

THE ALEXANDRITE
and
The Alexandrite Effect

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Dione Jones

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ABSTRACT

The *Alexandrite* is a novel about the interaction of three families affected by certain events which took place nearly a century ago.

The discovery of a body in an English garden sets Pamela, a titled widow, on a world trip to discover the secret of the stone and mysterious letter which was on the body. The novel traces her search to find the reason for the stone and the letter being there, taking her from England to New Zealand, and out of the safe and privileged environment to which she is accustomed.

The exegesis explores two main themes, both of which span the century of the novel's story. The subject of adoption is an emotive one and one which has seen huge changes in the social approach and treatment. Post traumatic stress is a problem which affects more than just the victim, and this has not changed since World War I when it was barely acknowledged as a problem. Both of these subjects have been used in fiction throughout the century and the exegesis explores the differences over the time period.

The changing times is reflected by the *Alexandrite*, the stone itself, which has the unusual characteristic of changing colour. This stone acts as a mainstay throughout the century while the families change around it and yet stay the same.

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Section 1: Introduction

Synopsis

A half written letter and partly cut jewel is discovered on the dead body which Pamela, Lady Scawton, finds in her English family's garden. This propels her on a journey to New Zealand to unravel the mystery, in spite of the protests and derision of her rakish son, Sir Charles.

'Adoption' is mentioned in the letter and both the adoption and the jewel have a history which goes back to the First World War –to a brother suffering from shell shock, and to a contrived adoption and to a stone acquired in India which has a strange colour changing characteristic. As the history of the stone unfolds, it connects the families involved with a haunting effect .

Aggie is the New Zealander whose dying mother wrote the mysterious letter. When she finds her mother has given away her grandmother's stone, which was so important to the family, Aggie resists becoming involved in the exposure of a possible crime committed so long ago.

Pamela faces unfamiliar territory in New Zealand, as she travels from a sheep farm in Hawkes Bay to the lakeside at Taupo, meeting the New Zealand members of her family for the first time. Frustrated at being unable to find any answers to the mystery she is forced to re-evaluate her own attitudes towards long held beliefs.

The story comes to a climax when Pamela and Aggie finally meet. The stone haunts the meeting and secrets revealed could change lives forever.

Motivation

However much I might enjoy the writing process, writing is a form of communication and to achieve satisfaction it needs interaction with the reader. Learning how to improve my creativity and technique of writing during this year will, I hope, contribute to an increased pleasure for the reader. My writing is only a means to this end.

As a reader myself, I prefer fiction which is plausible or based on a true story. I have no desire to write about myself but needed to find a credible story. I was brought up in the English countryside, the youngest of four children, with a war between the birth of my closest sister in age, and myself. Many of the 'true' stories I heard as a child were of an earlier, lost, time. Even some of the stories of my parents' childhood already sounded inconceivable by the time I heard them. It was not so much what happened or what they did,

but how people reacted to what happened. It was the change in attitude which made those stories incredible; what they accepted, and what was considered normal.

If I could compare those pre-World War 2 acceptance and behaviour with modern characters and if I could include some kind of mystery, it should keep the reader's attention.

My family in England have a minor inherited title. This does give an insight into the traditions of English inheritance. The joy of fiction is that in using a title I am able to increase the size of the family home, the size of the family estate and employ more staff. My fictional family can have a longer history and set much more importance on inheritance and the maintenance of family traditions than my own.

I chose two themes to use in my story because they both have interesting, and often secret, histories. The first is Post Traumatic Stress, It was called Shell Shock after World War 1. Then it was a controversial subject and has been ever since. Treatment throughout the years has changed and differed, but the affect on close family members has not. Even today, when it is well accepted as a medical problem and often generated and exacerbated by soldiers' war experiences, it still can have profound affect on family relationships.

