

Rugby, War and the Mythology of the New Zealand Male

'SATURDAY, October 21, 1899, will live in the pantheon of New Zealand's history', wrote the *New Zealand Times*. On that day, the anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar and Lord Nelson's death, the first contingent of New Zealand soldiers left for South Africa. The troopers had marched from their Karori camp down to Jervois Quay where a reported crowd of 40-50,000 greeted them with 'extraordinary scenes of enthusiasm' and cries of 'Bravo, New Zealand'. On the harbour was a convoy of steamers containing an estimated 10-12,000 people and bands which played patriotic music as the good ship *Waiwera* made its triumphal departure. Before the troopers left, Premier Seddon told them: 'we shall look forward to your displaying bravery, decision and coolness, because coolness and determination must win in the long run'. Robert Stout made the mistake of publicly hoping that the war would be won before the contingent arrived. There were shouts of 'No! No!'¹ Mere victory was not what the people wanted. They wanted 'our boys' to prove their mettle, to show themselves 'neither children nor gods, but men in a world of men', as one commemorative souvenir publication put it.²

They did not have very long to wait. As in 1915 when the news of the Gallipoli landings sent 'a thrill of pride' through the country and Massey granted public servants a half-holiday to welcome the news in 'a patriotic demonstration', so in early 1900 the first cables of our boys in action created much enthusiasm.³ Then on 21 February came full reports of an incident just over a month earlier, which fulfilled nearly all the colony had wanted. The story ran like this. A hillock or kopje was being held by 70 New Zealanders and 30 men from the First Yorkshire Regiment. After many hours of intense firing from early morning, the Boers made a charge up the hill towards the area held by the Yorks. Both Captain Orr of the Yorks and his sergeant were shot and, in the words of the New

1 *New Zealand Times*, 23 October 1899.

2 Malcolm Ross, *Souvenir of New Zealand's Response to the Empire's Call*, Wellington, 1900, p.10. The words were a quotation from Rudyard Kipling's 1893 poem about the Empire, 'A Song of the English'.

3 *Evening Post*, 29 April 1915.

Zealand correspondent, 'British soldiers without a commander reminds one of a colossal machine, strong in every particular, of great worth, but without an engineer to guide and direct its movements'. So Captain Madocks, the New Zealand commander raced over to the Yorks, rallied their forces and then led three other New Zealanders, Sergeant Gourley, Lieutenant Hughes, and Trooper Connell over the parapet, and 'like the heroes they were, [they] dashed at the enemy'. Connell was shot dead instantly and Gourley fell seconds later seriously wounded. Madocks chased the retreating Boers down the hill, while Hughes after following for some distance returned to deal with his wounded comrade, Sergeant Gourley. Gourley, though badly wounded through the head, was conscious and as he was picked up and carried down for medical attention he began to ramble. 'First the poor fellow was amongst his comrades and was issuing instructions to the men of his section, and now he was back in Dunedin, rambling incoherently of the hunt at which he and his brother Hugh were always prominent, and then his thoughts wandered back to his happy southern home as he lapsed into semi-consciousness. When placed in Lieutenant Canavan's care his lips moved, and he spoke of "Father". These were almost the last words he uttered, for he never regained consciousness.'⁴

That night the New Zealanders were the 'talk of the camp', and Madocks in particular: 'To lead two charges and then follow the retreating Boers down the kopje after escaping death by killing the Boers' officer only a few yards in front of him were deeds of bravery that entitled him to the highest praise. From first to last he was cool and collected. . . . The colony should feel proud that one of its companies is led by an unassuming, mild-mannered, courteous gentleman, who possesses the courage of half-a-dozen men.' The next day General French came and spoke to the New Zealand troopers personally to congratulate them on their 'gallant stand'. The kopje was named New Zealand Hill. But amongst the troopers themselves we are told there was an air of gloom as the men spoke of 'their departed mates': 'Even the horses in camp seemed gloomy, and all the men were really heart-broken, for Sergeant Gourley was undoubtedly the greatest favourite in the contingent. Poor Sergeant Hazlett, his greatest chum in the camp, was dreadfully cut up, and seemed as if his heart would break with grief.' The Honourable Hugh Gourley, M.L.C., allowed the letters to him from Sergeant Hazlett and Lieutenant Hughes describing his son's gallant death to be published in the New Zealand papers.⁵

There were of course to be subsequent New Zealand triumphs in the South African War and much enthusiasm at home, but later incidents

4 *Otago Daily Times* (ODT), 21 and 23 February 1900.

5 *ibid.* It should be noted that Captain Madocks was in fact of English birth, having arrived in New Zealand in 1896. Lieutenant Hughes, awarded a D.S.O. for this action, later commanded the Canterbury Battalion at Gallipoli.

would but amplify the images of the New Zealand male hero that were implicit in the descriptions of New Zealand Hill. What were those images that emerged out of the Boer War? First, like the horses which they had brought with them, the New Zealanders were seen to be physically superior — immensely strong, tough and courageous. A legend of the troopers' physical superiority began from the moment the crowds saw them off. At the Dunedin send-off for the fourth and fifth contingents Seddon described them 'as fine a body of men, wonderfully even as to size, and as perfect in physique as it falls to the lot of the most favoured of our race to be'.⁶ Once the men were in South Africa, the New Zealand papers reinforced this legend. The *Evening Post* quoted a letter from an English officer: 'These colonial troops are a splendid body. . . . I don't suppose there is a man under six feet, and I should say quite half of them go up to 6 ft. 4 in. or 5 in.'⁷ In fact, the average height of the first contingent was 5 ft. 9 in.

The troops were said to be large, and also peculiarly fitted to fighting a war in South Africa by their frontier heritage and their long experience of station life in the colony. They were of course a mounted force. Yet, despite the arduous riding tests for all volunteers, the proportion of recruits drawn from class VI in the New Zealand Census (agricultural, pastoral, mineral and other primary producers) was barely in excess of its proportion in the New Zealand adult male population.⁸ Such facts did not dislodge the image of this as an army of frontier farmers. The idea was expressed in the name of the third, fourth and fifth contingents, the 'Rough Riders', a name chosen, as Seddon explained, because the Australian title 'Bushmen' might have unfortunate connotations. 'The Bushmen in Africa', he said, 'are a little people without being exceeding wise'; so instead the troopers became the 'Rough Riders', for, as the *Otago Daily Times* explained 'many of them have been at home in the saddle since childhood'.⁹ Others noted that pioneer hunting expeditions had trained New Zealand troops in the use of the gun, and there was play on the question whether Boer hunting was just like boar hunting.¹⁰

In addition to these physical attributes, a pioneer background was said to give the New Zealand troops a special ability to rough it. Repeatedly

6 ODT, 26 March 1900.

7 *Evening Post*, 21 February 1900.

