

A Taste of Civvy Street: Heroic Adventure and Domesticity in the Soldier Concert Parties of the First and Second World Wars

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In an early scene in *Man Alone*, Johnson, on his arrival in New Zealand, drinks the afternoon away with a New Zealand soldier who had just returned to Auckland after three years at war. The soldier's wife and kids are waiting for him at the wharf but, he assured Johnson, 'they won't mind waiting', adding 'I won't probably be seeing fellows like you again for a time'.¹ The soldier's reluctance to leave the company of men and be reunited with his family fits with historical accounts that have depicted soldiers' homecomings in terms of resentment and discomfort. It is a view expressed most clearly in Jock Phillips' *A Man's Country?*, where the transition from soldier to 'family man' was characterized by hostility and unease; as returning soldiers struggled to connect what Phillips saw as two distinct cultures and value systems — the world of men and the world of women.²

Throughout *Man Alone* Johnson avoids a settled life as a family man; instead he maintains a sense of freedom and his place within a homosocial male environment. In his reading of *Man Alone*, Phillips claimed that Johnson's long involvement in an exclusive male culture bred ambivalent feelings towards women and domesticity.³ The soldier concert parties of the First and Second World War, however, promoted an alternate model of masculinity, one in which the desire for heroic adventure and homosocial camaraderie could fit comfortably with a yearning for the pleasures and comforts of civilian life. In addition to this, the concert parties' performances reveal an affectionate longing for home that was shared by many men at war. An awareness of men such as those who performed in the soldier concert parties, or enjoyed their performances, can go some way to unsettling the assumed dichotomy between tropes such as the 'man alone' or the 'man's man' of war and the domestic family man. The soldier concert parties illustrate how men were simultaneously attracted to both the pleasures of domesticity and fantasies of adventure and male bonding.

In a survey of historical research on British masculinity, Martin Francis called for a greater awareness of the fact that 'men were continually seeking to reconcile and integrate the contradictory impulses of domestic responsibility and escapism'.⁴ Francis's approach followed the lead of historians such as Margaret Marsh, whose examination of late-nineteenth-century American masculinity focussed on the suburbs and illustrated suburban men's ability to reconcile the perceived contradictions between stereotypes of masculine aggression and emasculated domesticity.⁵ Within New Zealand historiography, however, work on the 'family man' has more frequently emphasized the enduring tension between alternate models of masculinity. Following on from Phillips' work, for example, Bev James and Kay Saville-Smith explored the ways in which the 'cult of domesticity' sought to reconcile the divisions between what they perceived to be two opposing models of masculinity: the 'man alone' and the 'family man'.⁶ James and Saville-Smith argued that by the early-twentieth-century, through the 'institutionalization of male mateship' within spaces such as sports and service clubs, a male culture developed that attempted to combine the satisfying elements of both the 'man alone' and 'family man'.⁷ But, like Phillips, James and Saville-Smith argued that there was an 'inherent conflict' between the 'man alone' and the 'family man', which, they maintained, ensured tensions between these two opposing models would endure throughout the twentieth-century.⁸

In recent years gender historians have increasingly looked beyond 'man alone' stereotyping and 'men only' social formations to examine men's lives in relation to women

and families and their identities as lovers, husbands and fathers. Studies such as Charlotte Greenhalgh's research into interwar courtship have gone some way in highlighting a shared romantic culture and critiquing the sense that men and women had separate emotional histories.⁹ As Greenhalgh demonstrated, men who went to the cinema observed a different model of masculinity from the 'soldiers and rugby players who had such a presence in twentieth-century public culture, and continue to dominate our gender histories'.¹⁰ However, historians do not necessarily need to look outside homosocial 'men only' environments to find men whose lives problematize the portrayal of an inflexible male culture. Within the soldier concert parties we see that even soldiers did not necessarily fit with Phillips' portrayal of the 'man's man' at war; many acted out their masculinity in ways more similar to cinematic leads than the practical 'man alone'. The concert party performers were soldiers who wanted to take centre stage; they revelled in the music, lights and attention that went with performance. Furthermore, they were applauded by many of their fellow soldiers for doing so.

