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Ecole Doctorale « Langage, Idées, Sociétés, Institutions, Terroires »  
Centre Interlanges « Texte, Image, Langage » (EA 4182)*

*In international cotutelle with*

*University of Canterbury  
School of Culture, Literature and Society*

## **“STRIDING BOTH WORLDS”: CROSS-CULTURAL INFLUENCE IN THE WORK OF WITI IHIMAERA**

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2007**

Thèse de doctorat en études Anglophones présentée sous la direction de  
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A thesis submitted to the University of Canterbury in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature supervised by  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis engages with aspects of Witi Ihimaera's oeuvre that demonstrate influences from cultures other than Maori. These may be overt in the fiction, such as plot settings in Venice, Vietnam and Canada, or implicit in his writing mode and style, influenced by English romanticism, Pakeha cultural nationalism, Katherine Mansfield's modernist epiphanies, and Italian verismo opera. In revealing Ihimaera's indebtedness to cultural and aesthetic influences commonly seen as irrelevant to contemporary Maori literature, this thesis reveals a depth and richness in Ihimaera's imaginary that is frequently overlooked and undervalued in New Zealand literary interpretation.

Illuminating cross-cultural influence in Ihimaera's works calls into question the applicability of biculturalism as a comprehensive manner of accounting for both Maori cultural ambitions of self-determination and the Maori relationship with Pakeha on the national level. Far from an "us-versus-them" dialectic based on a separatist notion of two individually self-sufficient and complete cultures, Ihimaera's fiction shows Maori culture to have been shaped by a long history of interaction and influence with the colonial British and the Pakeha. This is manifest in the way that the Maori sovereignty and renaissance movements, which gathered force in the 1970s, have been inspired by European concepts of modernity, the structures of nation building and, more recently, by Western globalization described in the theories of transculturation and diaspora.

Similarly, in New Zealand literature, Maori writing is commonly considered a parallel genre which describes a distinctive Maori worldview and literary style. Contrary to the familiar interpretation of Ihimaera's fiction from this standpoint, this thesis argues that an emphasis on difference tends to lose sight of fiction's capacity to bring into play issues of differentiation, originality and hybridity through its very form and function. In effect, Maori negotiation of its sovereign space in its literature takes place in its forms rather than in its storyline, for example in multiple linguistic significations, in the text's unstable relationship with reality, and the way that imagery escapes concrete, definitive

explanation. In this optic, this thesis analyses little-discussed aspects of Ihimaera's fiction, including his love of opera, the extravagance of his baroque lyricism, his exploration of the science-fiction genre, and his increasing interest in taking Maori into the international arena.

While reading against the grain of current New Zealand literary practice, this thesis does not intend to contest such reading. Rather, it endeavours to present an additional, complementary analytical framework, based on a conviction that contemporary Maori-Pakeha cultural and literary negotiation and contestation is far from unique, but a local manifestation of other international and historical efforts for recognition and respect.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With immense thanks to the following people whose support made this thesis a pleasure to research and write: Mark Williams and Jean-Pierre Durix for advice, encouragement and many hours of stimulating conversation to “refaire le monde.” The English Department staff at the University of Canterbury, for many years of support, and particularly for the PhD scholarship. L’Ambassade de France en Nouvelle-Zélande, for much-appreciated funding and recognition of this project under the rubric of bilateral cultural cooperation. Diana Brydon, Patrick Evans, Gillian Kootstra, James Meffan, Stuart Murray, Chris Prentice, Florence d’Souza, Michaela Moura-Koçoğlu and Anthony Carrigan for valuable discussion of my work and theirs, including permission to use unpublished work. Emily White for endless photocopying and Véronique Rouanet for checking my translations. Nicola Frean, Special Materials Librarian, for many hours of help at the Beaglehole Archives.

And especial thanks to Witi Ihimaera for providing audio material, prompt answers to many queries, and great doses of enthusiasm.

*To my family and friends who stride along with me*

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**INTRODUCTION: STRIDING BOTH WORLDS**

I took a firm step forward into the Pakeha world. Firmly, I retained it.  
Somehow, I managed to stride both worlds.  
(*Tangi* 78)

In *Tangi* (1973), the first novel by a Maori to be published, Witi Ihimaera creates the fictional world of Waituhi, a rural Maori village based on the real place where the writer is from. In the *tangi*, funeral wake, Ihimaera describes a Maori life world hitherto largely unknown to mainstream white (Pakeha) New Zealand. The fictional Waituhi is a Maori enclave, a rural safe-haven peopled by Maori characters—introduced in Ihimaera’s earlier short story collection, *Pounamu Pounamu* (1971)—who are secure in their Maoritanga, Maori culture. In the above quotation, Tama, the protagonist, steps out of this cultural idyll at home into the Pakeha world of formal schooling and work, a move which threatens, and may even be incompatible with that of the Maori: “the world I was growing up in was a Pakeha one [and] it was difficult to retain my Maoritanga” (78). Ihimaera’s image of “striding both worlds” implies a dualistic perspective of Maori and Pakeha cultures as culturally, socially and economically divided, a viewpoint represented in the novel by the opposing poles of Waituhi and Wellington. The birthright of *whakapapa*, genealogy, anchors Tama to the Maori heritage embodied in Waituhi and its characters. The Pakeha world, on the other hand, is described as exterior and learned at school rather than naturally acquired. Stepping over from one pole to the other requires knowledge of and skills in both Maori and Pakeha domains. While Pakeha do not have the key to access Maori culture—the Pakeha couple shuffle nervously at the gates to the *marae* for the *tangi*—Tama serves as emissary, making the move to come over and welcome them in. Ihimaera’s fiction of the 1970s also fulfils that representative and educative function,



describing Maoritanga for the first time to a Pakeha and international readership.

The Maori-Pakeha dynamics in the novel *Tangi* exemplify those taking place contemporaneously in New Zealand society generally. The 1970s marked the beginning of a reconsideration of race relations between the majority Pakeha and the indigenous Maori, sparked by increasing pressure from Maori for recognition, manifested in a demand for political sovereignty and the revalorization of Maori culture, termed a Renaissance. In the 1980s, a political and cultural sea change occurred, with the establishment of official biculturalism engaging with the special place of Maori in New Zealand. Negotiating the terms of this monumental shift in Maori-Pakeha relations, on all levels of society, has been a long process that continues to the present day. As a yardstick for Maori concerns, Maori literature has been instrumental in expressing both the Maori Renaissance cultural flourishing and the political demands of sovereignty. Ihimaera's depiction of the cultural autonomy of pre-contact practices and values asserts a unique and special Maori culture, which validates the claim for political sovereignty, expressed as a kind of nationalism based on the struggle to assert fundamental differences and thereby rights to recognition. Indeed, Ihimaera's early fiction laid the foundations of Maori literature in English as a recognized genre of New Zealand fiction, and its style and content continues to be recognizable in the majority of Maori writing in 2007. In particular, the position from which the writer directs his or her narrative remains a constant: as Ihimaera puts it in an interview, writing by Maori is writing "from the inside out," describing a Maori social, cultural and imaginative worldview (Ellis 172). From tentative beginnings in the 1960s and 1970s, with Ihimaera (first collection of short stories, first novel), Patricia Grace (first book of fiction by a Maori woman) and Hone Tuwhare (first Maori poet), the publication of Maori writing from 1980 has been remarkably prolific. In the footsteps of Ihimaera's earlier anthologies *Into the World of Light* (1982)

and *Te Ao Marama* (1990-1996), the biennial Huia Publishers short stories collections (1995–) continue to provide a forum for new Maori writers and for discussions on defining Maori literature.

The New Zealand literary community, understood as predominantly Pakeha, since the 1970s, has embraced Maori writing in an inclusive gesture which nonetheless carefully maintains and honours its creative difference. Occasional debate over the value of Maori literature outside the sociological import of its content similarly looks to the Maori imaginary to describe the fiction in terms of a Maori aesthetic. Thus, for example, Ihimaera explains that the linear Western story is replaced by a circular, multiple or oral-inflected structure construed as natural to an oral storytelling culture (Wilkinson 106), while Maori belief systems, such as myth and metaphysical animism, challenge labels such as realism and fantasy (Wilkinson 100-101). This emphasis on a unique literary perspective argues that Maori fiction cannot be contained by Western genre categories and stylistic classifications, but is instead something different, internally consistent and fulfilling. The appointment of Maori writers and critics to academic roles and as commentators on Maori fiction reinforces this nationally consistent view of Maori centrality to all aspects of creating, publishing and interpreting their own cultural output. Ihimaera's career exemplifies this Maori and Pakeha enthusiasm for promoting Maori cultural agency on national and international levels. On the strength of his first publication, *Pounamu Pounamu*, Ihimaera was offered a post in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1972, which he unabashedly describes as the role of "token" Maori representative (Shepherd, "The Storyteller" 51). In the mid 1990s, he took up another type of diplomacy as a lecturer and mentor for new Maori writers at Auckland University, where he is now Professor, teaching Maori and Pacific literature and creative writing. His prolific output of short fiction, novels, poetry, operas, a play, a children's story, a ballet, and his editing of

numerous anthologies and guides to New Zealand, make him today arguably the country's pre-eminent Maori writer.

Nevertheless, in *Tangi*, there is much about the Maori world of the Waituhi of Tama's—and no less the author's—youth that is both Maori and Pakeha. The rural Waituhi that features throughout Ihimaera's fiction is not a discrete enclave of preserved tradition. Rather, from first colonial settlement up to the present day, such communities have been incessantly forced into contact with, and thereby changed by, colonial, Pakeha, and latterly global influences. The familiar debate surrounding the concept of Maoritanga illustrates the possibility of understanding “striding both worlds” as cultural interaction rather than as separate entities. By contrast with Ranginui Walker's definition of Maoritanga as a blueprint for continual Maori resistance that acts as a kind of buffer to cultural loss, several other anthropologists analyse the concept as contaminated by British colonial and Pakeha cultural constructs. For critics who challenge the separatist basis on which national biculturalism is founded, deconstructing Maoritanga supports their claim for cross-cultural interaction and influence. In *Patrons of Maori Culture*, Steven Webster argues that as a direct response to the pressures of colonization, Maoritanga emerged as “‘a whole way of struggle’” with the dominant settler society (Webster 7; see also King, *Te Ao Hurihuri* 16). In a literary context, Patrick Evans invokes Webster to situate Maoritanga within a wholly Pakeha framework (“On Originality” 72) in order to query the extent to which Maori Renaissance literature may claim a deep-seated and authentic difference from Pakeha fiction (77-81). From the perspective of Maoritanga as cultural interaction, then, “striding both worlds” is not about crossing over from one pole to another, but rather about how Maori culture is always already part of and contained in a web of historical and contemporary, local, national and global cross-culturality.

To understand Maoritanga as constructed out of cross-cultural interaction is to accept that Pakeha culture and people are in some way part of a

Maori worldview. Indeed, the ambition to redefine New Zealand race relations in the biculturalism of the mid eighties required looking anew at the country's foundations for both Maori and Pakeha. Alongside—and partly in response to—the Maori sovereignty and Renaissance movements, Pakeha national identity was also recast.<sup>1</sup> Pakeha willingness to identify themselves as an integral, somehow natural and “native” part of New Zealand was essential to the institutionalizing of a bicultural state in the 1980s. Today the tendency is to historicize the period from a Maori perspective, often in the terminology of Maori sovereignty, as a pro-active demand for agency in the face of Pakeha resistance. However, such a stance tends to forget that Pakeha, despite a history of political hegemony, have, since the 1970s, widely embraced biculturalism. Furthermore, Pakeha recognition, as Michael King puts it, “that people with security of identity in one culture are more easily able to integrate with another,” acknowledges that encouraging pride in Maoritanga secures a sense of legitimacy and belonging for both Maori and Pakeha (*Te Ao Hurihuri* 15). The Pakeha engagement with precepts of Maoritanga, including a revision of settlement history, the integration of Maori cultural and linguistic terms, and self-identification as “indigenous,” is evident in key Pakeha fiction of the 1980s by Ian Wedde, Maurice Shadbolt and C. K. Stead, as well as in King's polemical *Being Pakeha: An Encounter with New Zealand and the Maori Renaissance*. Whereas white New Zealanders in the past were averse to the Maori label “Pakeha,”<sup>2</sup> Avril Bell and Margot Butcher have described a

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<sup>1</sup> Other key reasons for the interest in (re)defining Pakeha identity issues are found in the major changes in New Zealand politics in the 1980s, particularly market deregulation and momentous changes in the social state, which called into question the concept of nationhood and the place of New Zealand in the world.

<sup>2</sup> At the moment of colonial contact, Maori labelled the white European settlers as different from their own state of normalcy, the word “Maori.” Whereas in its the original usage, Pakeha is anyone who is non-Maori, today it tends to have a more restricted meaning referring to European (predominantly British) New Zealanders of several generations standing. More recent immigrants are still marginalized by Pakeha as foreign. Although the term “Pakeha New Zealand” appears to be a doubling of signification, the proper noun is often employed—including throughout this thesis—as a substitution for “white,” which has negative, race-based connotations.

changing trend in recent census statistics. The majority now prefers to identify as Pakeha rather than European, and there is an increasing number of non-Maori who identify ethnically as Maori (Bell 144-147; Butcher 37-38). To embrace the term Pakeha as an identity marker is not only to identify *in relation to* Maori, but *as part of* a Maori worldview of belonging to Aotearoa/New Zealand. Quite simply, one cannot be a Pakeha anywhere but in New Zealand.

Cultural collaboration depends on both sides acknowledging the imbrication of the other in their own identity. In this, biculturalism is not formed by a binary of two opposites but by cross-cultural influences already within both halves. Currently, Maori are reticent in this regard, and it is predominantly Pakeha who seek to highlight cultural exchange, evident in the above scholarly studies of Maoritanga as influenced by non-Maori conceptions of culture. Over and above perceived differences that feed an argument for unique cultures, modern Maori and Pakeha cultures are both produced out of the historical and contemporary relationships between them. As Evans puts it, Maori-Pakeha debate “show[s] all the intimacy and familiarity of yet another row between long-term marriage partners” (“Biculturalism” 23). While it is clearly necessary to acknowledge the wish among Maori to register difference, this does not invalidate attempts to conceive of culture differently.

In agreement with a reading of biculturalism and Maoritanga as mutually interdependent and cross-contaminated, this thesis highlights aspects of Ihimaera’s oeuvre that demonstrate cross-cultural interaction and influence with Pakeha, European and other postcolonial cultures and literatures. Ihimaera’s fiction is heavily indebted to artistic traditions handed down from the English canon. His writing style contains echoes of Anglo-Saxon bardic poetry, English Romantic lyricism and the sublime, and he frequently employs the modernist vignette of heightened consciousness and postmodern pastiche, particularly with reference to American pop and film culture. The Pakeha

legacy of cultural nationalism is also evident in his use of social realism, with its demotic, colloquial and vernacular language, and the equally familiar portrayal of a rural masculine world, man against nature, ingenuity and endurance, the bush and rustic, modest rural communities. These influences are mixed with aspects of Maori storytelling, rhetoric, allegory and metaphor to create the highly readable and popular fiction for which Ihimaera is renowned. Yet, across his oeuvre there is an unreconciled tension in the multiple ways that the Maori writer employs Western cultural references and literary traditions. At times, his writing challenges Western conceptions and expectations of history, fiction and literary modes, while in other work he deploys these constructs without apparent mistrust. Similarly, while some of his fiction is thinly disguised political activism, his love of opera, the fantasy of baroque excess, and a curiosity for other peoples and cultures also informs writing that experiments with integrating positively other idioms into his Maori worldview. Recognizing in Ihimaera's fiction the ever-present tension that seeks to separate Maori and Pakeha yet benefit from both cultural and literary traditions illuminates the contradictions, difficulties and disputes at work in New Zealand's ongoing interrogation in the 2000s, of its national cultural identity as "one nation," bicultural or potentially multicultural. Ihimaera's work mirrors a parallel debate over the direction that New Zealand literature (both Maori and Pakeha) is taking, as the international orientation of some new writing challenges a perceived obligation to map the local in a distinct New Zealand idiom.

In its methodology, this thesis on Ihimaera's negotiation between Maori-Pakeha and Maori-international influences similarly "strides both worlds." As a cotutelle between New Zealand and French universities, the thesis views Maori literature from a European vantage point, situating Ihimaera's work within broader international and historical processes of identity and literary formation. In New Zealand, Maori fiction is predominantly

read through a bicultural frame, which is extended to a postcolonial context in comparative work that classifies and studies Maori writing alongside other minority and indigenous literatures. While these frameworks certainly speak to many of Maori literature's concerns, each has its own limitations. As Pascale Casanova argues in *La République mondiale des lettres* (*The World Republic of Letters*):

The fact of considering literary works on an international scale leads to the discovery of other principles of contiguity or differentiation, which allows one to bring together that which is usually separated, and to separate that which is usually brought together, thus revealing otherwise unknown properties. (242)<sup>3</sup>

The international scale of Casanova's analysis applies as much to her interpretative techniques as to the range of literature she addresses. As she puts it later in her argument, a text's specificity and its place in the vast domain of literature may only be found by "constant to-ing and fro-ing between the closest and the farthest, between the microscopic and the macroscopic, between the individual writer and the vast literary world" (476).<sup>4</sup>

In order to apply Casanova's focus-shifting techniques to a study of cross-cultural influence in Maori fiction, both French textual practice and New Zealand literary criticism and cultural studies are advantageous. The cotutelle arrangement has in this sense been crucial to establishing complementary reading positions capable of moving "between the individual writer and the vast literary world." For example, where French close readings tend to assume the text is separate from the world that produced it, the New Zealand critical preoccupation with "reading" Maori and national socio-cultural issues and

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<sup>3</sup> "Le fait de considérer les œuvres littéraires à l'échelle internationale conduit à découvrir d'autres principes de contiguïté ou de différenciation, qui permettent de rapprocher ce qu'on sépare d'ordinaire et de séparer quelque fois ce qu'on a coutume de rassembler, faisant ainsi apparaître des propriétés ignorées." *My translation.*

<sup>4</sup> "Ce va-et-vient constant entre le plus proche et le plus lointain, entre le microscopique et le macroscopique, entre l'écrivain singulier et le vaste monde littéraire." *My translation.*

events has drifted away from the text. Both make important contributions to literary criticism: the French familiarity with linguistic and literary theory and the New Zealand knowledge of Maori culture each offers different ways into the text. Alongside French textual and theoretical practice, my research in Ihimaera's archives in the Beaglehole Collection, Victoria University of Wellington, opens up other interpretative pathways. As with the French perspective, this new material challenges the conventional, accepted reading of Ihimaera's work in New Zealand. The study of his annotated manuscripts, unpublished operas, and letters negotiating the editing and publishing of his work reveals diversity and depth to Ihimaera's conception and construction of a Maori literary world.