8 The census of 1901 shows that among New Zealand males aged 20-24 the proportion employed in the primary sector (category VI) was 36.57%; and for men aged 25-44: 36.68%. By comparison, a one-in-ten sample of men in the ten contingents shows the following proportion drawn from that sector: Contingent 1 and 2: 42.97%; Contingent 3-7: 42.52%; Contingent 8-10: 36.5%; Among officers the figure was 29.13%. Sources: New Zealand Census 1901; *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives* (AJHR), 1900, 1901, 1902 H-6.

9 ODT, 26 March 1900; 4 January 1900.

10 James H. Birch Jr. and Henry D. Northrop, *History of the War in South Africa*, Wellington, 1899, p.26. See also K. G. Malcolm, *The Seventh N.Z. Contingent: its record in the field*, Wellington, 1903, p.21.

they were praised for enduring the starvation and sleepless nights, the poor clothing and the cold weather, without a grumble. In one of the innumerable souvenirs produced during the war appears D. M. Ross's poem 'Soldiers of the Southern Cross' which ends:

Ye who braved the bush a-burning, ye who swam the ford a-flood,
 Ye who pillowed on the saddle and the belt,
 When the bugle calls to battle, you will prove your breed and blood
 In the rattle of the rifles on the veldt.¹¹

These sons of pioneers were tough. Indeed, soon after the arrival of the second contingent, it was reported that Captain Smith jumped onto the parapet of a bridge to rest, overbalanced and fell 20 feet to a gravel yard beneath. 'When asked why he did not kill himself, he said "Oh, New Zealanders are very tough".'¹² Their long experience of battling floods and drought and bush had trained the New Zealanders, it was said, in the courage and determination required for battle. They possessed a stoical ability to repress pain and thoughts of death. A story was told of a New Zealand farrier, 'a man of giant build [who] was mortally wounded above the groin. He went on firing, saying that was the only way he could forget the pain.'¹³ 'Coolness' under fire was a much praised attribute.

Another bundle of qualities of a pioneering origin were the troopers' alleged adaptability and initiative. At New Zealand Hill there was the example of Captain Madocks responding quickly and imaginatively to the Boer attack, and there was the obvious comparison with the Yorks regiment who, left leaderless, lacked all initiative. The contrast between the disciplined but passive Tommy Atkins and the adaptable colonials was made repeatedly throughout the campaign. The English regular, it was said by a visiting expert Colonel Londen, was 'not allowed to think for himself, while the colonials were'.¹⁴ Our boys were distinctively self-reliant. Seddon took pride in 'the marvellous adaptability of the average New Zealand boy'.¹⁵ Their adaptable qualities were seen as making them ideal scouts, and as the war degenerated into a guerilla operation so colonial skills were held in even higher regard. Colonel Francis, commander of the fourth contingent, interviewed in London, claimed that a colonial training made the New Zealand troopers more 'at home' in the South African kind of warfare than Imperial soldiers.¹⁶

Since the troops were more adaptable, so colonial leadership was different from the English model. In a commemorative volume after the war, Sarah Hawden put it this way: 'The resourcefulness and self-confidence and pride in their work which made these men from the land of in-

¹¹ Ross, p.26.

¹² ODT, 9 April 1900.

¹³ A New Zealander (Sarah E. Hawden), *New Zealanders and the Boer War or Soldiers from the Land of the Moea*, Christchurch, 1907, p.87.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.210.

¹⁵ ODT, 26 March 1900.

¹⁶ ODT, 4 January 1901.

dependence so valuable in guerilla warfare had their drawbacks . . . in making them proud, lacking in deference to superiors — in a word, unwilling to submit to the necessary discipline of military life.’¹⁷ Most other colonial commentators put it differently. The colonials were never undisciplined on the field of battle where it counted, but they had little time for the ceremony and ‘the red-tapism’ insisted upon by English officers. The discipline of the Imperial force robbed men of their individuality, and reflected an army in which there was an immense gulf between officers and men. But in the New Zealand forces men led from the front. At New Zealand Hill it was Captain Madocks who led his men over the parapets, and when Sergeant Gourley was killed there was deep mourning, for he was said to be loved by his men. These were natural leaders who were never too proud to mix with their men. Colonel Sommerville told the *Evening Post*: ‘The colonial officer knew all his men, fraternized with them, chatted with them, and took an interest in them. There was none of this between the Imperial officer and Tommy, from whom the officer held strictly aloof.’¹⁸ At times indeed the New Zealanders were scathing about the English officers. Corporal F. Twistleton who published an account of his service with the New Zealanders after the war raved at the ‘asses’, ‘the prigs’ and the ‘nincompoops’ who passed for Imperial officers. They were all theory, all schooling, without any ‘practical common-sense’. Twistleton like others at the time had an obvious explanation for this style of leadership. Whereas the Imperial army, both officers and men, were professionals and of permanently different class origins, the colonials were volunteers and in Twistleton’s words, ‘the officers have many men serving under them who are socially their equals, and as they will probably all go back to civil life, they have to use a little consideration’.¹⁹ In fact there was a large class difference between officer and men in the New Zealand forces. To take just two extremes, 31.5% of the officers were professional men by occupation, but only about 3% of the men; there were no labourers as officers in the New Zealand contingents, but except for the first and second contingents over 15% of their men were so described.²⁰ Nevertheless the image of a classless civilian army was strong. The New Zealand troops were ‘raw and callow’ recruits (‘raw’ was an adjective often used), ill-trained according to the barrack-square code, and yet through their natural talents and inner discipline able to compete with the regular soldiers of Britain. They were gifted amateurs, who fought, not because it was a permanent job, but

17 [Hawden], *New Zealanders and the Boer War*, p.132.

18 *Evening Post*, 30 November 1900.

19 Corporal F. Twistleton, *With the New Zealanders at the Front*, Skipton, 1902, pp.183, 94.

20 The exact figures for the men based on a one-in-ten sample are: Contingent 1 and 2: Professionals 7.42%; Labourers 11.93%; Contingent 3-7: Professionals 3.27%; Labourers 15.88%; Contingent 8-10: Professionals 2.48%; Labourers 19.15%.

from the nobler call of patriotism and duty. An army of natural aristocrats, no less.