The New Zealand concert parties that were established during the First World War emerged from a transnational community of like-minded entertainment troupes within the Allied forces.¹¹ Like most troupes, the New Zealand concert parties presented a combination of popular songs, scenes from familiar shows and comedy sketches to provide moments of respite for weary soldiers. Initially, there was some hostility towards the formation of concert parties amongst some officials who saw war as a glorious and edifying adventure. For these officers, concert parties and other activities which attempted to provide relief from the brutality of war were at best distractions and at worst obstacles to soldiers' coming to terms with the challenge of war.¹² This tension was significant, but ultimately short lived; by 1916 concert parties were established within almost all the Allies' divisions and officers officially recognized their value in maintaining troop morale.¹³



The Kiwis and their orchestra, 1917, Reference Number: 1/2-012914-G,
Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL)

The first of the New Zealand concert parties, the Kiwis, was formed at the request of Major-General Andrew Hamilton Russell, commander of the New Zealand Division, as part of an effort to maintain soldiers' morale after the tragic losses at the battle of the Somme.¹⁴ The Kiwis were soon followed by the New Zealand Pierrots and by the end of the war there were at least five concert parties touring Europe that were attached to the New Zealand Division.¹⁵ The Kiwis and New Zealand Pierrots met an endless demand for entertainment and performed continuously for the remaining war years. The Kiwis regularly packed out theatres, church halls, and their thousand-seater portable marquee, while the New Zealand Pierrots' popularity led to tours of camps, hospitals and theatres in France, Belgium and England.¹⁶

The companies' combination of popular songs and comedy sketches not only entertained weary soldiers, but connected them with memories of peacetime pleasure and entertainment they might have enjoyed whilst away at war. Concert parties responded to the desire to maintain ties with a civilian society that many had been reluctant to leave and were now desperate to return to. Whereas *Man Alone* depicted a returning soldier grudgingly leaving the homosocial world of military service to be reunited with his family, recent research has explored men's reluctance to leave home and their attempts to maintain their emotional connection with home and family while at war.¹⁷ This work has challenged the arguments advanced by Eric Leed and Paul Fussell in the 1970s, which highlighted the emotional separation and alienation soldiers felt from the civilian environment.¹⁸ Letters and parcels from home connected soldiers with the intimate world of family; however, as Michael Roper acknowledged, soldiers at war missed not only loved ones, but also the basic comforts, entertainment and public life that was available in civilian society.¹⁹ Soldier concert parties provided a reminder of these more peripheral social relations as they sought to recall public entertainment and leisure activities from home. While nothing could recreate the public life men had enjoyed in New Zealand's towns and cities, concert parties provided a glimpse of the social world they had left behind and the relationships that were formed outside of private family connections. Additionally, concert parties brought back memories, not only of entertainment soldiers might have enjoyed back in New Zealand, but of shows they saw while on leave in London.²⁰

As Robert Nye has highlighted, literature that examines soldiers' emotional connection to home has recast soldiers as reluctant warriors who clung to the memories and emotions of domestic life.²¹ Like the letters and packages soldiers received from home, concert parties provided a reminder of the lives they had led before the war, and one day hoped to return to. The Kiwis' Ernest McKinlay, reflected on this potential when he emphasized the company's ability to reconnect their audience with memories of happier times spent at home.²² In some instances New Zealand concert parties included direct references to life in New Zealand, but more commonly it was the memory of peacetime pleasure that was recalled. For a reporter from the *Chronicles of the N.Z.E.F.*, a performance of the New Zealand Pierrots' revue *Eyes Front* brought to mind 'the very best in New Zealand'. In his praise he highlighted the performance of female impersonator Stan Lawson, claiming it 'makes you homesick to see him'.²³