In moving between the poles of Maori and European discourse, through a series of cultural and literary close-ups and long shots, this study is necessarily dialogic. To adopt Casanova's method, each chapter inserts Ihimaera's fiction into a different context, with the intention of highlighting "other principles of contiguity or differentiation" easily overlooked by approaches focused on cultural rather than literary analyses. Chapter one, "Maori Nationalism," attaches the demographically small and historically brief configurations of the Maori claim for political and cultural recognition to other national struggles, from the revolutions of 1848 to the new independences of the 1950s. To place Maori sovereignty and the Maori Renaissance within an international and historical perspective is not to diminish the particularity of New Zealand nationhood issues. Rather, it highlights the legitimacy, and indeed the normalcy of debates on identity and culture that figure so prominently in New Zealand. The second chapter, "Bicultural and Postcolonial Politeness," considers the importance of the cultural context from which Maori fiction and its writers position themselves within the long-running debate over the social or aesthetic function of literature. Ihimaera is seen to respond to the two positions available to the writer, as he creates both fiction that has a social and political



purpose, and that which responds to more personal, artistic interests. Focusing on work Ihimaera has called “selfish” releases this fiction from the demands of representation and realism encouraged by bicultural and postcolonial reading practices that interpolate into the Maori text social, cultural and political issues taking place off the page. While it is certainly productive to read Ihimaera through a postcolonial frame, the politics of his texts are complex and contradictory at times—qualities which increase their openness and demand more flexible and layered kinds of reading attention. In chapter three, “International Aesthetics,” a look at ways in which fiction distances itself from the world and from reality valorizes the imaginative and technical range in Ihimaera’s texts. Moreover, close study of the historical development of various stylistic and generic modes—baroque, epic, opera and rewriting—that Ihimaera employs shows that these features of English literature themselves contain aspects of the postcolonial struggle against alterity. Whereas the third chapter analyses incoming influence to Ihimaera’s Maori fiction, chapter four, “The Local and the Global,” identifies aspects of a Maori worldview that Ihimaera exports, leaving Waituhi for the metropolis of New York and London, and engaging with other indigenous or minority struggles in Canada and Vietnam. Theories of transculturation and glocalization cast positive light on contemporary Maori culture’s growing interest in internationalization and commercialization, which is received with wariness by critics such as Evans and Chris Prentice in New Zealand. Finally, chapter five, “Ambivalent Indigeneity,” approaches some of the questions and problematics that have emerged out of the different types of cross-cultural influences identified in the preceding chapters. In effect, this final chapter replies directly to the initial questions with which I began reading for my thesis topic. The curious way that Maori fiction of 2007 is often so similar to that of the 1970s raises the question of whether indigenous literature may somehow be caught in a demand for self-representation, a set of expectations concerning form and content. Ihimaera’s

stance as a Maori and as a writer is often ambivalent. His increasing use of the terms of minority struggle for empowerment demonstrates a certain sense of duty to “act” as an indigenous writer of the contemporary postcolonial era. In contradiction, his interest in diaspora and chosen cultural attachments challenges the perception of indigeneity as a knowable, fixable, bounded identity. In turn, this poses the question of whether Maori fiction which is unrecognizable as Maori, may still be labelled and valued as such. Ihimaera’s fiction, spanning more than thirty years, embodies this conflictual yet generative process of embracing change while retaining the force of Maori Renaissance and sovereignty aims.

It may be argued that this thesis’s refusal to centralize the Maori position reduces cultural specificity to assimilationist, Eurocentric universalism of the kind that pervaded dominant discourse views of the subaltern from the Enlightenment to colonialism. However, as Casanova’s schema reveals, the culture and literature labelled “European” or “Western” are already hybrid, non-static and subject to the same processes and pressures of identity formation currently at work in New Zealand. To recognize that culture is neither a place nor a period, but a constant and continual inter-animation played out through contestatory stances, challenges and justifications, validates the particular concerns of Maori culture at the same time as it does not allow it unique status by rights of precedence, authenticity or uniqueness. A sense of respect is here important, but also an acknowledgement that respect for cultural difference does not prevent fruitful debate. Despite conflicting definitions and usages of Maoritanga, all commentators concur that Maoritanga has been, and continues to be a central and powerful unifying force for Maori claims to cultural and political sovereignty. Similarly, to read Ihimaera’s fiction for what it shares with other cultures and literatures is not to denigrate its uniqueness or the role that Ihimaera has played and continues to play in promoting Maori literature and cultural pride.

The international perspective is a non-privileged position which brings to the fore those aspects of Maori cultural expression available to an international audience with little inside knowledge of Maori culture. Such a reading strategy goes against the tendency in bicultural New Zealand to leave comment and interpretation of Maori issues to Maori. Non-Maori New Zealanders, attuned to cultural differences, display a sensitivity and willingness to follow protocol that is carried over into their interpretations of Maori cultural expression. Although there is much willingness from New Zealanders and foreigners alike to learn about Maori culture on its own terms, I argue that it is also valid to engage with Maori culture on non-Maori terms. The increasingly international reach of reading and teaching postcolonial literature, and the use of cultural “branding” in corporate business—including the publishing industry—make it difficult for Maori to fully control their culture’s dissemination and interpretation.

One of the main criticisms levelled at Pakeha commentators on Maori literature is their lack of authority to interpret Maori culture and its expression. Ihimaera, Grace and Albert Wendt’s boycott of Stead’s 1994 *Faber Book of Contemporary South Pacific Stories* is certainly the most infamous example, while in broader cultural studies, Webster and King were severely admonished for their work on Maoritanga. Indeed, interpretation is an ideologically loaded act, which, in the bicultural, and no less the postcolonial context of deconstructing minority-Western power dynamics, has been somewhat prised away from its literary meaning where it designates how a work strikes an individual reader. Instead, interpretation has taken on a more anthropological sense, which infers a certain right and ability to decipher the other, coupled with a degree of acceptance from those observed of the verity of the interpretations. The close attachment of much Maori fiction and its critique to representative cultural identity forgets that literature is itself already an imaginative interpretation of the world. Wedde, in regards to another kind of

translation, that of lived culture to the memory institution of the national museum, Te Papa, puts it thus: “[a]rt constructs [the] present not as a pedagogic space, but as a metaphoric one” (“Living in Time” 10). As literature is an imagined impression rather than a lived, “pedagogic” reality, the parameters of this study shift from a question of interpretation to one of translation. The writer’s wish to translate reality into fiction, or from one language or culture to another, is propelled by a belief that translation carries across to the new context something of value or pertinence, illuminating certain aspects while leaving others behind. Whereas interpretation becomes implicated in a search for lost originals and better, more accurate and true counter-interpretations, translation looks at what has survived the crossover. It is in this sense that the “cross-cultural influence” of my title is intended.

The subject of this thesis has come about from my own experience as a Pakeha New Zealander, of a generation that came into political consciousness in the 1990s. By this time, the Maori Renaissance, if not finished, was already historicized, and the ground shift economic and political restructuring of the 1980s was similarly a past event. New Zealand’s position, in the last decade of the millennium, was firmly bicultural with an eye keenly fixed on the international horizon. This desire to measure the country by international (preferably British or American) standards, sent me, like many New Zealanders before and since, to work and live in Europe, on an “Overseas Experience.” In the national imaginary, this rite of passage affirms that New Zealand’s education, work skills and culture are on a par with those of London and New York. Such a perception, this constant pegging of the self to international acceptance, has particular resonance for the international success of Maori culture and arts which this thesis addresses.

By contrast with New Zealand’s constant questioning and sense of insecurity in naming its national character, I have lived in France for the past seven years, a country founded on the principles of the French Revolution and

the Third Republic, which provide national foundations that are virtually unquestionable, despite pressure for recognition from regional, ex-colonial and immigrant groups. The other countries in which I have lived (Turkey, Lithuania), and communities I have been involved with (Yugoslav, Armenian, North African) all experienced major upheavals in the twentieth century which have forced them to question the direction, and often even the location, of their identity on individual, community and national levels. While each of these cultures is unique, they nonetheless all share a constant questioning of their cultural identities as minorities and foreigners in majority cultures. My contacts with these communities, coupled with my own experience as an immigrant and foreigner, have shaped my understanding of how identities are formed and negotiated cross-culturally and inter-nationally. Similarly, my methodology working between and across Maori, Pakeha and French discourses and critical practices enacts the uncertainty and insecurity of minority experience. Through the non-resolution of contrastive and sometimes even conflicting positions, this thesis explores cross-cultural interaction and influence, the prerequisite of which is an openness and fluidity of boundaries between self and other.

## CHAPTER ONE: MAORI NATIONALISM

### “New” Maori Literature

In several articles throughout the 1950s and 1960s, eminent Pakeha New Zealand writer and literary critic, Bill Pearson, analyses Pakeha writers’ representations of Maori. In particular, he criticizes the majority of such fiction for succumbing to simplistic, often unfounded stereotypes of the Maori character and of Maori-Pakeha relations. Although, by the mid-sixties, some Pakeha writers were capable of “writ[ing] sympathetically of Maori,” Pearson argues that there remains “an incomplete appreciation of the distinctness of Maori communal life and of cultural features that Maoris prefer to retain” (*Fretful Sleepers* 146).<sup>1</sup> In *Te Ao Hou*, the journal of short stories by Maori published by the Department of Maori Affairs from the late 1950s, Pearson registers possible new directions for New Zealand literature to take, as an “authentic Maori outlook” begins to offer up “Maori attitudes to life which have escaped the Pakeha writer” (*Fretful Sleepers* 66-67). Pearson ends his essays anticipating “the appearance of a Maori novelist of outstanding talent,” and states his confidence “that Maori writing will be distinct in its passion, its lyricism and unforced celebration of living” (“The Maori and Literature” 137). The appearance of Witi Ihimaera’s first collection of short stories, *Pounamu Pounamu* in 1972, quickly followed by two novels, *Tangi* and *Whanau*, was heralded as that new voice which launched Maori fiction. Although predated by the stories in *Te Ao Hou*, Pakeha anthropologist, Margaret Orbell’s early anthology of Maori fiction, *Contemporary Maori Writing*, and Hone Tuwhare’s

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<sup>1</sup> Up until the early 1990s, both Maori and Pakeha tended to pluralize the proper noun as “Maoris,” and also to italicize Maori words and/or include a glossary. This clearly English technique has been replaced in New Zealand discourse by the adoption of Maori terms using Maori spelling and without explanations in English. Although it is incorrect in a national context, with the intention of remaining clear to a non-New Zealand readership, throughout this thesis I italicize and translate all Maori terms and include a glossary.

1964 poetry collection, Ihimaera, and later Grace as the first woman writer, received the accolades for Maori “firsts,” ushering in a “new” category of New Zealand writing that simultaneously, and somewhat contradictorily, adheres to its own traditions and conventions in a distinct manner, yet draws upon recognizable elements of the English literary tradition, packaged and received as part of the national literature.

Ihimaera claims to have been inspired to write in order to give a Maori perspective to New Zealand’s national literary imaginary. Indeed, he cites Pearson’s 1968 essay as particularly motivating (Pearson, “Witi Ihimaera” 167). Both within and outside his texts, Ihimaera assumes the role of educator, drawing attention to a unique, specifically Maori worldview, emerging reactively against the assimilationist expectations of mainstream Pakeha culture and society. He already has his ideal audience in mind:

My first priority is to the young Maori, the ones who have suffered most with the erosion of the Maori map, the ones who are Maori by colour but who have no emotional identity as Maori.  
(“Why I Write” 118)

In order to remain accessible to Maori who have lost contact with their indigenous origins, the vehicle must be the English language, which Ihimaera sees as strong enough to contain a Maori worldview within a foreign language. He states: “writing is my way, even if the vehicle is English, of trying to transmit Maori concepts” (Wilkinson 99). In the lyric trilogy *Pounamu*, *Tangi* and *Whanau*, these cultural traditions include the funeral *tangi* and wedding, Maori songs, legends and *marae* ritual protocol. The way that these cultural specificities are depicted in English and in the familiar genres of short story and novel means that the fictional setting of the village Waituhi is exclusively Maori yet also understandable, non-threatening and non-alienating to the Pakeha reader.

Pearson notes, along with several other commentators, that Ihimaera's themes are the direct and natural culmination of the earlier collections; in effect that the much-anticipated star writer of a "new" Maori fiction is already inscribed in an existing frame. Pearson summarizes *Te Ao Hou* and *Contemporary Maori Writing*:

The recurrent concern was a cultural identity crisis, provoked by the rapid shift of Maoris to the cities and the passing of the old spiritually relaxed, emotionally assured way of life that had prevailed in villages for half a century or more, involving the personal sustenance and obligations provided by the extended family, mutual aid, and a sense of fullness of living. ("Witi Ihimaera" 166)

Pearson accounts for the thematic continuity from earlier Maori writers to Ihimaera in terms of the cultural background they share, which includes the experience of a shift from rural to urban settings, from traditional Maori to a predominantly modern Pakeha culture. In closely aligning the writers' personal lives with their fiction, Pearson indicates that the principal difference between Pakeha writing of Maori and the new Maori voice is that of cultural authenticity. In speaking of his early writing, Ihimaera collaborates with this notion that the author's privileged insider view entails a parallel authenticity in the fiction: "[w]hat matters to me is the view from the inside out [. . .] I am a Maori writer, and this is my world" (Ellis 176). The effect is an understanding of early Maori literature as organic, arising out of both cultural traditions that Pearson says Maori "prefer to retain," and personal experience, "from the inside."

As identified by Pearson's "cultural identity crisis," Ihimaera's early fiction is principally concerned with portraying a rich rural traditional way of life set in counterpoint to the cultural paucity brought about by contemporary urban dislocation. Pearson's outline, above, not only sums up the two main axes of Maori fiction, but his language also signals the literary styles of this



writing. Traditional “fullness of living” is described in an emotional mode hazed with nostalgia common to a romantic lyricism, while the “crisis” of a sudden shift of an implied enforced change suggests the pared down, blunt style of social realism. Ihimaera’s first collection, *Pounamu*, develops the former of these key preoccupations, recreating “tender, unabashedly lyrical evocations of a world that once was” (Ihimaera, *Turnbull* 50). Ihimaera describes the “emotional landscape [of] the Maori people” (47), emphasizing values of love, community and tradition played out in the rural setting of Waituhi during the 1940s through 1960s, a period of increasing urbanization. Many of these early stories feature a child narrator, whose innocence and sensitivity paint a picture of a rural community and extended family as benevolent, emotionally rich and complete. For example, in “One Summer Morning,” the protagonist is a thirteen-year-old boy whose interior monologue reflects on his childhood, which is portrayed as idyllic. A similar tone is apparent in “In Search of the Emerald City,” in which the young boy narrator is excited about his family’s move from their rural community to the “Emerald city” of Wellington. The poignancy of these stories rests on the gap between the child’s eye naivety and the reader’s knowledge of the hardship awaiting these children as they grow up faced with rural poverty and lack of opportunity, in the case of the boy in “One Summer Morning,” or of discrimination and dislocation in the city, in “In Search of the Emerald City.” In stories which feature village elders, Ihimaera’s romantic, lyric voice becomes overtly elegiac. Imagery of the timeless and relentless rhythms of nature, land, and sea, enhances the sense of loss and nostalgia for the people who occupy it. For example, in “The Whale,” the old man reflects that “[j]ust as the sun falls and the shadows lengthen with the meeting house, so too is his life closing” (125). In this story, as in “Tangi”—both later reworked in the novels *Tangi* and *Whanau*—the village elders are dying or dead, leaving the younger generation to mourn the loss of wise elders and the ancient tribal knowledge that has gone with them.

In very early reviews, Pakeha literary commentators approach Maori fiction in English with a European aesthetic regard, concerned with analysing textual practice. Pearson defends this in his own review of Orbell's *Contemporary Maori Writing* as the ultimate accolade and proof that this collection holds its own on the national literary stage:

It is nevertheless no less than their due that the contributors to this volume should be judged by the same ultimate aesthetic criteria as other writing is judged by. (*Fretful Sleepers* 155)

H. Winston Rhodes is less certain, acknowledging in his reviews of *Tangi* and *Whanau* that Maori writing is predicated on such different premises to Western literature that it is difficult to combine the two:

*Tangi* becomes accessible to the Pakeha reader provided that the latter is patient with his own misunderstandings [and] aware that literary conventions are closely related to social traditions. (351)

Rhodes insinuates that the Pakeha literary tradition may not have the capacity to fully account for the ambitions of Maori fiction. In a resoundingly more negative manner, R. S. Oppenheim also registers the shift in New Zealand letters towards interpreting Maori fiction from a “social location” rather than within a literary frame, a change in perspective which he puts down to the Pakeha public’s thirst “for a deep draft of ethnicity” and the “self conscious Maoritanga” of Ihimaera’s generation (507). Over the course of the 1970s, Pakeha reviews of Ihimaera’s writing demonstrate a gradual distancing which unhitches Maori fiction from European and Pakeha considerations of literature. This shift in expectations has the effect of destabilizing the non-Maori critic from an authoritative critical position.