If the troopers were a classless band of men in which as one of them later claimed 'all were officers', and if they were men of initiative and adaptability, then what kept them together as a cohesive unit?²¹ The answer, according to the newspapers, was of course mateship. At New Zealand Hill there was the image of Lieutenant Hughes returning to care for his wounded comrade, Sergeant Gourley; there was the gloom of the New Zealanders at the death of 'their departed mates' and the special grief of Sergeant Hazlett, who had been Gourley's 'greatest chum in the camp'.²² Even before New Zealand Hill, there had been much coverage of an attempt in an earlier incident to recover the wounded body of Trooper Bradford, the first New Zealander to die in the war. Later more publicity would surround the award of the V.C. to Trooper Hardham for his heroic rescue of another wounded mate. The New Zealanders, it was emphasized, looked after each other — a fiercely loyal team.

There were two other attributes often noted that marked the New Zealanders out as true gentlemen. First, they were modest. After ten days in the field, the first contingent displayed some 'gallant conduct' which brought special compliments from General French. J. A. Shand, the newspaper correspondent reported: 'Officer and men might well have been excused had they made much of their engagement and been guilty of a little boasting. . . . But beyond a chaffing reference to the hot corner in which they found themselves . . . the matter was scarcely referred to, and not the slightest pretension was made to magnify the danger or indulge in self-glorification.'²³ As for Madocks himself, the earlier description of him as 'an unassuming, mild-mannered, courteous gentleman' received support from the London *Times*, no less, whose report was quoted in the New Zealand papers: Madocks was a 'man of gentle disposition, but brave as he is modest, and every inch a soldier'.²⁴ A tiger on the field, a modest gentleman off it: the image is recognizable.

Second, as gentlemen the New Zealanders were said to be well-behaved. The New Zealand correspondent in South Africa reported that he was dining in Capetown when a stranger entered and remarked: "'Look at those Yeomanry. They are behaving simply like children, whilst over there are several of the New Zealand men who are setting everyone an example in good manners.'" I was naturally pleased at this tribute to the good behaviour of our boys.'²⁵ Speaking in 1902 at the unveiling of a memorial tablet to those who had fallen in South Africa, Seddon suggested that it was some consolation to the parents that all the

21 AJHR, 1902, H-6c, p.278.

22 ODT, 23 February 1900.

23 ODT, 23 January 1900.

24 ODT, 30 March 1900.

25 ODT, 9 April 1900.

boys would have gone to heaven. And why? — 'they have been taught at their mother's knee to say their evening prayer . . . they have been good young men; and when they were called they were prepared therefor.'²⁶

As Seddon implied, to be a well-mannered gentleman was to be a family man. What had Gourley mumbled as he lapsed into unconsciousness? His thoughts wandered back to his happy southern home and he spoke 'Father'. This was presented not as an army of footloose drifters, but respectable men only temporarily absent from their family duties. When later in the campaign, the New Zealanders were faced with the unpleasant task of rounding up Boer women and children, much was made of the chivalrous and gentle manner in which they did it.

The New Zealand male, as seen on the trek in South Africa, was a gentleman of the bush, combining pioneer attributes of strength and determination, of versatility and egalitarian mateship, with the moral qualities of the English public school gentleman.

The sixth of March 1906 witnessed another huge public event in New Zealand. This time it was an arrival not a departure, the homecoming of the 1905 All Blacks. The good ship *Sonoma* carrying the conquering heroes first dropped anchor in Auckland at two o'clock in the afternoon. The health officer went out by lighter to clear the boat, but he was accompanied by Premier Seddon who, neglecting official duties in Wellington, had travelled north to welcome the All Blacks home. Around the anchored vessel ferries circled packed with enthusiasts who cheered every time they caught sight of the players. When the footballers reached the wharf there was an enthusiastic crowd of 10,000 to greet them, and more continuous cheering marked their triumphal procession from the wharf to the hotel. At five o'clock there was a civic reception before some 6,000 people, and that evening there was a formal banquet attended by the Premier and William Massey. Nor did the cheering stop there. Throughout the country crowds thronged to railway stations, and local dignitaries rose to pay their respects. The *Evening Post* claimed that to find a parallel one had to go back to the days of the South African war and the multitudes that acclaimed the returning contingents. Even before their arrival Gordon & Gotch were advertising a book, *Why the 'All Blacks' Triumphed*. One man suggested that a painting of the victory over England should hang in Parliament Buildings. Instead a postcard was issued showing a Moa shaking the British Lion by the neck.²⁷

Seddon's role in the welcome was no accident for as the *Evening Post* complained he had already added the 'Minister of Football' to his other titles. Never naive enough to believe that politics and sport should not mix, he was always ready to identify himself with the nation's successful manhood. He had been present at the departure of all the contingents who left for South Africa; he had even stopped off at the Cape Province

26 *In Memory of New Zealand Sons Fallen in South Africa*, Wellington, 1902, p.8.

27 *Evening Post*, 7 March 1906.

to visit the troopers; and his support for the 1905 All Blacks increased with their sporting success. From the first game he arranged that the results should be cabled from Agent-General Reeves to his office, and from there the score was placarded in the window of local newspapers. For the Welsh match the government made more complex arrangements. The telegraph office was opened half-an-hour early, at 9 a.m. instead of 9.30 a.m., and a system of flags was devised. If New Zealand won, the New Zealand Ensign was to fly from town halls and post offices; if Wales won, the Union Jack was to be hoisted; and a draw would be signalled by a white flag and a red centre.²⁸ The early victories encouraged Seddon to telegram the *Daily Mail* explaining the team's success,²⁹ and victory over England drew from him a congratulatory telegram to the team itself. As the tour ended one wag in the team suggested that Seddon was offering each member 300 acres of King Country land.³⁰ The joke was only half-wrong, for on 29 December the Premier cabled the team offering them a jaunt at the taxpayers' expense through Canada and the United States. This American 'picnic', as it was called, went ahead including trips on the Santa Fe Railway and to the Grand Canyon. Seddon was right of course to recognize that rugby football was more than a game; for as the team manager, George Dixon, commented on receiving Seddon's telegram after the English match, rugby 'represents the manhood and virility of the colony'.³¹

The image of the conquering All Blacks as expressed in newspapers and the several popular books on the tour bore a close resemblance to the image of the Boer War troopers, and indeed the comparison was frequently made. A rural pioneering background had produced superior footballers as well as outstanding troops. The New Zealanders were tough and strong, heavy and quick. After the team's eighth match against Hartlepool which they won 63 points to nil and which raised their total points to 310 (against 7 by the English teams), the *Daily Mail* writer, whose reports were reprinted in New Zealand, observed that 'with every muscle taut, teeth clenched, and eyes aglow, they are desperately hard men to stop', and went on to ask: 'Is the colonial born and bred on a higher mental and physical scale nowadays as compared with that at home?' To this question Seddon answered by telegram: 'The natural and healthy conditions of colonial life produce the stalwart and athletic sons of whom New Zealand may be justly proud.' Reeves, who was no less quick than the Premier to exploit the situation and began to travel around with the team in the hope of attracting migrants to New Zealand, had a whole list of reasons for the team's success: shorter working hours, a high standard of living, universal education, protection for women and

28 *Evening Post*, 16 December 1905.