The popularity of female impersonation at war suggests that some element of feminine self-expression was not only tolerated among soldiers, but celebrated. The *Chronicles of the N.Z.E.F.*'s review of Lawson's performance fits with J.G. Fuller's claim that the female impersonators' popularity and the desire they aroused was due to their status as 'surrogate women' who reminded soldiers of sweethearts they had left back home.²⁴ However, this view has not found universal favour with historians. David Boxwell has argued that the audience's gaze was knowingly directed at an effeminate, or at least feminine, acting man and the

performances' comedic and erotic potential was informed by its cultural association with illicit civilian homoerotic desire.²⁵ In both interpretations, however, the presence of female impersonators disrupts the 'man's man' view of the soldier at war. If the female impersonators evoked memories of wives and girlfriends back home then we see the enduring romantic resonance of soldiers' connections with home, while Boxwell's claim that they appealed to soldiers' sublimated homoerotic desire suggests a 'man's man' quite different from what Phillips proposed.



Frank Perkins and Stanley Lawson, D570 E8,
Auckland War Memorial Museum

For the performers, the concert parties also provided an opportunity to retain their passion for music and performance while at war. As Ilana Bet-El has highlighted, soldiers often sought to preserve the image of themselves as civilians; the memory of their life before the war provided sustenance as they struggled with the drudgery of military service.²⁶ Lyttleton treasured the opportunity to perform and play music throughout the war, but also to be reunited with many of his friends from the Auckland entertainment circuit.²⁷ Not only that, but when visiting concert parties — such as the Canadian Maple Leaves — performed for New Zealand troops, Lyttleton was able to meet and talk with them as fellow musicians, rather than soldiers.²⁸ Similarly, Oliver Foote saw his opportunity to spend time performing with the Tuis concert party as a chance to reconnect with his peacetime passion for music and performance.²⁹ While Foote's discharge papers listed his occupation as 'Clerk', in his pay book Foote described himself as a 'Vaudeville Artist'.³⁰ Foote clearly saw being an entertainer as an important part of his identity and valued his involvement with the Tuis.

By responding to a widely held desire to connect with the pleasures of home, First World War concert parties reveal a more sentimental view of domesticity and civilian life among soldiers than is often acknowledged. Historians such as Phillips and Stephen Garton have argued that during the war soldiers saw home as the place of women, domesticity and shirkers.³¹ Phillips' and Garton's work dealt with memoirs and fiction, such as *Man Alone*, frequently written many years after the war had finished. While veterans looking back on their wartime experiences may contrast any dissatisfaction in their life at home with nostalgic memories of soldierly camaraderie, during the war soldier concert parties presented home as a site of pleasure and respite from the dangers and drudgery of war. For soldiers serving overseas 'home' was always an imagined space and a point of contrast. However, as Michael Roper's work on British soldiers' letters to their mothers highlights, bonds between men were not always formed in opposition to home; men's domestic attachments were often shared and acknowledged among soldiers.³² The attitudes to home evident in concert parties, alongside other wartime practices, point towards a desire for, and idealization of, the comforts and pleasures of civilian society.

For most performers their time with the soldier concert parties ended when peace was declared. For the New Zealand Pierrots, however, peace marked the start of a new enterprise; they regrouped to entertain civilian audiences as the Diggers. The Diggers embarked on popular tours of both New Zealand and Australia that continued into the early 1930s and, in their later years, provided the material for the films *Diggers* and *Diggers in Blighty*.³³ For the performers involved, concert parties most obviously provided a form of steady employment within the entertainment industry. The public reception of these post-war performances, though, should be seen within the context of the war remembrance traditions that were being formed in response to the Great War. Whereas war memorials drew on familiar classical and religious iconography to articulate their sense of sorrow and pride, concert parties employed a different vocabulary to remember the war experience.³⁴ The concert parties emphasized idealized male bonding and camaraderie rather than heroism and sacrifice.

