeoned sailor brings about birth of a nation, the dead soldier's constitutive fertility extends boundaries and erases others. But this expansion demands the body beautiful. In First World War poetry, one by one the dead habitually return to an inviolable innocent pastoral realm that lead and high-explosives cannot muddy and bloody. The beatific combatants remind the living of what they are fighting for: a goodly, righteous, and prospering kingdom—despite all appearances to the contrary.

Unsurprisingly, Jock Phillips found an "apparent absence of a 'horrors of war'" (232), particularly the First World War, in New Zealand combatants' writing. In "Gold Stripe" these horrors are generalised how I have mentioned. Even so, they are pitilessly reinvoked, especially death's disenchantments. "Gold Stripe" uses two parenthetical analogies to

represent violence and what it does to real living human bodies. The first addresses its survivors:

> I don't suppose yer ever saw them jumpin' 'marionettes,'
> The blokes who flap their feet about? I tell yer, yer forgets
> There's things that worse than bein' killed. Them twitchin' bodies greet
> Yer eyesight in the 'shell-shock' wards. I've heard it called 'cold feet.' (30)

The opening homely colloquialism aside, the Homeric echoes are striking. It directly recalls the *Odyssey* passage quoted in my main introduction:

> Then, as doves or thrushes beating their spread wings
> against some snare rigged up in thickets—flying in
> for a cozy nest but a grisly bed receives them—
> so the women's heads were trapped in a line,
> nooses yanking their necks up, one by one
> so all might die a pitiful, ghastly death …
> they kicked up heels for a little—not for long. (491-99)

Combining synonymy and *impassibilité*, Homer's extended simile makes an unflinching visceral comparison. The handmaids are like birds so momentarily in one's mind they are magical and beyond reality and its ultimate truths. But their feet don't flutter in fictive timelessness. They do so, like real people who die by hanging, uncontrolled and frantically but only in the brief measurable time before they are dead. Even if we have not seen hanged people dying, we can sympathetically imagine its affective dimension because we know how it feels being unable to stop someone's suffering. Lea's marionettes figure likewise combines fantasticality and forensics, showing us men who look like something they are not. It forces

us to see what happens when violence makes someone's mind mere supposition. We are cast into a wordless world of incongruent appearances.

The second figure in "Gold Stripe" even more effectively combines these two strategies of invention and incision:

> Have y'ever shelled Cape-gooseberries by squeezin' at the top
> With the thumb an' finger (ripe 'uns squash) till out the berries pop?
> Well that's the way blokes eyes come out, or burst inside their head,
> That catch a 'shell-blast' in the face—stone blind—but never bled! (Lea 30)

The dissonant pun—cape gooseberries get shelled and so do the men—signals how its analogy works. Difference is implicit in the aptest analogy. Because likeness is not sameness, figurative language always involves implicit unlikeness. Indeed, difference creates discomfiting frisson, which is particularly marked in the stanza above. Eyeballs and cape gooseberries are alike in their sphericality, consistency, and vulnerability to force. Fruit comes out of shells and eyes come out of heads in the same way: they "pop" (30). When squeezing berries, "ripe 'uns squash" just as men's eyes sometimes "burst inside their head" (30). But there is a crucial difference: whether eyes "come out, or burst inside their head" (30), they are no good to anyone. The man is made blind and probably dead. He stops being a man. But the fruit is good to eat either way, if squashed as a preserve, say, or if intact savoured whole.

The analogy of the cape gooseberries depends on categorical slippage. It invites readers to see something as if it were something else. The analogy's *poetic* aptness depends on its descriptive inappropriateness. I noted earlier that the poem suggests war reduces men to the vegetable kingdom. They become sensitive plants. The speaker does not record them experiencing pain or distress; they do not bleed as people do. But we know they are not plants;

people feel pain. The stanza negotiates between human suffering's facticity, figurative aptness and inaptness, and the communicative disjunction between them. The aptness is perceptive and insistently visual whereas the inaptness is interoceptive and mental, the realm of personal suffering and mental anguish, which without language victims are unable to communicate. The figure is therefore substitutive: it extends the possibility of readerly understanding while maintaining participatory experience's privilege. But the comparison's specificity undermines its comprehensibility. Some readers will not have "shelled Cape-gooseberries by squeezing … till out the berries pop" (30). Even if they have peeled or shelled other fruits, third-order comparisons diffuse analogical directness. But the analogy fundamentally speaks to the unbridgeable impasse violence opens between subjective interiority and reading about it.

The poem's analogical meaningfulness corresponds with it undermining sensory communicability. It is a poem about "Eyesight" and its limits. Homeric witness depends on seeing. As the speaker says to us about the horrors he has seen, "God! Can't ye see it for yerselves, I ain't got no words … Oh Strike" (30). Qualifications spiral around witness: violence leaves victims speechless; only violence's visible effects can be described; shell blasts render victims "stone blind" (30); words cannot substitute for direct observation. The speaker is helpless: he knows that if he were in the shell-shocked men's position, he would also be effectively mute. The men were already typically taciturn and laconic when initiated into organised violence. As they have more to complain about, they can say less about their daily experience because it is increasingly incommunicable. Their common trajectory is fixed: from language and communal meaningfulness into speechless incomprehension, whether through madness or death.

* * *

Archetypal First World War poets such as Sassoon, Graves, and Owen wrote as junior commissioned officers: lieutenants commanding platoons of around fifty soldiers or captains commanding companies of two hundred. They would lead these units into battle, sharing the experience but set apart by rights and obligations of rank and class. By contrast, like Issac Rosenberg, Lea writes from an enlisted man's perspective, for whom even the modicum of agency exercised by his immediate superiors is unthinkable. One explanation for the poem's silence about legitimacy and sanction is ignorance: the speaker is simply unaware of inaccessible 'higher' command and authority where generalising decisions about his personal fate are made. Typical military activities have three levels—tactical, operational, and strategic—and above these is the national-strategic level of politics, government, and law. Because the poem is from a soldier's viewpoint, the poem reports exclusively from the tactical level. Operational and strategic movements are mysterious and inscrutable. For example, they have no idea why they are going to this or that far-flung place aside from that a war is happening there. Indeed, politicians' and commanders' motivations and purposes are irrelevant at the level where private soldiers experience national-strategic decisions' deadly consequences. The speaker cannot question the state's legitimacy for what it uses him and his comrades to do (although as mentioned the poem passes over their active role). He simply cannot *see* what is going on: he is mired in tactical minutiae and commands no one. He and his fellows are utterly obedient and fully reliant on superiors' discretion and good judgement. Their ignorance prefigures the parenthetical mute marionettes and shell-blast victims. Unable to access political and judicial 'truth', they collapse into laconic self-deprecation. Critically reflecting on the state bizarre self-undermining its legitimacy and suicidally exercising its Weberian monopoly on force are—as the poem might put it—far beyond their ken.

Private soldiers commonly have no idea what is happening beyond their immediate tactical actions. In "Gold Stripe", the fog of war is especially thick. The concept of the fog of war derives from Clausewitz's *On War*: "War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty" (101). Such "uncertainty" is compromised situational awareness: not knowing who is doing what, when, and where, and thus being blind to actions' effects. An ordinary soldier's situational awareness is horizontal and confined to military matters; understanding widens as one ascends the military hierarchy into higher concentric tactical, operational, and strategic planes. The violence of "Gold Stripe" is environmental rather than volitional, but reality's ghost of human agency naggingly haunts the poem. Again, readers know more than do Lea's soldiers. War is not a phenomenon like tides, storms, or disease; it is a directed activity. According to Clausewitz's influential dictum, "War … is an act of policy. Were it a complete, untrammelled, absolute manifestation of violence (as the pure concept would require), war would of its own independent will usurp the place of policy the moment policy had brought it into being" (87). Furthermore, "war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means" (87). Whether it is good, bad, or ineffectual policy, it is always a legitimate prerogative of states. New Zealand currently reserves using armed force for individual (national) and collective (multinational) self-defence and at the United Nations' behest. It formally renounced using war as an element of state policy when it signed the Pact of Paris in 1928, which it reinforced by signing the Charter of the United Nations in 1945. Using armed force for any other purposes would be illegitimate even if they were state sanctioned. However, these restrictions and caveats assuredly did not apply during the First World War, and New Zealand's involvement was certainly an "act of policy". Such Clausewitzian considerations are

undoubtedly part of war's reality and explanatorily essential. But state policy is a mimetic dimension "Gold Stripe" refuses to access. Its violence happens in a volitional vacuum and legitimacy and sanction go unquestioned.

Wounds inarguably witness war: "The wound tells a story. Homer knew this, for wounds and scars play central narrative roles in both of his epics" (Sychterz 137). Healing happens but it leaves a scar; the veteran can hide the scar but eventually someone will see it. Auerbach understands the witnessed wound as an important Homeric epic technique: "fully externalized description" (4) with no background—all events happen equally in the foreground. Narrative time stops to accommodate direct witness, which involves explanatively describing the wound and how and why its bearer got it: "when Homer mentions the scar, the story must be told in full at the moment of its mentioning, even though it interrupts the moment" (Sychterz 138). Despite deep Homeric investments—forensic analogy, indifferent and inaccessible godlike powers, interruptive witnessing, and disenchanting violence—"Gold Stripe" does not show us performative scars. The men's wounds are internal: rather than being empty, they have collapsed into themselves. Like the men, wounds keep their secrets.

"Gold Stripe" shows neither wounds nor scars: it is desiccated. Lea's culminating wounds are internal and therefore nothing like Owen's gurgling haemorrhages. Instead, "Gold Stripe" climaxes with shell-shocked veterans' nervous agonies and fatal but un-exsanguinating shell-blasts. The poem's speaker incredulously notes that despite the casualties' blindness, disfigurement, and terminal trauma, they "never bled!" (30). What is inside the men—pasts and futures, cultural generalities, and personal specificities—remains there. Because their blood has not spilt, however, the poem also cannot claim it as the seed of

new polities or a means to extend empires. This makes the violence in "Gold Stripe" pointedly pointless: it is disconnected from strategy and policy as well as disenchantingly infertile because unbloody. The men progressed from homelife and work-life to encampment, where they begin to become aware of indifferent forces beyond their control, beginning with popinjay officers and military discipline's levelling illogicality. Just as we do not see the soldiers and their enemies doing violence to each other, the poem divests their commanders and political leaders of responsibility for it. Abnegating agency means they cannot give ordered killing and maiming any purposeful utility.

The *poem's* violence—what violence does for the poem *qua* poem—is, however, entirely purposeful. It is its narrative engine and barometric register; without it, nothing would move, notwithstanding everything at once accelerating towards twitching atrophy of shellshocked and fatally concussed soldiers. This chasm of meaningfulness between worldly inanity and poetic essentiality profoundly destabilises the ground of mimesis. Condemning the world as phenomenally mindless and ends as deadly culminations, the poem, despite its historicity, becomes self-reflexive. The eponymous "Gold Stripe" becomes its only source of meaningfulness, but it is a matter-of-fact emblem, something recognising meaningless wounds, a merely medical symbol that has nothing to do with heroism, duty, or selfless action. It signals only the ultimate disavowal of subjectivity and normative significance.

Disabusing one's readership of war's notional gloriousness is nothing new. Indeed, the cynicism of "Gold Stripe" is far less like the soured Georgianism of Owen and Sasson than it is Byronesque. As one finds in *Don Juan*: "War's a brain-spattering, windpipe-slitting art, / Unless her cause by right be sanctified" (9.3.3-4). Rather than the palaverous fantasmagoria of Owen's "Strange Meeting" or the wish-fulfilment of his "Soldier's Dream", in which Christ's

divine intervention disarms the warring parties, "Gold Stripe" is epigrammatic, pungent, and forensic. Lea's poem sacrifices much mimetic and explanatory significance in fully committing itself to what Sarah Cole sees Owen and Sassoon doing: "expos[ing] the crude realities of war" (62). Violence is the poem's only occasion. But Lea makes no attempt "to pit the unimaginable violence of war against its enchantments" (Cole 63). "Gold Stripe" has no truck for enchantment—including law, strategy, and governance—whatsoever. Instead, "Gold Stripe" presents a narrative of deepening cynicism—progressive disenchantment. The men begin from stoic sufferance and move inevitably to the hideousness of mechanised warfare, which is merely the culmination of spiralling dehumanisation, the Dantean ninth circle of their progress through hell. The men who complaining that dodging bullets means no decorations enjoy Virgilian immunity in the inferno: they pass unscathed through it, albeit bemusedly so. Writing of Owen, Cole argues that:

> The poem generates its force from a division of war language into two opposing styles: the generative mode of the Horatian ode, in which war is glorified and made symbolic, and the ruthlessly disenchanted mode of the contemporary poet, in which war is figured through its pitiful soldier victims. When the poet turns angrily on the reader in its final stanza, having depicted a gas attack that choked and strangled a soldier amidst a group of bedraggled, retreating comrades, leaving its narrator shell-shocked and aghast, he gives a name to the ideal of generative violence against which his poem stands: "the old Lie". (63)

In "Gold Stripe" there is no "dichotomy between sacralised violence and the ugly reality of war", as Cole reads in Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est"; Lea's speaker is indifferent about Owen's "old lie". Equally, the men of "Gold Stripe" are not prone to the "passive suffering"

that Yeats declared "is not a theme for poetry" ("Introduction" xxxiv). They are stoic, act when asked, and enthusiastically canvas for the poem's eponymous decoration. Their selflessness, despite its brutal inducement by the state, is deep-seated and good-humoured. Their attitudes cannot stop them from ending up like their shell-shocked comrades in invalids' wards: grisly models of Yeatsian passive suffering. Their destiny is having their unselfishness become constitutional by making complaint impossible. Rather than death transmogrifying soldiers' blood into crimson poppies, violence transports them silently through analogy into unbroachable silence.