Although Oppenheim makes it clear that he disagrees with his own review’s non-literary interpretative viewpoint, his comments are prescient in reading the currents that would define the direction of Maori writing and New

Zealand's literary criticism as Maori activism became increasingly important from the mid- to late seventies. In particular, his comment that "Ihimaera has set about the task of making the myth which might make sense of being Maori" (507), registers a social motivation to Maori literary production. Indeed, following Pearson's and Ihimaera's emphases on the specificity of Maori literature, New Zealand literary criticism has largely focused on the Maoriness rather than the literariness of Maori writing, describing the sociological and anthropological import of these texts, of their faithful portrayal of a Maori world hitherto inaccessible to outsiders.<sup>2</sup> As Barry Mitcalfe puts it, in his review of *Tangi*, this first novel by a Maori writer would be a valuable "set text in a university sociological class" (Mitcalfe 15). Similarly, Norman Simms, in an early review of Ihimaera's fiction, evaluates the writing as drawing from a Maori heritage which is quite distinct from the English tradition of New Zealand's national literature (338). Mitcalfe's and Simms's emphasis on textual truth goes hand in hand with the similar demand for the writer's own authenticity and authority to represent a Maori voice. The satisfaction with which the dust jacket of *Pounamu* describes the collection as "[Ihimaera's] personal vision of Maori life as it is now, and of its values now," validates the text by attaching it to the life of the author.

Ihimaera's appearance on the New Zealand literary scene in 1972 coincides with a growing public awareness of *taha* Maori, things Maori, due to increasingly vocal Maori dissent in politics and social policy. The focus on

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2 In a notable exception, Pearson points to similarities in Ihimaera's imagery with Anglo-Saxon poems *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* (*Fretful Sleepers* 169-171). Norman Simms cites literary precedents including Zola, Gorky, Faulkner and Hardy, although he does not discuss how Ihimaera connects with these writers, and expects Maori literature to find inspiration in mythology and experience unique to Maori. By comparison, non-New Zealand literary critics have more thoroughly analysed Ihimaera's work in relation to European literature: Armando Jannetta likens Ihimaera's lyricism to English Romanticism and modernism, Hartwig Isernhagen discusses linguistic experimentation, Jannetta analyses the animistic fantasy sequence of the greenstone patu swimming through the air in "The Greenstone Patu" as akin to "The Dream of the Rood," and for Jean-Pierre Durix, this same scene is influenced by magic realism (*Mimesis*).

Ihimaera's writing as providing a unique Maori perspective of Maori experience and Maori imagination thus parallels Pakeha reconceptualizing of Maori during the 1970s, as an assimilationist politic was passed over in favour of highlighting differences between the two majority cultures. In the middle years of the decade, Maori protest erupted into the public domain, with key moments including the 1975 Land March, the Treaty of Waitangi Act, which ratified the Treaty as the nation's founding document, increasingly vocal protests by activist groups such as Nga Tamatoa, and land occupations at Bastion Point and Raglan. These events catalyzed the Maori demand for sovereignty and its concomitant cultural claim for recognition, the Maori Renaissance. While Ihimaera's lyric trilogy predates these major events, his second collection of short stories, *The New Net Goes Fishing* (1977) engages with these changes. *New Net* overlays post-1975 protest vocabulary on the lyric voice of a timeless Maori past. This juxtaposition is particularly clear in the shift in narrative setting from now derelict rural communities to an urban context, and the shift from child to adult narrator, which entails a subsequent diminishing of the lyric voice in favour of lucid social realism. Because the pastoral voice is necessarily situated in the past, it cannot engage with the contemporary context of Maori-Pakeha racial tension in the 1970s—lyricism cannot broach the “faultline” (Turnbull 50) of the urbanization and “Pakehization” which has broken the past unity of rural, wholly Maori communities. By contrast, the stories in *New Net* are political and angry (“Clenched Fist,” “Truth of the Matter”), and confront social and economic disparities between Pakeha and Maori (“The House with Sugarbag Windows,” “The Kids Downstairs,” “Passing Time”).

Compared with the predominantly first-person narration in *Pounamu*, the third-person perspective in the majority of *New Net* stories inserts a greater distance between author, narrator and reader. This narrative shift contributes to a loss of fluidity in the collection: in many stories the narrator takes on a

didactic function, filling in background information on Maori social conditions rather than allowing such issues to be carried by dialogue or the story's structure. Ihimaera's writing loses conviction when he moves away from describing emotions to put politics in the mouths of his protagonists. For example, in "Tent on the Home Ground," about an occupation of Parliament by Maori protesters over land rights, a Maori (Api) challenges a Pakeha (Peter), who refutes being racist. The dialogue, however, is not convincing coming from Api, depicted as a working class activist who resents the success of "middle class," "elitist" Peter (147):

Api narrowed his eyes. Then he flashed the quick smile of a panther.  
 – Who discovered New Zealand? He asked Peter.  
 – Eh? Oh, Abel Tasman, Peter answered startled.  
 And Api grinned with triumph.  
 – Man, he said. Your answer is your proof. Long before Abel Tasman got here, Kupe discovered this country. But you've probably never heard of him, have you. After all, he was only a Maori.  
 Peter reddened with anger.  
 – Kupe? He's just a legend.  
 – Your second proof, Api answered. Anything that happened to us you call myth or legend. Anything that happened to you is called history. (149-150)

The somewhat uneasy juxtaposition of the pastoral voice with Ihimaera's desire to map a more direct, politically engaged reality makes *New Net* an ambivalent text which conveys mixed signals in a range of tones—aggressive, poignant, exuberant, disappointed, perplexed, ashamed or regretful.

While Pakeha commentators register the shift in voice from lyricism to stark social realism in the latter collection, most refrain from judging these stories within a Western or Pakeha national literary tradition. As with Ihimaera's lyric trilogy, analyses look to what makes this fiction different from its Pakeha correlative. The unevenness with which certain stories in *New Net* have been singled out for critical attention, while others are largely ignored, is

indicative of the overall lack of coherence of the collection. It also points to an uncertainty about how non-Maori critics might go about commenting on the explicit politicization in these stories, or whether to do so is an appropriate response to such fiction. While a socio-political purpose is negative from Oppenheim's literary standpoint, it is acceptable and even expected in minority literature of the postcolonial era. Hence, when Richard Corballis and Simon Garrett bluntly criticize Ihimaera's cultural politics in some *New Net* stories as "propagandist" and "barely-disguised sociological treatises" (Corballis and Garrett 45, 48), Otto Heim defends Ihimaera's work as common to writing on race relations, which requires an immense effort "in constructing a political ideology as adequate consciousness" (*Broken Lines* 176). Ken Arvidson similarly defines Maori fiction as "a functional literature," which is useful "in the service of some cause or causes," and for its "archival function" (117). Arvidson positions such usefulness in opposition to the "'well-wrought urn' approach":

Maori literature is an accumulation of works which in the main have objectives different from their own perfection, and broadly speaking these objectives or ends are political. (120)

Ihimaera concurs with Heim's and Arvidson's argument for purposive Maori literature, as well as with Rhodes's and Oppenheim's early identification of the importance of social practices in literary output and interpretation. For the pre-eminent Maori writer, the politics of Maori sovereignty and the renaissance of cultural expression are inseparable. This is evident in his apparently unproblematic slide from talking about fiction to talking about politics, and the way he transposes his personal frustration at not being able to write as he would like to onto a larger socio-political field of a similar Maori struggle to find their own voice: "[j]ust as all literature is politics, so too am I not only a writer but a political person" (Williams, "Interview" 288):

Up until twenty years ago the strength, the mana of being Maori had been submerged in our society—I've characterised it as being the largest underground movement in New Zealand—and until then most Maori were still unable to engage the Pakeha on his own ground and at close quarters [. . .] If you look at the work of Maori before Nga Tamatoa, fiction or non-fiction, little of it engages the Pakeha on political issues. It only comes out in haka. My work is at the turning point of those times. (Williams, "Interview" 290-291)

Ihimaera employs the language of Maori protest interchangeably to describe his ambitions for Maori people and Maori literature. His overarching motivation and ambition is to assure recognition and empowerment for Maori, here expressed as the "freedom" to engage with issues that face Maori, and by challenging Pakeha directly, "on his own ground and at close quarters." In his claim that the future of Maori fiction is engagement in a literature of "race relations" (*Turnbull* 53), Ihimaera speaks with confidence and authority of Maori sovereignty as the right to control the style, content, and the dissemination of Maori cultural output.

Ihimaera's self-imposed imperative to "work for the Maori people" (*Turnbull* 47) fosters a literary voice which represents, educates and explains Maori culture to its non-Maori readership. This is matched by a Pakeha desire to read of such cultural differences, as foreseen in Pearson's early essays, waiting for a Maori writer who would offer a "viewpoint of different inheritance" (*Fretful Sleepers* 149). From these stances it is seen that both Maori and Pakeha have encouraged a separatist vision of the writing and the reception of Maori literature. Nevertheless, Australian literary critic, Paul Sharrad, offers a counterargument. Sharrad analyses an early Maori play, Harry Dansey's, *Te Raukura* (1972), which the critic argues has been sidelined for not adhering to the expected, neat Pakeha-Maori dichotomy:

It appears that neither an "outside" (Western) nor an "inside" (indigenous) critical formation has known what to do with this work.

This is because both the traditional Pakeha and the oppositional Maori literary histories both function out of the same set of assumptions; they are merely the majority-minded “identity politics” inversions of each other [. . .] Both critical camps value “firsts”, but the one emphasizes art and cannot accept Dansey’s work as meaningful in the context of a well-constructed, self-contained realist “play”, and the other emphasizes politics and cultural tradition and cannot accept that this otherwise oppositional work seems to move into a European genre and the dominant national ideology. (“Wrestling with the Angel” 323)

Sharrad sees the construction of a unique cultural identity for both Pakeha and Maori as predicated on the inverted and “oppositional” use of “the same set of assumptions.” In effect, Maori and Pakeha are dependent on one another so that defining what is unique in Maori literature is a process of rejecting and negating that which is valued in the Pakeha equivalent. Sharrad’s view of Maori and Pakeha identity politics as driven by the same prerogatives allows him to read Dansey in a new way. Instead of focusing on aspects of the play that illustrate cultural differences, Sharrad’s article concentrates on what is shared. The tendency to read Ihimaera as espousing a distinct Maori worldview through a novel use of literary form and function accords with the “oppositional [. . .] literary histories” that Sharrad sees as central to New Zealand literature. Indeed, Oppenheim’s speculation in his early review of *Pounamu* that Maori fiction will be read in accordance with its “social location” rather than within “the tradition of English literature” has prevailed in New Zealand literary criticism. The discourse of difference, already implied in Pearson’s early anticipation of a new voice, crystallized in the 1980s around emergent biculturalism governed by sensitivity to fundamental cultural differences between Pakeha and Maori New Zealand.

Sharrad’s reminder of the close, interdependent relationship between Maori and Pakeha literature offers a different way of reading Ihimaera. Rather than working against the national literature established by the dominant Pakeha, Ihimaera may be interpreted as both responding to it and contained in it.



Inserting Ihimaera's fiction into the national discourse demonstrates ways in which his work shares with Pakeha writers the common goal of creating a national identity through a nationalist literary imaginary. Maori literature is thus seen as the latest configuration of earlier "new" modes of writing in New Zealand's literary tradition, most notably early-twentieth-century Maoriland and mid-century Pakeha cultural nationalism. As in these earlier periods, the Maori demand for sovereignty is also a type of nationalism in the sense of asserting national independence, albeit contained within a bicultural framework. This nationalist drive is implied in its very terminology. Maori sovereignty's terms "renaissance" and "revolution" denote an ambition to make something new of the old, to reformulate the past within the parameters of the present, while the term "sovereignty" cannot help but contain echoes of colonial empire. Ihimaera's work illustrates and exemplifies the nationalist preoccupations of much Maori fiction. Most notably, his coalescing of politics and culture, of drawing on one to support the other, are foundational to nation building, in which the imaginary plays a major role in establishing, then later consolidating, the conception of cultural difference on which the demand for sovereignty or independence is based.

At first glance, nationalism may not seem an appropriate term for describing the construction of only one of New Zealand's major constituencies, which remains dependent on and contained within the national framework. The sovereignty movement is, however, a reaction against a "one nation" stance, and its emergence in the 1970s brought about a sea change in New Zealand's identity on all levels, overturning assimilationism and instating biculturalism as national politic, symbolized by the newly joint name Aotearoa/New Zealand. As perhaps the slash rather than hyphenated name indicates, the bicultural nation is not a melding of two cultures, but the acknowledgement of their dual title. Maori sovereignty asserts the existence of fundamental, irrefutable cultural differences between Pakeha and Maori New Zealanders, which

necessitates different ways of managing Maori and Pakeha interests in politics and society. Precepts of difference underlie all national struggles for recognition and independence, whether they are from a dominant culture, political regime or empire. The questions defining who and what is Maori share the same concerns as nation building in nineteenth-century Europe, which culminated in the 1848 revolutions, and their antipodean counterpart, in the emergent New Zealand identity in the late 1800s and early 1900s known as Maoriland. The same motivations are also found in decolonization movements around the world in the latter half of the twentieth century. To understand the Maori sovereignty and Renaissance movements within a common nationalist and decolonizing urge allows a reading of Ihimaera's early fiction that focuses on his work as based on a conception of culture as a common, shared language, rather than separate and bounded by a unique, impermeable Maori worldview. This envisages Maori fiction in English not as a discrete entity but rather contained in the historical and international breadth of the Western literary tradition, of which postcolonial literature is one facet.

The Maori sovereignty movement and concomitant cultural Renaissance may be described as nationalist in two very specific ways. Firstly, external European and Western, as well as New Zealand Pakeha influences, always already contaminate Maori nationalism, which reconstructs the past within the terms of the present. As Prentice puts it in her article "What *Was* the Maori Renaissance?," "[t]he communities may be 'closing ranks', but the 'outside' is already 'inside' before the gates are shut" (104). Secondly, the effort to uncover and promote cultural uniqueness is fashioned out of the same tools available to other nationalisms. Thus nation building is exposed as a paradoxical impulse in which each nation's authority, based on defined and accepted foundational differences, overlooks the common strategies used by all. In *La création des identités nationales*, French sociologist and historian, Anne-Marie Thiesse, illuminates the commonality of nation building in her thorough enumeration of

what she calls a “do-it-yourself” kitset or an identity “check-list,” a set of techniques that she applies across many European countries which each claims unique and immutable features (14).<sup>3</sup>

In the same way that late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century nationalisms replaced empire and monarchy as the governing structure of world power and economies, twentieth-century nationalisms stake a separatist claim for indigenous peoples and minorities contained within the nations created by colonial empires. As Prentice elaborates, Maori sovereignty’s use of the terms renaissance and revolution is not innocent of echoes of Europe (85-6). More than the specifics of European campaigns for artistic rejuvenation and independences, which have only distant relevance to a late-twentieth-century indigenous situation, Prentice draws closer connections with the US Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. Indeed, Maori protest groups, especially Nga Tamatoa, were directly influenced by American civil rights activism, which grew out of the earlier New York “boom.” The Harlem and Maori Renaissances share several features of socio-political unification grouped around sudden urbanization, a politicized, sometimes militant racial consciousness, and a surge in cultural production which reflected these issues (“Maori Renaissance” 86-7). Several of Ihimaera’s stories in *New Net* feature characters involved in activism similar to Nga Tamatoa, and hence display indebtedness to American antecedents. For example, in “Clenched Fist” and “Tent on the Home Ground,” the American terms “brother” and “black” replace the distinctly Maori “cousin” and “brown” to signal politicized group identity, as does the imagery of the black panther and upheld clenched fist.

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<sup>3</sup> Its features include: a national language based on a dialect or language which is recovered in rural enclaves and from elders or rediscovered in “lost” manuscripts; a national history, folklore, myth and typical landscape written and painted; a cult of ancestors selected to represent a prestigious, heroic and cohesive past; the archaeological excavation of cultural nationalist remains and artefacts, which again point to a great past; the stereotyping of a certain mentality or national character; a national anthem, flag, typical costume, cuisine, music, emblem of flora or fauna.

The Irish renaissance provides another international parallel at a hinge period between European nationalism and twentieth-century decolonization. As such, it is often cited as a precursor to the postcolonial phenomenon (Bahri; Casanova; Deane; Kiberd). Indeed, New Zealand literary critic, Mark Williams, finds strong similarities between the Irish, postcolonial and Maori renaissances, particularly their interlocking imperatives of renaissance as continuity with a mythic past and rupture with an undesirable present (“The Long Maori Renaissance”). For Casanova, the way that “new” literatures employ a common nationalist imaginary provides evidence that postcolonial fiction is inscribed in the long international history of literary development:

In one sense, [decolonization] is only the continuation and extension of the revolution inaugurated by Herder: the newly independent nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, obeying the same political and cultural mechanisms, moved to assert linguistic and literary claims of their own. The consequences of decolonization in the literary world were of a piece with the national and literary upheavals of nineteenth-century Europe, carrying on the Herderian revolution by other means. (116, trans in *The World Republic of Letters* 79-80)

Both the black American and Irish contexts exhibit features of nation building in the way they recycle key aspects of their culture’s past to serve socio-political motivations in the present. The Harlem Renaissance and later black Civil Rights movement show that the demand for recognition of cultural nationalism does not necessarily equate with a claim for an independent state. As Benedict Anderson, in his seminal work, *Imagined Communities*, and more recently Arjun Appadurai in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* both stress, nationalism’s cohesive power comes from its ideological components. This is borne out in the strong group identities maintained in many exiled, refugee, migrant, minority and indigenous communities.

