

A Slice of Theatre Archaeology: Mulgan's For Love of Appin and Other Plays

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Abstract

[Mulgan](#)'s play, *For Love of Appin*, has been dubbed the first New Zealand play. This article examines the play and its historic context, offering the concept of theatre archaeology as a process for not only the play as an art work in its own right, but also as an artefact that speaks of the socio-cultural context in which it was made.

Ye say the past's dead? How can it be dead? ... It lives in my heart.

Mulgan: *For Love of Appin*

Introduction

[Mulgan](#)'s play, *For Love of Appin*, was first performed in 1920 as part of a concert to celebrate the anniversary of Walter Scott. A modest paragraph in the *Herald* advertised the evening and announced that it would include "the first production of a Scottish play by Alan E. Mulgan". It further explained: "The scene is laid in New Zealand but the theme is purely Scottish" (New Zealand Herald 1920).

It was published in 1922 in a pocket-sized book called *Three Plays of New Zealand*. In the preface to that book (Shelley, 1922) and subsequently (for example, Harcourt, 1978), it has been described as the first New Zealand play.

This article examines the grounds on which such a title is justified or unjustified, where it fits into our New Zealand history of theatre, and how it may be used as a reflective glass through which we might learn more about New Zealand's cultural past and through which we might gain different perspectives to view our present and emerging future.

The title introduces the concept of theatre archaeology. An archaeological dig might reveal fragments of bones and shards of pottery. To the casual eye, these might be little more than a pile of rubble. The archaeologist is able to relate such fragments to previously explored sites and to what else is known of the people and the period. So too, a short and dated play, like Mulgan's, may appear lustreless and uninteresting to casual readers. (They would need to be readers as it is unlikely the play would now be seen in live production.) However, when the play is placed within the context of its place in the history of New Zealand theatre, it yields a rich layer of information about the time in which it was written and the ways it differs from the theatre that preceded it. As we unpack the values embedded in the play and align them with the values of the time in which it was written, the process also potentially poses

interesting challenges to current conceptualisations of place, identity and understandings of what it means to be a New Zealander.

Not Really the First?

There was theatre in New Zealand before the production of Mulgan's play.

In the first instance, there was a long tradition of Maori performance arts. It can be said that Maori culture is a strongly performative one (Greenwood, 2002; Royal, 1998). Knowledge is recorded and transmitted in a range of art forms, including oratory, waiata, story-telling, carving and weaving. Significant events and encounters are enacted in ritual. The art of oratory actively utilises physicality and space. The marae with its meeting house and whare kai continuously performs an account of genealogy and of connections to people, the land, and what lies beyond. It is also the theatre in which other performance of haka, waiata, and oratory are performed. Maori performative arts pre-dated European contact, and continued during Mulgan's time, but possibly would have been irrelevant if not invisible to Europeans except for explicit performances in tourist locations such as Rotorua. Moreover, according to the perspectives of the time, Maori performative arts would not have been considered theatre.

Secondly, there was a succession of various colonial theatrical experiences. New Zealand had been part of the British Empire's travelling circuit of epic extravaganzas. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, British companies toured extravagant spectacles to South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Their plays typically used iconic New Zealand elements such as geysers, volcanoes, the Pink and White Terraces, moas, and marauding warriors. A New Zealand Herald preview of the 1870 touring show *Philo Maori or New Zealand As It Is* promised that "Real Maori are to be introduced, and go through the war dance and other such little arrangements as aboriginals are likely to" (cited in Greenwood, 2002). The intended audiences were Britons in England and British settlers in the colonies: an evening spent in the theatre watching erupting volcanoes, moas and tattooed warriors (whose war dances blended African, Maori and vaudeville styles) allowed colonial audiences to enjoy and affirm their role as masters of a richly coloured empire.

The practice of drawing on Maori folklore continued through the turn of the century. It is evident in works written by the New Zealand born Australian Arthur Adams, who wrote the libretto for Alfred Hill's cantata *Hinemoa*, his own comic opera *Tapu*, and *New Chums*, a play he described as "a light comedy of the Maori backblocks" (cited in Harcourt 1978). It is also a central element in the romantic comedy opera, *Marama*, written by Ribbands, who formed the words as he fought in European trenches during the Great War, and first performed shortly after the appearance of Mulgan's plays. For the most part, however, colonial writing tended to draw on British figures such as King Alfred, claiming their identification with the history and heroic legacy of the distant land they considered their 'home'.