* * *

"Gold Stripe" is an anomaly in this study. Its author is far from securely canonical. More significantly, its author also saw the kinds of things it describes. Its versification is traditional and its vocabulary is vernacular. It is determinedly disenchanting. And, after a fashion, it is explicit. In all these ways, it is unlike the other poems I am examining. However, this anomalousness can also be seen as a product of the neglect of its ways of saying by New Zealand poets. Rather than alluding to Homeric themes or interpolating Homeric bricolage, it explicitly uses *impassibilité* and *enargeia* to evoke war's incommunicability. "Gold Stripe" tells us that it is not that we cannot understand war—what it looks, smells, and sounds like, what steel does to flesh—but that we do not know how it *feels*. The ultimate horror of the poem's fatalistic universe is to be reduced from doers and makers into monadic affective marionettes, as the soldiers' cynicism—which had given them the illusion of safe distance from their unhappy lot—collapses into silence. What their silence communicates is what "In Drear Nighted December" calls "the feel of not to feel" (Keats). The reader must either imagine it or admit doing so is impossible.

Silence extends to politics, law, and authority. Violence in "Gold Stripe" is *primum movens* and a law unto itself, pointless beyond its simple fact of happening. In its teeth, the men hanker for decorations as meaningful, communicable signs that say something to someone about their experiences of meaninglessness. Asking ourselves who historically was responsible for making men *en masse* into meat, we can name people and identify laws and institutions that sanctioned their directed violence. "Gold Stripe", despite its analogical force, disquieting tone blending ghastliness and homeliness, and discomfiting paradox of meaningful incomprehension, abnegates all human agency. Its thorough-going fatalism means immunity for those fated to survive and death for those who are fated to die. Their choices and anyone else's have nothing to do with what is going to happen. The unwavering focus on humanity's prerequisites and how warfare debases them in "Gold Stripe" gives force to its monomaniacal compassion and makes its generalising figurations so memorable. But it is also mute about readily communicable realities about who did what to whom and why. It is as mute about those things as the private soldiers are about everything as we helplessly watch them twitching like puppets on strings.

Chapter Five: Of Tūmatauenga and Distant Kings – Alistair Campbell's Māori Battalion

Alistair Campbell's *Māori Battalion: A Poetic Sequence*[12] is one of "a considerable number of creative and non-fiction publications on Māori war achievements that emerged at the dawn of the new millennium" (Keown *Pacific Islands Writing* 103). It is also the most sustained meditation about any group of New Zealanders' experience during the Second World War in recent New Zealand poetry. The sequence episodically retells the eponymous unit's exploits, sufferings, and adventures in a sequence of sixty-six poems divided amongst four sections named for the four areas where the battalion campaigned: Greece, Crete, North Africa, and Italy. Volunteers formed the unit and its constituent companies were composed on a broadly tribal basis. It was one of the ten infantry battalions of 2 New Zealand Division, which was part of the British Eighth Army. It participated in operations and engagements such as the Battle of Greece (March–April 1941), the Battle of Crete (May 1941), Operation Crusader (November–December 1941), Minqar Qaim (June 1942), the First and Second Battles of El Alamein (July 1942 and October–November 1942), and the Battle of Monte Cassino (February–March 1944).

Michelle Keown suggests Campbell's poetry is "located largely within a European poetic tradition, influenced by Campbell's university training in Latin and the Greek classical tradition, as well as his interest in modern poets such as W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot" (*Pacific Writing* 85). All these influences are evident in *Māori Battalion* but the most significant are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The Homeric inculcation of *Māori Battalion* is very considerable. It

[12] Hereafter *Māori Battalion.*

frequently directly alludes to Homeric figures, places, and incidents as well as ironically borrowing epithets. More significantly, it remakes the world of real war on epic Iliadic terms. It is a long, episodic, but fully constituted narrative poem about men and their importance to the history of a nation and their race. Its setting is vast—including quasi-mythical settings and the underworld—and it has frequent long formal speeches, whether elegiac or recounting heroic deeds. Heroes get dignified and bloodily realistic deaths and apotheoses into inspiring legend; ordinary men die demeaning and fantastical deaths and get forgotten by everyone except those who knew them. Despite deep investments in traditional Māori concepts about warfare—sometimes, as I will show, problematically—it is fundamentally a picaresque poem rendered in Homeric terms, especially how it understands violence.

Māori Battalion seldom allows readers to see violence; they only hear about it, often from interlocutors whose self-effacement and declared unreliability belies the sequence's factual grounding in official histories. The poems' versification derives from the American modernist William Carlos Williams's latter work: it is prosaic and discursive rather than calibratable for different intensities of rhythm and sound. The poems posit a twofold sanction: primarily, Tūmatauenga, who commands the men to war, reawakening their dormant martiality; and secondly—but necessarily—the state, which arms them and tells them where to go and whom to kill. Their state-sanctioned violence conflictedly legitimises them: prospective enfranchisement as New Zealanders and simultaneous decolonisation by re-essentialising them as toa. Te ao Māori is limited to Tūmatauenga's sphere of influence and the tāne are never more than toa, curtailments to which the poems add enchantments: death transforming torn flesh into mythical stuff; loquaciousness from beyond the grave; supernatural prowess on the battlefield; and more besides. But beguilement leads nowhere:

the state's licence is revoked and Tūmatauenga withdraws. The sequence ends in sadness and unfulfillment as solitary survivors sift through men's and places' names from which real-world meaning has fallen away. Violence does not fulfil its promise: it leaves the veterans empty and alone.

* * *

The poem begins *in finis res*: the collective speaker's war is over but there is no way of telling for how long. The first poem, "Tohi"—ceremonies for successful battle—, sets the scene and issues an invocation: "Kia ora. We understand these things. We are / Warriors still" (I).[13] The greeting invites the reader into the sacred space of the poem. The twofold declaration establishes credible witness—but, as will become evident, only for this trans-temporal collective voice—and mitigates against misattributing identity. These "fighting men" are fundamentally warriors despite everyday appearances: public selves characterised by vocation, personal character, familial commitments, and such like; which is to say, all that for which they are sanctioned to fight for the state, British empire, and the Allies against fascism. To use Clausewitz's formulation, they are embodiments of warfare's abiding nature who intellectually grasp its present character ("No longer is tohi practised—/and more's the pity" (I)). The poem makes the first of many contrasts between pure, instinctual, and intimate indigenous violence and mechanised, calculated, and impersonal pan-European violence.

The sequence moves to London where the men do "serious drinking" and "serious / training" before deployment (III). After enduring sexual frustration and "country folk" calling them "'Moo-rees'" (V), the Battalion circuitously sails to the division's transit camp near Alexandria. Speakers laconically relate picaresque incidents, such as smuggling aboard a dog

[13] References are to the sequence's numbered poems.

and visiting a "whorehouse" (VII). Eventually they learn from "the big chief" (IX)—presumably Major General Freyberg—that "It's Greece" (VIII) where they will first "be fighting the Germans / who want to smash the British Empire" (IX). The speaker wonders if doing so justifies being "so far from my run down farm, my sick people, / and a meeting house in need of repair" (VIII). Greece's prospect inspires comparison with Homer and famous battles of antiquity, such as Salamis and Thermopylae, likewise fought by coalition forces against encroaching militaristic empires. They also think about "Gallipoli, where Te Rauparaha's / war cry, 'Ka Mate, ka mate!', / was heard for the first time on foreign soil" (XI). But when fighting starts, it reminds them of "Rewi Maniapoto's stand / at Orakau" during the Crown's invasion of the Waikato (XII).

The action moves to Crete for Part II. At first it is "not so bad … I mean, compared to the shit handed out in Greece" (XVIII), not least of all because the "Cretan girls" are "dark eyed beauties" and "sweet and juicy" (XVIII) like the abundant fresh fruit they enjoy on the island. German bombers soon disabuse such bucolical pleasures, giving them "a thorough pasting" before the subsequent airborne paratrooper attack (XIX). The battalion fights ferocious engagements, including one when a grenade thrown by a surrendered German prompts "the utu of a bayonet attack": crying "Surrender, be fucked!", they "got among them, and killed twenty-four" (XX). But the speaker soon bemoans his nightmares "of a German boy / screaming and begging for mercy, as I drove the bayonet in" (XX). As the New Zealanders retreat to begin evacuating, the speaker remembers the Minotaur he "read about in school", a "man-eating taniwha / with a bull's body and horned / human head" who "hung around / for his kill in a maze" (XXIV). Before leaving the island, XXV's speaker promises that "Some day

we will / make a stand, but where and when, only time / and Tu of the blood-red face will tell".

Part III, the sequence's longest, concerns the unit's North African campaign. It begins disarmingly abjuring the battalion's heroic reputation: "The real / heroes are those who stayed behind" on Crete, "the stayers" rather than the "goers", those "with kids / and a wife" who "were the first to be / taken off" and who "couldn't / help feeling guilty" (XXVII). Men complain that the "beer is foul, and the girls are no better", which makes them restless to "have another go at Jerry / with the bayonet", especially given now they "know where to shove it" (XXVIII). The men suffer further casualties, one involving the slain soldier's winged soul fleeing to Te Reinga. The dead man gazes "down at the soldier who was my mortal self" and wonders why "It took so little / time and no regrets to abandon / my mortal self" (XXX). The section also elegises Victoria Cross recipient Te Moananui-a-Kiwa Ngārimu: "History watches / the hero from afar, inspiring him to high / deeds" (XXXVII). The men again feel the "fierce joy" of "charging with a fixed bayonet" but exhilaration fades quickly into remorse and "you curse yourself as an unfeeling brute, who rejoiced / that it was your mates who / were cut down and not you" (XL). Commanders' euphemistic hubris exacerbates the soldiers' guilt: they predicted the action at Takrouna, one of the Eighth Army's last major North African battles, would be a "cake walk" and "a piece of cake" (XL). For the battalion and 5th (NZ) Brigade of which it was a part, it involved three unremittingly fierce days' fighting and more than five hundred casualties. The men are also chagrined that Sergeant Haane Te Rauawa Manahi did not get a Victoria Cross for his "brilliantly successful" actions. Instead, commanders adjudged him "a war criminal" for having "more than thirty prisoners / hurled

over the cliff" (XLI). Even so, the battle again confirms to the men "that we are toa still". The section ends with an Meleageresque epigrammatic epilogue:

> After battle with no prisoners to take
>
> into custody, or dead to bury,
>
> what better occupation than to
>
> clean our reddened bayonets in the
>
> sand while awaiting for [*sic*] transport
>
> to run us back to base? (LII "Red Bayonets")

The action moves to Italy for the sequence's closing section. Men are mourned and consoled with tender ribaldry, as when Padre Wi T. Huata reassures a gravely wounded soldier by saying "'Boy, / kei te pai, karore i taotu o raho' / ('Boy, your testicles are intact')" (LIII). LV recounts at length the Battalion's fight for the Cassino Railway Station. The section includes brief personalised Catullan elegies, such as that for 2/Lieutenant George Asher who "died alone, and in agony on the battlefield"—"Tūwharetoa, he was your son … Remember him" its speaker implores (LVI). The longest poem is a postmortem soliloquy by Stuart Alexander Maireriki Campbell, the poet's brother. After serving with D Company in Greece, North Africa, and Italy, 'Tuati' died less than a month before the Italian campaign ended: an RAF bomber accidentally dropped a 500-pound bomb near his unit as it waited to cross the Santerno River near Massa, Lombarda. He assures his poet brother that he is "at peace / in the Faenza Military Cemetery", which he prefers to his earlier temporary interment "because water [had] soaked into [his] body bag / chilling me to the bone" (LXIII). He summaries his campaigning, his death's circumstances, and how he was mourned. He ends by saying he is "not bitter, but I could have lived a little longer" (LXIII).

The sequence began with an assertive collective declaring "We understand these things" (I). Knowledge fills them: they know who they are, what they do, and why they do it because "we are / warriors still" (I). But it ends with hesitating isolated individuals emptied of Tūmatauenga's animating rage. Now they have nothing left but scarred memories with which to identify. The final poem evokes a characteristically New Zealand libation: fifty years after the war's end, a returned soldier says "the beautiful names" of places where he fought, summoning his friends back from dead "as if / they had never been lost". We watch and listen to him "say their names over, / raise a glass of beer, / and drink to their memory" (LXVI).