Adoption is another subject which has been controversial over the years. I have experience of adoption in my family and, rather than enter into the complexity of nurture versus nature in a fictional story, I wanted to use focus on the affect of adoption on family and friends and the social attitude rather than emotional searches or reunions. Today's laws allow the adopted person to seek out their birth parents, or vice versa, and the adoption is usually open so that there are few secrets. Moreover there is little or no stigma attached to unmarried mothers. This is a vast change to times gone by, when adoptions were kept secret and unmarried mothers were faced with social rejection and considerable financial hardship.

I felt that both these subjects had the potential to add a richness to the novel's relationship line and complement the novel's action line.

The action line is set in the present day, and uses flashbacks to introduce the time comparison I wanted. Flashbacks alone were not going to produce a coordinated relationship to the action line, even in the genre of an inverted mystery whereby the reader finds out what caused the mystery before the protagonist. I was fortunate in that a family member who happens to be a geology professor mentioned a little known rock or jewel which was more valuable than a diamond, and had an interesting mercurial quality in that it could change colour.

To move the scene to New Zealand during the story, fitted with the idea of changing times and society. I have spent more time living in New Zealand than I did in England and so

personal experience could help. Many New Zealand families still have British connections. Earlier immigrants who arrived with a veneration of English aristocracy, class and society contrasted with immigrants whose felt restricted by that same social structure and whose more critical and independent opinions questioned imported traditions. Immigrants to New Zealand now come from diverse countries and cultures but earlier in the last century, there was Government encouragement to those from Great Britain.

The changes in society over time, in what is morally accepted, on what is socially accepted, and even what is legally accepted, change how people react and what become important to them. It should be the base of a good story. All I have to do was to weave the old with the new, the past with the present.

Structure

The incident in 'The Alexandrite' which caused the mystery occurred after World War I, but because the action line is in the present day, it does not fit in a historical genre. It is a mystery story but there is no murder or 'whodunnit'. The protagonist is an amateur investigator but the momentum is built as much on the relationship line as the action line. More important to the structure is that the mystery is revealed to the reader before it is protagonist. This was necessary in order to describe the reactions and behaviour of the family after World War I, and give a comparison with modern day behaviour and emotions. The inverted mystery structure is probably the most suitable sub genre, as it allows momentum to build in the action line, and by the end combine with the relationship line.

Section 2: Theoretical Section

Because this is a family mystery spanning nearly one hundred years, the overriding characteristic of the book is the time difference. The time difference involves language, social attitude, post traumatic stress and adoption.

The coordinating action line is set in 2013 in both England and New Zealand, but the solution to the mystery lies in events which took place at the end of World War 1. The earliest scene in the book is 1918. The latest is 2013.

The Alexandrite

The plot involves an unusual stone, the Alexandrite. Considered by many geologists to be rarer than diamonds, alexandrites were first discovered in 1833 and named in honour of the Czar's heir, Alexander, for his 16th birthday. There was a considerable mining industry in Russia at the time, much of it based near Ekaterinburg, which later became infamous for being the town where the Czar and his family were executed in 1917. Alexandrites were used as gems in some of the Romanov royal jewels. Some were also used to decorate the Winter Palace in St Petersburg.

The story in the novel of how the Alexandrite reached England is fictional, from hearsay from a friend whose father did serve on the North West Frontier of India. After the Revolution, there was a flood of refugees from Russia, who became known as White Russians. Many of these refugees were extremely wealthy and brought as much portable wealth as they could, including jewels. One of the lesser known exit routes from Russia was via Afghanistan and India. The British Army on the border had orders to confiscate the jewels which were then sent to Vladivostok to finance a planned White Russian counter revolution. White Russians did plan a revolution from Vladivostok but I cannot verify whether the exit route via Afghanistan was correct.

The Alexandrite is a crysoberyl, an alluminate of beryllium. Beryllium is normally yellow or pale green, and translucent. Today Alexandrites are found, and are mined, elsewhere in the world. The Ekaterinburg mine is no longer operating.

The Alexandrite is unusual because it is the beryllium green by daylight and pale red by artificial light. 'Green morning full of hope and the colour of blood and the end of the Russian monarchy' according to the Tsarstone collectors guide of 2006. This changing colour is called the Alexandrite effect and is a central idiosyncrasy of my story.