In Britain during the First World War and immediately following it, the New Zealand army lads and their English friends were offered vaudeville representations of New Zealand, particularly Maoriland, with catchy lines such as the following: "He learned the Maori way to woo/ Married her in Oamaru/ Had some tamariki too" (cited in Harcourt 1978). Nostalgia rather than authenticity was a distinguishing feature.

In New Zealand, in the post war period, theatre came either from professional overseas touring companies who brought Shakespeare, or the latest musical companies, from amateur groups who 'got up' a Gilbert and Sullivan, or from local fundraising projects which would offer an evening's entertainment of short scenes from Shakespeare or British pantomime. University reviews, political lampoons and musical theatre all made popular appearances during the period between the wars. However, literary criticism continued to make clear distinctions between musical theatre, revues and the dramatic stage. While there were New Zealand poets, novelists and short story writers, there were no playwrights of acknowledged literary reputation.

Breaking New Ground

Mulgan stepped into the role of New Zealand playwright of acknowledged literary reputation. He was an established journalist, poet, novelist and critic, a recognised force in the New Zealand world of letters. His status within the established literary circles is no doubt a component of his nomination as first New Zealand playwright, as are the facts that his plays were written and produced (and since drama was considered a literary art both were important) in New Zealand, and that they were not revues or musical theatre. However, there are other significant ways in which his work broke new ground.

For Love of Appin, like the other two short plays in the published volume, is set in New Zealand: a New Zealand that represents the reality of daily life, not an artificial backdrop to a musical extravaganza. It relates a day in the life of a farming couple, Angus Buchan and Mrs Buchan, when they are interrupted by the arrival of a swagman, Stranger, looking for shelter as he travels in search of work. A fight breaks out as the husband and the swagman piece together their former relationship in Scotland and is finally resolved. *The Voice of the People* is a slightly satiric account of a small-time and somewhat myopic politician and his encounter with the woman to whom he proposes marriage, but who blackmails him into supporting the role of women in parliament. *The Daughter* is again set in a farm house. A surprise visit by an old friend makes the woman contrast the harshness of her farming life and the promise of her earlier student life. In a passionate outburst, she cries: "I read the other day of the fuss they were making about women playing football! Most unwomanly.... Let them come and see what some of us have to do.... I'd rather my daughter played football than that she drudged her life out as the wife of a poor dairy farmer."

As the above, brief summaries suggest, the characters are recognisable as New Zealanders and they have concerns that New Zealanders of the time would have recognised and in many cases shared.

For Love of Appin, in particular, captures the dilemma of colonial identity at that time: a sense of nostalgia for the home of origin – Britain – and an assertion of the new promises of a separate antipodean nationhood. In the opening moments Mrs Buchan and a neighbouring farmer, Harding, talk about Angus Buchan's homesickness. Harding suggests that Mrs Buchan will herself go back "Home" for a trip someday after she and her husband have made their pile. Angus later says: "I'm sore sick for home these days". Mrs Buchan, however, has few sentimental illusions about the country she left: "I was brought up one of a family of eight in two rooms, with father never earnin' more than twenty-five bob a week. Four of the eight died. It was the best day's work I ever did when I came out 'ere as an 'sisted himmigrant – the very best." At the end of the play, when the conflict between

Angus and the Stranger is resolved, Angus is still aching with the memory of the Scottish heather: “The heather! I mind it well. Mist on the mountains; patches of green; the white farm houses; and the heather.”¹ The Stranger suggests: “You know, tea-tree often reminds me of heather.² You get whiffs of it sometimes on sunny days, when you’re passing a hillside of it.”³ The comparison echoes Harding’s earlier statement that when he was back in England for two years, he had missed “the sight of a bit of burnt bush and the smell of tea-tree fire.”⁴ In the Stranger’s speech, however, while to an extent tea-tree replaces the heather, the replacement evokes a sense of loss: “Many a time when I’ve smelt it my heart has been sick for Appin” [a village in the Highlands].⁵ The play ends with Angus proposing a toast. “Well, here’s luck and may we both see Appin again soon.”⁶ For the men, Britain is still the centre of the world.⁷ For Mrs Buchan, the old country is as irrelevant as the old quarrels that had occurred there: “What does it matter what you two did in Scotland?⁸ You’re not in Scotland now; you’re in New Zealand, and yer oughter ’ave left yer quarrels be’ind yer.”⁹ The two view points in the marriage epitomise the split in the 1920s New Zealand psyche: a sense of being far from home yet beginning to realise that home could turn out to be here.