* * *

Keown notes how Campbell, like Patricia Grace in her novel *Tu*, "interweaves fact and fiction, reconstructing various phases of combat from the imagined perspectives of Māori soldiers" (*Pacific Islands Writing* 103). The poems' facticity derives from military records and the battalion's reputation. Lieutenant-General Bernard Freyberg, who led 2 New Zealand Division throughout the war, stated "no infantry battalion had a more distinguished record, or saw more fighting, or, alas, had such heavy casualties as the Māori Battalion" (v). Many of the sequence's events are verifiable in the meticulous, somewhat unevenly written, but often narratively engaging *Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939–45* published in 48 volumes between 1949 and 1986 by the War History Branch and its successors in the Department of Internal Affairs. Comprising campaign histories, unit histories, documents, and *The New Zealand People at War*, the scale of New Zealand's contribution, although proportionately significant, gets a granularity in seldom found in other larger participating nations' official histories. Even more detail is available in twenty-four supplementary *Episodes* and *Studies* booklets. Keown postulates *Māori Battalion* "is carefully researched" (*Pacific Islands*

Writing 102) and it largely agrees with J. F. Cody's *28 (Māori) Battalion* (1956)—a volume in the official histories—and Wira Gardiner' *Te Mura O Te Ahi - The Story of the Māori Battalion* (1992), which were available when Campbell wrote his sequence. It also largely concords with two later books, Gardiner's *Ake ake kia kaha e!: Forever Brave!* (2019) and Monty Soutar's *Nga¯tama toa: The Price of Citizenship* (2008), accounts of two of the Battalion's rifle companies: B Company, drawn from Rotorua, the Bay of Plenty, and Thames–Coromandel; and C Company, which was raised from the Gisborne/East Cape area. *Māori Battalion* fastidiously conforms with the factual record—even naming individual soldiers and sometimes devoting biographically-verifiable poems to characteristically defining acts—but the sequence is as much about the battalion's reputation as it is about what it actually did. Reputation, the battalion's collective persona, intimately connects with who tells a story. The narrators plainly and routinely signal their unreliability throughout the sequence even as the poems valorise the act of retelling and the events themselves, especially first-person testimony of one's own wounding and death.[14]

Fastidious historical verifiability and privileged orality combine with magical realism. The poems re-bequeath self-expression to dead or dying soldiers, including quickening them to make regular post-mortem monologues, an example of which a subsequent section discusses. Such sharp generic turns are disjunctive: they often come between passages of plainspoken quotidian detail or "taletelling". They also oppose the sequence's prevalent rationality: the brute "logic" of warfare, which is most obvious in the cause-and-effect

[14] Keith Douglas, a paradigmatic Second World War poet, contemporaneously acknowledged the battalion's reputation in his short story "Giuseppe", which written during the Eighth Army's desert campaign before a patina of legend had accrued on the Māori formation. Its eponymous Italian parachutist is found after defending his position in Tunisia's Matmata hills against the attack of "New Zealanders…Maori [sic.], or some such name" (357).

relationship of weapon to wounding. But Neither dimension impinges on the other. Dead men have godlike prescience and hindsight but no magic manifests for mortals. Their survival depends on all-too human effort, skill, and attitude. Death does not reduce humans to corpses—subjects into objects—; the poem imaginatively reconstitutes dead soldiers into living language (at least until they are demobbed). Closed biographical entities expand into a subversive unmediated indigeneity—but men must die for it to happen.

* * *

Almost 3600 men served overseas with 26 (Māori) Battalion between 1940 and 1945. 649 were killed in action or died on active service, 1712 were wounded, and 237 were made prisoners of war. Since the Māori Battalion's four rifle companies (named A, B, C and D) were organised along tribal lines, any actions in which units suffered heavy casualties immediately impacted the areas from which it had been raised, as happened with the British Army's First World War "Pals" Battalions. Nothing happened as grievous as the twenty minutes on the Somme when an estimated seven hundred Accrington Pals lost 235 killed and 350 wounded, but iwi and hapū would frequently have to cope with disproportionate losses compared to Pākehā communities. Accounting for casualties suffered and inflicted and how they impact constitutive communities—for example, nation, iwi, neighbourhood, and whanau—involves reattributing qualities that Scarry argues are irretrievably lost in death's undoing and erasure. But civilian lifeworlds and collective identity do not carry over into *Māori Battalion*. Despite its libidinal heroism, the sequence shies from intimate witness: it only momentarily establishes a "*locus violentus*—a visualized, narrative space which emphasizes the qualities of scale, suspense and, to a lesser degree, similes and anecdotes in order to create a cognitively engaging scene of physical violence" (Hernandez 30). Campbell's *locus violentus* only

accommodates the soldiers purely physical and deeply ethno-spiritual dimensions: localised culture and community investment are inadmissable.

Such eviserated medial identity is most apparent when the sequence represents battlespace wounding and death. XXXIX's speaker recounts how his friend was killed "in this bloody desert, / shells flying about, and smoke / so thick you can't see the sun". Not only can he not see clearly, he cannot hear "the bullet / strike him". But his "friend flops beside" him and "lies still / … on his back, eyes open, a sort of grin / on his mouth, now gushing / with blood". XLVI's speaker retells how "a bullet / went right through me". After "Darkness swallowed" him, he could not see his "best mate, following close behind, had copped it worse than me, his throat torn out / by a shell fragment". This is exemplarily Iliadic: the action is intimate and spatially circumscribed and it exactly and gorily describes the fatal wound and itemises the weapon that caused it. But it does not Homerically juxtapose the forensic memorial with scenes of hearth and home where hot baths are drawn. It does not summon into sight whanua in Kawerau or Ōpōtiki, who soon will be mourning their men but for now are living mutually understood lives, lives that taken together constitute what is lessened by each man's violent death.

Māori Battalion, however, is seldom intimately violent. XXXIX's and XLVI's Homeric realism are its only closely seen violent episodes, despite the sequence including such infamously ferocious actions as the attack on German positions at the Munassib Depression, where the Battalion took "no prisoners, or very few" because "the battle was / so ferocious that five hundred Germans / were killed in the bloodiest hand-to-hand / fighting" of the war (XLIX). Even the two examples described in the previous paragraph are compromised by the witnesses' avowed inability to have seen or heard what really happened. *Māori Battalion*

reserves seeing and hearing—externally directed perceptiveness—for when someone recalls violence in tranquillity. Violence happens in an existential sphere exactingly demarcated from everyday world where respective soldier's individuality and personality are recognisable and detail is meaningful and memorable. Home is where war's meaninglessness can be made meaningful by reincorporating survivors' personal experience into communal traditions, retrospectively humanising brutal battlefields and imposing order on their disorientating fatalistic aleatory—which is what *Māori Battalion* attempts to do.

But it does not evoke the soldiers' peacetime communal self-investments against which loss and barbarism would be measured. And it too rarely establishes a stable unmediated "encapsulated space" for drawing readers into "close, imaginative proximity with the details of violent acts" (Hernandez 30) so they can see loss and babarism for themselves. When a *locus violentus* does momentarily come into view, timelessness rather than specific lifeworlds penetrates it. Such timelessness goes with the maximal selfhood to which the proem attests: deep abiding selfhood signalled by declaring the men "are warriors still"—and ever will be. The sequence depicts soldiers as most fully or authentically Māori *in extremis*; which is to say, they are most themselves when fully immersed in the congenital ferocity that the state has allowed them and Tūmatauenga has commanded them to vent. Killing and getting killed is when they become "fully alive" by allowing themselves to be "warriors still" (I). But as Franchesca Walker dryly puts it "The belief that Māori soldiers were predisposed to war has endured partly because ideas about Māori martiality have not been exposed to critical examination" (Walker 2). Quite so. And in *Māori Battalion*, predisposed violence rather than lived culture is what mediates between personal and ethnic identity.

Dead soldiers are more than an accounting burden or addends in a sum of total fatalities. Remembering them is rehumanising them. For Scarry, "the roll call of death should always be taken as it was first taken by Homer in the record of war that stands at the beginning of western civilization" (123). A Homeric death involves fourfold particularisation: the soldier must be named; the weapon must be known; and a forensic detailing of the site of the fatal wound and the progress of its fatal consequences must be provided, often linked to a metaphor or simile connected with nature. Most importantly, the reader must be told the characteristic attribute of civilisation—especially attributes seemingly antithetical to war—that passes into oblivion when such habits and values no longer inhere in personhood. For Scarry, war's fatal violence unmakes selves and erases nationality precisely when nation-states most fully exert their prerogatives:

> When the Irishman's chest is shattered, when the Armenian boy is shot through the legs and groin, when a Russian woman dies in a burning village, when an American medic is blown apart on the field, their wounds are not Irish, Armenian, Russian, or American precisely because it is the unmaking of an Irishman, the unmaking of an Armenian boy, the unmaking of a Russian woman, the unmaking of an American soldier that has just occurred, as well as in each case the unmaking of the civilization as it resides in each of those bodies. (122)

Māori Battalion does occasionally resist killing's depravity by asserting individual uniqueness. XXXII tells us Lt-Colonel E Te W (Tiwi) Love was "killed by an artillery burst"; "another star appeared" when the Battalion's "first Māori / commanding officer" dies. He was "a big solid man … with a voice to match", and so the men called him "Bull"—but "Now Bull is dead". However, it does not describe the fatal wound. LVI is more explicit. It names 2/Lieutenant

George Asher, whom his comrades find in a minefield "dead six weeks" after he "had lost both legs / in an explosion" and died while "trying to apply / a tourniquet with a piece of wire / around the top of both legs". His appearance was as memorable as his deeds: he could be "recognised / by his slicked-back hair"—the way *he chose* to look. But equally important is the concomitant injunction: "Tuwharetoa, he was your son". George Asher was the son of Tuwharetoa with slicked-back hair "who died alone, and in agony on / the battlefield. Remember him"—remember *him*. Culture and lifeworld finally give the lie to violence's constitutive power.

But more frequently, death poetically authenticates soldiers, reintegrating them into deeper sources of identity. And so does killing, which magics the workaday world: it is "This sorcery I do" as Keith Douglas's "How to Kill" says. It must be remembered that the Battalion's toa—in poem and world alike—kill human beings who were as culturally contingent and unique as they are. In XIII "Sergeant Jack Tainui", who was later killed in North Africa on 15 December 1941, recalls ambushing a group of German soldiers from a riverbank in Greece:

I waited until the leading group
had got halfway, then opened fire,
killing three, and in the panic
that followed I shot the fourth.
I watched him as he crawled away,
took aim to finish him off,
but found I couldn't do it.
He may have died anyway.

They are unquantifiable and unqualifiable targets for Tainui: at most pronouns who "crawl" and get "shot" and "killed". These personally unspecifiable agents are collectively "Huns" and "Germans": categories based on reputation, caricature, and political allegiance. But the following section, "Naked Swimmers", tells of "a couple of Germans" who "climbed out of the sea stark naked", as if born from Tangaroa, the atua of the waters, offspring of what the poem punningly calls "a bloody mystery". The two Germans are "cold"—whether in temperature or temperament—and "shivering"—from fright or chilliness. They are briefly flesh and blood creatures emerging from numerical abstraction, such as the "twenty-four" killed in XIX or the "500" killed in XLIX. But the poem does not see them undergo Scarry's mortifying transformation from a nation's culturally replete son into an emptied corpse. Germans/Huns remain irrevocably as such when dead. Their culture stains them so. But the Germans and Italians provide a balance on the ledger totting up payment for Māori citizenship and so they too are a blood-sacrifice on New Zealand's altar.

The mortal wound serves other needs. Sex and death are intimately entwined in *Māori Battalion*. In III "London 1940" the soldiers encountered financially and physically "desperate" English women, one with "tits / half-popping out of her dress", but a sub-altern Pākehā informs them that "Sooty wicks just aren't in demand", an off-colour and pretentious *bon mot* to which the speaker takes offence, not least of all because it intensifies the men's sexual frustration. In Cairo they pay for sex but the prostitutes "hardly give you time to take your / pants off, then it's in and out, and / then you have to pay" (VII). What, then, are they to do? In I "Tohi" Campbell reimagines bayonet combat, which by the Second World War was extremely rare, as a contemporary manifestation of precolonial Māori masculinity. Keown suggests the poem represents bayonet combat as a "continuation of Māori warrior tradition"

(*Pacific Islands Writing* 103). I argue it is less a matter of custom transmuted by modernity than untrained instinct finding its intermittent but perennially ferocious expression on North African and European battlefields with contemporary combatants' forged steel equipage. The British profession of arms used by the New Zealand forces discouraged or prohibited tohi. An example is the traditional pre-battle purification ceremony te tohi o ngā karaka whati, in which warriors went to a mountain spring, were sprinkled with its water, and touched with a karaka leaf before elders and their priests intoned karakia ("Karaka Whati"). The warriors would return home and leave to go to war. In *Māori Battalion*, however, they must do without such purification: baser instincts explode with full libidinous force.

The Battalion certainly had a talismanic attachment to its bayonets. The bayonet was standard issue for Commonwealth infantrymen throughout the war, but when the British developed a six-inch-long one shaped like a pig sticker and proposed 2NZEF infantry adopt it, Māori soldiers refused to relinquish their 18-inch weapon. Rather than face outright disobedience, 2NZEF command kept the long bayonet in service. Soldiers used bayonets for disabling or killing opponents in close combat and the 28th Māori Battalion earned a deserved reputation for how ferociously and effectively they used them. A particularly noteworthy instance happened during the Crete operation. On May 27 1941, New Zealand's depleted 5 Brigade had fallen back to the sunken dirt Tsikalarion Road, nicknamed "42nd Street" by Allied troops. The Māori Battalion led a counterattack against advancing German units, including a ferocious bayonet charge in which the Māori soldiers claimed to have lost only four men while killing more than 80 Germans—including crack Austrian mountain troops—, a third of the German force (Pugsley 172). Les Cleveland anachronistically suggests that "in the atavistic world of mana, close physical combat, utu, mythological gods and spirit visions,

the bayonet became the master symbol of the warrior's power" (Cleveland). Campbell, however, redirects attention to the body. The bayonet connects the toa's spiritual selves to the physical world. *Māori Battalion* sometimes imbues bayonet combat with cannibalistic eroticism as soldiers feed their bayonets all-too fresh German meat: "And everywhere we fought, the long tongues / of our bayonets, having tasted human flesh, / hungered for more" (I). The soldiers contort their faces into pūkana as they charge and thrust at the enemy; the bayonet itself becomes an extension of the face, as if a whetero—an action in the haka reserved for men—performed with a forged steel tongue hungrily penetrating another man's body. More often, however, Campbell identifies bayonets with erect penises. The men rejoice in combat's orgasmic surge and find temporary but ultimately unsatisfying release in "the whana / tukutahi, the mad charge, the terror, / the sexual thrust into flesh, the screams" (I). The sexual thrust brings death not life or its affirmation; they are screams of pain and bloodlust not ecstasy.