The Alexandrite has rarely been used in fiction. There was a Russian novella, *Alexandrite, Mysterious Interpetion of a True Face* by Nikolai Semyonovich Leskov, and a French novel, *La Clef des Grands Mysteres* by Eliphas Levi, both written in the nineteenth century. I could find nothing published since. Despite this, according to the Alexandrite Tsarstone collectors guide, the Alexandrite is often given magical or astrological attributes. This changing characteristic of the Alexandrite lends itself to the plot in my novel.

The Time difference: Language

To ensure a tone of authenticity, I intended that the part of the novel set post World War I should reflect the language of the day.

Language is dynamic, and ‘continues to change with time, many words falling out of use, whilst others are adopted’ (Martin Pegler, *Soldiers Song and Slang of the Great War*, page 14). With a huge number of men from diverse backgrounds collected together into the British World War I army, soldiers would adapt new words only really appreciated by their comrades. This would have increased camaraderie. ‘Plonk’ was the English adaptation of ‘vin blanc’ according to Pegler, ‘Blotto’ was adapted from ‘blot’ or ‘blot out’, according to the Online Etymology Dictionary. These words still well understood today but other words have changed or now have additional meanings: such as ‘gay’ meaning carefree. Yet others have lost popularity altogether, such as ‘lollygagger’ and ‘spifflicated’. The use of words which may have been in use then, but which are not in regular use today or could have a different meaning today, could irritate the reader. I have tried to avoid that.

Even if the words of the English language may be the same, at the start of the 20th century, the majority of writing was full of wordiness and grandiloquence, even in factual diaries and even in New Zealand.

A farewell evening among the guests of Kings’s Court was held...The evening went off cheerily, the Reverend Joseph Kemp of the Baptists Tabernacle being present, giving a speech. The Bridgadier is a fine old chap.’ (*Feet in Auckland, Heart in Christchurch*, L Rosser 1922)

By contrast today, descriptions are often overtaken by succinct and spare action line dialogue

Bosch next studied the man on the hit sheet. Clayton S Pell. It meant nothing to him (Michael Connelly, *The Drop* page 357)

Today, sentences have become more direct and short. Adjectives and adverbs are often used sparingly. The semi-colon and colon are hardly used.

Today is Christmas Eve. Today is my birthday. Today I am fifteen, Today I buried my parents in the backyard. Neither of them were beloved. (Lisa O'Donnel, *The Death of Bees*, page 1)

Fictional dialogue, even by popular writers like Dorothy Sayers, may sounds stilted to today's reader.

'One gets over everything,' repeated Wimsey firmly, 'Particularly if one tells somebody about it.'
'One can't always tell things.'
'I can't imagine anything really untellable.'
'Some things are so beastly.' (Sayers, *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* 1928, (p142)

To stay accurate to the time in words and grammar which today may sound antiquated, may allow the reader to ridicule the language, and be distracted from the action line and the signifiers of the inverted mystery.

It is a fine line to try and use anachronistic words and longer sentences, without losing the concentration of the reader. Modern TV dramas have the same problem of whether to use the language of the period. In 1924 *Downton Abbey*, can lunch can be called 'luncheon' without sounding preposterous? Written on the page it becomes more noticeable. Perhaps by describing the butler in as 'a considerable figure in the village' (*Downton Abbey* Series 5, 1st episode) shows enough respect of the language of the times without emphasizing the pun on his ample figure, which could be intimated in the language of 2013 when read and not heard.

I have tried to differentiate between linguistics of the time periods, not by using old fashioned language, long sentences or didactic descriptions but by keeping the 2013 parts with shorter sections or chapters, shorter sentences, including references to the use of modern technologies such as Skype and mobile phones, and to ensure the characters themselves do not have as long an attention span as the characters of 1920.

The Time Difference: Social Attitudes

The changes in society during the last century, in England and among the English immigrants in New Zealand, give the ideal backdrop to the story. It is important to the story that the reader understands the attitudes which history may now view as anachronistic arrogance but which was not viewed as such at the time.