Nationalism, through the articulation of a “national spirit” first identified by Ernest Renan in a foundational essay of the early-nineteenth century, *What Is a Nation?*, establishes a real base out of largely imagined sentiments, construed as natural and timeless (Thiesse 16). This is apparent in the etymology of the word “nation,” which comes from the Greek *natio* meaning *naissance*, birth. Raymond Williams points out a further etymological link: “[n]ation’ as a term is radically connected with ‘native.’ We are *born* into relationships which are typically settled in a place” (Williams qtd in Brennan 2). Drawing from the connection between native and nation, Maori sovereignty leans heavily on the notion of indigeneity to stress historical continuity as the basis for its claims to authority and authenticity. This is evident in both its political dimension, which seeks redress for colonial misdeeds and rectification of contemporary social inequalities, and its cultural dimension, which promotes the revival of traditional cultural practices. Maori sovereignty focuses on an ongoing and unabated struggle for recognition of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi as New Zealand’s founding document. Emphasis on earlier protest movements, starting with Kingitanga and Kotahitanga from the 1850s, politicians, notably Pomare, Buck and Ngata from the 1900s, as well as a long line of tribal leaders and prophets, notably Te Whiti and Ratana, reinforce the claim for autonomy in the present. Influential Maori spokesman and anthropologist, Ranginui Walker, describes this ongoing protest as forced “underground” by the assimilationist Pakeha politics of the twentieth century (*Ka Whawhai* 186). The sense of Maori determinacy as maintained with difficulty over a long period corresponds with Thiesse’s claim that the features of nation building are always placed under the aegis of urgency and struggle, to be salvaged, enumerated and preserved before the traces of these “originals” are lost (13-14). This is a point of which early leader, Apirana Ngata was well aware. Indeed, Walker cites Ngata’s efforts to preserve artefacts in the early 1900s, and his 1928 establishment of the first school of Maori arts, as the beginning of the modern Maori Renaissance

(Walker, *Ka Whawhai* 188-191; *Nga Pepa* 48-51). Ngata's poetry similarly creates its lyric pathos out of the threat of losing a valued cultural past, particularly evident in his poem "A Scene from the Past" written within the mode of Maoriland romanticism (Stafford and Williams, "Victorian Poetry" 30-36). The tropes of cultural salvage, which Arvidson calls the "archival function," also feature in Ihimaera's early texts. In an echo of Walker's insistence on a long history of Maori resistance, Ihimaera draws attention to the "underground" presence of Maori literature, something which he also stresses in his first anthology of Maori writing in 1982. His continual reminders of a legacy of Maori writing that predates his own work, including Tuwhare, Dansey, Jackie Sturm and Rowley Habib, accord with the nationalist instinct to focus on continuity in order to legitimate and naturalize its claims for recognition.

Recognizing the demands of nation building in the Maori Renaissance frame within which Ihimaera's fiction is packaged and interpreted provides the starting point for an analysis of further influences of other kinds of nationalisms in these texts. The following sections on national heroes, myth and history, and landscape in Ihimaera's 1970s texts apply European, Pakeha nationalist and other postcolonial efforts to the Maori literary imaginary. Ihimaera's extensive borrowing of earlier nationalist tropes argues that cross-culturality is inherent in all literature, and thereby supports Sharrad's claim that Pakeha and Maori literatures are mutually dependent.

### National Heroes: The Romantic Peasant and Realist Man Alone

Against the confines of empire or colonization, nation building is always interpreted as a democratic revolution, drawing strength from popular, grass roots and egalitarian values. In its literary and artistic equivalent, late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century romanticism, construed as a reaction against the formal strictures of classicism, embodies these values. An emphasis on emotion, the organic, liberalism and equality, often found all at once in the rural working class, are to be found in Herder's oral folklore and peasant songs, the Grimm brothers' legends and fairytales from rural elders, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *retrouvailles* from his walks in the French countryside, and James Macpherson's Ossian. The philosophical and literary works of such writers prefigure nationalism by "documenting," in the uncertain present, a homogenous and autonomous past, which in turn inspires aspirations of national solidarity and independence. In particular, the rural informants and subjects of their tales represent nationalist ideals because unsullied, either because historically or geographically preserved, from the negative impact of encroaching modernity. Romanticism and nationalism combine in art to bridge the gap between the imagination and the real, as the artist creates an edifying sense of national identity through storylines played out in a national setting and by a hero that the public can identify with and imitate—to the point where the nation itself is the main character of the epic heroic struggle (Thiesse 136). The same characteristics are found in the much later nationalist work in postcolonial writing. As Jean-Pierre Durix points out in a discussion on the historicizing impulse in early postcolonial texts, the "village novel," exemplified by Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, combats the reductionist colonial view of the indigene by portraying in great detail indigenous culture as rich in tradition and complex in organization (Durix, *Mimesis* 25-26). Durix classes *Tangi* and *Whanau* within this grouping, a point supported by Ihimaera's claim that

*Waituhi: The Life of the Village*, an opera based on the novel *Whanau*, “has no main characters at all, the main character is the village itself” (Wilkinson 107).

Ihimaera’s fiction shares many features of romanticism, in its subject matter, narrative perspective and voice. Indeed, Ihimaera directly calls attention to his connection with the English romantics, in his comparison of his *Pounamu* and *New Net* with William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (Ellis 170). Ihimaera’s rural setting and characters most clearly evoke a romantic, nationalist sentiment. Many of Ihimaera’s narrators are Maori elders or children, and the relationship between them—or lack of it—offers a way into the themes of alienation, through the dying village elder, the child lost in the city, or its opposite, namely cultural preservation through the transmission of traditional tribal knowledge. As in the romantic view of the past, the desire to salvage the Maori past in a way meaningful for the present is undercut by elegy. Constructing the national imaginary is always a recuperative gesture motivated by a sense of urgency, to “rescue” cultural artefacts before they are lost. This dynamic is apparent in many of Ihimaera’s stories which work around this theme, such as “Fire on Greenstone,” “Gathering of the Whakapapa,” and “The Greenstone Patu,” all of which are seen through the eyes of the younger generation who regret not having paid more attention before their elders passed away. In these stories, the natural generation gap becomes symbolic of the very real break with tradition caused by nineteenth-century colonization.

In his study of intertextuality in Ihimaera’s writing, Armando Jannetta outlines how the search for roots and past authenticity is a key feature of both the Romantic sublime and Modernism. Within these contexts, he points to Ihimaera’s reference to Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poetic imagery in “I, Ozymandias” in *New Net* (18). In this story, lyric poignancy is overlaid with the harshness of social reality. A young Maori man, who has succeeded in the Pakeha world of the city, happens to drive past a prison farm with a Pakeha friend. Passing a group of convicts labouring on the side of the road, the young



man recognizes one of the prisoners as his best friend from his rural childhood. The shock of recognition sparks memories of their shared past, portrayed as a pastoral idyll:

[R]emember? We [. . .] sneaked out of school and went down to the river for a swim. The water was cool, an oasis reflecting the sun which fragmented in mirror pieces when you dived into it. We chased each other through the sun-shafted depths of the water, under sunken logs and drifting curtains of overhanging willows. Then we skimmed our promises to each other like small stones across the water.

That day was one of the best of my life, honest. (178-179)

Under the guise of the truants being found out and made to learn “that dumb poem about Ozymandias,” Ihimaera draws on Shelley’s imagery of the sands of time effacing the pretensions of an ancient king who sought immortality in a stone effigy. For Shelley, nature’s relentless movement highlights the brevity and insignificance of a man’s life and mocks his attempts to maintain a hold of an instant and to be remembered, as in the “half sunk” or “shattered” statue of the Romantic poem. Ihimaera transplants Shelley’s philosophy to the context of modern Maori experience: just as all men are condemned to be forgotten or reduced to vestiges of their former glory, Maori culture of the past is fallen and crumbled and cannot be remade in the present. In seeing his childhood friend, the narrator is haunted by “a sandstorm which has uncovered those shattered remains of a life we once shared” (175). In his mind, the character replays the moment of recognition, where he saw his friend’s shame and bitterness, but he cannot undo it. Neither can he forget the moment, and it is here that Ihimaera’s nostalgia for the loss of Maori culture due to colonization becomes both sad and angry: he is condemned to live in a state of suspension between two cultures, while imagining the wholeness and unity of the past. Ihimaera’s romantic vision imagines that a reconnection with pre-contact Maori values of land, ancestry and mythology may offer a way out of the cultural desert of Shelley’s poem, thereby providing a future for Maori culture. The clarity of this

rupture between past and present makes Ihimaera's texts typical of the national imaginary, in which a positive past contrasted with an unsatisfactory present provides the basis for the cyclical revolution and renaissance.

Ihimaera's lyric and elegiac voices are carried by the pastoral mode, something which is acknowledged by all commentators who do not, however, unpack the romantic implications behind this. Within this mode of writing, the features of particular import for the nationalist imaginary are those of emotion and land, brought together in the traditional rural persona. William Wordsworth's "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads* sets the precedent, in which he describes the attractiveness of the "rustic" peasant as poetic subject:

In that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity [. . .] because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and, from the necessary character of rural occupations. ("Preface" 650)

The pastoral vision is organic, growing out of the soil rather than schoolroom learning. In *Tangi*, Ihimaera's narrator puts in perspective Maori children's difficulties with doing their schoolwork:

Dad and Mum couldn't help us [with our homework] because they knew little of such things. That didn't seem to matter to us; their knowledge was of the earth and of loving the earth and that seemed more important. (79)

This is reformulated in *Whanau* in a way that equates knowledge of the land with a strong sense of roots and, ultimately, happiness. The boy, Andrew, "env[ies]" his father who is a labourer:

You're content; I'm not. You know about the earth; all I know about it is from books. Your life is here and you only want to stay here; I don't

know where my life will lie. But wherever it is, it will not be as happy as yours. (69)

Although it is somewhat difficult to imagine a fourteen-year-old boy formulating his fears of growing up and leaving home in quite this way, Andrew clearly sees his father as a quintessential Maori man, a role model whom he knows he cannot replicate. In passages in the novel that depict these male characters at work, readers are shown a model for the way in which Wordsworth's "essential passions" and "elementary feelings" are translated into a fundamental connection between Maori and the land:

[Rongo] had felt the earth crying out for seed. He had felt the yearning of the land for peace, for it had become accustomed to the rhythm of the yearly planting. And there had been a crying out of his own blood too. The rhythm of the land and the rhythm of his blood had been one and the same. And he had begun the planting and both blood and land had gradually become calm. And he felt the strength of the land calling him. (54)

The linking "and" in each sentence augments the metaphoric connection between the Maori farmer and his land. Wordsworth's romantic heart, represented in the blood in this extract, makes emotion the conduit between man and his natural environment, something that Ihimaera's characters express in spontaneous outpourings of love: for Rongo "the tears from his eyes, it would be they which would water each green shoot" (54). Child characters are similarly deeply connected to the land: even the adolescent Hema takes time out of his fantasy of sex and Western movies to notice:

He looks up and sees [the wild geese], arrowing sharply through the bright cloudless morning. So beautiful they are, and they have all the sky as their dominion. Breathless with wonder and happiness, he watches them. ("One Summer Morning" 83)

Against criticism of overflows of sentiment in his writing, Ihimaera explains the importance of emotions in the Maori world. The underlying criticism is that there is a lack of feeling in Pakeha expression:

[W]ell, I'm very sorry but Maoris are people who tend to cry and tend to laugh, they are our basic human emotions and we have not been westernised to the extent that we find it difficult to cry because someone has told us that we should not do it [. . .] We depend a lot on people's emotions, we like to involve ourselves directly in emotion. (Wilkinson 104)

This statement is loaded with romantic sensibility, which pits “basic human emotions” against inferred restraint and austerity in the Western tradition. The implication is that not only is emotion intrinsic to Maori identity, but also that this is something unique, a remnant of pre-contact culture and thus not shared by Pakeha. When applied to nature, emotion becomes the exclusive feature which makes the Maori sovereignty claim to the land superior to Pakeha ownership. The fact that all of Ihimaera's characters possess a direct emotional link to the land is a point of continuity between past and present. Even those characters who leave the rural enclave of Waituhi are assured that they still belong: in *Whanau*, Andrew's father assures his son that “[t]his village belongs to you; you belong to it” (69). That this link is maintained emotionally and historically, rather than through actual ownership or residency, is what makes Ihimaera's romantic pastoral vision nationalistic.

In an early review, Simms likens Ihimaera's stories to the naturalism of Emile Zola, whose work offers an exaggerated view of plebeian struggles and detailed descriptions of the rural milieu (Simms 338). Simms's label of Ihimaera as a “Maori Zola”—a sobriquet which occasionally resurfaces—conceives of Ihimaera's portrayal of the Maori world as located midway between romanticism and realism. The way that New Zealand critics have avoided signalling Ihimaera's debt to romanticism reveals a negative perception

of pastoral lyricism in New Zealand literature. This silence is doubly inscribed in the national literary consciousness of the twentieth century. Firstly, it corresponds to the rejection of early efforts at depicting a local sentiment at the turn of the twentieth century, in the writing known as Maoriland, and secondly, it accords with the separatist drives of Maori sovereignty and Renaissance. There is similarly little mention of Ihimaera's use of mid-twentieth-century Pakeha cultural nationalism, the realist mode that emerged out of the Depression, from Allen Curnow and Frank Sargeson's generation of the 1930s. In another example of the strong influence of a national imaginary, the literary landscape of this mid-century generation embraced the values of ruggedness, masculinity and the local vernacular similar to those used in settler culture while clearing and taming the land.

Because the New Zealand literary tradition necessarily grew from its European (predominantly British) roots, its early writing continued this style, adapting its content to the antipodean climate; for example, replacing English motifs (skylarks, blossom trees) with antipodean ones (bellbirds, kowhai). Thus English romanticism was important in the first stages of the development of a New Zealand national imaginary at the turn of the nineteenth century. By the 1930s, in a reaction against the predominantly Georgian romanticism of Maoriland writing, epitomized by Quentin Pope's 1930 collection *Kowhai Gold*, the next generation of poets strained to prove their independence from both England and their colonial legacy, to shrug off the loftiness of romantic sensibility and replace it with realism and ruggedness. In rejecting the romantic tenets on which Maoriland writing was founded, Pakeha nationalism supplanted romantic sensibility for harsh realism, and set about coming to terms with a New Zealand identity not from the comfort of their provincial libraries, but by getting out onto the new land to conquer and to tame. This was inevitably conceived of as a masculine task, leading to the predominant trope of

this period as the man alone. As Allen Curnow, poet and critic who spearheaded the movement claimed:

By visions it is meant, of course, things actually seen and faithfully reported: not Ezekiel wheels but real wheels, not turnip spooks but turnips at market prices. It is out of such things that vision is required of a poet here and now. (*Look Back Harder* 10)

This new direction was registered in New Zealand's first literary journals, *Phoenix* (1932) and later *Landfall* (1947), their titles signalling a rebirth into new beginnings. *Landfall*, which first appeared in 1947 and continues today, took up the charge of mapping a growing national literature. This motivation was also expounded in Curnow's two major anthologies of New Zealand poetry, the Caxton *Book of New Zealand Verse* (1945) and the *Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* (1960). Curnow claims that his *Penguin* is the first "comprehensive" anthology of New Zealand poetry, which he goes on to specify as that poetry which is unique to the country. When he claims that "reality must be local and special at the point where we pick up the traces" (*Penguin* 17), the "we" he proudly and confidently puts in the agentive position is the Pakeha poet who, like himself, feels that both he (and on rare occasions, she), and his poetry's vision "belongs, here, uniquely to the islands of New Zealand" (17). This search for local reality is twofold, incorporating both a recognizable locale and persona: a truly national literature predicated on a defined and definable New Zealand location and peopled by New Zealanders. Curnow's influence, as an esteemed poet, literary critic and editor, effectively established a Pakeha national literary character based on mateship, sport and a stoic battle with the rugged land all in a realistic, vernacular approximation of New Zealand English.

Ihimaera's foregrounding of the rural setting and working class, usually male heroes, is particularly close to earlier national literary preoccupations. In his early work, Ihimaera lays out particular aspects of Maori rural life as

defining features of his characters' identity. These features, which Ihimaera asserts as integral to pre-urban Maori identity, are also recognizable tropes of the national identity fostered by the earlier Pakeha literary tradition. Ihimaera's rural settings read like a roll call of rural activities common to the New Zealand masculine tradition from Sargeson and John Mulgan through to Barry Crump. These characteristics may be loosely grouped as depicting either rural hardship or mateship: scrub cutting and mustering ("One Summer Morning," *Tangi*, "The House with Sugarbag Windows"); shearing ("One Summer Morning," *Tangi*, *Whanau*); man's battle against the elements and nature (*Tangi*, *Whanau*); living in *whare*, one-room huts, ("One Summer Morning," *Tangi*, *Whanau*, "The House with Sugarbag Windows"); men relaxing after a hard day's work ("One Summer Morning," *Tangi*); rugby and hockey games ("Beginning of the Tournament," *Tangi*, *Whanau*); beer and pub culture ("In Search of the Emerald City," *Tangi*, *Whanau*, "Truth of the Matter," "Tent on the Home Ground," "I, Ozymandias").

Ihimaera's use of these themes of hardship and mateship, which he locates in a rural setting recognizably unique to New Zealand, is very similar to Sargeson's short stories. As in Sargeson, Ihimaera's narrators are often children or young adults socially out of their depth. This also registers a debt to Katherine Mansfield shared by both writers, as discussed at length in chapter three. Through the child-eye perspective, the writer achieves an undercurrent of tension, brought about by the ellipses of narration as the reader fills in the underlying meaning of what the child's gaps in knowledge fail to recognize, or that which the adult is reluctant—or unable—to put into words. This technique generates a sense of sorrow, which, for Ihimaera revolves around the social gulf between Maori and Pakeha, while for Sargeson, it marks a working class-middle class discrepancy and hypocrisy. Thus, Ihimaera's narrators in "Yellow Brick Road," "The Escalator" and "Return from Oz," mirror Sargeson's in "Last Adventure" and "An Attempt at an Explanation." In stories such as these,

both writers make heroes of the poor and the dispossessed: in evoking readers' sympathy for the narrator, Ihimaera and Sargeson support the underprivileged. As R. A. Copland declares in an essay on Sargeson, in the great leveller of the 1930s Depression, and at a time of national (legislative) nation building, Sargeson's stories show that

the serious, saving grace of the depression years in this country [was] that a democratic spirit, or a democratic instinct, was roused to identify itself and demand that this identity be expressed. In the 'thirties the New Zealander finally *knew* himself to be as good as his brothers (and most of his brothers to be as good as himself). (45)

Ihimaera extends Sargeson's heroizing of the rural working class to make a claim for Maori as typical New Zealanders. Following Copland, Ihimaera reminds his readers of the demotic values on which national identity was built; a rural setting where the working man's hard labour and clear sense of community values and mateship stake a claim for democratic equality.