In *Māori Battalion*, the bayonet (and sometimes the rifle) becomes a taiaha and vice versa; each is understood sexually. The sequence frequently notes weapons' hardness and enumerates their inches. Such length and stiffness are pressed into use for sexual violence: the bayonet attack is rape. It is homosexual rape: men violently sexually penetrating other men against their will. Homeric homoeroticism is most famously apparent in the relationship between Achilleus and his beloved Patroclus, whose violent death elicits Achilleus' rage, which the poem invokes in its opening lines. But it also energises the agon between Hector, slayer of Patroclus, and Achilleus. Such homoerotic rivalry and love are absent in *Māori Battalion*, whose men do not know the object of their (blood)lust and their homoeroticism has nothing to do with tenderness. Their same-sex libidinousness is restricted to violent intimacy.

War inverts the state's prohibitions on rape and homosexuality. Protecting, preserving, and furthering civility—that un-abrogable 'way of life' justifying New Zealand's expeditionary wars—against Nazism's barbarism—requires unloosing hitherto sacrosanct strictures. Nothing is true, everything is permitted, including analogical miscegenation between Māori and Aryan men. Higher command and chauvinism prohibit the Māori's "sooty wicks" from sullying the London's ladies but they can—indeed must—take screaming German and Italian men with their oversized bayonets.

* * *

Modern warfare inevitably subverts the legitimacy its parties use for sanctioning violence. States' Agambenian licentiousness casts them back into a Hobbesian state of nature where they are nothing but another nasty brute. Charles Tilly directly equates war-making and state-making with organised crime. This seemingly outré position in fact aligns with Clausewitzian dictum that war "is a continuation of politics by other means" (280). Clausewitz's understanding of warfare is concomitant, if not schematically identical, with his theory of the state. Each is tri-unitary: war comprises enmity, chance, and intelligence; the nation-state comprises people, military, and government (282). Each characteristic of war corresponds with one of the nation-state: the state is intelligence; the military is enmity; and the people are chance. The nation-state is the only entity with enough power and capacity to transform material and the people's energy into means for waging war. But warmaking states also release behaviours and attitudes antithetical to legitimate sovereignty, such as violence, dishonesty, destructiveness, and chauvinism: the same tendencies characterising the ungoverned condition that required and justified states assuming their monopolies on violence. But states routinely descend into lawlessness when using ostensibly legitimate

violence to pursue policy. Such force—making people do things that they do not want to do—is most palpable and dehumanising on the battlefield: a Hobbesian state of nature that technocratic states have made nastier and more brutish and where legitimacy is immediately inconsequential.

However, the tension between force and legitimacy is pivotal in *Māori Battalion*, especially where they intersect in enfranchisement. Simone Weil wrote apropos the *Iliad* and the war soon to engulf the world in 1939 that "force is that x that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a thing. Exercised to the limit, it turns a man into a thing in the most literal sense: it makes a corpse out of him" ("Poem of Force" 183). But it can also make citizens out of us. In 1943, with the defining and costly battles of Crete, El Alamein, and El Agheila already to the Battalion's credit, Apirana Ngata published the booklet *The Price of Citizenship* in which he declared:

> Has he [the Māori soldier] proved a claim to be an asset to his country? If so, he asks to be dealt with as such. An asset discovered in the crucible of war should have a value in the coming peace. The men of the New Zealand Division have seen it below the brown skins of their Māori comrades. (18)

X "Homeric" suggests otherwise: the men "go into battle hoping / that by saving Greece / we Māori are saving ourselves". The New Zealand state gives the Māori soldiers provisional license and temporary sanction for protecting and projecting the values and 'humane' monopoly of violence enjoyed by the New Zealand state specifically and generally by the Allied powers—problematically including the Soviet Union—against the fascist powers. The poem construes the Battalion's members' service—committing state-sanctioned violence—as a partial prerequisite for becoming New Zealanders or what Gardiner and Souter follow

Ngata in characterising as paying "the price of citizenship", a price not levied on Pākehā soldiers. Indeed, 28 (Māori) Battalion was frequently used for difficult, risky, and frequently costly actions by its Pākehā superiors: the cost they paid for citizenship in North Africa and Europe was higher than it would have been for other units whose men already had it.

Māori Battalion shows its subjects as if schizophrenically suffering divided loyalties: their temporary but perilous enfranchisement allows them to discharge state-sanctioned violence but they also do so at Tūmatauenga's command. Ngata, whose advocacy had been crucial in forming the Battalion, asked in his 1943 booklet whether New Zealanders "fully realised the implications of the joint participation of Pākehā and Māori in this last demonstration of the highest citizenship" (18). One would argue they did not and do not even now. The Battalion finds itself far from home "fighting the Germans / who want to smash the British Empire" (IX): the very empire dishonouring its promises to tangata whenua and that waged war in Aotearoa to establish by force its "legitimate" rule over New Zealand. II "When Tu Commands" asks and answers a pivotal question: "We did not have to join up, so why do we / hurl ourselves into bloody conflict? / The answer is simply this: when Tu commands, / we must obey", to which the poem adds their "longing for the glory / of snatching victory in the taniwha's mouth". The men "rush / to join up, throwing off the restraining arms / of mothers, wives, and children" but they are consoled and fortified by the blessings of jealous "wet-eyed fathers", who look on as "death thumbs a lift to perdition" and they "drop / everything, and go along for the ride" (II). This legitimacy comes not from the settler-state but from deeper and abiding pre-Pākehā sources of authority. Prospective enfranchisement has nothing to do with it and neither does volition. the men simply "must obey". By incarnating

the war-god, the men empty themselves of selfhood, their bodies and minds only considered as vehicles for exercising force.

Even so, the Battalion's men can only do what "Tu commands" because the state has sanctioned it and decided where, when, and against whom they will do it. They would not do it if Tūmatauenga had not called them to battle; they could not do it without the Pākehā state. But it is the latter that profits from their losses. This tension acutely manifests in XII "Remember Ōrākau!", which juxtaposes the Battalion's rear-guard action at Olympus Pass and memories of 1864's Battle of Ōrākau, in which Ngāti Maniapoto chief Rewi Manga Maniapoto led Kīngitanga forces against invasive Crown troops under Majors von Tempsky and Blyth. The incomplete *pā*'s three hundred defenders, of whom a third were women, opposed 1400 besiegers. The speaker relates that the Battalion has been ordered to "hold the pass / to the last round and the last man". Suddenly "Someone remembers Rewi Maniapoto's stand /at Orakau" and his defiant challenge "'Ka whawhai tonu matou, ake, ake, ake!'". The recollection makes the men equally "determined to resist tyranny". The irony is acute: the Māori Battalion motivate themselves "to resist tyranny" by invoking Maniapoto's resistance of British/Colonial tyranny at Orakau; but they do so as part of the British Eighth Army, alongside men serving the same empire against which Maniapoto fought. Nazi Germany and colonial Britain are likened as tyrannical enemies of Māori toa, and each must be resisted to the last. The New Zealand state sanctioning such resistance matters as little as its bloodily costed enfranchisement. Tu's command supersedes all others.

* * *

Like many of Campbell's later poems, *Māori Battalion* uses verse paragraphs of stepwise descending tercets. They seemingly derive from William Carlos Williams' later poetry, such as "Asphodel, that Greeny Flower":

I have learned much in my life

from books

and out of them

about love.

Death

is not the end of it.

Poets such as Thom Gunn and Charles Tomlinson used this triadic line to bridge their earlier work's metrical conventionality and subsequent adoption of free verse. It is also functionally surrogate blank verse: it allows discursive and essayistic paragraphing while maintaining a sense of measure, particularly when each unit is enjambed, whether quantified orally by breath and pause or in more rigorously demarcated but poly-footed variations of Hopkins' sprung metre. Campbell uses it to lightly modulate and visually parcel his prosaic language.

Campbell allies his versification with a version of the persona poem, itself a variant of the dramatic monologue exemplified by Browning. Simply, a dramatic character distinguished from the poet is the poem's speaker. Writing of Ezra Pound, an important re-instigator of the persona poem in twentieth century modernism, Charles Bernstein notes that "the speaker in Pound's persona poems is a made-up character with whom Pound did not completely identify". This distinction "allowed Pound to be satiric, even sarcastic, not only about the subject of the poems but about their speaker, although he sometimes appears to share the sentiments of the poem's persona, making for an interesting ambiguity" (75).

Whatever authorial psychological investments or deflections Campbell's personas had for him—and however closely he identified with them—, each guise is a self-integrated identifiable character even while identifying with the Battalion's corporate speaker. In *Māori Battalion*, the individual is identified with persona and the unit is reflected in its reputation. Violence paradoxically strengthens and expands the Battalion's communal identity by fatally weakening its constituents—individual physical soldiers—so that persona dissolves and the men's free-flowing essence can swell the store of homogenous spiritual selfhood.

Māori Battalion trans-historically contextualises violent actions with direct analogues to literary precedents. LVIII "Jittery Hill", for example, begins by referencing *Macbeth*—"the bit where Birnam Wood comes to / Dunsinane"—which the speaker, who participated in the events he describes, assumes his reader knows. The Māori soldiers "saw the trees / drop to the ground … and crawl towards the house" where they were waiting. When one of the Germans "leapt / to his feet" they "opened fire. A fusillade from every window /blew him away, and the others died where they lay. At daybreak five / Germans lay dead in the snow" (LVIII). However, *Māori Battalion* most deeply invests in classical models. Parry and Perris suggest that Campbell's use of myth is restricted to "a handful of poems [that] address classical themes, notably 'Narcissus', the war sequences 'Gallipoli' and 'Māori Battalion', and the much-admired poem 'The Return', from his first collection *Mine Eyes Dazzle* (1950)" (164). But this only accounts for references. *Māori Battalion* is also structurally and thematically a thoroughly 'classical' poem. Its documentary narrative and anecdotal detail incorporate Homeric techniques and are melded to a decidedly Homeric structure, and sometimes subversively. X "Homeric" makes especially explicit correlations with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*:

Some of us hang our heads

over the rails and are sick.

Can you imagine Achilles

and the other great heroes seasick?

It would put you off to read

that Odysseus having evaded

the sexy wiles of the sirens,

when they untied him from the mast,

he was sick in the wine-dark sea.

No, it would not do at all.

And if by chance you awake

to a rosy-fingered dawn,

it may not be what you think,

but a city set ablaze

by bombs dropped in the night. (X "Homeric")

The "wine-dark sea" and "rosy-fingered dawn" epithets are "formulaic expressions in Homeric verse, which suggest that things have an eternal, infinitely repeatable presence. Different things will happen every day, but Dawn always appears, always with rosy fingers, always early" (Wilson 13). But Campbell's poem upends the Homeric formula: "a rosy-fingered dawn … may not be what you think". In the *Iliad*, flora and fauna exist parallelly to the violence of men and gods, to which the natural world is delicately indifferent. Tides ebb and flow and seasons gently and inexorably unfold; meanwhile, a spear rips out a man's throat. In Campbell's reformulation real-world violence sullies everything, such as the sunrise

in "Homeric". In *Māori Battalion*, brute facts batter into the bucolic: mankind has made nowhere safe and reflective epithets become freighted with destruction.

Māori Battalion subversively uses epic to frame the historical. It certainly qualifies as an Aristotelian epic. It is a long narrative poem forming an organic whole. It relates heroic mortals' adventures. It proclaims their importance for a nation and race. It begins with an invocation (not to one of the muses but to the Māori god of war, Tūmatauenga), states its theme (the Battalion's exemplary rage and repeatedly summoned whana tukutahi), and imposes past events weight onto present readers. The poem's setting is vast, covering many nations, including quasi-mythical ones, and ones previously only known by stories (such as Greece). Previous generations had also been pitted against its antagonist (Germany). As discussed earlier, it uses epithets and includes epic catalogues (instead of the *Iliad*'s catalogue of ships it lists the Battalion's nicknames: "The Gumdiggers, The Penny Divers, / The Cowboys, and The Foreign Legion, later / Ngati Walkabout"(I)). It has long formal speeches, including elegies and ones about heroic deeds. *Māori Battalion* is inarguably an epic.