In England and elsewhere, socialism and social independence became popular were helped by technological advances and World War I. News, via wireless or speedily dissipated by film and newspapers, went to a universal audience anxious for information. Much of

World War 1 was fought only a day's travel away from England and civilians. Even those who were associated by the Commonwealth felt more involved than in any previous war.

Knowing the public was horrified by the carnage, authorities tried to assert stoicism as Patriotism. Rupert Brooke's sonnet *The Soldier*, read out on Easter Sunday 1915 in St Pauls Cathedral and published the next day in 'The Times' romanticised the patriotism.

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England.

As the war continued with the atrocious conditions and the obvious waste of life, there was a spreading socialistic attitude doubting the class driven acceptance that with aristocracy went wisdom. Officers, traditionally from the upper classes, led the attacks and suffered for it in casualties. Their replacements became even younger and more obviously inexperienced.

With less able-bodied men to provide for those at home, women began working in factories and on farms, as well as military hospitals. This gave them a new independence.

Improvements in education, medical science and communication meant people had more confidence and less reliability on their customary way of life.

Not surprisingly, the affluent older generation, who had enjoyed a luxurious life before the war, was less inclined to accept the new socialism. Their traditional way of life and governance – expanded throughout much of the world in the previous century and now successfully defended through war – gave some of them an arrogance which was passed on to future generations.

Fiction reflects the social changes, even if the fictionalized romantic view of war and the violence was popular.

Under a cloak of assumed flippancy he concealed an iron nerve which had never yet failed him (Sapper - Cyril McNeile – *Bulldog Drummond* page 127)

The unease felt by those who had come through the war but now faced a changing order Was highlighted by T S Eliot in *The Wasteland* (1922)

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats....

Many in the now unsettled British society decided to emigrate. The British Government assisted migration to commonwealth counties, and according to the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, jointly sponsored migration with the New Zealand

Government. New Zealand had contributed to the War with the lives of much needed labourers, and there were private schemes to encourage immigration as well, such as the Flock House scheme organized by Manawatu sheep farmers. The egalitarian society of New Zealand gave immigrants more self-confidence and independence, even if the more affluent society in New Zealand was very slow to change from the pre-War attitudes of 'home' and the prejudices of Edwardian England. These attitudes suited my story.

One of the recognized English social institutions was, and is, that of bestowed and inherited titles. Although very few inherited titles were ever conferred on New Zealanders, until 1975 the New Zealand Government adhered to the same system of titles. The class system, and aristocracy at its best and worst has frequently been described in fiction and on the screen. *The Forsyte Saga*, *Upstairs Downstairs* and *Downton Abbey* are a few of the many television series which have covered that period. *Downton Abbey* has the advantage of the screenwriter, Julian Fellowes, who is a peer himself and whose family would have firsthand knowledge.

I have tried to compare some of the moralities and vagaries of the earlier period and throughout the century, with the more independent thinking, even pertinacity, of present day New Zealanders, to highlight the changes in the modern era in the preconception of inheritance and reputation. It is reflected in the changes which the Scawton family, and Pamela in particular is faced with. My intention was to partly demonstrate these social changes through the use of post traumatic stress and adoption.

The Time Difference: Post Traumatic Stress

In World War 1, Post traumatic Stress, or Shell Shock as it was known by the end of World War I, was not so much unrecognized as unaccepted. Over the century it has become recognized and accepted, but is now less of a problem, especially among the military.

One of the first fictional accounts of the war was *The Secret Battle* A P Herbert, published in 1919. Although it is a fictionalised account, it was based on what had happened during the four years of the War - as acknowledged by Winston Churchill in the Preface and by John Terraine in the Introduction. The latter explains that there were over 140,000 convicted in court martials during the war, mostly for desertion rather than cowardice. 18 soldiers were executed for cowardice. Many officers were convicted in a court martial. No officer was executed for cowardice.

Almost all those men and officers would have been suffering from shell shock but would not have been diagnosed as such.