The protestant work ethic of the outdoors labouring man, coupled with the idealized, iconic identification with the land rather than the urban setting, indicate a point of similarity between Ihimaera's fiction and the Pakeha nationalist tradition. Commentaries of Ihimaera's early work often point to the short story "One Summer Morning" from his first collection, *Pounamu*, as exemplary for its mastery of several unusual narrative points of view, which these critics infer are original to Maori writing (Pearson, "Witi Ihimaera" 169; Jannetta 19). What critics do not mention, however, is that the subject of the almost hyper-real monologue, namely, a rural boy's impatience to become a man, is fully inscribed in the New Zealand masculine tradition. There is little lyricism in this story, which takes its narrative frame from describing the narrator, Hema's, sequence of morning chores. The opening lines set the enduring tone of a no-frills, unadorned setting:



His room is a small one. Four walls, a large wardrobe inset with a full-length mirror, a little desk littered with his schoolbooks, a bookcase, a single bed spread with a quilt his mother has made, and a chair with a clock on it. The alarm is set for half past five in the morning. In four minutes it will ring. (69)

The personal touches in this description (the books and the quilt made by his mother) belong to the child side, which Hema hopes to discard now that he is a man. His mission to be recognized as no longer a boy is symbolized by moving out of short pants into long trousers. Rural life is depicted as a world of responsibilities. In the first pages, Hema spells out his chores (light the stove, put the water on to boil, have a cold wash, milk the cows) and the home and farm conditions (no heating, a wood stove, outside wash-house, broken guttering, falling-apart fences). The primacy of the masculine world is consolidated at the end of the story. When Hema finally works up the courage to ask his father for a pair of pants, “I’m a man now. I’m thirteen years old. Can’t you see?” (102), his father’s response is to spell out a man’s role:

From now on, I expect you to act like a man. No more cheek to your mother, no more putting water into the milk, no more quarrelling with your sister, and a lot more work and responsible action! Okay? And you can get started now. After kai, you go down to the shed and feed the dogs. Then saddle my horse so it’s ready for me. Then after that, you better come back and do the chores you usually leave for night-time. Chop the wood, make your bed, clean out the grate in the sitting room, feed the hens . . . (103)

Although both the setting and the parents’ expectations were quite normal in rural New Zealand in the 1940s and 1950s, Ihimaera is assured that his (predominantly urban) readers of the 1970s onwards will sympathize with the boy. This added distance accentuates the boy’s contentedness: modern readers cannot help but admire his gutsiness, and it is here that Hema reflects the national cult of “the good keen man.” In the nationalist imaginary, stoicism is the dominant, positive attitude towards the land and the difficulties of working-

class life in general. Ihimaera's use of this stoic heroism sets up a sharp contrast between positive rural hardship and negative urban comfort. Hence in "The House with Sugarbag Windows," in *New Net*, the Maori narrator separates himself from the fine wine, classical music and false friendship of a Wellington party to remember his childhood, growing up in a *whare*, where he remembers his mother's daily routine:

[T]he normal routine of her days [was] patterned with sweat and the dull throb of fatigue. Yet she did not feel any fury or rage against the way she lived. Sweat, fatigue, pain and sometimes hunger were to be borne because they were part of the only life she knew. (159)

Although the narrator is careful not to glorify the past, he remembers the beauty of the land and the warmth of his family in connection with this setting. By contrast, as a Wellington diplomat, "he did not like all about the person he'd become" (161). At the end of this story, the narrator sums up the importance of setting against each other the rural/urban, past/present Maori realities:

No matter how far he went he would never forget [the house with the sugarbag windows] because it had been at the beginning of his life [. . .]

– Yes, he whispered. I need you to remind me and to make me remember who I am. And I will need you more as I keep on climbing. Never leave me. (164)

This character epitomizes Ihimaera's conception of the modern Maori hero, as one capable of "striding both worlds." A strong memory of rural roots, coupled with success in the Pakeha urban world, gives Maori both the strong cultural basis and the social nous to demand Maori sovereignty.

### **Myth and History: Defining National Origins**

As Thiesse observes, the national interest in its own history begins with foundation myths which include heroic events and heroic ancestors as well as historical ones (23-66). In nation building, myth and history work together to validate the nation's right to be there. The authority of history's factualness, and the organic authenticity attributed to national myths play an important part in fortifying a shared and common past accepted by all. More important still is the use of both history and myth as tools to explain the present, to record and validate social precedents, which in turn legitimate and reassure present claims for independence. Myth and history combine to locate a distant time and place from which the nation can trace its lineage up to the present day. As such, it is involved with uncovering origins which must be unique and original to the nation. The collection of these authentic (re)sources is indebted to the motivations of social anthropology, which, as a science born out of Enlightenment universalism, is historically linked to nationalism, as urban intellectuals made forays into rural communities. As Thiesse points out in regards to figures such as Rousseau, Herder and Schiller, their esteemed status in urban academies or circles of patronage lent authority to their anthropological presentation of rural enclaves and inhabitants (see also Jean-Loup Amselle 52-60). Macpherson's gathering of the Ossian myth, for example, proved the unique lineage and historical precedence of the Highlanders who had resisted Roman invasions, a useful origin to validate Scottish independence from England (Thiesse 25-35). Indeed, for Simon During, the deployment of Macpherson's text in Scottish cultural revivalism, British and French colonial campaigns, and European romanticism, makes Ossian a figure that foreshadows both postcolonial discourses and global dissemination ("Postcolonialism and Globalisation" 43-45). In other words, although each culture's myths and history are unique, working towards creating

a national history that is different from that of its neighbours and oppressors, the impulse to collect and document is common throughout the world and throughout history.

For nation building, it is not the veracity as much as the desirability of the history and myths that is important. At the same time as Macpherson was being challenged to provide proof of his sources, the Ossian stories were already circulating in Great Britain and on the continent, in turn inspiring the recovery or invention of other national foundation texts. These national histories were quickly absorbed into popular imagination, desired into a local and contemporary reality through literature and art.

As Edward Chamberlin puts it in *If This is Your Land, Where are Your Stories*, storytelling is crucial to the construction of a “ceremony of belief,” a concept that echoes the importance of the imaginary in nation building also described in Anderson’s “imagined communities” (Chamberlin 2). As Chamberlin stresses throughout his book of tales, believing in stories has little to do with the truth of their content. Since the deconstruction of anthropology in the middle of the twentieth century, terms such as “authentic” and “original” now tend to be met with scepticism, while cultural critics are much more aware of history’s febrile nature. This does not, however, mean that new nationalisms can dispense with evoking mythic and historic origins. Wendt, in an essay searching for “a new Oceania,” underlines the importance of asserting a unique and meaningful past as a component of “imaginative nation building”:

[W]e must rediscover and reaffirm our faith in the vitality of our past, our cultures, our dead, so that we may develop our own unique eyes, voices, muscles, imagination. (51)

The present tense of Wendt’s argument is vital, as it acknowledges that the present moment brings forth new versions of the past. Here, the storyteller and cultural commentator takes into account the slipperiness of notions of primacy

and authenticity, concluding that when faced with a choice of differing conceptions of the past, “usage determines authenticity” (52; see also Hereniko 162). This position echoes that of Irish critic Seamus Deane, in an introduction to essays about identity in Irish writing. In the context of the Irish “Field Day,” which collects and comments on Irish literature in its many guises, including nationalist, colonialist, separatist, unionist, pro-British, pro-Gaelic or pro-Eire, Deane highlights the fact that each discourse re-centres the past for its own use.

Maori myth is central to Ihimaera’s early writing, and is a key element of his presentation, for both Maori and Pakeha readers, of a unique Maori cosmology. Repetition throughout his work of the same founding myths, both pan-Maori and pertaining to his local tribe, signals the ongoing pertinence of a symbolic (re)connection with origins. While his recounting of origin myths, of Papatuanuku, the earth mother, and Rangitane, the sky father, describes a unique Maori worldview, his writing of the First Fleet legend of the seven founding canoes makes his strongest nationalist claims for Maori ownership of Aotearoa. In *Tangi*, the grieving narrator recalls a “magical” scene from his boyhood, when his father pointed out some fishing buoys at sea, and “whispered a dream” about the seven legendary canoes coming to Aotearoa (48). Then, on a more serious note, the narrator recalls a later question to his father:

In a later year, confused, I asked father:

– E pa, what is a Maori?

He said to me with fierce pride:

– Takitimu, Tainui, Te Arawa, Mataatua, Kurahaupo, Tokomaru, Aotea . . . They are the Maori, Tama. As long as you remember them you are a Maori. Then, again, he pressed his palm against my heart.

– To manawa, a ratou manawa

Your heart is also their heart.

And if ever I was ever confused again all I needed to do was to recite the legendary names to calm my heart. (48-49)

This sequence illustrates a technique that Ihimaera commonly employs when his subject is questionable myth or history. He begins by signalling a myth, fiction, story or fairytale, here, “a dream,” but then undercuts this supposed fictive status by the factuality with which it is told and the conviction with which it is believed.

Ihimaera’s technique challenges the Western separation of history and myth, fact and fiction. In a non-threatening manner, Ihimaera challenges the dominant ideology which prioritizes fact over fiction by indicating that for Maori, myth *is* history. For example, in “The Whale” in *Pounamu*, the *kaumatua*, respected elder, teaches his granddaughter “the story of this whanau”: “[t]he Pakeha, he says they’re legends. But for me they are history” (117). In this example, the elder is recounting the legendary arrival of his tribe’s founder, Paikea, on the back of a whale. In the preceding example from *Tangi*, the narrator’s father is similarly describing a foundation myth, this time the arrival from Hawaiki of the seven principal Maori tribes, depicted as an organized mass migration that, in conquering the formidable distance by sea, simultaneously conquers Aotearoa and claims it as their own. These foundational myths are consolidated by their incorporation in foundational texts, either carved into the meeting house, or written, as in the *whakapapa* genealogy charts. In “The Whale,” the elder reminds his granddaughter: “[t]hese books, in them is your whakapapa, your ancestry. All these names, they are your family who lived long ago, traced back to the Takitimu canoe” (118).

Ihimaera’s knowledge of these myths, and his understanding of them as key to the Maori imaginary, is partly due to a strong history of social anthropology in New Zealand, which began with the first Europeans, who were, no doubt, influenced by the ethnography and comparative philology fashionable at that time in Britain and on the continent. In a revised edition of *The Matriarch*, Ihimaera acknowledges his dual heritage of historical sources:

“the enormous wealth of Maori history, genealogy and folklore [. . .] from my family,” and key sociological texts by authors including Anne Salmond, Tiaki Mitchell, Sir Peter Buck, and Judith Binney (“Acknowledgements”). The collection of myths and legends in New Zealand by early missionaries, traders and settlers follows the same pattern of recovery, embellishment and synthesis as in the early anthropology of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe. More recently, however, ethnographical practices have been cast into some doubt, with a shift in emphasis to revisionist criticism which often aims to pull apart the methodology and motivations of earlier efforts. From a contemporary perspective, one of the most discredited collectors today is also one of the earliest, Sir George Grey, whose collection *Nga Moteatea* was published in London in 1853. Grey is not discredited because his sources are any less credible than those of many other anthropologists, but because the tradition which he represents is no longer in favour, and it is no longer possible to separate Grey’s scholarly interests from those of his political and economic mandate, as one of the country’s first colonial Governors. In particular, many Maori, including Ihimaera, reject Grey’s pretensions to authority.

Over a hundred years after Grey, in *Hawaiki: A New Approach to Maori Tradition* (1985), prominent Pakeha scholar, Margaret Orbell, works her way through the theories of nineteenth- and twentieth-century anthropologists who “proved” historical truth behind Maori mythology and folklore. Key to her study are two foundational myths of the god creator Io and the First Fleet as the organized and simultaneous arrival of Maori to Aotearoa. Orbell aims to show how and why these myths cannot be true (60-66). She highlights the discrepancies between, and gaps in logic within, the work of the founders and leading scholars in New Zealand anthropology and sociology, which include colonial, Pakeha and Maori scholars J. H. Beattie, A.

H. Thomson, Edward Tregear, S. Percy Smith, Elsdon Best, D. R. Simmons, Sir Apirana Ngata, and Te Rangi Hiroa (Peter H. Buck):

Nearly all New Zealand scholars interested in Maori tradition have been most anxious to demonstrate its historicity. It is often said that it is Pakeha scholars who have misinterpreted Maori tradition; but they have not been alone in this. Such formidable scholars as Te Rangi Hiroa and Apirana Ngata have been especially concerned to discover an historical meaning in the migration traditions, and many of the narratives set in Hawaiki as well. The fear has been that these stories would otherwise come to be regarded as meaningless, something to be scorned and set aside. (65)

Orbell's thesis is that there ought not be a lesser value judgement attached to non-historic myth, a judgement system she attributes to Western scholarly traditions. Although her argument is soundly based and convincing, such a position fails to take into account the needs of nation building. Instead of weighing up facts and fiction to ascertain whether they are true or not, it is more pertinent to ask why such myths were welcomed by Maori leaders.

In Buck's anthropological study, *The Coming of the Maori* (1950), the Maori anthropologist supports the First Fleet myth, claiming that "it ranks in historical and social importance with the Norman conquest" (Buck qtd in Hanson 893). The grand scale of Buck's comparing the arrival of Maori in Aotearoa with that of the Normans in England elevates the myth to the status of an impressive and great national foundation. The First Fleet myth has all the ingredients of an origin myth in the same vein as those found (uncovered or invented) during European nation building: a great battle against the elements, a noble conquest of a new land, heroic captains, and settlement of people and place traceable to today. Buck, in the scholarly role of a Macpherson or a Herder, decrees the myth to be solid, and thereby authorizes modern Maori identity as culturally distinct because historically founded. The importance of key texts such as that of the First Fleet resides in their expression of continuity,



so that Maori today, via a direct link to a founding canoe, are tied to their tribal land. This temporal and spatial attachment is not only symbolic, contained in myth, but is deployed in the legal and political context of sovereignty. Tribal claims for redress by the Waitangi Tribunal depend on *whakapapa* to prove ancestral links and continual occupation, a requirement which leads Sir Tipene O'Regan to call for the application of "rigorous" and "scholarly" research to Maori history (169). Although Ihimaera's lyric trilogy predates the Tribunal's establishment in 1975, his Nani characters possess this visionary understanding that cultural knowledge must continue to be passed on. In his second short story collection, *New Net*, the purpose of this bequest has grown clearer, as the tribe's connection with its past is linked to the ongoing battle for recognition in the present. In "Gathering of the Whakapapa," the narrator, a young man, interprets his Nani's remembering and rewriting the *whakapapa*, an earlier version of which had been lost in a fire:

[Nani Tama] had begun to rewrite the village family genealogy. He had started to re-establish our links not only with our past, but also with our land and with each other in the present. Although we would always be bereft of those other village treasures consumed in the fire, our history as revealed to us through our whakapapa could still be reclaimed. There was time yet, time yet to dig again our toes into the earth and shout our challenge to the changing world: This is us, this is our history, this is our land, and we together are the tangata whenua, the people of this land. (28-29)

This story affirms the basis of Maori sovereignty, the grounding of Maori in the past and with the land, as carried through *whakapapa*. Myth and history converge in this oral or written document, which is a roll call of ancestors whose relationship with the land and tribe, and, from the time of colonization, their battle with Pakeha, form a heroic precedent for late twentieth-century sovereignty.

Ihimaera's use of foundational Maori myths to substantiate his claims for cultural independence adheres to European and Pakeha knowledge systems of anthropology and history. Thus both the techniques of nation building and the content and deployment of Maori foundation myths are deeply embedded in Western concepts. To acknowledge such dependence is not to construe Ihimaera's fiction or the imaginative foundations of Maori sovereignty pejoratively, as somehow fake. European nation building shows that establishing an origin is only as difficult as taking a document as a starting point, inventing a manuscript, or unearthing oral sources. However, legitimating that origin is a complex task, one that requires a consolidated effort from inside (Maori) and acceptance from the outside (Pakeha).<sup>4</sup> This is the argument that American anthropologist, Allan Hanson, follows in his consideration of Maoritanga in "The Making of the Maori: Culture Invention and its Logic." Hanson cites Buck's use of the First Fleet to argue that today's Pakeha scholars, such as Judith Binney, Anne Salmond, Michael King and Joan Metge, have supported Maoritanga by playing down the truth aspect, in short, of not dismissing Buck's work as unsubstantiated conclusions, which is what Orbell does. The emphasis has been on letting Maori choose the parts and the ways in which an essentially Western anthropological tradition fits with the contemporary needs of Maori sovereignty (894-896). Ihimaera's is the kind of culture invention that Hanson says Pakeha proponents of Maoritanga support.

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<sup>4</sup> In a striking example of the process of consecrating a newly revealed origin myth, in the 1990s the Maori cultural rights of South Island tribe Ngai Tahu were undermined by a new claim to previous occupancy from the Waitaha tribe. Claiming esoteric knowledge hidden from public view, a struggle for survival despite a history of massacre from the invading Ngai Tahu, and a claim to ownership of the land based on historical primacy and a deep, spiritual connection with the land, Waitaha gained significant recognition in New Zealand thanks to strong publicity, the appearance of textbooks and championing by well-respected academics. See O'Regan 149-172; Waitaha at [www.zealand.org.nz/history.htm](http://www.zealand.org.nz/history.htm), accessed 29 March, 2005.