If the wartime performances appealed to memories of the pleasures and comforts of home, their post-war success suggests there was still a public appetite for entertainment drawn from the experience and camaraderie of military service. When the Diggers first toured Australia, the *Bulletin* claimed their success was 'thanks to the many people with a kindly feeling for all entertainers who have worn khaki'.³⁵ The *Argus* may have noted that the Diggers 'wisely refrain from laying stress upon the war element', but their connection with the war was always acknowledged.³⁶ Promoted as 'warrior entertainers', the concert parties were part of a larger process that ensured the experience of Great War veterans would be affectionately remembered by future generations and the ideals of military masculinity would remain culturally embedded.³⁷

As First World War veterans returned home with severe and often highly visible injuries, civilians were confronted with the Great War's unprecedented level of violence. Sandy Callister's work on the photographic representation of wounded New Zealand soldiers has highlighted how new technology in cosmetic surgery enabled the true violence of the war to be hidden; mutilated soldiers were transformed 'from being symbols of the horror of war to the acceptable category of "war-wounded"'.³⁸ Work by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker has also considered the ways in which the violence of the First World War was repressed in the years following the war. They argued that in the sculptures for war monuments the war was sanitized as soldiers appeared 'as clean and fresh as toy soldiers'.³⁹ In a similar manner concert party performers appeared onstage fit and healthy, allowing the audience to forget that the male body 'was intended to be mutilated' during the First World

War.⁴⁰ By portraying veterans as healthy and well-adjusted, concert parties not only obscured the violence of war, but also glossed over the difficulties of repatriation.⁴¹

However, although the concert parties' performances obscured some of the difficulties of post-war repatriation, in other ways they were intimately involved in these concerns. Part of the impetus behind the Diggers' initial tour of New Zealand was to raise money for the Returned Soldiers' Fund.⁴² Moreover, many of the concert party members remained with the troupe due to difficulty finding other work after the war.⁴³ Reviews of the Diggers' early New Zealand performances urged readers to attend, as much out of duty as for the quality of the show.⁴⁴ Reports initially emphasized the money they were raising to help struggling veterans, then once they became a commercial venture, focus shifted to the role concert parties had played during the war. The *Ohinemuri Gazette* reminded its readers: "The Diggers" helped your boys over many a mile. Come see them'.⁴⁵ Pat Hanna's 'Chic and Joe' sketches with Joe Valli also provided opportunities to explore some of the challenges facing returned veterans. Although most sketches played with the emerging image of soldier larrikinism and emphasized the importance of intimate relationships between soldiers, one sketch, 'Civvies', hinted at post-war tensions when Chic became jealous once Joe found a 'tabby', or girlfriend, whom he feared would come between them.⁴⁶

Post-war performances sought to construct a positive memory of the war, but, as Richard Fotheringham has highlighted, rather than simply sanitizing the wartime experience, performers aimed to show their audience how soldiers coped with the trauma of war.⁴⁷ As a member of the All Diggers Company — another soldier concert party touring Australia — explained, they wanted veterans who saw the performance to be able to say, '[t]here you are. I have been trying to explain to you for weeks how we used to do it; now you see'.⁴⁸ Fotheringham claimed the Diggers were not afraid to acknowledge the destruction of war, but articulated a sense of social inclusiveness that 'invited audiences to join them in trying to laugh it off'.⁴⁹ The Diggers did not seek to make their war experience heroic. Rather, they promoted another myth; that war was manageable and that through laughter soldiers could deal with the trauma they had faced. Naturally, such an image was easier to develop after the war, when the audience was secure in victory. But the enduring message was that the challenges returned soldiers faced, and the injuries they had to live with, were obstacles that could be overcome. In their attempt to construct a more optimistic vision of repatriation, and one that civilians would find reassuring, these performances disrupted the depiction of resentful returned soldiers that were unable or unwilling to reconnect with those who remained home.