The above tropes are used straightforwardly if occasionally ironically. But other ones are more complex, particularly divine intervention in human affairs, portraying heroes embodying a civilisation's values, and descents into the underworld or hell, all of which I discuss elsewhere in this chapter. One epic omission is that *Māori Battalion* has no central hero—no Achilles or Odysseus—on whom the action concentrates, around whom other characters constellate, or against whom they measure themselves. The sequence's hero is corporate: the Battalion itself, which is characterised as an extra-individual person. Sometimes an individual emerges from the Leviathan: they temporarily embody its deep and enduring identity, a manifestation usually terminated by death rather than reincorporation. The

Battalion's identity effloresces into rapture and rumour when such heroes die. As XXI "Captain HW Leaf" notes, they do not "die in the normal way". The "real part of him, his legend, / lives on … / He lives in the hills rallying the dead". The epic hero of *Māori Battalion* epitomises the unit at its purest and most potent. Death makes him a legend and becoming a legend makes him real.

* * *

In the epic world, the wound is the sign of the hero, and the ultimate hero is a man who keeps killing despite his mortal wounds. Wolf-Hartmut Friedrich notes how Homeric epics dignify heroes with realistic deaths whereas they grotesquely, cartoonishly, or comically do away with ordinary soldiers (40-78). Like Friedrich's reading of the *Iliad*, heroes in *Māori Battalion* keep fighting despite their wounds. Like Odysseus and Agamemnon, they manage to endure their injuries long enough to kill their adversaries before inevitably succumbing to them. Friedrich argues that enduring wounds and fighting to the death divides great Homeric heroes from the minor ones; in the case of *Māori Battalion*, it divides those awarded the Victoria Cross from those mentioned in despatches. Heroes of Campbell's sequence do not die apotheotically—or fantastically—like ordinary soldiers. Heroes get realistically wounded, die, and become silent and still. But they grow and live because the living speak about them. They did not know him but they have *heard* about his deeds.

XXXVII "2/Lieutenant Te Moananui-a-Kiwa Ngarimu" most fully realises Iliadic heroism. It colloquially relates the exploits of the first Māori recipient of the Victoria Cross, "a man possessed, / a hero to his mates, but to the Hun / a scourge". The poem's speaker begins by asking a question "Ngarimu?": who was he then and who is he now? With familiar Antipodean mid-century laconicism, we hear the narrator:

….speak of fighting

that occupied one long night

in the Desert War, and when morning

came, the steep hillside was strewn

with the dead and dying of both sides. (XXXVII)

The speaker establishes Ngarimu's whakapapa—he "sprang from a long line of / fighting chiefs"—while noting his unusual character: it suggests he was akin to gunfighters and "the legendary hero who kills the dragon and weds / the beautiful princess" (XXXVII). Ngarimu's persona was quasi-mythical even when he was alive; he was a mortally Herculean figure partially comprehensible in the flesh, someone not yet fully real when he was alive. The section includes "Wild West" characterisations possibly deriving from C Company's nickname Ngā kaupoi ('The Cowboys') for the soldiers' use of horses on the East Coast. Ngarimu had a "large strain of the gunfighter" and reported to have been seen "shooting from the hip". Ngarimu was a living legend.

Even so, readers are simply too far from historical heroes to see them clearly even if they could separate them from fiction: "History watches / the hero from afar" (XXXVII). Despite this estrangement, the speaker attests that self-reflexive myth-infused history—admiration, high repute, or storied valour—was what had been "inspiring" Ngarimu "to high / deeds". Certainly, nothing in the poem deviates significantly from contemporary official accounts of that "long night / in the Desert War", including the citation for Ngarimu's VC published in a supplement to *The* London Gazette on 4 June 1943. It commended him for "personally annihilating at least two enemy machine-gun posts" (i), which the poem simply rephrases as "single-handed, / [Ngarimu] wiped out two machine-gun posts" (XXXVII). The

citation states that "by using hand grenades" Ngarimu "succeeded in piercing a certain part of the line. Without hesitation this officer rushed to the threatened area, and those of the enemy he did not kill he drove back with stones and with his tommy-gun" (i). The poem's version tells us that when Ngarimu saw the approaching Germans, he "hurled them back, / killing some with his Tommy gun, / some with his grenades, and when these / ran out, he picked up some stones and / hurled them as grenades" (XXXVII), which adds to historical facts redolence from the Biblical story of David and Goliath. Campbell's Ngarimu poem adds mythopoetic undertones to its fastidious near-transcription of historical record. The poem's Ngarimu is a fairy-tale hero but more prosaically and discomfortingly, he is a *bone fide* hero because he kills—he would not be one otherwise—and does so with exceptional sangfroid, ferocity, and derring-do. His killing is heroic rather than criminal because the New Zealand dominion, the British Crown—which awards him his posthumous Victoria Cross—and Tūmatauenga have sanctioned it. He kills with such elan, skill, resourcefulness, and prolificacy because he is more intimately connected to Tūmatauenga than his lesser comrades; which is to say, he kills so much and so well because *he is more Māori than they are*.

Ordinary men's Homeric deaths are entirely different from heroes'. They are usually memorable only for being ridiculous. XLIII "Desert Flower" shows how strictly *Māori Battalion* adheres to this trope:

He was shot in the backside
as he bent to pick
A flower, and as he lay
dying he thought of the
joke, 'He must have been

running away,' but it

didn't seem funny

anymore. The flower

Was tiny, like a spot

Of blood when a finger

is pricked, like the glint

in a moth's eye, like

his mind that had shrunk

to a point of light,

winking as it went out. (XLIII)

The Homeric bathos could not be more pronounced: the soldier is fatally wounded in the site of neurotic masculine vulnerability. Doing something stereotypically "feminine" or less damningly self-indulgently appreciating beauty, the dying soldier worries about his reputation and the "joke" that will adhere to it, his posthumous persona defined by his last ridiculously shameful—because un-warriorlike—act on earth. Likewise, the incongruously "tiny" flower, itself a common metaphor for wounds, contrasts with heroes' impressive injuries, despite which they somehow keep fighting. The elaborate string of delicate similes chafes against death's vastness and irrevocability. Ridiculousness, specificity, delicacy, and forgettability are what ordinary men are made from; heroic stuff is seriousness, generalities, brutality, and legend.

Whether ordinary or heroic, the living soldiers of *Māori Battalion* inhabit a space of manifold liminality: between life and death; between past and future; and neither amongst nor apart. They are neither fully rāwaho nor ahi kā. They burn fires of occupation but dwell

nowhere; they move in step wandering the world doing regimented violence on chaotic battlefields for deliberate policies' sake. They take and hold ground through their military strength but only provisionally. The seeming opposition between death and life in the sequence's opening strophe effectively asserts their equivalence: "When death sings … / the warrior becomes alive fully alive" (I). Life *is* death and death *is* life. Knowing this saddens the warriors, keyed into battle, hovering between worlds in a wordless no-man's-land full of feeling. Monsacré notes how epic heroes, especially the most violent ones, are constitutionally lachrymose: "tears set forth the heroic figures, male as well as female … tears are one of the constituents of his heroic nature" (69). Weeping follows killing and vice versa. Indeed, they are symbiotic: evermore tears and evermore blood in an ever-increasing cycle of sadness and rage, a phenomenon most memorably manifested in Achilleus. Dead and dying heroes and ordinary brave men likewise weep frequently in *Māori Battalion*; for example, in XLV when Jack Tainui utters his last words "Give me the gun" after having had "a hole blown in his stomach" that "would have killed a lesser man" and the men avert their faces to "hide our tears", tears the poem conceal. XXXVI "Private Iver Whakarau" remembers seeing "the hardiest men / shed tears during the sermon" in memory of "the slain Ngapuhi". After libations and lamentations, they leave gravesides and funeral services, Tūmatauenga repossesses them, and they go away again to kill and be killed. And the cycle continues.

Men die differently in poems than they do on battlefields. An Iliadic death is linguistically hyper-attenuated. The living perform obsequies confirming the soul's passage to the next world. Rites transform barbarism into beauty: "Sometimes there is no other word but 'beautiful' to describe the evocation of the death of an otherwise insignificant warrior" (Buxton 151-52). It is the evocation—the elegy, the poem—that is beautiful rather than death

or warriors. Expressing death's paradoxical meaningful meaninglessness is a prerequisite for pathos. *Evocate* is calling forth and summoning an audience with the dead but it also has a further juridical meaning of elevating a cause from a lower to a higher court. The dead soldier's personal ordinariness, his workaday status, and his rude, blunt, and messy death are made significant *ex post facto*. Mundanities once taken for granted become retrospectively numinous. XXX "Death in the Desert" is typical. A dead soldier speaks about his own death: he becomes characterised by verbosity, not silence; he confirms his own unique manifestation of ordinariness even as he becomes essentialised and expansive. Only dead narrators are homodiegetic. His stately prolixity in death contrasts with the silence seizing him as he attempts to warn away the blood-thirsty "Hungry desert spirits" feeding on his lifeforce as it drains out of his mortally wounded body. These encroaching foreign succubae sup on what is not theirs to savour: the soldier's spirt is poised for its homewards voyage but his body will be interred in this alien desiccating environment. The soul is not prey to desecration or mis-interment: it *must* "make its way to Te Reinga" (XXX), geographically Cape Reinga on the northwesternmost tip of the Aupouri Peninsula at the northern end of the North Island of New Zealand. Reinga is the Māori word for underworld and the location is spiritually Te Rerenga Wairua, the leaping-off place of spirits. The dead soldier feels his soul homing towards where it will journey into the underworld. It is from there that he addresses the reader.

The soldier asks, "How does my spirit know where to go / when it leaves my body and my blood / spills out on to the desert sand?" (XXX). He may not know the answer but his spirit goes where it must go anyway. Survivors' futures are far from such certainties. In LXV the eponymous "Māori Battalion Veteran" sees himself as embodying loss and absence. The

speaker, with exactness belying his self-diagnosis, tells us dissolution reduced him not merely to guilelessness or incoherence but to a pre-linguistic state. He hears inside himself "the sound of roaring" rising from "darkness" and "emptiness" and returning to it. He has been emptied of words and emptied of tears. He has become an inanimate object, "an empty street in a town / that has been blown to pieces" where "No one lives … anymore / no one who loves sunlight" (LXV). But the dead are quickened in the "sacred hymn 'Aue Ihu'" they sing at the "special church / service at the end of / the war" (LXV). When the speaker in LXVI says "the beautiful names" of the places where the battalion fought fifty years earlier—"Orsogna, / Cassino, Faenza, Santerno"—and his "friends come back as if / they have never been lost". All he needs to do is "say their names" and they appear to him. The few words violence has left him carry strange power: they are an invocation and affirmation. But finally, it is the living whom death's emptiness fills; living language fills the dead.

The *Iliad*'s capricious gods wield mortally inviolable authority to orchestrate violence done on the plains of Troy. Similarly divine forces beyond the Battalion's control drive them into war, at least in the first flush of enlistment:

> We do not have to join up, so why do we
>
> hurl ourselves into bloody conflict?
>
> The answer is simply this: when Tu commands,
>
> we must obey. Blood surges through our veins,
>
> our eyes stick out like bolts, our fingers
>
> ache to curl about the handles of the
>
> taiaha, our tongues send on their way
>
> the words of the haka: "Ka mate, ka mate!

Ka ora, ka ora!"– words from the fires

of hell (te mura o te ahi). (II "When Tu Commands")

The corporate voice attesting to this compulsion brooks no exceptions. They are Achillean in their singlemindedness in the berserk of battle but they exceed his rage's profit by performatively becoming a purposeful unit. "When Tu Commands" describes and performs the haka of Te Rauparaha. Reviewing "Māori Battalion", Les Cleveland characterises it as "a ritualised displacement of anger directed at an enemy; as an expression of collective will, it intensifies bonding; it frightens its target with alarming aural and visual semblances; and it can bring its performers to a state of hysteria in which they are insensible to pain or fear" (Cleveland). Robert Sullivan noted how the "personal pronoun is never used in this ngeri. Its absence opens up a greater sense of self, a cultural and a collective self" ("Ka Mate" 4). Selfhood is fullest when soldiers die but in battle death's propinquity quickens them. In mortal danger they come alive:

Nothing can compare with seeing

the enemy throwing away his weapon

and running away. The look

in his eyes, the panic

fills your heart with a

terrible joy. You feel your

lungs expand and almost burst,

wings spread on your

shoulders, muscles ripple,

hair crackles, and you become

ten feet tall, your bayonet

six feet long. (L "Conqueror")

The Battalion's toa undergo an Ovidian apotheosis, sprouting wings and becoming angels of death. It is extremely unlikely any member of the Māori Battalion thought in such Homeric terms or would allude to Yeatsian "terrible joy". However, their cognitive and linguistic realities fall outside the poems' mimetic catchment.

XXXV "Porangi" gives another reason for the Battalion's instinctual hyper-violence: madness.

I think we must have been porangi.

Show a red flag to a bull, they say,

and it will charge. Show a Māori

a live German, and he will

also charge. We charged and we were

slaughtered. We were given no

order to charge. (XXXV "Porangi")

The men were "given no order to charge" apart from Tūmatauenga's general command to fight, to which they respond repeatedly without hesitation, literarily seeing red as "blood came down / like a hood over our eyes, and we / saw blood, and nothing but blood" (XXXV). They charge—the whana tukutahi or sudden simultaneous attack mentioned in the sequence's proem—and are "slaughtered". Blinded by rage, they corporately manifest martial insanity, "yelling like the / porangi that we had become" (XXXV). In the physical world, however, there are consequences because human bodies remain separate, vulnerable, and

nameable and countable: "two-thirds of our / company fell. We are the brave / Ngapuhi, A Company is our marae". Even so, the madness serves its purpose because the enemy's "losses were also great, and / they pulled out during the night" (XXXV). The sequence rebarbatively makes madness as a defining characteristic of the Māori soldier. When "a live German" triggers them, they become violent: they cannot help themselves.