Fear, in that generation, was a crime; the war of the most terrifying shell-fire yet experienced would not admit the existence of shell-shock. (John Terraine in the Introduction).

The reluctance by the medical profession to recognize the psychological effects of war was as much caused by trying to maintain numbers of willing fighters at the Front, as much as the problem of treatment.

...patients might be encouraged to acknowledge their fear, but they were still expected to do their duty and return to France. (Pat Barker page 48).

Although it is fiction, Pat Barker's *Regeneration*, one of her trilogy on World War 1, is one of the most sympathetic and informative novels about shell shock, written of course with a greater advantage of hindsight. When patriotic British subjects expected the army to be made up of brave heroes, then surely

Men who broke down, or cried, or admitted to feeling fear, were sissies, weaklings, failures. (pg 48)

Shellshock was not necessarily caused by the sound of shells. There was, and is, no one cause.

In Gallipoli, where the Turks' rapid musketry fire was almost incredibly intense and their snipers uncannily accurate, men would say that they hated bullets, but shell-fire left them unmoved. The same men travelled to France and found rifle-fire practically extinct but gun-power increasingly terrible, and rapidly reversed their opinions. (A P Herbert page 80-81)

Although it did become recognized medically as neurosthenia, treatment was still aimed at getting the men back to the front, and little thought was given to longer term treatment or how men's suffering would affect their family life after the war.

So she knew nothing about the 'job'; and this put me in a hole. For if I told her about it...the knowledge would be a standing torture to her.' (A P Herbert page 105-105)

The isolation victims felt and their strange behaviour seemed to suit many of the modernist stories, particularly Virginia Woolf and Ford Madox Ford. Characters like Woolf's Septimus Warren Smith were probably quite a familiar sight

There he was; still sitting alone on the seat, in his shabby overcoat, his legs crossed, staring, talking aloud (Virginia Woolf 'Mrs Dalloway' page 21)

By the time Woolf wrote that, it was undoubtedly a problem for many families the victims lived with. Victims were disabled, but often with no physical symptoms. What were the wives or close relatives to do? Virginia Woolf's character, Rezia, was married to Septimus.

Dr Holmes said there was nothing the matter with him...It was she who suffered ... but she had nobody to tell (page 23)

Although there were a variety treatments, many doctors were just perplexed, and had no cure.

Shell shock, now called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (or just Post Traumatic Stress) is now better understood, as are the drugs used for treatment by the psychiatrists who administer the treatment. It is still a popular subject in fiction, whether from the victim's point of view or another. In Clare Francis *Unforgotten*, Tom Deacon, who is suffering from PTSD after seeing his daughter burnt to death, is described as 'A man being consumed from within, as if by some voracious parasite' (page 25). One recent novel is Kevin Powers *The Yellow Birds*

If it is determined that you are overly stressed, you will be given the opportunity to recuperate in the presence of the best doctors available. ..You will go home when you are cured...' (page 185)

In spite of this optimism, the medical experts have the frustration of no specific guaranteed 'cure'. In Patrick McGrath's *Trauma* the protagonist is a psychiatrist, well aware of the affect of PTSD on the families of the victims – an added frustration

She glared at me with damp eyes. She blamed me....
'Was there really nothing you could do for him?' she said.
I let the question hang in the air. (page 98)

David Finkel, in *Thank you for your service* follows several US veterans from the Iraq War. He also highlights the affect of PTS on the wives. The wives are relieved their husbands are home, supposedly uninjured, but then find that are irrevocably changed and often unbalanced. Neurasthenia, shell shock or post traumatic stress, by whatever name, had – and has - a debilitating affect on those victims' families as well as the victim. The medical profession, even with the better understanding of the causes and effects, are continually trying different treatments on the victims and tend to ignore the plight of the wives and families. This is not so much a lack of sympathy as a lack of what can be done to help them. That much has changed little over the years.

There are far greater changes during the last century in the social attitudes to the other subject I have included in the story – adoption.