When the Kiwi Concert Party was established during the Second World War they were presented as continuing a tradition established during the Great War. The Kiwis were the centrepiece of the New Zealand military entertainment and in many respects this new generation of performers operated in much the same way as their Great War counterparts. They were fully mobile, infantry-trained and worked as close to the front line as possible.⁵⁰ However, unlike the First World War concert parties, the Kiwi Concert Party was its own military unit, the New Zealand Entertainment Unit.⁵¹ While the concert parties of the First World War connected audiences with memories of home and peacetime pleasure, in the Second World War this aspect of the shows became more pronounced. The Kiwis adhered to a strict 'no khaki' policy; no military uniforms were worn onstage and no soldier jokes or references to military life were permitted.⁵² As Terry Vaughan, the Kiwi Concert Party's leader, would later claim, '[t]he point of the show was to get the troops away from the atmosphere of the army entirely'.⁵³ Vaughan made it clear that the troupe's objective was to give their audiences 'a taste of civvy street' or 'something they might have taken the girlfriend to back home and, with luck, would again'.⁵⁴ Despite this explicit desire to remind

soldiers of home, Vaughan stated ‘we had no “longing-for-home” sentiments’ and ‘no nonsense about “New Zealand, the little Pacific Paradise”’.⁵⁵ Like their predecessors, the aim was not to directly draw on soldiers’ lives back in New Zealand, but to recall entertainment they might have enjoyed away from war.

Terry Vaughan insisted that the Kiwis’ popularity during the war was due, not only to their ability to provide a ‘taste of civvy street’, but also to their refusal to underestimate ‘the taste of a modern soldier audience’. Vaughan believed that there was demand for entertainment that worked the gap between ‘the usual army show fare’ and the values he had developed at the Royal Academy of Music.⁵⁶ In his official history of the New Zealand Chaplains during the Second World War, M.L. Underhill claimed that soldiers repeatedly complained to the chaplains that British concert parties were ‘substituting smut for humour’; reportedly ‘the troops wanted humour, but again and again they told the chaplains they did not want bawdiness’.⁵⁷ Herbert Ross, a New Zealand soldier with the 20th Armoured Division, expressed a similar sentiment. He too claimed New Zealand soldiers did not appreciate ‘smutty English humour’.⁵⁸ Both Ross and Underhill praised the Kiwi Concert Party for providing an excellent alternative; the Kiwis’ reluctance to rely on bawdy entertainment was seen as a sign of their ‘real talent’ and, apparently, appreciated by their soldier audience.⁵⁹ In their commitment to providing respectable entertainment at war, the Kiwis were portrayed as New Zealand soldiers who retained the characteristics of ideal civilians, while making their contribution to the war effort. In doing so they were seen to represent a broader ability of New Zealand soldiers to retain their good character, rather than be brutalized by the war experience.



Kiwi concert party, El Alamein, Egypt, Oct 1942,
Reference Number: DA-02711-F, ATL.

Naturally the Kiwis' respectable entertainment was not to everyone's tastes. Les Cleveland claimed that while military authorities promoted troupes like the Kiwis and similar 'musical slop', the songs that soldiers sang among themselves reflected more 'vulgar, ribald tastes'.⁶⁰ These were the songs enjoyed by the drinking, brawling and whoring 'man's man' of Phillips' work.⁶¹ Vulgar songs were generally tolerated by military officials, but attempts were made to suppress more rebellious verse which demanded repatriation.⁶² While Cleveland presented this material as authentic folk music, in opposition to the 'establishment propaganda' of the Kiwis, Vaughan saw the two as complementary. Vaughan claimed soldiers could make their own songs about the frustrations of service life, songs like 'Won't You Take Me Home', that expressed soldiers' frustrations with the war by demanding that Prime Minister Peter Fraser let them return to New Zealand. The Kiwis' objective was to give them a taste of entertainment they might have enjoyed before the war.⁶³ Like the soldiers' songs that demanded repatriation, the Kiwis' 'no khaki' approach responded to declining morale and a desire to be free from military service. Cleveland may have contrasted the two, and the Kiwis' approach was certainly favoured by military officials, but the two forms of entertainment shared a similar sentiment.⁶⁴