Search for Home in the Antipodes

The experience of the war and its aftermath left colonials across the British empire with a confused sense of belonging.¹⁰ Young men from the colonies answered the call to defend Britain and its empire.¹¹ They fought for year after year in mud-filled trenches; they watched their comrades die.¹² When they were on post-war leave in London they, or at least those who had officers rank or private money, could go to the theatre and enjoy many of the sophisticated pleasures of metropolitan life.¹³ They also had a chance to experience some of the things they or their parents had willingly left behind:¹⁴ rigid class structure, privilege and poverty.¹⁵ Mulgan has Mrs Buchan talk about the inequalities back “home”:¹⁶ “An’ I’ve got sense enough ter know that what makes this country much better to live in than England is that there ain’t no gentry on the one side, and poor touching their ’ats on the other; that there ain’t no lairds and tenants an’ deer forests.”¹⁷ Her husband further identifies the injustices that characterised English history: “Did his father not turn mine out of¹⁸ our farm to make room for their dammed deer, so that he and his London friends could have sport? Had we not been there for hundreds of years – Buchan after Buchan, and all followed the Lairds to battle?...Men were hellish cheap when put beside deer.”

For many New Zealanders, just as for Canadians and Australians, there had to be better outcomes to the horrors of the world war than a return to the injustices of the old world.¹⁹ With hesitation, in many cases, they began to gradually define their sense of belonging in terms of the new landscapes they now lived in and the future they might build in it. The Stranger tells Angus: “[My father] simply doesn’t understand and never will understand what is accepted out here as a matter of course – that all men have equal rights.”

Shelley, gunnery officer, Professor of Education at Canterbury University and editor of Mulgan’s volume of plays, wrote:²⁰ “The various human elements which go into the process of colonisation, the evaluations involved in the struggle between the memory of old traditions and the presence of new conditions, the bitterness that comes from the neglect of the old culture in the transition period before we become conscious of the rise of a new culture, the weak points in the machinery of political representation – of such indigenous material does Mr Mulgan make his scenes.” (Shelley, 1922)

It is the sense of struggling between old world and new that was identified as indigenous New Zealand material in 1922. And it is the representation of this indigenous struggle that in his time won Mulgan the credit of being the first New Zealand playwright.

How Identity Is Inscribed

In Mulgan's play, as in most of mainstream society, emergent New Zealand identity is inscribed as descending from British stock; Mrs Buchan from London, her husband from the Highlands of Scotland. She comes from the city poor and he from dispossessed farmers. The Stranger is the son of a laird, but down on his luck, learning about life in the hard school, and prepared to admit that he is a better man than he was when he was rich: "I'm a much better swagger than I was a gentleman of means." It is their shared memories of Britain that finally gives the men something to talk about when they have put aside their differences. It is the sense of now being, as Mrs Buchan puts it, "two New Zealanders" that allows them to put aside those differences.

Within the play, New Zealand identity is also defined in terms of the farm, the right to own one's own land, the hard work involved, and the importance of women as partners on the land. It is also defined in terms of fragile connection as well as relative national prosperity: "I wonder if we'll grow such a love in this fat prosperous New Zealand of ours," Angus muses.

A new sense of values characterise identity in the new land. Neighbours help each other out in the hard process of breaking in and working land. Harding came to ask Angus to give him a hand with the mustering, and Angus agrees as a matter of course. Equality is not only possible, but expected. Mrs Buchan expresses the sense of colonial egalitarianism: "Anyway, you've climbed up and 'e's come down, an' yer both can meet as equals – yer couldn't ha' done that in England."

Yet the solidarity and egalitarianism are relatively insular. Nowhere in this play, or in the others in the volume, is there sign or mention of Maori. New Zealanders in these plays are far-flung Brits who are adapting to displacement by claiming the new land as their own. Nor is there mention of other Europeans, or of Chinese, of whom there were significant groups at this time in the colony. The three plays have a limited number of characters, but their homogeneity pretty well matches that in accepted colonial society.

The Pragmatics of Form

Contemporary audiences or drama readers are unlikely to be excited by the form of *For Love of Appin*. It is dialogue dominated and, therefore, reads like a scripted short story. There is little physicality or manipulation of the elements of space, time, role, light, sound or set. That is to be expected within the context of when and where it was written.