In *Māori Battalion*, it is also presumably not only Māori soldiers who go berserk but potentially all Māori. Afterall, the proem asserts they are constitutionally "warriors still" deep down in the "heart and guts" (I). What Weil says of the *Iliad* is also true of *Māori Battalion*: "The true hero, the true subject, the centre of the [poem] is force. Force employed by man, force that enslaves man, force before which man's flesh shrinks away" ("Poem of Force" 183). Men are vehicles through which gods, whether Ares or Tūmatauenga, make war in the world. From the poem's perspective, Māori, hitherto held in check by the state, are a force of nature unleashed and sanctioned by Tūmatauenga and the state in turn but whose violence seems only to benefit Pākehā policy. What Tūmatauenga gets from it is not mentioned. Campbell's sequence, however, does assert the primacy of Māori sanction, which seems to derive from mana motuhake and mana taketake: "distinct power and authority derived from the gods" and "deep rooted/Indigenous power and authority derived from the gods" (Mutu 269). Tūmatauenga personifies it but it manifests as an amorphous Iliadic Indigenous force rather than a sophisticated and contemporary source of justice, order, and legitimacy. In *Māori Battalion*, te ao Māori is no more than Mars. It excludes whakapapa: how people, plants and animals are all descendants of Ranginui (the sky father) and Papatuanuku (the earth mother). It excludes mauri (life force), mana (authority/power), tapu (sacred and restricted customs), and wairua (spirit), all of which are surely matters of martial moment. The soldiers lose their

status as tangata whenua (people of the land) and roles as kaitiaki (guardians) to preserve the mauri, wāhi tapu (sacred sites), and natural taonga (treasures) having been made solely toa. Campbell's assertion of Indigenous sanction, then, while provocative, relies on a tightly circumscribed and primordial conception of what it means to be tāne Māori, which does away with everything other than their dubiously maintained predisposition to martiality. *Māori Battalion* shows us men fighting for their lives. But what gathers and holds those lives together and makes them meaningful is a reality it never really shows us.

* * *

Māori Battalion confects historical reportage, anecdote, and fantasy to articulate how Māori experienced modern warfare. Adhering to primary sources gives it verisimilitude but it mostly avoids viscerality. Its prosody is inexpressive: it does not re-enact in language the world's violence, as do Curnow's "The Victim" and Smithyman's "Vignettes of the Māori Wars". *Māori Battalion* is instead either laconically essayistic or reverently elegiac as its voices uninterruptedly progress along smooth narrative trajectories down the poems' elegant triadic verse paragraphs. The poetry of *Māori Battalion* amounts to interpolation, contextualisation, and attribution; and especially by performatively albeit unreliably remembering. Indeed, according to *Māori Battalion*, creative remembering is poetry. It depicts a world where the Māori soldiers' violence is legitimate—primarily through Māori authority personified by Tūmatauenga and secondarily but purposefully by the state. It is also legitimising: being violent in an allowable context justifies or fully realises enfranchisement as New Zealanders. Such were the "political realities" Apirana Taylor called the "implications of the joint participation of Pākehā and Māori in the last and greatest demonstration of citizenship" (18). They are the state's ambivalent but potent martial agents and yet waging war also decolonises

them: they re-become toa. But *Māori Battalion* neither draws into itself the Māori or Pākehā lifeworlds that make violence meaningful (or at least seem so) nor concertedly confronts its readers with the reality of war's intimate physical abjection, as its Homeric models so evocatively do.

Making Homeric and Māori martial experience equivalent and sometimes indistinguishable—especially problematically identifying manhood with *being* a warrior—makes the sequence's violence become ahistorical and cross-cultural. Real-world twentieth century Māori warfighting seemingly has more commonalities than differences with Iron-Age Grecian warfare, which admittedly adheres to Clausewitz's distinction between war's abiding nature and its always changing character. *Māori Battalion* changes war from something experienced *between* persons into something *within* the toa he must express even if doing so destroys him. The poem strongly implies the quality and quantity of violence done by the Battalion was exceptional. But *Māori Battalion* ignores the Achillean violence perpetrated by Pākehā soldiers, such as by Victoria Cross recipients Clive Hume and Keith Elliot. Campbell's poems promulgate an Antipodean but Owenite "old lie": deep-dyed Māori martiality.

The poem does not reconcile settler-state sanction and Tūmatauenga's commands. Dividedness in a poem, however, can be opportune: questioning itself, admitting its irreconcilabilities, and allowing them to be a poem's *raison d'etre*. Dividedness, too, can become mimetic: realistically representing polities' governmental, social, and jurisdictional conflicts is predicated on poetic dividedness. But *Māori Battalion* homogenises what little reality it allows to enter it. It uninterruptedly opines that the Battalion's men are essentially warriors. Their various obligations, loyalties, values, and proficiencies were contingencies not competing calls to action. Like timebombs, they went off when their fuses were lit. They were

spoiling for a fight—they "rush to join up", "throwing off the restraining arms of mothers, wives, and children" (II). Feminine restraint is nothing to masculine impulsiveness. Tu's command trumps all else—as their "wet-eyed fathers" well know—and it must be obeyed. For a time, violence makes them hard and bright. But when the toa returns home, he finds "nothing but darkness, the sound of roaring" (LXV). It is the slumbering war-god.

Chapter Six: Conclusion – Whose Hands Are These?

> After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
> And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
> Guides us by vanities. Think now
> She gives when our attention is distracted
> And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions—
> That the giving famishes the craving.
>
> —T.S. Eliot, "Gerontion"

This thesis explored the agon between verdictive New Zealand poems about state-sanctioned violence and pained bodies' and mute corpses' brute facticity. It showed how these examples of New Zealand poetry have resisted fully accounting for state-sanctioned violence. Allen Curnow suggested "experts in a more potent magic have prevailed; the fictions have to be rewritten, in blood, and in another language" ("Preface" 11). What these poems do is rewrite history, of which Curnow's "The Victim" is one of the more extreme representatives. Curnow's "reality prior to the poem"—contingent history thickened with what Donald Davie called "the reek of humanity" emitted by victims and violators alike (165)—has been transformed by various prerogatives into almost unrecognisable imagined poetic worlds, from which poems have purged uncertainties and restored order at the expense of witness and accountability. In these ways and others besides, New Zealand's foundational violence—its realities and human context—remains hidden, not least of all in our poetry. So, too, violence

maintaining sovereignty, government, and restraint along with a peaceable Pākehā self-image and imputed Māori martiality have not been submitted to poetic language's full weight.

Positioning myself outside the predominant New Zealand poetry discourse by adopting modernist mimetic close-reading and poetic exemplars has enabled me to reveal similarities in categorically different poetries. I noted in Chapter Four Rebecca Straple's astute diagnosis of the unexpected commonalities between 'conservative' and 'radical' First World War poets, enchanters such as Rupert Brooke and Charles Sorley and disenchanters like Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. It is easy to see how Curnow and Sullivan or Smithyman and Campbell diverge but those differences are what make their counterfactual likenesses so intriguing. In what follows, I summarise the poems' differences and similarities in representing state-sanctioned violence in the following areas: knowledge and fantasy; privileging speech and 'voice' over sight and image; ideas of elsewhere and being 'other than'; sacrifice; prosody and poetics; authoritativeness's allure; and personalism trumping law and politics. I end with a provisional speculative proposal about what kind of poem could better accommodate the reality of Aotearoa New Zealand's constitutive and self-perpetuating state violence.

* * *

These poems make meaningfulness from ordinary bodies exceeding everyday limitations—especially mortality—, which sees them become raw material for speculative fiction and incorporation into enduring bodies politic. The factual body is solid, opaque, and resistant but fatally vulnerable; it stinks and makes messes especially when mechanised violence is done to it. We have seen such bodies intimated in "Gold Stripe" and "Vignettes of the Māori Wars". The fantastical body is asomatic, airy, transparent, infinitely manipulable, and unkillable. The

latter overwhelmingly populate this study's poems. They are animated by strategies ranging from supplementing historical records' impersonality with necessarily fictional characterisations and personas; to positing wholesale fictive alternatives for actual events as well as their causes and consequences, fantasy worlds akin to a *verblendungzussamenhang*—a total system of delusion. But reality includes universally applicable physical facts that can re-substantiate human-shaped historical lacunae. We may not exactly know the injuries of a Dutch sailor or member of the Māori Battalion but we do know blunt-force trauma's mechanics and what happens when high-explosive artillery shells undo human bodies. We might not know victims' and violators' intimate interior worlds—their loves, likes, and preferences; what Keith Douglas in his poem "How to Kill" tellingly called those "ways his mother knows, habits of his" as distinct from his being a soldier—but we can infer much from their social milieus and human psychology—from culture—as well as how brain injury, shrapnel wounds, and shell-shock disorientate and depersonalise people and alienate them from their constitutional lifeworlds (Crocq, and Crocq). And what we can know very well are the governmental policies, legal prerogatives and obligations, and nameable authorities who have sanctioned, enabled, and demanded such violence. However, in the poems I have examined, such realities have no place in poetical realities populated by bodies categorially unlike yours and mine.

As imagination replaces memory and spirit triumphs over flesh, trauma, itself a kind of inarticulate memory, silently occupies the site of acknowledgement and understanding. New Zealand modernism's account of the state-sanctioned violence that originated, expanded, and maintains the New Zealand polity has mimetically and morally failed: fantasy, rather than history, has gotten into the poems. This thesis has shown poems that are fictive-

dramatic worlds, as much imaginary artifacts as prose fiction. Allen Curnow's 1941 *Island and Time* contains a poem where a dead sailor extemporises his sudden violent death's circumstances as well as speculates on its historical, philosophical, and religious (if not cosmic) significance. In another Time speaks in certain terms to The Child. These are poems that articulate worlds no less strange and uncannily like our own than those in *The Tempest* or *Pedro Páramo*. They do not speak directly about history and certainly do not show us it; they re-confect it into something we read at our discretion according to our preferences.

Privileging the fantastical has degraded the factual—the world of wounds and the unknowable—, which does not answer or submit to totalising authorial perspectives. Not knowing is not an excuse to make up things; the unknown inheres in the factual world. Montaigne's motto "*que sais-je*?"—what do I know?—speaks to the enormous nothingness separating individual and imaginative experience of the world from life's workaday but incomprehensible fullness, including the past's. Reznikoff allowing historical lacunae into his poems about violent governance shows modernist mimesis can include uncertainty and it is possible to make the unknown meaningful. Only Smithyman admits imagination's limits and quotes directly but sceptically from contemporary sources as does Reznikoff. In Smithyman's case, interpolated source material is textually disruptive: dissonance and conflict become poetically constitutive in marked contrast to *Māori Battalion* or *Captain Cook,* which uninterruptedly unfold with stylistic consistency. Rather than articulating unresolved disjunctions, which predicate democracy, these examples of New Zealand poetry have erected alternative worlds, manageable ones ruled by poetic absolutism like Curnow's Macbethian domain of sameness or Sullivan's supernaturally absolving realm. Purposefully refurbished and translocated historical violence becomes a literary device, a trope, a mechanism relieving

tension or resolving a poetic or personal problem, or a stylistic characteristic. And as the poems' fantastical bodies keep living, physical ones keep suffering, dying, and being forgotten.

* * *

These poems elevate speech and sound while relegating sight. The real dead are silent but their poetic confreres cannot stop speaking. Curnow's, Campbell's, and Sullivan's poems all have speakers who have died violent deaths but volubly persist in poetic after-worlds. Death enables the speakers to vocalise themselves far more fluently than an illiterate Dutch sailor, enlisted men, or a taciturn eighteenth-century professional mariner could have done. Furthermore, these speakers sound unmistakably and anachronistically like the poets who encipher them. We do not hear voices conforming to their respective education, class, or social expectations. The postmortem speakers are engaging and familiar. The even ataraxic voices in Campbell only occasionally modulate upwards into gentle rhapsody when souls articulate self-reflexive eulogies. More often, they are soothing and elicit closeness to the speaker not to the events they describe. Campbell and Sullivan occasionally supplant the Anglophone lyric's typical monadic speakers with choric intelligences: successive representative individuals or *tutti*. Doing so more acutely registers communal loss than poems written by Pākehā poets, which are thoroughly individualistic and externalised. These strictures apply only to those who do violence; those to whom violence is done are generalised, abstracted, and phenomenalised until they become non-existent.

Violence is forceful induction into a non-linguistic realm. It reconstitutes human subjects into objective meaninglessness and incommunicability. However, Reznikoff shows how the dead and witnesses to death can speak when poets grant authority to archival

sources. Then the departed can speak with their own voices. And abnegated verbality does not axiomatically lead to incoherence or incomprehension. Furthermore, wounds, scars, howls of pain, and much more besides are all communicative. When the human falls into animality, its *umwelt*'s integrity and potential communicability confront us with its inherence and inviolability with disquieting acuity. Forensic description, as Popitz champions, is then a viable source of poetic witness: it speaks for itself and for its silenced subject. The poem can continue looking with empathetic *impassibilité* at humans *in extremis*. Doing so, it can represent in language what happens when sovereign power is exercised as "essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself" that "culminate[s] in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it" (Foucault 136). But poems putting poets' own words in nameable dead people's mouths—no matter for conciliatory, redemptive, revolutionary, nationalistic, or any other ends—forfeit any claim to accountable historical witness.