Like the parcels soldiers received from home, concert parties provided only temporary, and inadequate, relief from the trials of military service. But their popularity illustrates how soldiers attempted to imaginatively reconnect with civilian society. As Deborah Montgomerie has argued, homesickness was culturally accepted among New Zealand soldiers during the Second World War. In letters home men described in great detail how and why they missed home; home was not only romanticized but 'became a shorthand for the frustrations of all service life'.⁶⁵ The singing and dancing of the concert party, like the sending and receiving of mail, responded to soldiers' desire to hold onto their connections with home. These links were a source of strength and support.

Rather than the dichotomy that Phillips and James and Saville-Smith established between the domestic family man and the 'man's man' of war or the 'man alone', concert parties illustrate how the desire for heroic adventure and homosocial camaraderie could fit comfortably with a yearning for the pleasures and comforts of 'civvy street'. Whereas novels such as Robin Hyde's *Passport to Hell* or John A. Lee's *Civilian into Soldier* suggested that the characteristics that were celebrated during war were those that were most distasteful in civilian society, the concert parties of both wars presented men who could make a valuable contribution to the war effort, but still maintain the values that would suit family and civilian life.⁶⁶ In doing so they responded to fears that men could be overmasculinized or brutalized by war and become too aggressive and antisocial to fit back into civilian society.⁶⁷

In 1943 the Kiwis cemented their place in the public's imagination with a civilian tour of New Zealand; this circuit foreshadowed their phenomenally successful post-war career as the Kiwis Revue Company. Between 1946 and 1954 the Kiwis continuously toured New Zealand and Australia, enjoying over three million paid admissions in the process.⁶⁸ Like the Diggers before them, the Kiwis celebrated masculine camaraderie and soldiers' ability to cheerfully cope with the challenges of warfare, rather than the rhetoric of sacrifice and valour that dominated war memorials. Jonathan Bollen has even gone so far as to argue, with reference to their use of 1930s style entertainment, that the Kiwis 'might best be described as engaged in the task of forgetting the memory of the war, as a diversion from remembering the actuality of life during the war'.⁶⁹ Certainly, the Kiwis were reluctant to draw too heavily on militaristic rhetoric. An early programme told the audience that the Kiwis 'have no connection with the war or its memories', and one reviewer claimed 'they do not come to us with any reminders of war: they come to us as the cream of their country showing the brighter, happier, better side of life'.⁷⁰ However, although the Kiwis' performances eschewed

overt militarism, their connection with the war was discretely promoted. For their appearance in Wellington the attendance of Major-General Bernard Freyberg was noted and tied to his role in assisting their formation during the war; while the praise of 8th Army commander Bernard Montgomery was repeated in programmes and promotion.⁷¹

The Kiwis may have banished military material from their performances during the war, but after the war they named their revues *Alamein*, *Tripoli*, *Benghazi* and *Cassino*, significant sites for the Allied campaign, and performed their opening chorus and the segment 'Songs of the Maori Battalion' in battledress.⁷² Many newspapers responded favourably to this. The *Bulletin* claimed that when the Kiwis came out in uniform one was reminded 'that the turns have been played in the war-time desert, in Syria and Greece and Crete, by men who have had their share of front-line service'.⁷³ Historians of theatre may see the emphasis on comedy and female impersonation as recalling pre-war variety shows, but the audience were also encouraged to see it as a continuation of entertainment put on for troops during the war.⁷⁴ Rather than helping audiences forget about the war, the Kiwis responded to a public desire for positive memories of war and presented the war experience as something which could be overcome and from which positive memories could be garnered.