Hanson's article assumes that both parties openly acknowledge the constructed nature of mythologizing history and historicizing mythology, thereby placing the emphasis firmly on the reception, acceptance and promotion of features of national identity. Following this line of argument, Pakeha scholars allow that cultural invention has a role to play in creating solidarity, while Maori acknowledge their use of Western techniques to create and retell their own stories. This, however, has not been an easy task. Even though the empirical truth-value of anthropology and history has largely been replaced today with the more nebulous notion of cultural invention and legitimation, Hanson's argument that Maori culture is "invented" caused a heated debate in New Zealand. Widespread Maori rejection of the word "invention" stands in contrast to neighbouring Pacific acceptance of the process of identity formation, such as by Wendt and Vilsoni Hereniko. Ihimaera has also rejected the notion that Maori culture is infiltrated by European influences. A 1992 interview with Sharrad is revealing:

P.S: How do you cope with the critical theory that there is no essential identity to go back to—that constructions of what is Maori are as much a product of interbreeding with nineteenth century Romantic ideas of nationalism as constructions of what is Pakeha?

W.I: Well; does that really have currency? [. . .] Because the Maori people have been the most modern, or the most recent of all Polynesian people, we don't need to go back that far, in fact. But to uncover the source of our heritage, what we need to do is to deconstruct all of the literature which Sir George Grey collected, for instance, to get back to the original, not the reported, sources. (3)

In a later interview, Ihimaera refers to a project he is coordinating to "go back beyond [. . .] colonialists," to present a "decolonized" version of Maori myths and legends (Ellis 182). In both interviews, Ihimaera assumes the role of ethnographer. Paradoxically, he applies this Western technique, with its problematic terms and concepts such as authenticity, truth-value, the uncovering of historical precedence, and the existence of an uncontaminated

source, in order to record “[as] close as we can get to original Maori thought on the creation of our world” (Ellis 182).<sup>5</sup> Ihimaera does not specify what these original sources might be, nor his research methods. Whether or not there does indeed exist an original, uncontaminated Maori past, the belief in its existence, and the desire to find it, correspond with the separatist drives of the nationalist imaginary. At the same time, Ihimaera’s own fiction and his project’s methodology, demonstrate the very interanimation, historically and internationally, of a common and shared thread to the culture of nation building.

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<sup>5</sup> In the 1999 interview, Ihimaera suggests that the project will take about three years. However, none of his editorial work published since this date clearly corresponds to the kind of revised mythology that he indicates.

### ***Tangata Whenua and Landscape***

If myth and history offer one kind of national portrait involving a certain type of construction, then the cultural representation of the relationship with the land is another. Indeed, the two are often combined: as demonstrated in the title of Chamberlin's book, land and stories self-support, with the one giving meaning to the other. Different ways of seeing thus entail different ways of believing. In New Zealand, colonial, settler, Pakeha and Maori interpret the land differently, with each imaginary turning nature into landscape in literature and art. For Maori, tribal and national landscape is also portrayed in oratory, performance arts and carving. Thiesse demonstrates how nationally defined landscape is more imagined than real by revealing the selection process among a common set of geological features. Her examples from nineteenth-century European nation building illustrate the various considerations at play in deciding upon national symbolic landscapes. For example, Hungary, like Austria, has mountains, but after independence from the Austrian empire, the symbol of which is imposing, grandiose mountains, Hungary chose the plains as symbolic of a wild, vast, harsh liberty. (Thiesse 189-193). The same impulse to inscribe upon the land a national project of belonging is evident in New Zealand.

Although simplified, it is not an overstatement to say that the history of New Zealand is the history of its inhabitants' relationships with the land: colonization was based on the need for land as settlement, just as Maori sovereignty is based on the recognition of Maori as *Tangata Whenua*, the original owners of that land. This fundamental relationship finds its first legal expression in the Treaty of Waitangi, a contract between the Crown, representing the British dominion, and Maori chiefs, on behalf of tribal *Tangata Whenua*. In updating this covenant—effectively the foundational document of biculturalism—to the needs of late-twentieth-century sovereignty, which was

made possible by the 1975 Treaty Act and its 1985 amendment, three arguments come to the fore. Across protest action such as the 1975 Land March (“Not One More Acre”) and 1984 Hikoi, the occupation of Bastion Point 1976-8, Raglan 1982 and Motua Gardens 1996, land claims to the Waitangi Tribunal, and the 2003 seabed and foreshore debate, the arguments of historical precedence, colonial wrongdoing, and the cultural importance of the land, continue to circulate. All three points are deployed as much in artistic representation as in the law courts. The demand to prove unbroken habitation or spiritual ownership of land is requisite to Waitangi Tribunal recognition, thus making it important to stress Maori occupation of the land as predating the arrival of the Pakeha. Ihimaera puts it clearly in the opening sequence of *The Matriarch*, where the elder explains to her grandchild:

E mokopuna, we ruled here for over a thousand years. This was our land. This was our life. [. . .] A thousand years and further back, mokopuna. We had eternity in us.  
‘Then came the Pakeha.’ (6)

Walker voices a very similar formulation in his editorial letter to *The Listener* regarding the debate over ownership of the foreshore and seabed. Walker’s letter, “Dear Crown; An open letter to Helen, Bill, Richard, Peter, Jeanette and Jim,” nullifies the government’s authority by claiming seniority and thus superiority: “I have been here a thousand years. You arrived only yesterday.” While both historical precedence and colonial wrongdoing are left to the courts to decide, it is the third point of contention, the cultural import of land, that has occupied the largest space in debates over different Pakeha and Maori relationships with their national territory.

As Paul Spoonley puts it, in a summary of the argument expounded by many Maori commentators, colonization made land an economic commodity, thereby changing its traditional role, “stripp[ing] the Maori of their culture base, of the most important factor in their spiritual and cultural traditions” (6).

Traditional rituals and spirituality combine to affirm Maori belonging to the land, producing meaning over and above recognition of physical reality, so that any environment, by right of historical precedence, can be considered a site of Maori importance. Some examples of places that have been attributed a Maori set of values even though they are not—or no longer—specifically Maori, include Mt Eden Prison (the ritualistic exhumation of executed chiefs), Eden Park rugby ground (prayers and *haka* during the Springbok Tour), a New Zealand Steel ironsands mine (desecrating sacred ground), Manukau Harbour (the sacrilegious pollution of nature), and even the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art (lifting *tapu* and blessing the “Te Maori” exhibition). In each of these locations, the site is ascribed symbolic meaning over and above its current ownership or usage. Maori sovereignty interprets a spiritual connection with the land as unique to Maori and thus fundamentally different from a Western conception. However, establishing an imaginative connection with one’s homeland is a feature of all projects of nation building. Throughout the twentieth century, the quest for a truly New Zealand identity revolved around a desire to come to terms with the land, defined in literature and painting in symbolic landscapes. Ihimaera’s early work, then, is not a unique reconceptualization of landscape, but a direct response to (and away from) his Maoriland and Pakeha cultural nationalist precedents.

As colonial settlers grew into their new environment, they imagined their way into the land through the European traditions of the walking tour, landscape painting and gardening. In the tradition of the romantic sublime, spectacular landscapes evoke feelings of awe and mystery, which quickly slide into mysticism. For example, early poet Jessie Mackay attempts to convey a spiritual connection with nature, but one which hides its meaning to the new arrivals (1903):

[T]he great water scarred slopes [of Te-Marua] are like the face of a giant old Maori warrior, seamed with the sacred moko (facial tattoo) and gashed in many a long-past fight. A passion of Ossianic melancholy glorifies the Northern soul with a nameless romance. Te-Marua broods over the past; the river sings loud of ancient things. (Mackay qtd in Stafford and Williams, “Fashioned Intimacies” 38)

While Mackay points to the “melancholy,” “nameless romance” and indecipherable singing issuing from the landscape, by the mid-twentieth century, the Pakeha cultural nationalists had become insensitive to this. Hence, New Zealand is “a land of settlers / With never a soul at home” (Curnow) and the landscape is a *terra nullius*, in which “[t]he plains are nameless and the cities cry out for meaning” (Charles Brasch). Although mid-century Pakeha aimed to be natural and at ease in their environment, their portrayal of nature retains a certain *hauteur*. Roger Horrocks illustrates this point in his important essay “The Invention of New Zealand” by stringing together some first lines of poetry from the index of Curnow’s 1960 *Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*:

Alone we are born, 286  
 Always, in these islands, meeting and parting, 179  
 And again I see the long pouring headland, 281  
  
 In this scarred country, this cold threshold land, 119  
 Instructed to speak of God with emphasis, 261  
 It got you at last, Bill, 229  
 (24)

Like Mackay’s description of Te Marua, the poets behind these lines guard their wary distance, pointing to a heroic relationship of man against nature, of man isolated by nature, which is menacing in its grandeur. This perspective incites John Newton to argue that, even though the Pakeha realist project claimed to shrug off Maoriland literary precedents, cultural nationalist writing sublimates rather than replaces the awe and mystery of Maoriland romanticism.



In a special issue on settlement studies in the *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, Alex Calder, Stephen Turner and Jonathan Lamb find the Maoriland and Pakeha nationalists' reaction to the land typical of settler societies. Their work on settler identity shows that the nascent New Zealander cannot call on the usual nationalist claim to authority via a mythic or historic past, because that past is predicated on the disruption brought by colonial forbears. For settlers, and later Pakeha, making themselves at home in the new land instead hinges on a rupture with that undesirable beginning, of somehow becoming native, which is, of course problematic because the land is already inhabited by an indigenous population (see also Lamb, "Problems of Originality," "The Idea of Utopia"; Turner, "Settlement as Forgetting"). In an early articulation of this difficulty, Pearson's 1952 essay on the Pakeha character, "Fretful Sleepers," identifies the fear of non-belonging as expressed in their hostile lack of eloquence in describing and defining their relationship with the land:

[C]aught between the mountains and the sea, never far from the silence of the bush and the stars, we are in the bland and frightening witness of the infinite, and we haven't created a social convention strong enough to reassure us [. . .] But the hostility is not in the landscape: our countryside is as admirable and lovable as any in the world. It is we who are hostile, because we haven't made up our minds whether we have accepted it, whether we mean to stay, why we are here anyway, or what life is all about. (*Fretful Sleepers* 28)

Lack of strong national, cultural and artistic conventions and traditions means that writing landscape for both Maoriland and cultural nationalist poets revolves around writing loss and disorientation. The settlers' nostalgia for Britain, and the mid-century Pakeha denial of both its British origin and indigenous counterpart, prevented them from coming to terms with their national location, in effect, of "ma[king] up [their] minds" how to construct their national identity: while colonists and settlers could only stand back to paint or sketch the landscape from a suitable artistic vantage point (Newton;

Wedde, “Isle of Poplars”), in an anecdote in “Fretful Sleepers” Pearson describes a Pakeha excursion on the West Coast, which enters nature only for the men to end up drinking at a pub while the ladies listen to the wireless (28).

The terminology of disruption and loss is more readily called to mind in the theory of postcolonial rather than white settler societies. Nevertheless, the issues and effort of building a relationship with the land remain the same. In the Caribbean context of colonial dislocation, Martinican writer and critic, Edouard Glissant, writes of the importance of imagining a place to be at home: “when one finds one’s landscape, the desire for the other country ceases to be an alienation” (756).<sup>6</sup> This comment is particularly pertinent for the colonial cringe evident in early- to mid-twentieth-century Pakeha poetry in which poets still struggle to recognize themselves in the undomesticated local landscape. In their reflexive comparisons with the tamed, known English countryside, Glissant’s “other country” (England) is not somewhere else, but a distanced, mythic homeland. The cultural nationalists’ determination to “fin[d] one’s landscape” thus becomes a project of anchoring the self in the location, something which requires the subject to re-orientate the (here, English) way of looking upon the landscape, to reconfigure it in a positive light. In Glissant’s terms, “[t]he potential of landscape is the way in which it works against a neutralizing generalization.” The “*poétique*” of landscape overrides the “physical” land (Glissant 449).<sup>7</sup> Landscape, then, is a way of setting the parameters of one’s domain, consolidated and fixed tight by the *poétique* of the imaginary. As Wedde shows in “The Isle of Poplars: Does Landscape Exist?,” the romantic construction of the landscape, which he locates in Rousseau’s staged naturalism, continues to apply to all subsequent considerations of nature-in-art and art-in-nature in New Zealand (262-272).

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<sup>6</sup> “[Q]uand on retrouve son paysage, le désir de l’autre pays cesse d’être aliénation.” *My translation.*

<sup>7</sup> “Le possible d’un paysage, c’est ce par quoi il fait qu’on s’oppose à la généralisation neutralisant.” *My translation.*

The emergence into the mainstream public eye of Maori cultural mores with the sovereignty and Maori Renaissance in the 1970s reinserts continuity into the landscape, but it does so within the same structures of landscape as earlier European, Maoriland and Pakeha efforts. Ihimaera writes the Maori back into the landscape by centring a Maori perspective of nature in the interstices left by inchoate white New Zealanders, effectively bringing to the surface the Maori voice which was undecipherable to Maoriland writers and silent to the Pakeha nationalists. Mackay hears an “Ossianic melancholy” in the ancient song in the cliffs and river of Te Marua, which she finds haunting because she does not understand it. Ihimaera retains the anthropomorphism of nature, and echoes the romantic sublime of Maoriland affectation: “[a]e, sun: I see the white whorls of light, the remnants of those taut thongs. I see your anguished form, still bent from that battle” (*Tangi* 63). This lyricism, however, does not stand alone up high on a pedestal of romantic awe because it is essentially tied to a concrete signification. In the paragraph which precedes this citation, Ihimaera puts it in its Maori perspective as he recounts the Maori myth of Maui, who tamed the sun to make it go slower. Mythology functions as a rational explanation for the way things work: it normalizes the sublime and contextualizes anthropomorphism so that it loses the mystic overtones of Mackay’s Maori Ossian. Nevertheless, Ihimaera’s personification of the earth, like Mackay’s, does correspond to a similar naturalness of the Maori people, to the point where land and Maori—*Tangata Whenua*—are one and the same:

[Huia’s] is a handsome face, framed with a long, black scarf. The features are sculpted of earth and sky; the chiselled planes softened by wind, rain and sun. It is a face that has seen the passing of the seasons and understands that all things decay and fall of their own accord. A calm face, which accepts the inevitable rhythms of life: that the sun rises and sets, night follows day, and that winter always comes. (*Tangi* 24)

Ihimaera's passage reverses Mackay's simile so that instead of nature being "like" Maori, it is Maori who are metaphorically akin to nature. This allows a turn of perspective so that, whereas Mackay's Maori are too natural to adapt, for Ihimaera, Maori have survived because of their very naturalness. He indicates that being attuned to nature, and accepting "the inevitable rhythms of life," offers Maori an insight to the cyclical nature of life, something which contains in it the seeds of social and natural revolution.

While Curnow's men were setting out for the mountains, clearing the bush, and battling with the harsh elements, Ihimaera's description of man's interaction with the landscape of the same mid-century period is much more prosaic and less intrusive. Whereas Pakeha nationalism was about making a mark upon the land, in Ihimaera's fiction it is nature that makes its mark on the Maori—literally, in the previous citation, in defining the woman's features. Ihimaera's characters eke out their existence in a kind of earthy patriotism reminiscent of the Russian nationalist writers, and, as mentioned earlier, Sargeson's stories inspired by the Depression. In "The House with Sugarbag Windows," Ihimaera describes the way that, in the rural Maori community of the 1950s, "life [was] ruled by the seasons" (161):

The earth was good to them and kind but even she could not sustain them through all her seasons. Winter, when earth grew old, was the leanest season of all [. . .] Then it was a matter of keeping warm, carrying on and waiting for the earth to grow young again.

But it was the way of things. The family lived in stoic acceptance, knowing that after winter summer always came. (160-161)

In passages such as this, Ihimaera resuscitates romantic lyricism to make hardship look positive: Ihimaera's Maori embrace provinciality, which is aligned with the community spirit of *whanau*. Nationalism valorizes the rural enclave which is home to the archetypal national persona. Maori nationalism, then, claims for its own a landscape rejected by the dominant discourse.

The sites of this continuity between Maori and the land are often the unwanted, forgotten rural communities that feature in the Maori artistic landscape. Ihimaera is explicit that the Maori connection with the land is fundamental to Maori identity, and ongoing:

I have a rural background myself and I think too that Maori culture must always have that particular source. That's where life began and it's where Maori culture began and it's got to be there, no matter where we are in the world. (Williams, "Interview" 287)

For Ihimaera, personally, and in his writing, this rural "source" has an exact location, in the valley of Waituhi, near Gisborne in Hawkes Bay. Waituhi epitomizes Ihimaera's positive provincialism because it is a site of unbroken, albeit impoverished, Maori settlement, and so represents the emotional and physical continuity that Maori sovereignty claims as central to Maori identity. Because Waituhi has remained in the hands of Maori throughout the period of colonial dispossession, it is construed as an ideal landscape for the national imaginary. Nevertheless, this is not a picturesque landscape as in the English or European imaginary.

Readers are introduced to Waituhi in the first story of *Pounamu*, "A Game of Cards," although it is not until two stories later, when the same characters and setting appear in "Fire on Greenstone," that the village is named. Throughout *Pounamu*, key components of the village are presented, with special attention paid to the homestead, Rongopai meeting house and the graveyard. The village is portrayed as rundown and ordinary. The first full description of the village is given in *Tangi*:

A Maori village a few miles from Gisborne. There are no shops, no reason at all for Waituhi to be here except that this is the hearth of the Whanau A Kai. This is their home and here they live.