The Time Difference: Adoption

Adoption is certainly not a new subject for fiction from Charles Dickens, Emily Bronte, Charlotte Bronte in the nineteenth century, to J K Rowling in recent years and the film *Philomena* in 2013. Orphan children, fallen women, children being raised by adoptive parents, wicked or otherwise, all provide a wonderfully emotional ingredient to so many novels.

The opinions on adoption in fiction over the century reflects the changing opinions on adoption itself. Often, particularly where the children are concerned and where the genre of childrens' stories expect a happy ending, stories of adoption concentrate on the being positive.

L M Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* is encouraging

I don't know what lies around the bend but I'm going to believe the best does. It has a fascination of its own, that bend (page 434)

On the other hand, J K Rowling in *The Cuckoo's Calling* uses the bond between the birth parents and adopted child to add to the mystery of the story in a more pragmatic way

'Well, it's a bond, innit. You can't break it, blood' (page 351)

The 'adoption triangle' has always existed – the adopted child, the natural mother or parents, the adoptive parents - but the attitudes and information between them has not always been the same. Felicity Price, in her book *In her Mothers' Shoes* tells of all three points of view – the birth mother, the adoptive parent, the adoptee.

She desperately wanted to .. see her baby girl, just one look, that wasn't much to ask (page 85)

'And best of all, the book says I'm allowed to cuddle you, well guess what? I'm never going to stop' (page 187)

..her original birth certificate – such a small and insubstantial piece of paper to be carrying such significance. (page 307)

'The Alexandrite' is not a story dominated by adoption, although it is relevant to the mystery. I wanted to compare the attitudes towards adoption over the years and bring that into the story, but not to detract from the action line with too much emotive response to adoption. The mystery of the story was more involved with secrecy and the possible significance to a titled inheritance as it is with the adoption itself. Secrecy in adoption, until about thirty years ago, was both commonplace and legal.

In New Zealand today, Child Youth and Family, the government social services who approve adoptions, encourage the natural mother to raise their own child. The unfavourable prejudice of children 'born out of wedlock' has long gone and solo parents are certainly not uncommon. So there are fewer adopted children. In statistics collected by Griffin in 1970

there were 2086 children adopted in New Zealand by non-relatives. In 2011-2013, again according to Child Youth and Family, there were 21. For some years there have been no 'closed' adoptions where the identity of the natural parent or parents are kept from the adoptive parents or the child. An adopted child is brought up knowing the identity of the natural parents, and usually knowing at least the mother personally. A child adopted before the laws were changed in 2004, is now able to find out the identity of his/her natural parents. There no shame, and no secrecy.

But this is a modern social attitude. In earlier years, religious thinking and moral constraints confined children to married parents. A solo parent did not have the advantage of government benefits and many could not cope financially with raising children by themselves. This meant that many legally born children were adopted out as well and those born 'out of wedlock'.

Before 1926 in England, there were no 'adoption laws' at all. Unmarried girls who became pregnant were considered 'fallen' and secrecy in adoption was the norm. Secrecy protected the birth mother from becoming a social pariah. It helped the adoptive parents conform to society by pretending the child was their own. It was also felt at the time that it would protect the child from prejudice by church or society if it was not known that he/she was adopted or illegitimate. In the film *Philomena*, the protagonist, Philomena, herself a birth mother, is surprisingly slow to blame the Roman Catholic church or its representatives, the Roscrea nuns, who had insisted the baby was the punishment from God for premarital sex.

Even when social attitudes allowed the realisation that his or her existence was not the fault of the baby, many children were still not told they were adopted, let alone who their birth parents were. Adoptive parents felt it was best for the child if he or she did not know. Later in the twentieth century, this view, of not telling the child he was adopted, changed and children were brought up knowing they were adopted but still not knowing their birth parents. Legally they were unable to find out. It meant there were still secrets.

In *The Primal Wound*, Nancy Verrier reports on her extensive study on adoption. Verrier's study highlights the subconscious feeling of abandonment by the child. The child is never allowed to grieve successfully, but instead is told how lucky he/she is to have adoptive parents. Her study coincided with the modern day approach of open adoption and fewer secrets.