Promotional postcard for the Kiwis drawing on their wartime performances, D770 E8 Reserve, Auckland War Memorial Museum.

The notion that there was a 'crisis of masculinity' during the 1940s and 1950s within those nations that fought in the Second World War has received significant historiographical attention in recent years.⁷⁵ For historians such as Jock Phillips and Leo Braudy, the central tension concerned the transition from the military world of men to a civilian society that was seen to be dominated by women.⁷⁶ Braudy argued that veterans' struggles to re-enter civilian

society were reflected in the rise of the American western and detective films, alongside Japanese samurai films, that valorized the solitary heroic individual, un beholden to women, who rallied against the perceived injustices of a cruel and uncaring society.⁷⁷ While *Man Alone*'s Johnson clearly fits within this tradition, the Kiwis presented an alternative to the escapism of Hollywood westerns and detective films. They reassured their audiences that effective reintegration was possible. Much was made of the fraternity and spirit of co-operation that existed among the troupe; the Kiwis adhered to a strict 'no-star' policy in which all members drew the same salary and no performer's contribution was valued over others.⁷⁸

While the co-operative nature of the group highlighted the positive attributes that they were believed to have developed during the war, in their lives offstage the individual performers were presented as happily accepting the demands faced by the present day civilian. Onstage the Kiwis explicitly drew on idealized images of masculine camaraderie; offstage they cultivated an image of settled family men, happily marrying and starting families. As their shows continued into the 1950s, reports praised the concert party performers' transition from bachelors to family men. On their return from Australia in 1951 one newspaper commented, '[t]he years have brought changes and the gay young blades who rallied round leader Terry Vaughan in the desert entertainment days of 1941 ... are now responsible married men'.⁷⁹ By retaining the wartime experiences that were deemed to be positive as they settled down to live respectable domestic lives, the Kiwis sold reassurance to their audience; they demonstrated how men could reconcile their potentially contradictory identities as soldiers and civilians.⁸⁰ Newspapers reported on the marriage of each Kiwi with approval and, in 1953, the *Argus* claimed that, with his marriage to Queenslander Wilma Thomson, Maurice Tansley had 'forfeited his title as the last bachelor of the Kiwi company'.⁸¹ The story, however, ended with an enigmatic retraction with Tansley insisting he was not truly the last bachelor since the four female impersonators were all unattached.⁸² Persistent bachelors such as the female impersonators, who problematized this image of settled family men, were usually ignored, but occasional interviews mentioned their desire to find the right woman and settle down.⁸³

Through reconciling the perceived contradictions of the demands on the modern family man and the enduring masculine ideal based on adventure and homosocial camaraderie, the Kiwis presented an idealized, and largely impossible, compromise. If the public were reassured by this sanitized image of military service and repatriation, the effects of this overly optimistic portrayal of military life on veterans was both more problematic and more ambiguous. Alison Parr, who examined the pain and distress felt by New Zealand's Second World War veterans, argued that many soldiers' difficulty in re-adapting to civilian life was influenced by the sense that their military service did not conform to the public image of the New Zealand soldier and that no one could comprehend their experience.⁸⁴ The Kiwis presented war as an experience from which lessons were learnt, skills developed and friends made. The Kiwis were popular among veterans, but not all returned servicemen would have been able to recognize their own experience in the Kiwis' portrayal of war.

Although the all-male soldier concert parties might seem like an archetypal man's world, the performers blurred the boundaries between military and domestic worlds. With their emphasis on both memories of home and military service, soldier concert parties were constantly engaged with connecting war and domesticity in the realm of the imaginary. Wartime shows recalled the pleasures of public life back home; post-war civilian tours promoted a spirit of camaraderie fostered through war. Whereas figures such as the 'man alone' may illustrate a degree of ambivalence with family life and a significant male hunger for masculine adventure, the concert parties exhibit a greater level of affection for, and emotional reliance on, domesticity and 'feminine values' within all-male environments. The

concert party performances demonstrate the extent to which the simultaneous, and seemingly contradictory, longing for both domestic responsibility and heroic adventure was ever present as the Diggers became the Kiwis. Their popularity among returned soldiers and civilians should encourage us to question how many New Zealand men identified with tropes such as the 'man alone' and consider the ways in which the continued yearning for heroic, manly adventure could be compatible with men's attraction to marriage, fatherhood and civilian life.