The play was originally presented as part of larger concert and performed by skilled amateurs. This reflects the theatrical opportunities available at the time. A writer might, therefore, depend on intelligent interpretation from his actors and expressive and strong vocal projection. He (or she, when women such as Violet Targus joined the ranks of New Zealand playwrights a decade or so later) could not expect, and, therefore, would not be prepared to

write for, a professional company who had built their own performative and perhaps innovative theatrical traditions. Moreover, the dominant theatrical philosophy of this time was one of realistic naturalism. The technical and imaginative extravagances of musical theatre belonged to a different genre altogether, and the theatres that produced such works would probably have had little interest in the unadorned seriousness of the work of a literary playwright.

Consequently, Mulgan's play has a realistic but simple stage set, that of the farmhouse kitchen. There is no call for sound beyond the actors' voices and what lights were available would have remained constant throughout the performance. The action is entirely dialogic: the characters bring different social histories and articulate different perspectives; conflict arises and the characters work their way through to resolution. There is little subtext, and the characters, while drawn astutely from life, have no hidden facets that they gradually unfold. To today's readers the action may seem fairly predictable.

However, within the conventions of its time, the play is finely crafted. The characters are realistic. Although dialogue predominates, it is used to economically and unerringly give a sense of personality and to carry the action forward: there is no fluff. The conflict that develops, and its resolution, is strategically foreshadowed in the opening moments and nicely embedded in the character's attitudes. A similar finesse in sketching character and unfolding the tensions and frustrations of farming life in colonial New Zealand is evident in the third play in the volume, *The Daughter*. Mrs Bailey is a farmer's wife who had benefited from a wide liberal education and now finds herself trapped in the rural backblocks. An old flame from her university days arrives and, in a scene where he eventually declares his love, Mrs Bailey shares her frustrated hopes that her daughter might achieve the life she herself has missed. The declaration of love comes too late. Mrs Bailey has made choices she does not mean to renege on, and the daughter is in the process of making her own choices that will probably lead her to repeat her mother's predicament. "What's the good of wishing?" says Mrs. Bailey. In this case, too, the characters are authentically New Zealanders of the time, the dilemma is one astutely perceived and sensitively portrayed. The form is conventional, dialogic but pertinent and economical.

Some of the sense of cliché that a contemporary reader might find in the plays was clearly not there for the audiences of the time who found the issues incisive and topical, and for whom the portrayal of realistic scenes from a New Zealand that they could recognise from their own experience was in itself innovative. The resolution to *For Love of Appin* may seem bland today, but, in its time, the way the two men try to find reconciliation on the basis that they are both New Zealanders may have been as ground-breaking as a contemporary play ending with Obama and leaders of Al-Qaeda sitting down to begin peace talks.

Further Reading of the Shards

As well as examining the play in its own terms, we can also use it to highlight some of the aspects of the time it was written. In particular, it evokes further discussion of the role of theatre in its time, of labour and unemployment, of the relationship between classes, the role of women, the complex relationship with Britain, the monoculturalism of the period and the relationship to land.

As alluded to already, there was marked differentiation between musical theatre and dramatic theatre; the second was considered as much a literary form as a performative entertainment. In addition, however, all forms of live performance struggled for their share of the country's entertainment expenditure with the wireless and the emergent cinema industry. Each of the main cities had a number of picture theatres, sometimes conversions of earlier venues for live performance. Christchurch had six picture theatres, Dunedin eight, Auckland nine, and Wellington twelve. The pictures were silent, but they offered spectacles and humour on grand scales and for much cheaper prices of admission than the live scenic spectacles of the previous generation. For decades to come, New Zealand written plays had to struggle for any kind of audience in the entertainment mix, and even more so for a commercially viable role.

In 1920 the Depression had not yet developed, but levels of unemployment were high and there was no social welfare. In *For Love of Appin*, we learn that the Stranger is not the only swagman on the roads. He talks about how far he has walked in his search for work. "There's none here," says Angus, dourly stating the inability of a farmer to buy in any labour, despite the cold, wet job he has just come in from. If help on the farm is to be found it has to be from other farmers who freely share their labour at peak times and from the women, like Mrs Bailey in *The Daughter*, labouring on the farm as well as in the household and the kitchen. The Stranger talks of his previous work as a navy in Canada. Hard financial times and the struggle to make a living were being experienced around the world. As the Depression bit in more harshly in the later part of the decade, the Worker's Education Collective, Wellington's Unity Theatre and Auckland's People's Theatre performed the plays of George Bernard Shaw and a number of New Zealand derivations. The period and its hardships were again strongly evoked by writers of the 1980s, notably including Renee with *Wednesday to Come* and Mervyn Thompson with *Songs to Uncle Scrim*.