29 *Why the 'All Blacks' Triumphed*, London, 1906, p.33.

30 *Evening Post*, 6 February 1906.

31 *Why the 'All Blacks' Triumphed*, p.36.

children — the standard emigration propaganda; but he placed special emphasis on two factors: the 'brisk, breezy and bracing climate' and the small size of the cities.³² The outdoor life had given the New Zealanders muscle of 'better quality' as well as 'mere quantity'. It had made them full of pluck, determination and zeal. Oxo began to use the All Blacks in their advertisements under the slogan 'New Zeal-and Energy'.³³

Second, like the New Zealanders in the South African war, the New Zealand footballer was credited with the quality which the *Evening Post* correspondent said 'may be summed up in the word "versatility"'. That paper quoted several foreign publications to this effect: the *Athletic News* declared that 'the adaptability of the colonial is really their greatest value'; the *Daily Mail*, that 'the men are opportunists in the best sense of the word, and red tape is entirely absent from their methods';³⁴ and R. G. T. Coventry, writing in *Why the 'All Blacks' Triumphed*, claimed: 'The colonies are the home of broad-mindedness and scorn of convention, as also of dash and hardihood, as evidenced by the doings of their sons in the late South African War.'³⁵

But, again as in the Boer war, the pioneering initiative of the New Zealanders is not seen as implying lack of discipline, or even as implying individual brilliance. There is an insistence upon the combination, the teamwork of the All Blacks and this in turn is said to reflect a spirit of egalitarian comradeship. In *Why the 'All Blacks' Triumphed*, E. W. Taylor attributed the team's results to 'the unselfish manner in which they play to each other', and J. A. Buttery agreed that this perfect understanding in the field was but a reflection of the comradeship off it — 'What strikes me most about the "All Blacks", apart from their homogeneity on the field, is their comradeship in private life.'³⁶ When the team arrived back, Mr Hall-Jones, the Minister for Public Works, singled out as an example of rugby's finer qualities the fact that Wallace had stayed behind in America to look after his sick mate, Roberts.³⁷ It was Trooper Hughes going back to tend Sergeant Gourley again.

For British commentators the apparent classlessness of the team was a source of fascination. They thought of rugby as a gentleman's game associated with individual brilliance. The combination and teamwork of the New Zealanders were more akin to a professional game. Yet unlike soccer players, and even more unlike the Northern Rugby League, the New Zealanders were not hired men. Like the army in South Africa they

32 *ibid.*, pp.32, 33. On New Zealand's rural mythology, see Miles Fairburn, 'The Rural Myth and the New Urban Frontier: an Approach to New Zealand Social History 1870-1940', *NZJH*, IX, 1 (April 1975), pp.3-21.

33 *Evening Post*, 30 December 1905. The advertisement appeared in *Why the 'All Blacks' Triumphed*, p.5.

34 *Evening Post*, 24 November 1905; 8 December 1905.

35 *Why the 'All Blacks' Triumphed*, p.25.

36 *ibid.*, pp.37, 35.

37 *Evening Post*, 10 March 1906.

were volunteers, amateurs who played for love of their country and not for money (although it is interesting that six of the team eventually transferred to league). The captain, David Gallaher, like the colonial officers in South Africa (he had himself been a corporal in the sixth contingent) led by example from the front — he was a forward. He was a quiet leader, one of the boys, who expressed his values perfectly in the statement: 'We reckon that every man of the fifteen has had a hand in every try.'³⁸

After Gallaher's death in the trenches of France, it was written: 'Dave Gallaher was one of nature's gentlemen. There was not a bombastic word in his unassuming recital of the principal battles the New Zealanders had fought on that record-breaking tour.'³⁹ Again it could be Captain Madocks. The pattern is the same: a fine leader on the field, but quiet and modest off it. Like the troopers, the All Blacks were described as having gentlemanly virtues to go with their pioneering strength. Their modesty became a legend. 'The London public', wrote the *Evening Post* correspondent, 'evidently like the quiet style of the colonials.'⁴⁰ When the team returned to the applause of a people who were anything but modest, the fear arose that the reception might 'unsettle the men'. The *Evening Post*, however, was reassuring. The men would return 'to the ordinary bannerless life of every day with a new zest', for 'it is not on record that the fetes and the flattery to which they have been subjected have turned their heads in any degree.'⁴¹

In every other respect, too, as the newspaper, team manager and the Premier himself assured the public, the All Blacks, like the troopers, had behaved like gentlemen. Indeed in his welcoming speech, Seddon, after declaring that the Welsh game was not 'morally' a defeat since Dean's famous 'try' had been unfairly disallowed, proceeded immediately to congratulate the men on their gentlemanly behaviour. The captain of the ship, Seddon said, 'had never met a large body of young men who were so well conducted. Even on the last night aboard there was nothing to take exception to.' The *Evening Post* agreed that far more pleasing than the sporting results of the tour was 'the uniformly sedate and manly conduct of the men' and contrasted their sportsmanlike acceptance of the Welsh defeat with the pronouncement of the Minister of Football, Richard Seddon.⁴²

Newspaper and politicians chose to interpret the All Blacks' successes in 1905 in very similar terms to their descriptions of the troopers' performances in South Africa. They saw in these foreign triumphs an image of

38 *Why the 'All Blacks' Triumphed*, p.35.

39 Roger Dansey, ed. *Special Souvenir: All Blacks in England, Ireland and Wales*, London, 1924, p.22.

40 *Evening Post*, 16 December 1905.

41 *ibid.*, 9 March 1906.

42 *ibid.*, 7 March 1906.