* * *

The poems also insist that New Zealand's violence happens elsewhere and that atavistic others are responsible for it. They embody modernity's quasi-mythical exclusionary narrative as peaceable, conciliatory, and definitive. As Hüppauf argues, "banishing violence to a contained sphere separated from one's own is a prerequisite for maintaining the cherished image of modernity engaged in redeeming the pledge of its own origin" (3). It is enchantment to promulgate such myths. And New Zealand's literary modernism seems decidedly retrograde when one sees how little it has involved "active stripping away of idealizing principles" and how infrequently one encounters any "insistence that the violated body is not a magic site for the production of culture" (Cole 42). Instead, one finds enchantment after enchantment—and in poetries as different as Sullivan's and Curnow's—conferring generative

power to violence, embargoing it to stop the valorised body politic from getting cankered, sullied, or both. *Captain Cook* implies that it is incumbent on the living to make the best of violence and its "evil consequences"—as the Treaty of Waitangi puts it—by creatively reconciling past, present, and future and absolving its sanctioners and agents. "The Victim" rejects reconciliation and makes violence a prerequisite for collective self-realization, even if Bergsonian misdirection leads only to the desiccated consciousnesses inhabiting *Island and Time*. In Sullivan and Curnow, we see an ocean wash away spilt blood. Such absolutism is a catastrophic failure of political and poetic imaginations unable to conceive mutually beneficial communal originations free from coercive force.

Temporal distance further insulates state-sanctioned violence from jaundicing New Zealand's cherished self-image. The poems are about events generationally predating their writing and publication: Curnow's "The Victim" (1941) is about events in 1642; Smithyman's "Vignettes" were written in March-December 1958 about events in 1863; Campbell's *Māori Battalion* about the eponymous unit's participation in the Second World War was first published in 2001; Sullivan's *Captain Cook* (2002) relates to events in the second half of the eighteenth century. Lea was a combatant in the war about which he writes so his "Gold Stripe" is the sole exception. Why are our poets writing poems about violence from another time rather than their own? I cannot speak to the poets' motivations. But as a reader, I know that hearing stories about periwigged seafarers' and mutton-chopped Victorian's dutiful deadliness is less confronting than seeing killers and victims who look and sound like me. Those quaint and unenlightened old-timers are not like us so what they do is not like what we are doing. And so state-sanctioned violence remains safely embargoed.

* * *

I have insistently asked if the poems name who did what to whom. My answer is that they are reticent about naming violent New Zealanders as Pākehā. In Curnow, a Dutchman is killed by (unseen) Māori; in Lea, Pākehā New Zealanders are killed and maimed by (unseen) Germans; in Smithyman, Englishmen are killed by (unseen) Māori and Māori are killed by Englishmen and a German; in Sullivan, Englishmen kill Māori; Campbell's Māori kill and are killed by Italians and Germans. Only in Campbell are New Zealanders, the soldiers of the Māori Battalion, both violence's perpetrators and victims. Pākehā New Zealanders are never shown doing state-sanctioned violence. Even in poems about twentieth century expeditionary warfare, Pākehā combatants are reluctant and ambivalent while also conscientious and honourable, which markedly contrasts with the instinctive martial spirit possessing *Māori Battalion*'s soldiers. "Gold Stripe" foregrounds Pākehā soldiers' sacrifice and elides their professionally-attested reputation as efficient, skilled, and determined state-sanctioned killers at Gallipoli and Passchendaele. *Māori Battalion*'s monomaniacally characterised congenital toa is never set against Pākehā Achillean ultra-violence. For example, Charles Upham's pitiless battlefield ferocity equalled that of his fellow Victoria Cross recipient Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa Ngarimu. The reality is Pākehā and Māori soldiers could be equally fearsome and deadly; 26 (Māori) Battalion, however, was simply more often than majority Pākehā units commanded take dangerous and desperate actions. They had to fight ferociously for their lives more often; their martial qualities were requirements rather than predilections. Whether by reattribution, caricature, victimisation, or simple omission, the poems make violent Pākehā conspicuously absent.

The poems' construal of personal identity and subjectivity, however, cannot be taken at face value. It is not that the poems' personages are not what they seem; they are *more* than

they appear and certainly more than they when they were alive. Cook *is* the British Empire; Jan Tyssen *is* European 'sacrifice' in colonising the Pacific; the soldiers of the Māori Battalion *are* manifestations of Tūmatauenga. Individuals' subjectivity transmogrifies into undifferentiable objectivity. It is poetic *nunquam moritur*: the subject is dead but the object lives. The corporate identity is impervious—and oblivious—to the death of a single mortal. Albion's red stain keeps spreading across the map; the fruit of martyrdom remains ripe beyond its season; the angry-faced war god awakens and inhabits new agents. Itemizable human wastage—this Yorkshireman, that man from Oue-ven, these ones of Ngāti Porou and Te Whānau-ā-Apanui—is irrelevant to the wellbeing of the absorbent and expanding force for which people are expendable synecdoches. Only Lea and Smithyman resist the allure of such reductive deadly self-expansion.

* * *

Consistent, too, is the idea of sacrificial violence serving a "greater good": a state-sanctioned killer's death offers pained individual subjectivity at the altar of national selfhood. Curnow's sclerotic history of bloody reanimation creating unforeseen consequences is the most extreme iteration. But throughout the poems, violence is initiatory: it re-categorises individuals from self-directed particulars into manifestations of generalizable communities as well as bloods them into being. Sacrifice is transactionary; someone gains something from it, usually something that cannot be obtained by any other form of payment, and something valuable enough to make the sacrifice—even the ultimate cost— *ipso facto* fair and justifiable payment. One gains a country, a community, an identity. Susan Sontag's reading of Georges Bataille's ideas sacerdotal violence befits the poems' sacrifices:

> [It] is a view of suffering, of the pain of others, that is rooted in religious thinking, which links pain to sacrifice, sacrifice to exaltation—a view that could not be more alien to a modern sensibility, which regards suffering as something that is a mistake or an accident or a crime. It is something to be fixed and something to be refused. Something that makes one feel powerless. (88)

But really, those to whom violence is done to maintain law and order and private property or on battlefields are not sacrifices. The real people behind Curnow's "Victim", Lea's soldiers, Campbell's Māori men, Sullivan's Cook and people of the Pacific, and Smithyman's conscripts and Ngāti Apakura were not sacrifices, either. They were either true victims or combatants. The sacrificial paradigm distorts reality and makes for strange confreres in Curnow and Sullivan. Curnow's Jan Tyssen and Sullivan's Cook die similarly: each a member of an encroaching party advantaged in arms but unknowingly foreordained sacrifices in a littoral zone where they die their watery deaths. In Curnow's version, the death serves unimaginative imperialistic imperatives; Sullivan more subversively makes his sailor's bloody end initiate a Pacific story rather than continue the Western imperial narrative. But neither gives Māori and Hawaiians sufficient agency for anything so workaday but pressing as, for example, defending themselves. They are mechanisms of the poets' or—in Curnow's case even more contortedly—their European victims' 'higher' purposes.

* * *

The poems vary widely in poetic range and intensity. Curnow's *Island and Time* is the most prosodically and formally sophisticated. But only in "The Victim" are such resources used mimetically. It is a poem that is so prosodically intense, it exceeds its historical occasion. Smithyman's and Sullivan's have enough simultaneities and sufficient polyvalence for them

to register violence—including its sanctioning—in diction, register, genre, and sound patterning such as rhyme, metre, and stanzaic form as well as rhetorically. These three poems are deeply invested in literary modernism, notwithstanding Sullivan's apparent post-modernity. New Zealand poetry's retreat into vocal puritanism, which privileges poets' unmediated self-expression more than anything else, has come at the expense of self-divided and internally disrupted textuality that would truthfully represent divided polities and violent inter-societal contact. Prosodic, syntactical, generic, and semantic interleaving and licences as well as intertextuality give modernism a broader and deeper mimetic catchment than mono-vocal lyrics, allowing *Island and Time*, "Vignettes of the Māori Wars", and *Captain Cook in the Underworld* to meaningfully accommodate reality's complexities and uncertainties. Lyrical utterances like *Māori Battalion* do far less justice to interpersonal and political multipolarities of Waikato and Western Desert battlefields and the littoral zones of Pacific islands—at least if one expects more from a poem than a point-of-view.

Sullivan's poems' bilingualism is a creditable rejoinder to assuming uninterruptable voices can homogenously register complex realities. But how expressively poems can represent extreme experience and its inherent oppositions and disjunctions most depends on how prosodically resourceful they are. *Māori Battalion* has the same poetic and prosodic range and intensity as Campbell's following book, *Poets in Our Youth: Four Letters in Verse*. Extreme experience in the former does not register prosodically; it is asserted. As noted, prosodic tactics are extremely dense in Curnow's "The Victim". It enacts historical oppositions with cohabiting "civilised" accentual syllabic and "primitive" accentual metrics, coincident end rhyme, and internal alliteration. Its myriad concentrations of effects are unique amongst his oeuvre. As mentioned, even in *Island and Time* its poetic maximalism distinguishes it; it is far

more textually violent than anything in 1979's often Grand-Guignolesque *An Incorrigible Music*. But "The Victim" does not use its verbal maximality for mimetically articulating relevant political or historical intersectionality. Its prosodic simultaneities demonstrate modernism's expressive potential but in this case the resultant frissons are purely poetic.

Poems not meaningfully registering violent experience is about not being able to register aurally fluctuating sensory intensity. There is no *poetic* difference between *he went to the mess and his mates beat him at cards* and *he went to the front and Germans killed him*. In the latter, we learn circumstances changed from convivial to bestial; but language passes unscathed through the categorical situational change. Campbell's sequence is inexpressive because it is too prosaic and stylistically consistent compared to Curnow's, Smithyman's, and Sullivan's prosodically variable and stylistically and generically ambiguous and therefore more potentially expressive poems. Poetry simply has more expressive options for conveying disjunctive experience, most notably aural patterning and metre. Poems can establish local order, which by modernist prosodic or generic disjunction can be mimetically broken. Because modernist poetry can establish simultaneous meaningfulness across formal domains—such as coinciding syntax, metre, lineation, sentence, and stanza—it can formally manifest political, territorial, and social coinherence, contradiction, dividedness, conflict, and violence. It can prosodically register relationships: between law, governance, and constitutionality; between past, present, and future; between states; between social groups; between enemies; and between mutually antagonistic 'identities' such as soldier, father, Pākehā, and Christian. Accurately and expressively articulating historical, social, and personal complexities is never easy. But when poetry disallows itself its maximal resources, it can no more fully represent violence than prose.

* * *

Rather than conceding authority to the reality prior to them, the poems assume totalising authority for themselves, with which they assert closure and pass judgement rather than opening themselves to participatory reading. They project meaning rather than gather it. I noted earlier that "The Victim" has fascistic overtones. It emphasises an authoritative voice declaring itself to be a totalising and impersonal source of truth. It issues paternalistic proclamations from on high, looking down on past, present, and future, from which perspective an individual's violent death is inconsequential apart from it confirming the deathlessness of something 'greater'. It is, then, the voice of nation and state. *Captain Cook* and *Māori Battalion* also assume this authoritative voice. At the end of Sullivan's poem, the speaker gives his determination about what we have read: it establishes meaning rather than meaningfulness's conditions. Such authoritarianism, however benign or benevolent, precludes dialogue. Only Smithyman's poem is dialogical: it asks questions to which it gives no answers and constantly interrogates its own premises.

The other poems combine authoritative orality with irrational subsummation. Legal, political, and administrative language is either mimetically excluded or it is reinvested with libidinal significance. Kristeva summed up fascism as an "institutionalised unconscious" (qtd. in Kaplan 17): as Kaplan elaborates, it effected a symbiosis between semiotic language—affective babbling, as baby to mother—and symbolic language—the realm of law and order (13). In "The Victim", *Captain Cook*, and *Māori Battalion,* violently killed individuals pass over into the greater-than-them: global history writ European, the absolving collective unconsciousness, or Tūmatauenga. It is neither assimilation nor integration: it is state-sanctioned death as subsummation, if not annihilation. The human subject dissolves and what

absorbs it not only increases but becomes even more itself than it was before. Kaplan asks "isn't one bound to think oceanic thoughts along with the totalizing state?" (13). Unsurprisingly, then, the most totalising authorities found are in Curnow's and Sullivan's poems about violent sacerdotal littoral encounters. The poems' oceanic thoughts are fulfilled by making emotion the agent of change. Sullivan's Cook most explicitly tells the reader he "will turn to my emotions" so that "the surf of an emotional flood" can cleanse him, a momentary decision letting him "truly understand" his true self; in such a state, Orpheus/ Māui releases him from his "cold hell" of rationality (47). In Campbell's sequence, the soldiers submit themselves to a kenotic frenzy that searingly erases their subjectivity so that they can be pure agents of war; in its aftermath they are left empty. In "The Victim", nothing in Tyssen's utterances is considered reflection about his or his masters' choices or actions. Force and feeling are all, even if in *Island and Time* they lead to unwanted consequences. Uttering *Consummatum Est*, the various victims swoon, let go, and assign all ego functions to a supra-personal authority.