Mrs Buchan repeatedly talks about the absence of class distinctions in New Zealand and the play as a whole lauds the concept of egalitarianism. New Zealand as a classless society was a claim made repeatedly until the about thirty years ago. In the late 60s, the historian Sinclair wrote that "It must be more nearly classless than any advanced society in the world" (Sinclair 1969 p 285). There was a relatively small range of wealth, high levels of social mobility and relative lack of deference to authority figures. Belich (1996) argues that class did exist but that the New Zealand working class had much better standards of living than those in Britain, being able to eat regularly and own their own homes. However, the material well-being of the colonial working classes was not shared by Maori, many of who lived in serious poverty (Binney 1996), and it may in large part be ascribed to the appropriation of Maori land.

Women are strong character in all three plays in the volume: they work hard, think clearly, reject hypocrisy and ensure that the best happens for their families (and in the case of *The Voice of the People*, their communities.) The ability of women to hold their own is a clear theme, as is the attitude still prevailing in society that seeks to keep them in a domestic role. When Mrs Buchan voices surprise that a woman could be a genius, Harding tells her: "Oh that's because man has hitherto had the key to that paddock and only let men in." New Zealand was the first nation to give women the vote in 1893. In 1922 the New Zealand Federation of University Women was established to provide a contact network for women graduates. In 1925 the Women's Division of Federated Farmers was formed, and in 1926 the

League of Mothers and Homemakers was established. The formation of these two groups evidences women's activism in providing support structures for each other, especially in isolated rural districts and it also speaks of the struggles that made it necessary for them to do so. It is interesting that Angus Buchan has a first name, but Mrs Buchan has only a married title. Perhaps in terms of the period, the naming is no more than a mark of respect. However, it signals the primacy of the household role.

New Zealand's relationship with Britain at the time of the play has already been discussed in terms of its complex mix of loyalty, nostalgia, emerging difference and the seeding of new concepts of identity. It is interesting that, in the advertisement to the first performance, the play is introduced as a Scottish one. This can be partly attributed to the fact that the evening was a Walter Scott anniversary. However, it also evidences a continuing equation, during this period of the colony, between culture and the British tradition and a lack of expectation that 'New Zealand made' would have social or intellectual currency. Mulgan's own first book (1919), co-authored, examined New Zealand citizenship and placed New Zealand firmly within the British Empire. In contrast, the three plays are located firmly in the New Zealand landscape and New Zealand experience. Nevertheless, a later publication, *Home* (1927), recounts his experience of returning to England and his palpable pleasure at seeing for himself all the wonders he dreamed about through literature and ancestral folklore.

In as much as colonials in 1920 were slowly transferring their sense of home to New Zealand, it was to a New Zealand that was a transplant of Britain in a new landscape. In most colonials' consciousness, Maori existed as a relic of the past, and as an embellishment to occasions like the Prince of Wales' visit in 1920, but the colony was a white man's land: an offshoot of Britain where the tea-tree replaced heather, where opportunities for prosperity were on the whole better, but a little backward and isolated in terms of culture. Black (1984, p49) accuses Mulgan of having "no sense of the past". He criticises the three plays for the way an "assumption that the inhabitants of the country were of British descent is unquestioned in these colour blind sketches of New Zealand life" (p 32). Mulgan shared that colour blindness with many of his contemporaries, and it could be said to characterise mainstream society well into the 70s and 80s, when Maori activism forced awareness of Maori existence and concerns on the rest of the population. Nevertheless, while most Maori lived in rural parts of New Zealand and so might be erased from colonial consciousness, they had served proudly and prominently in the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion and were represented in Parliament, notably by James Carroll and Apriana Ngata. The Ratana movement had started, and a wave of renaissance was encouraging a modern Maori leadership that sought to integrate the most important ancestral values with a drive to claim active participation in the modern New Zealand State. The degree to which Maori concerns were seen as marginal to the progress of the new New Zealand state is illustrated by the status of the Treaty of Waitangi. In 1877, Judge Prendergast had ruled the Treaty was a simple nullity, and so it remained in law until in 1926 when a royal commission began to inquire into the land confiscations of the 1860s. One compensatory payment was accorded in 1931, but any other settlement was delayed till 1944. Waitangi Day itself was first formally celebrated in 1934. It would be fair to say that the perspective of the 1920 colonials was firmly monocultural.