New Zealand manhood, whose pioneering origins were seen as making him physically stronger, tougher and more adaptable than Englishmen. He was regarded as part of an egalitarian band of comrades led by example not class position; and he was a gentleman, modest, well-mannered and unselfishly ready to serve his country. What is revealing is that these were not by any means the most obvious explanations for the All Blacks' successes. There were other factors that were undoubtedly more significant, but barely mentioned. For a start, and this is an old All Black trick, the New Zealanders arrived early in the season when the English were far from match fit. The huge victories that established their name came in the opening matches, all played before mid-October, and the teams they played there were small geographical units and club teams that could hardly have been expected to test a national side. Further, the English teams, particularly in the north, had been enormously weakened by the secession of players to the recently established professional game, Northern League. What was left in England was a group of ex-public schoolboys. When the team reached Wales in December, where rugby was still a sport of the masses and where teams were match-hard, the results were far from impressive. They lost to Wales, and almost lost to Cardiff and Swansea, in all scoring only 29 points to 17 (as against 801 to 22 in England). But these Welsh results were not allowed to threaten sacred beliefs about New Zealand manhood. The explanations were in terms of tiredness at the end of an arduous tour, and, of course, unfair Welsh refereeing.

One obvious reason for the All Black success was the fact that unlike the British players, the New Zealanders adopted specialized positions in the team. They took the field as wing-forwards or five-eighths, not just as forwards or backs. But this factor was not given great prominence for it did not fit with the national self-definition. That of course is the point. People chose to interpret the behaviour of New Zealand heroes overseas whether All Blacks or Troopers within an established framework, a set of images about the New Zealand male which they wanted to believe. Essentially that set of images, that stereotype, remained much the same for the next sixty years or so. Whether it was the First or Second World Wars, whether the 1924 or the 1963 All Black tours, New Zealand male success overseas was interpreted in terms of this stereotype of the gentleman pioneer, the natural aristocrat of the backblocks. There were, it is true, slight developments in the legend. As the infantry of the two world wars replaced the horsemen of the Boer War as carriers of the nation's military prowess, and as the forwards replaced the backs as pre-eminent All Blacks heroes, so there was a greater emphasis on sheer footslogging strength and toughness. As the pioneering nature of the country became ever more mythical, so the football and war heroes became more exaggerated versions of the backblocks male. The 1924 All Blacks were presented in their souvenir programme in this way: 'As showing the zeal which infuses the blood of the sons of the Southern seas, the players frequently ride miles on horseback, fording rivers, and crossing mountains,

to play in the back-blocks rugby match.’⁴³ Charlie Upham, that pathologically modest hero of the Second World War, and Colin Meads, the undoubted hero of post-war rugby, were each seen as giants of the back country life.⁴⁴ It is also true that as time went on, there was a limited recognition of another unofficial legend which co-existed alongside the official legend — the myth of the hard-living man off the field. But this myth never achieved official recognition for reasons which will become obvious. In essence the image of the New Zealand male in war and rugby remained very static: from Captain Madocks to Graham Mourie there is a clear line of continuity.

This stereotype was not simply a matter of media heroes. It was a whole value system. During the years at the turn of the century when the Boer War and the 1905 Tour established heroic models for young New Zealand males, they were being indoctrinated in the ideology in more immediate ways. This was the period when rugby, begun as a voluntary leisure activity of adolescents, became a compulsory activity in schools throughout the country. Programmes of physical education were instituted under the encouragement of George Hogben, Inspector-General of Schools 1899–1916, the school cadet forces became reorganized after the investigation of 1902. Boy Scouts followed in 1908. Young New Zealand males found themselves inevitably dressing up in uniforms and learning the values of physical toughness, bravery and teamwork. What they learnt on the parade or play-ground was reinforced by their reading in class and home. In 1907 the *School Journal* emerged and its pages were filled with role models — Britain’s pantheon of military or naval heroes and explorers. At home boys were encouraged to read *Boys Own*, *Chums* and the boys annuals which began to appear. There was even a growing number of pioneering stories from New Zealand to strengthen the values of physical toughness, comradeship, heroic self-sacrifice and modest gentlemanly conduct. At school, at home, in the pages of the press, New Zealand males were fed one diet.

Why did this value system arise so powerfully in New Zealand at this time and remain so pervasive a social force? One point is obvious. The stereotype of the New Zealand male emerged in the context of an imperial war and it continued to turn out New Zealand men willing to die in England’s wars. The spirit with which New Zealand men left for the Boer War may be well summed up in a pamphlet written in memory of the fallen in 1902: ‘Twenty five years ago the people of Great Britain thought little of Imperialism, as we understand it now. Now, however, it has developed into an Imperialism which is the most remarkable feature of our time, and which readily seeks to take up the “Burden of Empire”.’⁴⁵

43 Dansey, *Special Souvenir*, p.34.

44 See especially Alex Veysey, *Colin Meads, All Black*, Wellington, 1974, and K. C. Sandford, *Mark of the Lion*, Wellington, 1962.

45 *In memory of New Zealand’s sons*, p.5.

Several factors added to the power of this imperial call. One was a renewed consciousness that in New Zealand's hour of need, the New Zealand Wars, the British had come to the colony's aid, and now was the time to repay the debt; the other was an interesting generational undercurrent. Most of the troopers were New Zealand-born (indeed originally it was hoped they would all be so). Many of their parents, immigrants perhaps of the 1870s, must have been English-born, and there was a certain anxiety as to whether the sons would respond to England's call. This adds a deep poignancy to the constant imagery of sons going off to fight for the motherland. An Otaki poet wrote in a typical piece of the time:

Oh, mother, they are calling
 Our bravest boys are falling,
 I have heard the war-note blaring o'er the sea;
 My heart is almost bursting
 With a-hungring and a-thirsting
 (I learned to love Old England on your knee) . . .
 While yet a little breastling
 Pressed against your gently nestling
 I was nurtured in the spirit of our breed.⁴⁶

Going off in this spirit to fight for the motherland, it was hardly surprising that the stereotype which emerged from the Boer War was of the perfect soldier of Empire. But it is true also of the rugby mythology. New Zealanders had no doubt that rugby-playing was, as Thomas Ellison said, 'a soldier-making game'.⁴⁷ Indeed in rugby circles there was special pride that Lieutenant Hardham and Captain Coutts, the only two New Zealanders in South Africa to win the V.C. and Queen's scarf for gallantry respectively, were both prominent footballers. Gallaher had been a corporal in South Africa, and after his death at Passchendaele he was held up in the 1924 souvenir booklet as one who 'bore himself in the days of the Empire's crucial test just as he had done on the Rugby field'.⁴⁸

At the turn of the century this sense of imperial responsibility contained a strong racial content. Seddon was quite clear that the Boer War was part of a contest for racial supremacy, and his speeches were full of hopes that the troopers would maintain the traditions of the race.⁴⁹ He clearly included the Americans in his sense of the Anglo-Saxon community: hence his enthusiasm to send the All Blacks through North America as a way of displaying to the white world New Zealand's superior manhood. It is also interesting that the term 'Rough Riders' was the name of Theodore Roosevelt's brigade in America's 'splendid little war' against the Spaniards. Although this vision of a world contest between the races was social Darwinist in origin, there was an en-

46 [Hawden], *New Zealanders and the Boer War*, p.100.