There are, at present, eight adopted children in our family, including my own two children and daughter in law. For most there appears no more hidden resentment than there would have been from a child of natural parents wanting to challenge their parents' authority

as a teenager. But they all appreciate that adoption can provide an emotive subject in a fictional story.

All adoptions are different, and personal. The need for an adopted child to discover their original parentage is surely natural. The potential for different stories in literature is as varied as the individual stories themselves.

The film *Secrets and Lies* is a 1996 film written and directed by Mike Leigh. It describes an Afro-Caribbean woman finding and meeting her natural mother, who is white. Barbara Kingsolver's first book *The Bean Trees* and the follow up *Pigs in Heaven* deals with adoption from a different culture. Her story is full of emotion, but, as with *Secrets and Lies*, the emotion is relieved by humour. P D James *Innocent Blood* has a story about the adopted daughter finding that her birth mother is a murderer, a secret withheld from her by her adoptive parents. James George's *The Hummingbird* has a moving scene when the adopted child is born, with the refreshing attitude of the mother wanting to adopt the child out. The mother is initially shocked when confronted with her daughter years later.

Adoption is an integral part of the mystery in *The Alexandrite*. Various points of view of adoption are given by the different characters affected by the adoption process in one way or another, but to dwell on one point of view would have emphasized the emotion of adoption and detracted from the action line of following the protagonist to find the source of the mystery.

The problems – or in my case a mystery – arise when secrets are known by some but not others. The adoption in 'The Alexandrite' which causes the mystery, does not complete the triangle. The child adopted does not know he is adopted. The child is adopted at birth and never told of the adoption, so that neither he nor succeeding generations know.

Section 3. Discussion/conclusion

The alexandrite itself and the house, Ashly House, owned throughout the time period by the Scawton family, is the consistency throughout the century of the story's time period and I hope maintains in the readers mind the connection of the families in the story. The house which is structurally the same throughout, does have some changes in how it is used, and by the number living in it. The rock and its characteristics do not change. Attitudes, behaviour and families do.

New generations of families are affected by different events, different people and different places. Sometimes they react in the same and sometimes they react differently.

The structure I have used is that the story starts and ends in the present day. I have used flashback scenes of various moments in time to advance the families from World War 1 through the century, a long flashback to set the mystery itself in its period and shorter ones to keep time moving forward – Post World War 1 England, England in the 1920s, New Zealand in the 1920s and the Depression, wartime in England, 1970s New Zealand, 1980s New Zealand.

Apart from the protagonist solving the mystery to the satisfaction of the reader, the intention is to highlight personal events and conflicts which were vital to the families at the time, but which in a later time period has sunk into the unemotional mists of time. By using the flashback scene, I can try to show that those stories, which today are just past family stories, were a poignant 'slice of life' at the time.

Post Traumatic Stress is an ongoing problem even today. It is not like a disease which ideally could be eradicated. Psychologists and psychiatrists understand it much better than in post World War 1, and have much less invasive suggestions of treating it. But its affect on victims and families have not changed so much. Adoption, on the other hand, has changed dramatically from the unregulated secrecy and moral judgment of the 1920s. Today, where it does occur, there is an accepted and open attitude.

As the writing progressed and the accepted opinions of the day advanced through the century I realized that the protagonist was faced with a quandary that I had not anticipated - that of the importance of inherited titles. Is the prestige attached to a title merited? Is there an unwritten obligation by those with titles to behave a certain way? As inherited titles die out, and are not replaced, does the present generation revere celebrities in much the same way as the previous generations exalted those with a title? Some of these question faced Pamela as the protagonist.

The novel is intended to appeal to more than the local New Zealand, but also hopefully the English reader by spiking interest in both countries. Hopefully that interest is maintained by the action line and gives enough depth and importance to the underlying themes.

I would like the relationship line to reflect something of an ‘Alexandrite effect’ on the reader as the changes in the families and their heritage, prompted by the passing of time, are reflected in the personal growth of the protagonist and the revelation of the mystery itself. I hope you enjoy reading it.

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