A road runs through the whanau and the houses are strung out like beads along the road. Some of the houses are very old, with paint peeling from the boards and rusting corrugated roofs. Others are State

houses, shining and new. Some are just tin shacks, with newspaper and pictures from magazines as wallpaper. Dirt tracks lead from the road and along them live others of my family [. . .] Th[e] river, for me, is like that river which flowed through Eden. And this place, Waituhi, is my Eden.

Just as there was a gateway to Eden, so also is there a gate to Waituhi. The road curves round a small hill where an old colonial home now stands. Once, there used to be a Maori stockade upon that hill. You can still see the terraces where the tall wooden fences used to be. (Tangi 114-115)

Waituhi is Ihimaera's national landscape because it is a wholly Maori domain: Pakeha would have no reason to stop there. As such, the village is a model setting for Maori Renaissance objectives because it combines a romanticized past with a social realist present, as depicted in the juxtaposition of the colonial home and stockade next to State housing and rundown homes. Hope for the future is provided in the surviving community and, particularly, in the figure of the young man who journeys to and from his village origins. The village of Waituhi is Ihimaera's version of a typically—and uniquely—Maori setting, one which brings together a romantic pastoral version of spiritualized, animate nature and nostalgia, and a Pakeha cultural nationalist realism. Thus, the peeling paint, dirt tracks and tin shacks sit alongside the evocation of Eden and the still visible remnants of a proud past. The landscape of Waituhi contains an entire ideology, in which the lean-tos and the homestead's flaking paint denote family solidarity and a strong work ethic, despite a legacy of colonial oppression. Waituhi bears its scars and poverty with the pride that comes from survival. The *poétique* works on the physical to valorize the landscape, and in this way, the ostensibly derelict village is described positively, imbued with value far superior to its real value in economic terms.

The success of Ihimaera's Maori landscape can be measured by the extent to which his vision has been assimilated by Pakeha. The 2002 film of a later Ihimaera novel, *The Whale Rider*, is set in Whangara, a neighbouring

village to Waituhi. However, while Ihimaera's depiction of the simple life in a rural Maori enclave contains social criticism of Maori marginalization and the devastating effect of the urban drift on rural communities, the film version is wholly positive. As Prentice says, the fashionable "natural look" romanticizes the "not romantic" ("Maori Renaissance" 103-104). Contemporary New Zealand fashion for rural retreats, "kiwiana," home renovation and native planting has revalorized the *whare*, bach and rural outpost of cultural nationalism and Maori provincialism, so that villages such as the one featured in the film and depicted in Ihimaera's writing are alluring rather than off-putting. Maori landscape has provided a way for New Zealand to "find one's landscape" through an indigenous, rather than imported British model. Since the international success of *Whale Rider* made Ihimaera and his East Coast locale widely known, tourists to the Hawkes Bay area can today find information for a scenic drive through Waituhi and Whangara. The historical development of Pakeha and Maori New Zealand nation building is expressed in the distance between the early-twentieth-century walking tour chronicled, for example, in Blanche Baughan's travel guide, *The Finest Walk in the World* (1923), and the twenty-first century equivalent, guided visits of Whangara.

## National Maori Literature

A national literature, like all other aspects of imaginative nationalism, is built out of a series of key moments. Ihimaera's "arrival" on the New Zealand literary scene is one such moment, about which he has been very vocal in interviews, editorial introductions and author's notes. His constant reiteration of his early work's publication and reception creates, in effect, a founding myth of the emergence of Maori fiction in New Zealand literature. In accordance with the common nationalist rhetoric of struggle, he describes the difficulty of having his manuscripts accepted by a Pakeha publishing industry reluctant to take the risk on Maori literature (*World of Light* 1; *Turnbull* 51; Williams, "Interview" 282). Yet this comment, understandable within a nationalist context, is somewhat incongruous with the larger, international picture in which minority literatures emerged in mainstream Western publishing in the 1960s, of which Ihimaera's first publisher, Heinemann Educational, was a significant player (Huggan, *Exotic* 50-55). Another key myth that Ihimaera circulates as a defining moment in both his career, and by extension, the development of the Maori genre, concerns his placing a ten-year "embargo" on his work, from *New Net*, written in 1975, to *The Matriarch*, published in 1986. By way of explanation, he cites a pivotal incident in his career in the mid-1970s, of receiving stories written by Maori schoolchildren which mimicked his own (Ellis 171; *Turnbull* 52; Williams, "Interview" 289-290). This event gave him cause for concern about the implications for Maori writing:

I didn't want to be the only one on-stage and the only representation that was around. [. . .] I realized that because there wasn't sufficient work there, the iconic representations that young children were growing up with were those that I had constructed myself. (Ellis 171)

However, despite his intention to draw back from the limelight, today Ihimaera is, along with Grace, the most prolific and prominent Maori writer. Although he



is no longer the only one on stage, he continues to be the best known. Furthermore, while he was motivated to stop writing out of a sense of frustration with the tropes of lyricism that he felt he had made stereotypical, Ihimaera's style and early subject matters still predominate in Maori writing. The nationalistic impetus of the kind described in the previous sections, continues to motivate and underpin much Maori fiction in English published in the 2000s.

In a 1991 interview, Ihimaera explains the importance of his five-volume anthology, *Te Ao Marama*, co-edited with D. S. Long, Irihapeti Ramsden and Haare Williams. In reflecting on the overwhelming task of editing the series, he intimates that the anthology will reflect a transitional, momentary phase of Maori literature:

[T]his might be the very last time that we can have an anthology which is called 'Contemporary Maori Writing and Oral Literature', because it seems that our writers are moving far beyond what we normally accept as being the traditional context of Maori writing. [. . .] When the whole anthology is published we hope to show what was happening to the body Maori between 1980 and 1992. My belief is that this decade has been one of the most crucial in our history. [. . .] It may well be the only occasion where the opportunity has been given to view the hopes and dreams and realities of a people. Our world is moving so fast. (Williams, "Interview" 293-294)

Ihimaera sees this as a period to be passed through, and thus envisages the recuperation of texts for *Te Ao Marama* as intended for posterity, to capture the moment of this crucial decade. In the "Kaupapa" introduction of the final volume, the editors write:

The time has come to recognise that Maori writing cannot continue to be lumped under one generic heading. For instance, Maori writing in Maori is different from Maori writing in English. And within the genre of Maori writing in English there is a whole range of work. One size does not fit all. Even Maori writing in Maori observes different dialects and genres. (*Te Ao Marama* 5 17)

The expectation, then, is of an ever-expanding meaning of “Maori literature,” one that builds on the foundation that Ihimaera’s own fiction of the 1970s was so instrumental in establishing. Whereas in the early seventies Ihimaera was one of only a few Maori writers well known on the national stage, the cultural rejuvenation inspired by the Maori Renaissance and supported by biculturalism has led to the flourishing of Maori literature, a genre which today boasts many writers with solid knowledge of language, myths, protocol and traditions. Although Ihimaera identifies fiction concerned with recuperating tradition and engaging in race relations as a passing phase, and anticipates future experimentation in Maori literature, Maori anthologies of the late-1990s and 2000s largely follow in the footsteps of *Into the World of Light* and *Te Ao Marama*.

At the end of the “crucial” decade of the 1990s that Ihimaera had expected to be transitory, he describes being puzzled “that the players in the field are still the same as they were when we [Ihimaera and Grace] started to write” (Ellis 169). Not only are the writers the same, but so too is the style and content of their writing. Ihimaera enumerates the priorities of “a literature of race relations,” “writing [as] a decolonization process” with an obligation to subvert non-Maori structures and perspectives (175). Similarly, Lydia Wevers, in a 2001 article that traces recent Maori fiction collected in Huia publishers’ biennial Maori short story anthology, concludes that for this writing the “primary imperatives,” which include the after effects of colonization, the maintenance of group identity, and the politics of land and dispossession, create a writing that is “still firmly locked on to the politics of being Maori” (“GenX” 387). This reiterates her argument, almost ten years previously, that Maori fiction is principally concerned with expressing “what it is to be Maori. [. . .] a fight to retain and continue the past into the present, to force a space for Maoritanga” (“Short Fiction” 31). While neither Ihimaera nor Wevers offers

reasons for Maori writing's development in this manner, Evans provides a useful context by situating Maori fiction within the history of Maoritanga. Evans is primarily concerned with arguing that Maori fiction risks becoming caught in "conventionalised" tropes. He demonstrates how many new writers continue to work in the mould of earlier Maori fiction, for example, James George's romantic, lyrical novels, and Craig Marriner's harsh realism and focus on urban destructiveness ("On Originality" 79). By connecting the familiar landscapes, recourse to naturalness, Maori names and vocabulary in contemporary Maori writing to constructions of Maoritanga, Evans hints at the continuing force of nationalism which forms and informs Maori—as well as, Evans suggests, Pakeha—consciousness.

Evans's argument for ongoing adherence to artistic tropes of the Maori Renaissance suggests that the past tense of Prentice's article "What *Was* the Maori Renaissance?" is a little hasty (see also Williams, "Long Maori Renaissance"). Prentice correctly notes a shift in the context in which Maori cultural output is considered from national to increasingly global framing. Maori literature's attachment to globalization is discussed at length in chapters four and five of this thesis. However, whereas Prentice argues that globalization has become "the dominant cultural dynamic" (97), I suggest that globalization is both enabled and encouraged by the ongoing centrality of Maori national concerns for sovereignty.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Ihimaera's fiction of the 2000s continues to draw heavily on his early work, and his narrative perspective, voice and writing style, as well as characters, settings, and engagement with issues of tradition, modernity and sovereignty, are continually reiterated and recycled: the nationalist features identified in this chapter are as evident in *Tangi 2005*, the first part of his most recent novel, *Rope of Man* (2005), as they were in the original *Tangi* of 1973.

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<sup>8</sup> This argument is explored at length in chapter five.

The tropes of a writing of nation building require a nationalist framework for their propagation. Ihimaera's influence is here important. Although he dramatically claims a self-imposed kind of exile, during the embargo years, he was nonetheless active in promoting Maori literature. Ihimaera and Long co-edited the first anthology of Maori writing edited by a Maori, *Into the World of Light*, published in 1982, in which the editors claim to be motivated by the Maori "tribal" and "cooperative" sense of responsibility to support other Maori writers (Ellis 171). The anthology is focused on consolidating the Maori Renaissance and sovereignty imperatives, confirming Ihimaera's claim of not being the "first" short story writer by displaying a significant body of Maori writing. In keeping with Thiesse's terms of cultural recuperation, in the introduction Ihimaera describes the collection as the recovery (literally bringing into the world of light) of an "'underground' movement" (2). The fiction is largely preoccupied with the same issues and tensions as in Ihimaera's own fiction of the time. Almost all of the texts are about Maori identity in some form or other, foregrounding Maori language, myth, customs and protocol, and describing central Maori concerns, particularly of family and the land. The introduction's general tone, along with much of the work in *Into the World of Light* is aggressive. It describes Maori culture as involved in a momentous struggle for recognition, as evident in the scattering of words such as "fight," "malaise," "trauma," "crisis point," "dislocation" and "disruption." This leads to the "period of political and cultural protest" of the 1970s burgeoning Maori Renaissance, which includes the arrival of a Maori literature that "burst upon the landscape" (15). As Prentice points out, the term "renaissance" in this anthology emphasizes "rupture and renewal" rather than continuity ("Maori Renaissance" 89). This anthology takes the first tentative steps in defining Maori literature on its own terms. Its aggressive and radical terminology advocates sovereignty as separatism rather than bicultural understanding and mediation.

Ten years later, Ihimaera's second anthology, published in six volumes from 1992 to 1996, takes up and expands the same themes. Like the earlier collection, the title *Te Ao Marama* also means "the world of light." This collection, as the above excerpts from the introductory "Kaupapa" show, demonstrates a growing confidence and interest in exploring new forms and new directions for Maori writing. However, these remain on the level of describing cultural strength rather than defined by aesthetic, literary preoccupations. The rhetorical "Kaupapa," mission statement introduction provides a running dialogue across the five volumes, of which each offers a different perspective on the central question of what it means to be Maori. Consequently, *Te Ao Marama* grounds Maori literature within a sociological context in keeping with the socio-political purpose and cultural specificity identified by early commentators on Maori literature of the early seventies. As the editors put it in the "Kaupapa": "[y]ou cannot view the work of the times without placing it against the reality it has sprung from" (*Te Ao Marama* 2 15). Hence, for example, the second, non-fiction volume, "Regaining Aotearoa: Maori Writers Speak Out," clearly carries a political message which, as one reviewer on the dust jacket states, makes this volume "indispensable" for students of politics interested in New Zealand race relations, a claim which recalls Mitcalfe's similar comment about Ihimaera's own fiction of the 1970s. Similarly, the third volume includes poetry by street kids brought together by Apirana Taylor to participate in a social project for the "whanau concept" of mentoring and community support for young urban Maori on the fringe. Making good poetry was a bi-product rather than the main initiative of this group, something which supports Arvidson's early point that much Maori literature is less concerned with its own "perfection" than its social and political purpose (120). As a whole, the anthology builds a picture of the strength of Maori culture as manifested in writing, rather than the strength of Maori writing in and for itself.

In both the 1982 and the 1990s anthologies, Maori ancestry is a prerequisite for identifying as a Maori writer. The editors claim that this is, again, a “holistic” way of looking at Maori identity because it acknowledges that being Maori does not necessarily mean writing about Maori subjects. The opposite is not true, however; a non-Maori who writes about Maori subjects is not eligible for inclusion in the anthology. The fact that this criterion has continued to be applied to every consideration of Maori writing both before and since *Te Ao Marama* suggests that the issue of “blood” remains important in defining Maori identity as fundamentally separate from Pakeha New Zealand. This fuels a claim for biculturalism as predicated on difference, and also recalls the etymological association of nationalism with nativeness. For Thiesse, exclusionism by blood barriers feeds directly into the renegotiation of power structures and the rights of the individual in national revolutions, useful for the emerging nation to prove its difference and thus right to self-rule (Thiesse 174-182). Indeed, far from waning, notions of racialism maintain currency in the bicultural nation. In a recent article about the polarization of conceptions of Maori culture as used in politics in 2006, James Meffan notices

a significant resurgence of what could be called “ethnic essentialism”, Maori assertion of a collective identity that is essential rather than constructed. Although cautious [. . .] about any use of the term race at all (understandable given the term’s history) the idea of a continuous genetic lineage has become very important in Maori politics in New Zealand. (“Culturalisms” ms)

It is perhaps unfair to exaggerate the prerequisite of proven Maori ancestry for the selection process of *Te Ao Marama*. For a collection of such broad scope, it is almost necessary to impose some sort of restriction, whether that be by chronology, genre, content or biographical categorization. Nevertheless, the anthology’s flexibility and inclusiveness over literary questions of style and content makes the strict criterion of ancestry appear all the more rigid. New

Zealand literature and its criticism have been remarkably silent in debating the value of “blood” as a way of determining a Maori writer’s authenticity and authority to write in the genre. Stead’s harsh critique of Keri Hulme as not being Maori enough for her novel *the bone people* to have qualified for the Pegasus Prize (“Keri Hulme” 103-104), and the polemic his stance incurred, has perhaps deterred further consideration of the issue. This national silence stands in contrast to Canadian critic Margery Fee’s important essay, “Why C. K. Stead Didn’t Like Keri Hulme’s *the bone people*,” and the long history of faked identity and “passing” in Australian literature, including the debate over the Aboriginal identity of Colin Johnson/Mudrooroo. Such contestation of the pertinence of judging fiction by ethnic registration, or alternatively by chosen cultural self-definition, challenges and destabilizes the very notion of a national literature along ethnic and essentialist lines—a debate that has yet to be held in New Zealand.

Once the Maori writer’s symbolic and actual rootedness in the culture is assured, his or her work necessarily becomes informed by *kaupapa*, a concept of mission or purpose which underlies almost any consideration of the Maori world. In terms thoroughly examined by Heim in his essay “To Be True One Must Find One’s Kaupapa,” *kaupapa* is an implicit two-way contract in which the artist is motivated to promote Maoritanga, in this context imagined as Maori cultural strength, according to his or her own visions, and this aim is accepted by the Maori community as Maori. As Ihimaera puts it in his Turnbull lecture:

[W]hether we liked it or not, we were given a clear instruction from our people [. . .] ‘We are doing this for our people. For the Maori people.’ What I am often surprised about is that I have yet to hear a Pakeha person say ‘I am doing this for the Pakeha people of New Zealand.’ (48)

In the third volume of *Te Ao Marama*, “The Flowering,” which explores notions of centre and margin, Ihimaera’s introductory mission statement gives

a further idea of how one's *kaupapa* is accepted by the Maori community. He cites Maori organizations and tribal elders who, by virtue of their deep knowledge of central Maori concepts, are cultural "custodians":

[T]hey must always question us if we are moving too far from the centre or taking the tikanga (cultural rightness) into places where it does not fit, where it is being used inappropriately or without mana (prestige). This is their job. Without them we would be lost, a people without a culture. (*Te Ao Marama* 3 15)

Here, the centre, or heart of Maori culture, is seen as residing in a select group, which represents a cultural ideology seemingly uncorrupted by, yet responsive to, outside influences. *Te Ao Marama*'s "Kaupapa" enumerates the pillars of Maoritanga as founded on a dual sense of culture, at once biological, in the condition of ancestry, and ideological, in the notion of *kaupapa* itself. It is difficult not to surmise, from the above two excerpts, that the Maori writer sees him or herself as in some way responsible to the Maori community for the propagation of Maori culture. The importance of social and political imperatives to both the writer and his or her fiction gives a nationalist shape to such literature. Although the editors acknowledge the need for dialogue rather than definitions in opening the debate on the constitution of Maori identity and Maori writing, they do hold clear positions on such contentious issues as authenticity, originality and the authority to represent. The "Kaupapa" stance is that authenticity is having Maori blood, originality is taking Maori writing out into the world, and the authority to do so comes from the cultural custodians.