47 Thomas R. Ellison, *The Art of Rugby Football*, Wellington, 1902, p.80.

48 Dansey, *Special Souvenir*, p.22.

49 E.g. ODT, 26 March 1900.

vironmental element. The fear was commonly expressed, throughout the Empire, and especially in England, that racial fitness might be slipping away in the soft materialism and decadence of urban life.

It was this imperial fear, a fear that lasted right through until the Second World War, which gave a special meaning to the role of colonial men on battlefield and rugby ground. For it enabled colonials to interpret their rural and provincial character not as a mark of inferiority but as an attribute. Less tainted by urban decadence and imbued with a pioneering spirit, they had a mission to uphold the virile yeoman traditions of the Anglo-Saxon race. The Boer War produced Kipling's famous poem, 'The Islanders', in which he spoke of the English people

Long did ye wake in quiet and long lie down at ease

. . . Ye fawned on the Younger Nations for the men who could shoot and ride.

The 1905 Tour produced from the *Daily Telegraph* a comment that the superbly good physique and health of the colonial testified 'to a great historical and ethnological fact'. In the open-air conditions of the colonies the transplanted Britisher was made better.⁵⁰ Such comments were made of course by Englishmen. The English perspective was crucial in creating the New Zealand male stereotype. Much of the comment on the success of the troopers and the All Blacks which appeared in the New Zealand press derived from English sources. In the Boer War it came from English officers and English newspaper reports. In the 1905 tour English descriptions of the games were widely reprinted, and the Gordon & Gotch volume *Why the 'All Blacks' Triumphed* consisted largely of the *Daily Mail* reports. New Zealanders, in other words, conceived a stereotype about their males partly through the eyes of upper-class Englishmen. These Englishmen had normally attended an English public school, and as J. A. Mangan, Bruce Haley, David Newsome and other recent writers about the nineteenth-century public school have indicated, the public school contained a distinct male ethic — an ethic of physical hardness, of courage, of repression, of loyalty to chums and of gentlemanly self-sacrifice.⁵¹ Such qualities were believed essential if decadence was to be avoided and imperial duties effectively carried out. Trained in these values, English upper-class commentators saw in New Zealand footballers or soldiers valuable members of the Anglo-Saxon breed. They were perhaps rather affronted at the egalitarian spirit of the colonials, who in turn claimed to be 'natural gentlemen' and therefore much superior to the class-based English variety. Yet the English were quite open, if a little condescending, in their praise of New Zealand men.

⁵⁰ Quoted in *Evening Post*, 18 November 1905. See also *Evening Post*, 20 January 1906, for similar comments in the *Spectator*.

⁵¹ J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, Cambridge, 1981; Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1978; David Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning: Four studies on a Victorian ideal*, London, 1961.

It has often been said that part of the mystique of rugby and war in the New Zealand cosmos derived from the fact that in these enterprises New Zealand established its name in the world. Utter rubbish of course — few people outside Britain have heard of Twickenham, or even of Gallipoli. In America, the home of our Anglo-Saxon brothers, the recent film of 'Gallipoli' was advertized as 'From a place you have never heard of . . .'. At Gallipoli and Twickenham New Zealand's male triumphs did not win attention in the eyes of the world but merely in the eyes of the British ruling class. That was enough, however. New Zealanders came to think of their male heroes partly in terms of English public school values. The language of the reports from both Boer and First World Wars was in the chivalrous language so perfectly described by Paul Fussell and Mark Girouard, with words like 'gallant' and 'valour' common.⁵² The stereotype was of loyal servants of the Empire, so the applause of the imperial masters was recognition indeed.

Imperialism, then, partly explains the origins and function of the New Zealand male stereotype in war and rugby. But there were domestic concerns. The fear of decadence and effeminacy, for example, while it had an imperial context, also had local roots. As New Zealand society settled down at the end of the nineteenth century, as the sex ratio evened up, and as respectable society launched a moral campaign against the male culture of the frontier, so anxieties emerged that New Zealand men too might become soft. Embedded in domestic responsibilities and the materialistic comfort of the city, New Zealand males might lose their virile pioneering spirit. In 1901, for example, the *Auckland Weekly News* filled its Christmas edition with photos of pioneering experiences, and commented that 'there is warrior blood in the veins of the pioneer settlers . . . theirs is not the life of ease and comfort . . . theirs the blood and spirit to live in the land and hold it when luxury has sapped the virility of the city-bred'.⁵³ As for the city-bred themselves, they too appear to have had some concern about their own virility. How else does one explain the large number of advertisements that began to appear in New Zealand newspapers at the beginning of the century for patented devices to restore men's flagging virility? There was the Freeman & Wallace Electro-Medical treatment, the ads for which screamed out, 'Have you no manly vigour? Have you no vital energy?' and promised a cure for 'Failing Manhood'. There was Messrs B. Hamilton & Co.'s 'Fair Offer to Weak Men', an offer of free advice to 'men who have wasted the exhilarating spirit of young manhood'. Most prominent of all were the elaborately illustrated advertisements for Dr. McLoughlin's Electric Belt. Beneath a drawing of a muscular he-man would appear a message such as: 'To be strong is the aim of all men . . . when you replace the

⁵² Paul Fussell, *The Great War and the Modern Memory*, New York, 1975; Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English gentleman*, New Haven, 1981.

⁵³ *Auckland Weekly News*, Christmas edition 1901.

Electricity in your weakened nerves and organs, you will regain the full vigour of your manhood. Thousands of men acting upon this theory are now restored and are what Nature intended them — strong and vigorous specimens of manly power.’⁵⁴

If the *Evening Post*'s readers wanted alternative reassurance for their virility, then they had only to turn over the page to the descriptions of the heroic triumphs of the 1905 All Blacks. Vicariously at least, New Zealand men could find a cure for failing manhood in the country's rugby prowess. When the team arrived back in Wellington, the Mayor T. W. Hislop offered them special congratulations, 'Under the luxurious circumstances in which modern society existed,' he said, 'there was always a temptation or tendency to become effeminate and give up those manly exercises which had done so much to make the British people what they were.'⁵⁵ Some six years earlier, when New Zealand first offered troops for South Africa, the *New Zealand Herald* welcomed the news with the comment: 'It would be a bad thing for the world as a whole were war to be abolished. . . . We should lose our virility, and sink into unhonoured ease and sloth. . . .' ⁵⁶ As New Zealand society became more urban and more prosperous over the next fifty years, so it seemed our male heroes had to become ever more brazen images of muscular manhood to reassure the urban effetes and decadents.