Farming and a relationship to the land is at the heart of Mulgan's plays. In this period New Zealand was a distinctly agricultural country and by 1920 farming products constituted over ninety percent of New Zealand's total export value. In 1920, Maori still owned only 4.7

million acres of land, out of a total land mass of 67 million acres, and, of these, a further .75 million were leased to colonial farmers. Land was a colonial acquisition and a commercial asset. Mrs Bailey, in *The Daughter*, describes the hardship of farming life and her words crystallise many farmers' attitudes to the land: it was seen as harsh and untamed, hard to break in and hard to work, but it was also seen as an asset that allowed them a freehold stake that most of them would not have been able to gain in Britain. "It's hard work ...but there's something ahead 'ere," says Mrs Buchan. "We've only three rooms, but we've five hundred acres an' the children'll have a chance."

How Much Have We Changed?

An examination of the *For love of Appin* and its period invites us to look at how much and in what ways we have changed over the last ninety years. A full investigation of our own period is well beyond the scope of this article. However, it might be of value to very briefly consider how the 'archaeological shards' discussed might be read against our own period.

Certainly theatre has changed. There is a strong and growing body of work that can be identified as New Zealand drama. It is not monocultural. There is a substantial body of work that is Maori and deals with Maori themes. There is also a smaller but increasing amount of work that can be identified as Pasifika. New Zealand Indian, New Zealand Chinese and other ethnic work is also emerging. Not all work is primarily designed for theatre production. Marae theatre and theatre for community development are significant genres. More complexity of form and style is celebrated than in Mulgan's time and there might be little agreement about what constitutes a well-made play. However, commercial theatre still struggles for a share of the entertainment dollar, not only against the movie theatre but against television which allows audiences to be entertained in their own home, and recently against 'reality' television which eliminates the cost of playwrights and actors. A new playwright today might expect to employ more technical resources than Mulgan had at his disposal, but would be wise to strictly limit the size of cast and would probably face as hard a battle in getting performed by a professional company.

The egalitarianism lauded in Mulgan's play is no longer a feature of New Zealand society, nor is it a value that all New Zealanders would aspire to. There may not be touching of hats, as there was in Britain that the Buchan's left, but there are the very wealthy and the property speculators, from all over the world, and the tenants who can no longer expect to ever own their own homes. The dream of a classless New Zealand seems to be well behind us. So, perhaps, might soon be the model welfare state that New Zealand created out of the tragedies of the Depression that was beginning to cast its shadow in Mulgan's time.

The choice Mrs Bailey faced between a family or a career is no longer a defining one for most New Zealand women. But is it premature to decide that there are no longer any locked "paddocks", as Harding called them.

The intervening decades have clearly seen a changed relationship with Britain. But has nineteenth century colonialism been replaced with a new, monetarist version? Is "home" somewhere in the gloss of media promoted materialism? Or perhaps in the share of a global market? Do we see the land as something to hold for our children, "so they'll have a chance", or a speculative commodity?

And if we are not so blindly monocultural as Mulgan's plays suggest he and many of his contemporaries were, how far are we still from realising both the bicultural basis of nationhood that is pledged the Treaty of Waitangi and the richness of multicultural diversity?

How do we define what makes us New Zealanders today? And how might it be defined in the future?

Conclusion

Angus's cry that the past cannot be dead because it lives in his heart is a statement of hurt done by an old injustice. The play suggests that New Zealand offers new opportunities and opportunities to move beyond the hurts of the past. However, within the context of the play as a whole, the words carry an additional resonance. They speak of the way that not only the characters but also Mulgan and his contemporaries were shaped by history and of how they understood their identity as a result of how they understood that history. And potentially, they speak to us, some ninety years later, about how much we want to recognise our past and of what we will do with the recognition.

Whether or not *For Love of Appin* was or was not the first New Zealand play is interesting. However, perhaps more interesting is what the play tells us about our New Zealand theatrical history and about our socio-cultural history. Somehow or other, the past and its effects "lives in [our] hearts". Examining the shards of our history, such as this play, may equip us with more understanding of how we came to be the way we are. It may also allow us to explore how we can relate to that knowledge.

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Biography



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