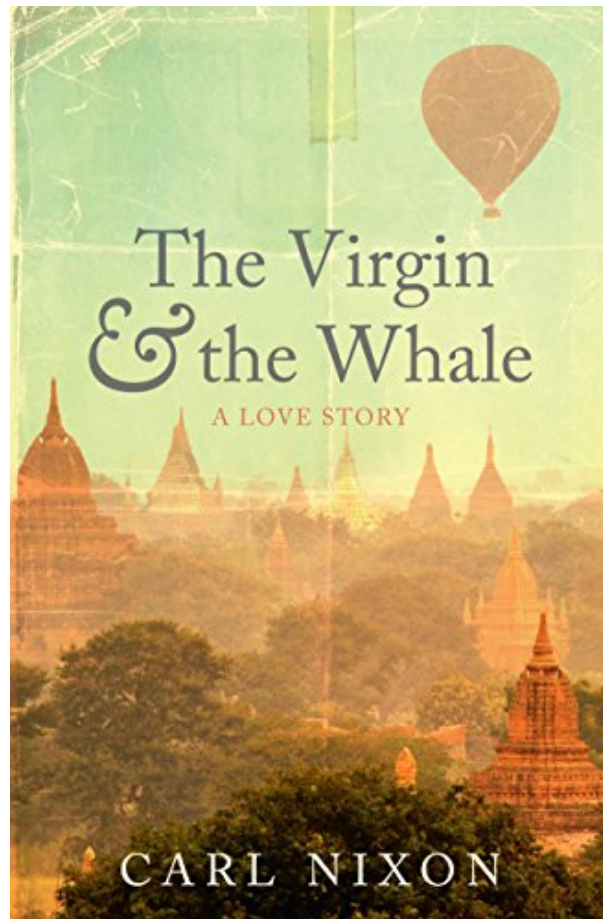
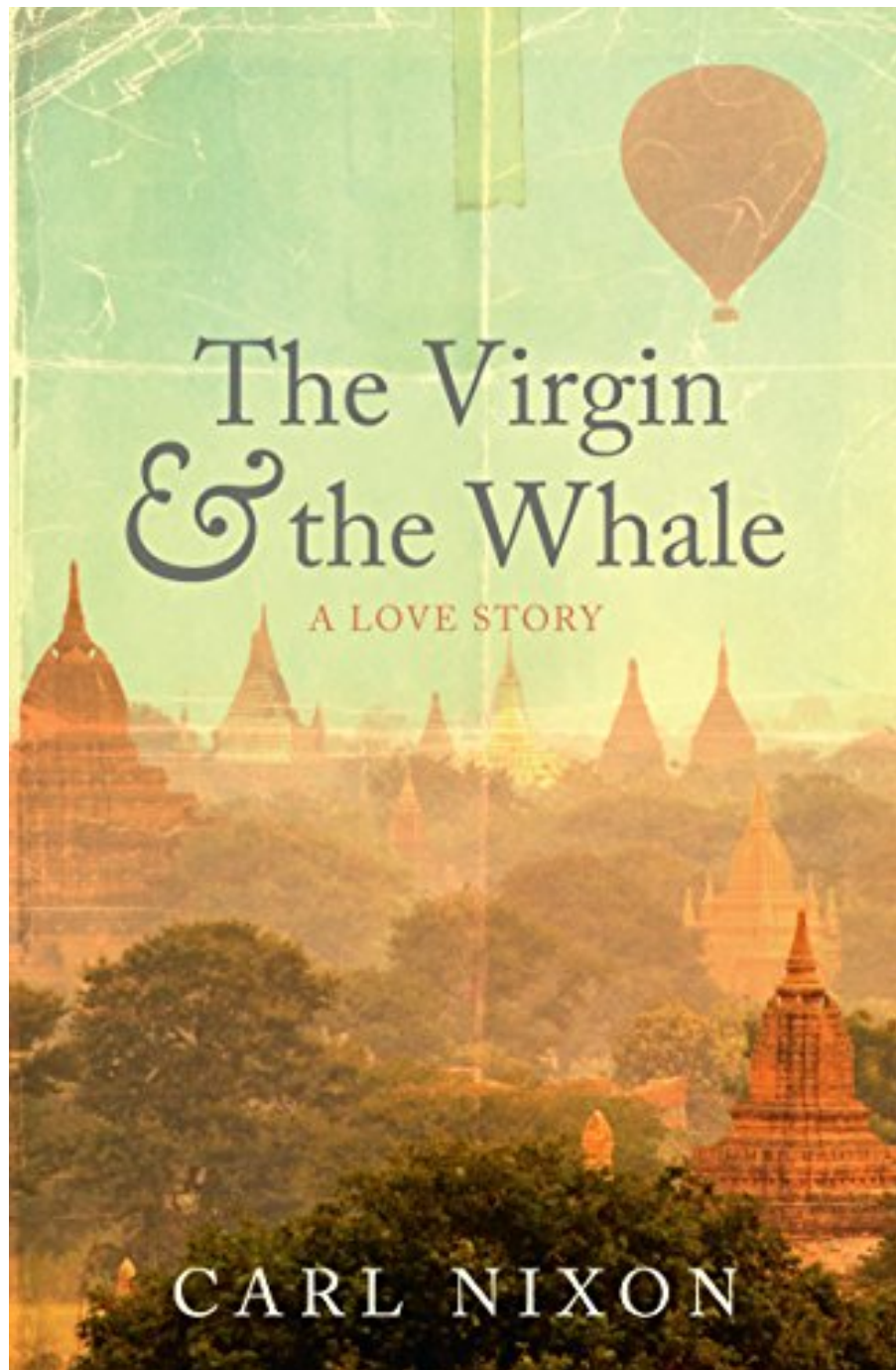