From its origins in the English public school, rugby had always been seen as a means of strengthening 'manliness', but as Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard, the leading social historians of the game, explain, it was to be a manliness 'tempered by "civilizing" restraints'.⁵⁷ These restraints were central. For while many people in New Zealand wanted to uphold manliness, the respectable had considerable ambivalence about much male culture, whether the culture of the frontier or of city streets. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, the strong male culture created by the colony's large surplus of men had worried many middleclass people, who worked hard to civilize and restrain it.⁵⁸ The itineracy, the violence, the drunkenness, the swearing and the general social disorder produced by both frontier males and urban larrikins had been a constant concern. Rugby had been initially encouraged in the English public school as a way of controlling disorder, of directing riotous behaviour into acceptable channels. But in its early years that does not appear to be the case in New Zealand. In fact the reverse was true. There was much criticism of rugby in the papers for inviting violence, rowdiness and drunken celebra-

⁵⁴ *Evening Post*, 27 May, 18 May 1905.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 10 March 1906.

⁵⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 14 October 1899.

⁵⁷ Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard, *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players*, Oxford, 1979, p.85.

⁵⁸ Jock Phillips, 'Mummy's Boys: Pakeha Men and Male Culture in New Zealand', in Phillida Bunkle and Beryl Hughes, eds., *Women in New Zealand Society*, Auckland, 1980, pp.217-43.

tions. The game was seen as encouraging, not containing, a crude male culture. The *New Zealand Herald* wrote in 1878: 'Bull-baiting and cock-fighting have more to commend them as recreations than the rough-and-tumble hoodlum amusement yclept football which our youths seem to take so much delight in.'⁵⁹ Even in 1889 the Rugby Football Union complained that the game had a bad name and was condemned because 'it is brutal, it is coarse, it is not scientific'.⁶⁰

By the turn of the century, however, the situation was different. The most objectionable feature of the game, hacking (kicking people's shins), had been eliminated and the passing game began to replace endless forward tussles. The rules and the size of the team had become standardized, and referees were armed with a whistle. Then in 1892 the New Zealand Rugby Union was formed. Seven of the 26 clauses in the draft constitution of the Union dealt with disciplinary procedures to curb rough play and there was also a clause to discourage lavish smoke concerts after the game. By the turn of the century rugby had become transformed from a game only worthy of savages, as a coroner had described it in 1877, into a highly regulated ritual for gentlemen.⁶¹ The change can be seen in team photos — uniforms become more regular, poses more disciplined. On the rugby field males could keep alive manly virtues, but within a controlled environment.

The same was true of the parade-ground. There, too, dressed in a uniform and disciplined, men could exercise physical strength and courage in a socially acceptable way. What had happened was that the male culture of the English public school, with its values of physical hardiness, but also sportsmanship, self-sacrifice and gentlemanly conduct, was promoted as an alternative to the undisciplined male culture of the streets and the frontier. What was retained from the past were the pioneer traits of physical strength and adaptability, but what was firmly rejected were other traits of our pioneers — their drunken sprees, their swearing. To set up Boer War troopers and All Blacks as male heroes and models was to redirect New Zealand male aspirations in a healthy direction. Social control, in other words, became a central motivation for the New Zealand stereotype. On the rugby-ground, larrikins would get rid of adolescent energies and learn gentlemanly virtues. It was claimed that rugby, like Cadets, provided moral discipline. The Chairman of the Southern Club in 1904 argued that the success of the club team was in itself 'evidence of a clean life'.⁶² Cleanliness, of course, meant in particular sexual repression, and the relationship between organized physical activity and sexuality was quite openly acknowledged at the turn

⁵⁹ Quoted in A. C. Swan, *History of New Zealand Rugby Football 1870-1945*, Wellington, 1948, p.76.

⁶⁰ *Wellington Rugby Football Union Annual*, 1888, p.59.

⁶¹ Swan, *History of New Zealand Rugby Football*, p.70.

⁶² A. R. Lawry, *From Inauguration to Premiers: A souvenir to the Southern Football Club*, Dunedin, 1905, p.155.

of the century. Take for example H. W. Bishop's claim in 1906 that 'strong physical exercise is one of the greatest safeguards' against sexual degeneration.⁶³

This social control function, the setting up of respectable male role models, explains the public insistence that the troopers and the All Blacks were gentlemen and respectable family men. For on the surface they were a band of itinerant males and hence there was a special sensitivity to any suggestion of loutishness. In the Boer War, as we have seen, much pride was taken in the troops' good behaviour and their chivalry towards women, and it was insisted that despite the egalitarian spirit of the officers, there was no lack of discipline. Any suggestions of bad behaviour were simply repressed. For example, while in 1900 the newspapers were prepared to report the commander's insistence that when the troops stepped off at Albany there be no 'breaches of discipline, bad language, or any irregularities', they were less forthcoming about the last two contingents when they visited Sydney. The only report was a note that the troopship was delayed because some troopers were late returning, and then a brief cable that seven of them actually missed the ship. Nothing more was said.⁶⁴ The same repression of news about ungentlemanly conduct occurred in 1915 when the *Evening Post* in an editorial criticized other papers for publishing accounts of 'alleged misbehaviour' by New Zealand troops (presumably the Cairo riots);⁶⁵ and the following year, as Maureen Sharpe showed in her thesis on ANZAC Day, the Reverend Alexander Gow was forced to resign from his Presbyterian Church in Waikato after reading an article from the pulpit accusing the main body of troops of rushing into vice when they arrived at Cairo.⁶⁶ Nothing could be allowed to disturb the image of the disciplined and gentlemanly New Zealand soldier.

Even before the 1905 All Black tour began, the Taranaki Union had suggested 'that the captain of the New Zealand team be a steady man and one who will be able to keep the men well in hand in order that the prestige of New Zealand, as regards behaviour as well as skill, may be retained'.⁶⁷ As we have seen, there was universal praise for their modest gentlemanly behaviour off the field, but there was criticism from English and Welsh quarters about their unfair and unsporting behaviour on the field. In particular the use of Gallaher in the wing forward position, a position not known in England, was regarded as obstructive, against the rules, and even 'dirty'. To such accusations of ungentlemanly conduct, the New Zealanders reacted with affronted innocence. It was claimed special efforts had been made to select 'clean' players for the tour, and to

63 AJHR, 1906, E-3B, p.7.

64 ODT, 23 April 1900, 8 February 1901.

65 *Evening Post*, 15 May 1915.

66 Maureen Sharpe, 'Anzac Day in New Zealand 1916-1939: Attitudes to Peace and War', M.A. thesis, University of Auckland, 1981, p.24.