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- ¹ John Mulgan, *Man Alone*, Harmondsworth, 1972, p.9.
- ² Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male*, Auckland, 1987, pp.213, 259.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p.256.
- ⁴ Martin Francis, 'The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity', *Historical Journal*, 45, 3, 2002, p.643.
- ⁵ Margaret Marsh, 'Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870–1915', in Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, Chicago, 1990, pp.111–27.
- ⁶ Bev James and Kay Saville-Smith, *Gender, Culture and Power: Challenging New Zealand's Gendered Culture*, revised ed, Auckland, 1994, p.37.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p.41.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p.40.
- ⁹ Charlotte Burgess, 'Looking to the Heart: Young People, Romance and Courtship in Interwar New Zealand', MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2007. Charlotte Burgess now writes under the name Charlotte Greenhalgh.
- ¹⁰ Charlotte Greenhalgh, 'Bush Cinderellas: Young New Zealanders and Romance at the Movies, 1919-1939', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 44, 1, 2010, p.8.
- ¹¹ J.G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918*, Oxford, 1991, p.95.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p.96.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p.96.
- ¹⁴ Peter Downes, *Top of the Bill: Entertainers through the Years*, Wellington, 1979, p.49; Nicholas Boyack, *Behind the Lines: The Lives of New Zealand Soldiers in the First World War*, Wellington, 1989, p.89.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.54.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.57.
- ¹⁷ Martha Hanna, 'A Republic of Letters: The Epistolary Tradition in France During World War I', *American Historical Review*, 108, 5, 2003, p.1361; Ilana R. Bet-El, *Conscripts: Lost Legions of the Great War*, Stroud, 1999, pp.131–37; Deborah Montgomerie, *Love in Time of War: Letter Writing in the Second World War*, Auckland, 2005, p.134; Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War*, Manchester; New York, 2009 p.33.
- ¹⁸ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, New York, 1975, pp.86–87; Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat & Identity in World War I*, Cambridge; New York, 1979, pp.188–89.
- ¹⁹ Roper, *The Secret Battle*, p.281.
- ²⁰ *Chronicles of the N.Z.E.F.*, 13 June 1917; 30 August 1918.
- ²¹ Robert A Nye, 'Western Masculinities in War and Peace', *The American Historical Review*, 112, 2, 2007, p.431.
- ²² Ernest McKinlay, *Ways and by-Ways of a Singing Kiwi: With the N.Z. Divisional Entertainers in France*, Dunedin, 1939, p.92.
- ²³ Reprinted in *Kaipara and Waitemata Echo*, 2 October 1919, p.2.
- ²⁴ Fuller, p.105.
- ²⁵ David A. Boxwell, 'The Follies of War: Cross-Dressing and Popular Theatre on the British Front Lines, 1914-18', *Modernism/modernity*, 9, 1, 2002, p.12.
- ²⁶ Bet-El, p.134.
- ²⁷ George Clyne Lyttleton, 'Pierrots in Picardy: a khaki chronicle, by one of them', Unpublished Manuscript, p.28, MS 242, Auckland War Memorial Museum (AWMM).
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.130.
- ²⁹ Oliver Nelson Paul Foote, 1894?–1974?, Wartime Dairies, 2 January 1918, MSX-4334, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (ATL).
- ³⁰ Oliver Nelson Paul Foote, 1894?–1974?, Papers Relating to Army Life, MS-Paper-5627, ATL.

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