THE VIRGIN AND THE WHALE: A LOVE STORY BY CARL NIXON



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THE VIRGIN AND THE WHALE: A LOVE STORY BY CARL NIXON PDF

A touching, clever novel about stories, about using them to create your own identity, and about the way they can forge bonds of love. It is 1919. Elizabeth Whitman is working as a nurse in the local hospital, waiting for her husband to return from war, though he is missing in action, 'presumed dead'. She keeps him alive for their four-year-old son, Jack, by telling the story of a man she calls The Balloonist, who went away in a hot-air balloon and has adventures in exotic countries. When she is asked to nurse a returned soldier whose head injury has reduced him to an animal-like state with no memory, Elizabeth starts telling her stories to him. It is through them that she manages to engage his interest and offer him a new life . . . in more ways than one.

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Beautiful storytelling, and lends another strand to the horrors of war

By Kiwiflora

How appropriate to read this in the year of the 100th anniversary of the start of WWI. And such a great tribute to the ordinary people - the survivors of the fighting, their families and the people who worked hard to rehabilitate them. This is a really good story, in fact it is several stories really, and centers itself around the power of memory in narrating those stories. Not just the stories we tell each other, but as Oliver Sacks puts it in an opening quote - our 'inner narrative', our own personal story.

Set in 1919, in the city of Mansfield, (very recognisable as Christchurch, NZ), Elizabeth Whitman is a very capable nurse who has worked with injured soldiers, injuries of both physical and mental nature. She has a husband, presumed missing, and a four year old son. She lives with her parents in some sort of limbo zone, unsure of how to proceed with her life. Lucky is one such very damaged soldier who she finds herself assigned to look after and try to discover what, if anything, can be done to fix him. It becomes very quickly apparent that all of his memories prior to a head injury he received while in the trenches have been completely obliterated. Elizabeth realises this fairly quickly, but has considerable trouble convincing Lucky's wife and medical team that this is the problem, and that he is not schizophrenic needing to be locked up.

Alongside the stories of these two people, Elizabeth is narrating to her young son the story of the Virgin and the Whale, the lead character being the Balloonist, supposedly representing the missing husband and father. How else do you explain to a four year old that no one knows where Daddy is. Nothing like a bit of magic.

Yet another story comes out of this. The author himself, also takes on the role of story teller. He opens his novel with the story of how this story came to be. He was approached by the son of Elizabeth, with the very attention getting line, 'My mother fell in love with a man who had no memory'. The author tantalises us with

whether this could be true or not, and in the end it does not really matter. Because the story he weaves between the chapters set in 1919 keeps our own thought processes alive and engaged, and the hold that memory has in our own understanding of ourselves.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting, easy to read novel

By No Drizzle or Jus

Interesting and easy to read book until towards the end when it becomes more convoluted with two tales intertwined. Ending also unusual with several near endings then finally the ending.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A different WW1 love story.

By David Begg

Obviously set in Christchurch New Zealand, as I have lived in that city I was able to identify places described. It is also a very fitting book for the centenary of the start of World War 1, depicting things did not always end up in a purely black and white solution. Recommended. (I am a male and enjoyed the book, it is not only a chick love story)

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