67 Swan, *History of New Zealand Rugby Football*, p.711.

accuse Gallaher, one of 'Nature's gentlemen', of 'dirt' was sacrilege indeed.⁶⁸ So began a tradition, repeated on subsequent tours of England, when All Blacks were sent off the field or accused of dirty play. The New Zealanders would instantly deny the charge and rush to defend the virtue of their maligned hero. One thinks in particular of Cyril Brownlie in 1924 and Colin Meads in 1967: both sent off in international matches. Playing before a British audience, New Zealanders were specially keen to retain their image as fair-minded modest gentlemen.

The social control function of the rugby/war male stereotype also had some economic implications. It has been suggested that the image of disciplined determination and teamwork of New Zealand troops and All Blacks provided a model of behaviour for the capitalist world,⁶⁹ and there is much in this. From the turn of the century, many people justified organized games and cadets in terms of a training for life. The economic world was a tough competitive battle, and only the most determined would win. Rugby and war helped sharpen the necessary virtues. The famous football song, 'On the Ball', which was in wide use by 1905 concluded:

This life's but a scrummage we cannot get through
 But with many a kick and blow,
 And then to the end, though we dodge and we fend,
 Still, that sure collar, 'Death' takes us low.

Others emphasized that rugby and war trained individuals in teamwork and co-operation, and it is tempting to see such a training as perfectly fitting New Zealand boys for the larger organizations of twentieth-century New Zealand life. Loyalty to the team would inspire loyalty to the firm. If one looks at the image of New Zealand men in 1900 and 1905 there is considerable emphasis on the disciplined cohesion of the New Zealand troops and much praise for the scientific combination of the All Blacks. Indeed in 1905 some English commentators used distinctly industrial images. J. A. Buttery talked of the All Blacks as 'a complex, highly polished mechanism, composed of a number of interchangeable units'. Their victories were explained as a result of 'systematic' and 'scientific' methods.⁷⁰ Yet little is made of the All Blacks' use of specialized positions, which might have been seen as a perfect model for the modern division of labour; and the insistence on sheer physical strength and pioneer adaptability looks backward to a frontier past rather than forwards to an organized urban future. Further, both the heroism and comradeship of the rugby ground and the battle-field were frequently praised precisely because they rose above the sordid commercial world of everyday life. The New Zealand Cadets' marching song reprinted in the *School Journal* in 1908 ran

68 *Evening Post*, 10 June 1905.

69 Erik Olssen, 'Towards a New Society', in W. H. Oliver with Bridget Williams, eds., *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Wellington, 1981, p.278.

70 *Why the 'All Blacks' Triumphed*, p.80.

Let others fight for gold or fame
 In anger or defiance
 We seek a higher, nobler aim,
 Defence and self-reliance.

Or, as the *School Journal* wrote in June 1916, 'wealth is as nothing without brave self-sacrificing men and women'.⁷¹ The material world was a selfish world, whereas fighting, if not rugby playing, involved social service.

It is too crude therefore to interpret the male mythology, which emerged out of rugby and war in twentieth-century New Zealand, as simply an ideological support and training for the capitalist world. Clearly some of the values of that mythology — the emphasis on determination, on teamwork, on gentlemanly discipline and good behaviour — were perfectly suited to the values of a capitalist society. But these virtues were also functional for other purposes — the general maintenance of order and social control, and for service in Britain's imperial armies. Indeed the values of courage, physical strength, and self-sacrifice suggest that it was imperialism, rather than capitalism, which was the dominant force.

There is one final role which this male stereotype in rugby and war played in New Zealand society during the twentieth century. It served as a way of maintaining certain important fictions about New Zealand, and so disguised tensions and conflicts that New Zealanders have preferred not to examine. Through rugby and war heroes, we have maintained our identity as a pioneering rural society during a period when we were becoming increasingly urban. Rugby and war were also idealized as classless arenas. The troopers and the 1905 team were presented as egalitarian bands of brothers. Sarah Hawden wrote of the Boer War: 'If this sending forth of sons and daughters to the scene of war does nothing else for New Zealand, it will have done much in drawing together the hearts of all classes . . . all sorts and conditions of men, learning to understand each other and know the worth of each simply as man to man.'⁷² The *School Journal* claimed in 1929 that in the trenches of the Great War 'all distinctions of class and creed were cast aside, and men were judged by their many qualities alone'.⁷³ The same was held to be true of rugby. Daniel McKenzie wrote in 1905: 'All grades of opinion from the university professor to the navy, the socialist, the freethinker, aye, any class of religious thought — Roman Catholic or Protestant — the black man, the brown man, and the white man have all one common place on the football field. What they are or who they are doesn't matter — it's their abilities as players that count.'⁷⁴ Through the mythology of rugby and war, New Zealanders kept alive their image as a classless

71 *School Journal*, November 1908, p.334; *ibid.*, June 1916, p.139.

72 [Hawden], *New Zealanders and the Boer War*, p.19.

73 *School Journal*, November 1929, p.293.

74 Daniel McKenzie, *Rugby Football in Wellington and Wairarapa, 1868-1910*, Wellington, 1911, p.22.

society, and they were able to avoid confronting the growing class divisions within their society.

Thirdly, as McKenzie implies, on the rugby field divisions of religion, and even more of race, were overcome. The myth of the racially harmonious society found support in the role which George Nepia or Waka Nathan have played in All Black teams; and this was even more true of the battlefield. In the Boer War, despite the keenness of some Kupapa tribes to volunteer, the British decreed it a white man's war, and Maori warriors had to be content with a visit to Edward VII's coronation. They did, however, bestow on each contingent a Maori war cry which was reportedly used in battle, just as the 1905 All Blacks won great notoriety with their haka. But subsequent wars, of course, did see Maoris fighting and dying in white men's wars, and a myth was established, as Maui Pomare said in 1916, that misunderstandings 'between the Pakeha and Maori [were] swept away forever [when] their blood commingled in the trenches of Gallipoli'.⁷⁵ Another conflict central to this society was disguised by the overarching mythology of the New Zealand male.

Finally, the legends of rugby-field and battlefield kept alive an image of New Zealand as a man's country. At a time when the sex ratio was becoming even, war and rugby became central to the national self-definition, and it was a definition which, while it included all classes and all races, did not include women. The national mythology remained powerfully patriarchal. These are huge issues, which invite deeper and longer examination. All that I claim in this essay is that the male mythology expressed in rugby and war is not a peripheral aspect of New Zealand history, but central to a whole range of experiences.

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⁷⁵ *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1916, 177, p.942.