Poems stressing emotion feel immediate, accessible, and personal, especially when readers respond empathetically to them. It is easier to identify with mortal fear or murderous rage felt by the 15th John Tiptoft, 1st Earl of Worcester, an unnamed Anzac enlisted man during the Gallipoli campaign, or an indigenous Algerian in the 1950s than it is to understand the social, legal, and political complexities of late Plantagenet England, the (yet again) clashing European empires of the early twentieth century, or violently intersecting *Gaullisme* and the nationalism, socialism, and Islamism of North African liberation movements. The same is true for the poems I have examined. But it was not tides, winds, or waves of emotion that caused state-sanctioned violence: the mechanism was rational choices structured and sanctioned by

law and the state's prerogatives; decisions made by groups of men with effective authority granted by the tacit consent of their polities. When Sullivan's poem recuses itself from examining the mores of Cook's age, it consigns its residual descriptive and explanatory weight to nullity. Curnow's poem does so, too, when characterising the violence at Mohua as a quasi-mystical initiatory blood-rite. Campbell's also does it when ascribing responsibility for the Battalion's warfighting to Tūmatauenga's dictates rather than the articulatable agency of, say, Sir Āpirana Ngata, Eruera Tirikatene, and Paraire Paikea; or this man who chose to join Ngā Kiri Kapia or that man who chose to join Ngā kaupoi, decisions that Claudia Orange suggests were taken to "prove the worth of Māoridom … and even secure the long-term goal of Māori autonomy" (237). Avoiding such complexities is undoubtedly reductive. My method of rich reading involved thickening mimesis to include political, legal, and social realities as well as physical and psychological description. impressionism and psychological states. The only poem that attempts to render historical reality thickly is "Vignettes of the Māori Wars", which combine archival, intertextual, and imaginative detail to represent historical reality in confronting and conflicted fullness. The other poems determinedly impose authority instead.

* * *

The poems also similarly construe government, law, and sanction. They have involved various authorities: the Dutch crown, Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri, the British Crown, the Kingitanga, the New Zealand settler state, the Dominion government, and Tūmatauenga. But they all view state-sanctioned violence as exceptional. Like homicide under the law, it violates unrevoked natural law implicit in the State of Nature, which rather than being Hobbesian—"solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes 99)—is implied to be a largely peaceable Rousseauean kingdom marked by goodwill, communality, and consensus. Smithyman's

poem demonstrates such a view with its bucolic picture of Waikato Māori, which denies the Kīngitanga's jurisdictional authority. In the poems, state-sanctioned violence is the same as any other kind: it erupts from people rather than institutions—as one sees most plainly in the "Vignettes" and *Captain Cook*—, disrupting the natural order abiding beneath the state's carapace. Unsurprisingly, the poems seldom include politics and law because they are not seen to cause violence; rather, people do. Only the "Vignettes" and (less so) *Captain Cook* admit legal and statecraft's language. Even then, state-sanctioned violence is misused or excessive because states have disregarded natural rights and lifeworlds' enduring Edenic foundations rather than for delegitimising themselves by acting contrary to their social contracts, as the colonial government assuredly did with its Agambenian sanctioned violence during its Waikato invasion. Questions about when state-sanctioned violence is legitimate or otherwise are never raised.

Despite the poems emphasising sub-political or "natural" normativity—such as Sullivan's Jungian subconscious or Campbell's ancestralism—, none of them avoid "nostalgia for frontiers, identities and close spaces" (Galli 15). All the poems worry about boundaries and what happens when uninvited parties cross them. It is implicit in Galli's concern that the law prevailing in one territory can violently extend—whether by war, colonialism, or commerce—into another and parasitically dictate its normative situation.[15] War is the most direct but least legally justifiable way this can happen, but in such matters policy makes law anachronistic and Agambenian pragmatism presides. Charles Tilly takes this matter-of-factness to its logical end: "If protection rackets represent organized crime at its smoothest,

[15] For example, members of New Zealand's armed forces deployed for expeditionary operations are subject to New Zealand's domestic laws and the laws of armed conflict. The laws of the countries where they are operating are a secondary consideration.

then war making and state making—quintessential protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy—qualify as our largest examples of organized crime" (123). These poems see scale as the only meaningful difference between state-sanctioned and private violence. Each is a personal deviation from the peaceable norm. Rather than ordering reality—making and maintaining nations and enforcing laws and sanctions—, the poems' state-sanctioned violence disrupts deeper sources of connectedness, which the poems only hazily intimate.

* * *

Poems are public memorials as well as communal memories. Their twofoldedness can be conflicting: memorials are prescriptive, fixed, and reductive whereas memories are capricious, unpredictable, heterogenous, and imaginative. Memorials project significance whereas memory gathers in meaningfulness. Both address what Winter calls "the universal problem of grief and its social expression" (224). The violence in Smithyman's and Sullivan's poems no doubt occasions grief—not to mention disgust—and each poem articulates poetic sites for communal remembering and mourning. Each ambiguously reconciles its artifice with violence's facticity. This ambiguity comes from their twofold purposiveness: each remembers and memorialises. Official local verse culture adheres to a *bien passant* orthodoxy that privileges selves expressing conclusively unmediated commitments. This prevents poetry from making mimetic memorials and memories out of argument, instability, and reality. Over emphasising self-expression forecloses sympathetic imagination, which risks failure when postulating opposing parties' motives and goals, especially when competing means and ends are grounded in common basic human needs. Simply, a richly mimetic—realistic—poem cannot take sides. It will say things that its poet finds distasteful, offensive, or wrong; it will contain multitudes and cooperating, competing, and conflicting complex lifeworlds. Poetry

about state-sanctioned violence needs to know what it is talking about, including quantifiable physical facts and verifiable archival data. It also needs to speak to its effects, which include emotional facts such as grief, mourning, and how its agents and victims unfailingly get dehumanised by it.

Reading violence involves a privileged position from which one has safely distanced oneself from its "reality". But this is only qualifiedly true: one is in no physical danger *per se*. But reading linguistically reconstituted or transmuted intentional physical violence potentised with immediacy—poetic maximality—sharply closes contemplative distance. It internalises what was external and the violence reoccurs within our consciousness. It ceases to confront us and we become the very location where violence rehappens. Language's sensuous and symbolic qualities gain a risky interiority. This domain maps to the public and the private: civilisation, which is conceptual and artificial order only approximately realised in reality; and the disorderly personal, which is nonetheless fully realised if contingent moment to moment. Custom and politics connect these realms, which as we have seen are symbolic orders with physical implications. Poetic escapes from the flashpoints where these realities intersect—Trilling's bloody crossroads—are failures of nerve. Relevant realistic poetry cannot shy away from the difficulties George Steiner considered inherent in "tactical" language, whereby reading is slowed and attempts are made "to deepen our apprehension by goading to new life the supine energies of word and grammar" (40). This involves raids on received wisdom: not merely disavowing commonplaces and cliché, but also fully consenting to paradox and unexpected reversal, the stuff from which words and our world are made.

Gustave Flaubert wrote that he found the greatest artworks "seem … *pitiless*. They are unfathomable, infinite, manifold. Through small apertures we glimpse abysses whose solemn

depths turn us faint. And yet over the whole there hovers an extraordinary tenderness" (198). Wedding pitilessness to tenderness allows us to gaze into the void: that is to say, into our wounds and those we have inflicted. I have not been interested in what characterises great art or even a good poem. Flaubert's formulation does not hold for all places and all periods. But it has undeniable appositeness for thinking about what kind of paintings or poems would make worthy twofold mimetic memories and memorials for New Zealand, which is reticent, apologetic, and dismissive about its violent past, present, and future. Such poetry would unflinchingly but gently insist that we look and see what discomfits us about ourselves; it would be disenchanting while making imaginative space for participatory meaning, multifarious perspectives, and unforeseen possibilities.

Poetry, at least in New Zealand, has come to lack historical credibility: it is not a source of referable factual authority. O'Malley, for example, does not look to poems when seeking to understand the New Zealand Wars. Why is it so obvious that an historian simply would not do so? Nowadays, poetry occupies a grey zone between fiction and non-fiction. The poems of Wilfred Owen and his confreres were belatedly decisive in shaping public perceptions of the First World War and in ways that conform neither to the historical record nor combatants' feelings, thoughts, and opinions. The Homeric poems are touchstones for understanding the Bronze Age. But again: neither O'Malley's books about the New Zealand Wars nor Christopher Pugsley's *A Bloody Road Home: World War Two and New Zealand's Heroic Second Division* (2014), which covers the same events as Campbell's poem, see poems as historically meaningful. Prose does not inviolably effectively convey meaningful and accurate information and it is certainly far more conventionally circumscribed, particularly academic writing. If a poem is where language has maximal potential expressiveness, it is at least *possible*

poems might more fully register historical violence's reality than, for example, an academic prose text. The fiction writer, poet, translator, and academic Guy Davenport put it this way:

> the power of the poem to teach not only sensibilities and the subtle movements of the spirit but knowledge, real lasting felt knowledge, is going mostly unnoticed among our scholars. The body of knowledge locked into and releasable from poetry can replace practically any university in the Republic. First things first, then: the primal importance of a poem is what it can add to the individual mind. (213-14)

Davenport's "body of knowledge" is not contained in all poems: it inheres in poetry that uses specific prosodic and generic resources to engage with state-sanctioned violence's inter-dimensionally. This is what Geoffrey Hill called "composition on a multiple plane", whereby political, social, historical, and poetic complexities mutually and antagonistically coinhere within a poem ("Postscript" 573). Hill takes this idea from Simone Weil, who argued:

> A poet in the arrangement of words and the choice of each word, must simultaneously bear in mind matters on at least five or six different planes of composition … Politics, in their turn, form an art governed by composition on a multiple plane. (*The Need for Roots* 207)

Mind you, a particular kind of poem; and, indeed, a particular kind of politics. Smithyman's and Sullivan's poem most closely commit to this modernist self-conflicted choric configuring. As I have said, it is no coincidence each poem is deeply invested in literary modernism. Whatever reservations I have about them, the poems allow division to animate them; they make room for it; they sometimes, at their most powerful, announce it predicates them. Whereas "The Victim" is overdetermined with destabilising mimetically-irrelevant poetic multiplicities; it is an overwrought urn. A baleful historical death is submitted to

extraordinary linguistic pressures, squeezing out all agency, most egregiously Ngāti Tumatakōkiri. Sullivan's and Smithyman's poems' agons are essential to what they are. Curnow's poem struggles against reality: we must stand back from it and watch as it violently forces consensus onto the world. It strangles life to death, albeit with extraordinary resourcefulness and memorability.

Literary modernism, then, is not the skeleton key to all mythologies, including New Zealand's state-sanctioned violence. Even so, modernist methods are mimetically apposite to colonialist history, another phenomenon typified by "composition on a multiple plane". Kinsella has noted how Weil provides an "analysis of modernity … that specifically centres colonialism as fundamental … to any analysis of international politics" (73). Understanding politics as "composition on a multiple plane", especially the intersectionality of law, parliament, government within democracy, is apposite for Aotearoa New Zealand, where concurrent but also apparently antagonistic politics are "composed". Specifically, I mean the te Tiriti o Waitangi relationship between Māori and the Crown; procedural antagonism of participatory democracy and political parties; and demarcations between the legislative and judicial arms of the state. Societies can willingly confront themselves and consensually find creative solutions to problems, honour the past, and make disagreement a source of possibilities. Likewise, poems that would participate in such processes would openly admit their limitations; rather than reporting what happened, show it; they would confront the reader with how it looked, sounded, smelt, tasted, and felt. Such poems would forensically personalise physical and psychological wounds as well as political, legal, and administrative language used to sanction them, two realities New Zealand poetry has kept a comfortingly vast distance apart or almost entirely ignored.

* * *

Why does avoiding state-sanctioned violence's realities matter? As Weil stated so insistently and plainly, killing makes a person into a thing, it makes an object of a subject; it makes the ultimate and irrevocable category error. All the poems I have examined do this to historical subjects, who become objects: bottles in which poets have inserted messages. This is one of the privileges enjoyed by what G.K. Chesterton called "the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about" (83). Honest historical and institutional self-examination requires ceding prerogative to the dead. If violence forcibly empties its victims of subjectivity, as Scarry suggests, filling them with our political or aesthetic confections is exercising another kind force, one whose victims cannot resist.

What is the responsible poetic response to a partial and contested but generative and constitutive violent past? We can either write about what we can know, write about our not knowing, or we can imagine, speculate, and fantasise. If poets and other makers do not explicitly and realistically render violence in all its dimensions, we are free imagine it according to our predilections, experience, tolerance, enjoyment, and purposes. Cole writes that "violence will, in the end, always find a way to surpass even our worst imaginings" (297). But we must see reality before we can believe it. Showing it begins by acknowledging that "Poetry … shelters other, older ways of registering violence and beauty in its preceptors" (Leggot) and accepting Guy Davenport's challenge to see "the power of the poem to teach not only sensibilities and the subtle movements of the spirit but knowledge, real lasting felt knowledge" (213-14). The title of this thesis is from another darkly-drawn but somehow hopeful poem: "if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst" (Hardy "In Tenebris"). When we are unwilling to cede authority to history—let alone fully account for

violence's physical, psychical, and societal transformations—and opt for manageable fantasy over intransigent facts, we are looking away. My argument has not been for pacifism and a thoroughly non-violent state, a prelapsarian but better organised and appointed Eden. It has been that if we choose to exact "a full look at the Worst"—a full look at *our* worst—we might begin to leave our bloody crossroads and make our stumbling "way to the Better".

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