In the same way that Ihimaera's own early fiction offered a model to upcoming Maori writers, *Into the World of Light* and *Te Ao Marama* provided guidelines for future Maori writing. Within the history of nation building, Ihimaera's idea that each anthology encapsulates a particular moment in Maori cultural history recalls Curnow's authoritative role during the earlier Pakeha cultural nationalist period. His *Caxton* and *Penguin* anthologies are seminal



texts in New Zealand literature, and provide reference points from which other major anthologies, such as Wedde and Harvey McQueen's 1985 *Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* take their bearings and position themselves in relation to. Ihimaera's anthologies play a similar foundational, shaping role in the genre of Maori fiction. Huia publishers' biennial Maori writing competition carries on the *kaupapa* of Ihimaera's vision of Maori fiction. Since its inception in 1995, the Huia competition, and the collection published from this, *Huia Short Stories: Contemporary Maori Fiction*, has provided a forum for new writers. The introduction<sup>9</sup> to the first collection states its purpose thus:

Huia Publishers has chosen a role in encouraging Maori writers and will continue to provide opportunities for them [. . .] Maori writers must develop their skills and build on the body of Maori fiction that, in the past, has been given life by so few. We hope that, in time, these writers will contribute to the development of the literature of Aotearoa New Zealand. (*Huia* 18)

In keeping with the tradition established by *Into the World of Light* and *Te Ao Marama*, Huia's collections continue to depend upon a definition of Maori writing which necessarily begins with the writers' own lineage. Submissions to the competition are judged predominantly by Maori writers, including Ihimaera, Grace and Hulme, whose own success played key roles in establishing the Maori literary genre in the 1970s and 1980s. Huia's aims, in the above citation, suggest that there continues to be a need to separately and actively encourage and promote Maori writing, a conviction shared by the national arts funding body, Creative New Zealand, which supports Huia's project. This claim is partly explained by the editors' insistence that Maori writers are a rare breed. The first two introductions emphasize the dearth of Maori writers in the past: "[t]he few Maori writers of fiction who have been published have carried the impossible burden of reflecting all the experiences

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<sup>9</sup> Only the first three Huia anthologies have introductions; later volumes do not have any introductory note.

that are Maori” (*Huia* 1 7). This was an understandable statement in Ihimaera’s 1982 anthology, but rings less true in 1995, following in the wake of *Te Ao Marama*’s 1000-piece effort from almost 300 contributors—a quantity which quite possibly matches the total of equivalent Pakeha work anthologized over its 100-year literary history. Another similarity with the earlier anthologies lies in *Huia*’s contextualizing Maori literature within the rhetoric of Maori radicalism, evident in its terminology of marginalization similar to that of *Into the World of Light*, for example “cultural displacements,” “imaginative autonomy,” “counter-colonised” (*Huia* 2 7-8), “identity, empowerment and loss,” and “appropriation” (*Huia* 3 7-8).

Together, the above priorities situate contemporary Maori writing in a national rather than international context: as the jacket of *Huia* 4 proclaims, “these stories could have come from no other country.” This infers that there is something special about the writing that makes it location-specific, which implies that Maori writing must be identifiably Maori. Although *Huia* intends this claim to mean that Maori writing is unique, as demonstrated throughout this chapter, the tools of nation building are common to all. Thus *Huia*’s claim for cultural specificity echoes Curnow’s key definition of the New Zealand imaginary as “local and special” in his introduction to the 1960 *Penguin*. The aim for cultural self-representation has meant largely working within the recognizable style established in the earlier anthologies: as the first *Huia* introduction states, “[t]he focus is almost exclusively on Maori communities” (*Huia* 1 7). Indeed, the relationships that Maori characters have in these texts reflect the communities which are perceived as meaningful to Maori: if there is to be any salvation for disconnection from the land and Maori heritage, and the contemporary minefield of domestic violence, poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunity, this is to come from support within the Maori community, centred on family and tribal affiliations, and drawing strength from a shared cultural past which is potentially self-sufficient and self-sustaining. Pakeha are

largely outside of this worldview. As a result, much of Huia's fiction is written in the tropes of Ihimaera's early work. The lyric voice continues to be associated with depictions of Maori communities, as summed up by Huia as stories which "describe situations of work, travel and the marae with the warmth and good humour of whanau" (*Huia* 18). Alternately, the harsh realism of *New Net* is ever present, as the Huia editors note that much of this fiction "reveal[s] the pain of Maori and the brutal, abusive settings and relationships they are experiencing" (*Huia* 18). Huia thus explicitly connects Maori writing to a self-documenting, cathartic process with clearly nationalist ambitions of asserting the Maori presence in New Zealand, a proactive proclamation that Pakeha New Zealand must take its Maori population into consideration. In effect, Huia's priorities declare that the Maori Renaissance is ongoing and contemporary rather than confined to a historical moment of the previous decade, as Prentice's essay and Ihimaera's speculation indicate.

More than forty years after the publication of *Les damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*), Franz Fanon's exposition on national independence continues to echo in postcolonial discourse. In particular, his enumeration of three phases of emergent national struggle in the art and literature of colonized peoples has proven a template applicable to many decolonization efforts since the mid 1900s (211-212). In a similar, if more militant manner than Thiesse and Anderson, Fanon's emphasis on the importance of national consciousness to restore the "psycho-affective equilibrium" (201) that colonialism destroyed has been crucial in legitimating the discourse of nation building in a postcolonial context. Despite the combative tone of Fanon's incitation to nationalist struggle, even the third stage of "revolutionary" national literature is not intended as isolationist. In fact, for Fanon,

the building of a nation is of necessity accompanied by the discovery of universalizing values. Far from keeping aloof from other nations, therefore, it is national liberation which leads the nation to play its part on the stage of history. It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows.  
(Fanon 235, trans in *Norton* 1593)

Drawing from Fanon, Achebe also notes the necessary but temporary phase of national consciousness. He describes the negritude movement and claims to an “African personality” as “props we have fashioned at different times to help us get on our feet again. Once we are up, we shan’t need any of them” (30). Although Fanon applied his theory to the context of negritude and Algerian liberation, Glissant evokes his fellow Martinican activist in his local study *Le discours antillais*. Mapping the lack of imaginative foundations in Martinique as a legacy of slave deracination and the protectionist French social state, nationalism provides a starting point in which the possibilities it generates outweigh its restrictions (288). Yet Glissant stresses that once a national cultural identity has been established, the constraints of isolating nationalism must be overcome by forging links with neighbours and with communities which share some of the nation’s cultural components. In propounding the “multi-relation” of common Antillean histories of movement, colonization and interaction that cross island borders, Glissant claims that “[t]he Antilles Sea is not the lake of the USA. It is the estuary of the Americas” (427).<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in a geographically-centred version of Fanon’s “psycho-affective equilibrium” that recalls Glissant’s island imagery, Edward Kamau Brathwaite describes the landscape of the Antilles as “geo-psyche”: the islands share the tops of a submerged chain of mountains, providing a regional connectedness that overrides the colonial carving up of the Caribbean (27). Once again, nation building is seen as a natural and necessary phase for all cultures to pass

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<sup>10</sup> “La mer des Antilles n’est pas le lac des Etats-Unis. C’est l’estuaire des Amériques.” *My translation*.

through. Yet nationalism is not an end in itself but rather the prerequisite to open engagement with the outside, the international, the global.

Casanova outlines the same common process in the building of a national imaginary in fiction:

Allowance being made for certain minor variations and differences associated with a particular political history, linguistic situation, or literary heritage the main initial stages of literary formation are [. . .] essentially the same for all literary spaces that have belatedly come into being as the result of assertions of national identity. An almost universal and transhistorical order of development.  
(245, trans in *The World Republic of Letters* 178-179)

In a literary equivalent of Fanon or Glissant's emphasis on the limitations of nationalism, Casanova describes the evolution of literary concerns from a first generation of national writers, who "refer to a political idea of literature in order to create a particular national identity," to a later generation who "refer to autonomous international literary laws" (439-440, trans in *The World Republic of Letters* 325):

Formal preoccupations, which is to say, specifically literary concerns, appear in small literatures only in a second phase, when an initial stock of literary resources has been accumulated and the first international artists find themselves in a position to challenge the aesthetic assumptions associated with realism.  
(274, trans in *The World Republic of Letters* 200)

In a similar evocation of a natural line of development in minority literature, Jane Wilkinson, in her early interview with Ihimaera, cites William McGaw's conception of four key stages in new literatures. He enumerates the minority aim to combat "cultural erosion" and "set the record straight," followed by "cultural adaptation and adjustment," which is later replaced by an increasingly "urban and social focus," and a final phase in which "the individual and personal focus replaces the social" (Wilkinson 108). In the interview, Ihimaera

agrees with this schema, noting that, already by 1984, the “catch up” phase of his own early fiction was giving way to McGaw’s later phases of adaptation and urban settings (109). Indeed, Ihimaera’s 1991 forecast that *Te Ao Marama* is a product of its times that will quickly become historicized iterates a belief that Maori literature will move on from its nationalist beginnings. However, the current Huia series contradicts such a move by confirming and celebrating Maori cultural specificity. In the following chapter, I look at the limitations of interpreting Ihimaera’s work within a nationalist and even postcolonial frame. Too strong an emphasis on cultural and literary difference in the nationalist mould fails to take into account the complexity of his texts and his motivations as a writer. An exaggerated correlation between author and fiction risks reducing the writer to an overly representative role and anchoring the fiction too tightly to a “reality” perceived outside of the text.

## CHAPTER TWO: BICULTURAL AND POSTCOLONIAL POLITENESS

### The Limitations of Nationalism: *Waituhi: The Life of the Village*

During the “embargo” years, as well as the preparation of the anthology *Into the World of Light*, Ihimaera wrote an opera libretto, *Waituhi: The Life of the Village* (1984). In both the 1981 Turnbull lecture and his 1984 interview with Wilkinson, Ihimaera emphasizes the need to break the stereotype of pastoral Maori writing in favour of a more radical voice that engages with the difficulties of Maori-Pakeha race relations in the 1980s. This change in voice coincides with an ambition to explore different genres in order to express the multiple facets of Maori culture and cater for diverse audiences. He claims that literature, film, theatre, television, poetry, songs and opera in both Maori and English, and even investing video games and break-dancing with Maoritanga, are valid forms for Maori art to take (Wilkinson 99). *Waituhi*, which played for a week in September 1984 at the Wellington State Opera House, is the first New Zealand Maori opera and also Ihimaera’s first attempt at synthesizing his political aims with his interest in different creative media. As such, the opera is a bridging work situated between the lyric novel *Whanau*, on which it is based, and the confrontational revisionist epic, *The Matriarch*, which, as discussed in the following chapter, is also structured as an opera. Nevertheless, *Waituhi*, which has not been restaged and was never commercially released as a recording or published as a libretto and score, is generally overlooked. The unusual choice of genre and complex artistic references in *Waituhi* muddy the tidy shift commonly identified in Ihimaera’s oeuvre from the pastoralism of the 1970s to the openly political and aggressive sovereignty work of *The Matriarch*.

In a later interview with Juniper Ellis, Ihimaera draws attention to the way he sees music as a structuring force across his work, from *Tangi*, “a

symphonic work,” *Whanau*, “an overture,” to the whole opera of *The Matriarch* (Ellis 170). Opera gives Ihimaera a different format with which to attempt to reconcile his romantic vision of wholeness with his ambition to record the political drives of modern-day Maori reality. In his Turnbull lecture, Ihimaera expresses his frustration that the lyricism of his early work fails to broach this gap or “faultline.” He attributes this to the fact that Maori is an oral culture and so the “alien” forms of Western literary genres are not suitable for capturing the emotion and the immediacy that he wants. In *Waituhi*, Ihimaera employs the “singing word” (Turnbull 49; Ellis 169) of Maori tradition in a European theatre genre:

[W]hat we’ve tried to do is to adapt the operatic form to Maori music and to New Zealand, so it’s not as if we’ve tried to use the operatic format and then squeeze cultural beliefs into that particular format. It is music theatre and it’s political theatre: it’s about the dilemma of all minority cultures within a majority system and it’s a very critical work. The definition we’ve given it at home is that it is marae music theatre. It’s simply what you would see on a marae or a Maori meeting place in New Zealand, except that instead of being supported by one instrument, it’s supported by an orchestra. (Wilkinson 98-99)

Ihimaera’s statement proffers a complex conception of the relationship between Maori music, opera and politics. *Waituhi* is at once specifically Maori, “what you would see on a marae,” and international, “the dilemma of all minority cultures.” The music is both Maori and operatic, and the subject is pertinent to Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders. The centre is conceived as Maori and traditional, but this is expanded to include Pakeha, European and international influences which are “adapt[ed]” to Maori cultural prerogatives. Such diverse demands make for an ambitious project.

The plot’s three strands, revolving around the transmission of oral lore from one generation to the next, a village wedding, and land disputes between members of the community, incorporate three different orchestral and singing styles, drawing on an extensive range of Maori oral modes and choral action



songs, operatic forms and techniques inspired by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European opera, most notably of Czech nationalism and Italian verismo. Ihimaera's adaption of a European performance genre to a Maori culture-specific context transforms the lyric novel *Whanau* into political opera, creating a nationalist work that brings together all the elements of the national imaginary, in its use of archetypal characters and recounting of myth and history on a stage set that evokes the national landscape. This is played out within a typical opera schema, driven by passion, love and betrayal, with poignant solos, rousing choruses and a climactic death scene at the end. As Ihimaera describes it:

*Waituhi* is about the concerns of the people for family, their land, their aspirations, their culture – and the ways in which these values are being beset by pressures from within as well as from without. It is an opera of varying moods. It is about the clash between past and present [. . .] and the attempt to carry the culture into the future. (Opera “Brief” 2)

The opera's central motif is the transmission of tribal knowledge in the Chant of Creation from village elder, Paora, to his great grandson, Pene. The chant functions as a framing device that, in retelling the Maori creation myth, centres the village of Waituhi and the tribe of Te Whanau A Kai. Paora and Pene are recognizable figures from earlier stories in *Pounamu Pounamu* and *New Net*. As characters fitting the romantic pastoral mode of those collections, they are also archetypal heroes of romantic nationalist opera in that they are more representative than individuals, a lens through which the audience may identify their own nationalist interests. At the end of the opera, as in the end of the novel *Whanau*, the tone shifts to elegy, mourning the loss of Maori cultural strength symbolized in Paora's death. *Waituhi* ends with the lingering echoes of the past fading away to allow the child to start reciting the myth cycle again. As Ihimaera explains in his plot outline, “[i]f there is any hope for the village, it resides in Pene's ability to maintain the continuity of teaching about the culture,

one generation to another” (“Brief” 7). In keeping with the importance to the national imaginary of myths which reaffirm and reiterate its right to exist, the Maori foundation myth, from the original parents, Papatuanuku and Rangitane, to the legendary coming of the seven canoes to Aotearoa, is repeated and recycled throughout the opera.

Several sub-plots based on contemporary social concerns are interspersed between Paora and Pene’s Creation Chant, and so update and illustrate phases of the myth of creation and the founding of Aotearoa. Land conflict (Miro/Arapeta), rural hardship (Charlie, Rongo/Huia/Pita/Miriama), separation and family disintegration caused by urban shift (Miro/Huia, Annie/Rose) and more generally, young people’s aspirations (Janey/Hana, Andrew) add a modern-day facet to Paora and Pene’s Creation Chant. This jigsawing technique connects, for example, Arapeta’s menacing “I want the land / It is mine to have” with Paora’s “[a]nd then the Pakeha came to Aotearoa [. . .] / he struck at the people / and ate up the land like a shark,” in Act III. Creating a contemporary equivalent to the dramatic myth sequence carries an overt, at times forced political motivation which calls on myth both as a cornerstone of a solid past identity and as relevant to sovereignty struggles in the present. In the introduction to *Waituhi*, Ihimaera and composer Ross Harris claim that “[w]e would prefer that the singers try to sing dramatically than ‘musically’” (“Brief” 2). This is especially important with regards to singing about the land conflict and the future for Maori culture. In the tense atmosphere of 1980s race relations, Ihimaera’s libretto intends to be provocative, and thus many lines are concerned with Maori estrangement from their land. For example, Huia’s “The land, the land is like a broken biscuit” or Miro’s “Homai te whenua! / Give me the land!” Such lines are punctuated by orchestration that calls attention to their importance, often with a drumbeat or plucked strings. This is no time for the orchestra to drown out the lyrics, or for vocal embellishments to obscure the message. Nevertheless, Ihimaera is explicit that “the opera is not intended to be

realistic or representational but, rather, imaginative” (“Brief” 1), a comment which asks that the libretto be firmly placed within opera conventions rather than those of political activism.

The wedding of the opera’s central scene (Acts II and III), set on the forecourt and in the church of a *marae*, involves all the cast in a community celebration. On the surface, this ensemble piece is completely Maori in style and structure. The chorus enacts a recognizable Maori wedding ceremony, in which Maori chant and harmonies combine with traditional costume and action song choreography. As the chorus moves into the wings, the classic opera theme of the fallen heroine comes to the fore, with the jilted lover singing an anguished aria of unrequited love. Underlying the apparent Maoriness of the wedding scene, however, is Ihimaera’s indebtedness to European opera. Among his musical influences and inspiration for *Waituhi*, Ihimaera cites Italian verismo, in Pietro Mascagni, the Andalusian provincialist, Manuel de Falla, and the two Czech nationalists, the symbolist, Bedrich Smetana, and the music realist, Leos Janacek (Wilkinson 1985; “Brief”; annotated libretto ms). In the most overt of these European influences, the wedding scene is an almost perfect reconstruction of the first act of Mascagni’s Italian verismo opera *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890). In *Cavalleria*, a Sicilian village square features a church where the ringing bells call the peasant chorus to Easter Sunday mass. This clears the stage for the tragic heroine to sing her aria of lost love, punctuated by offstage chanting from the chorus in church. The dramatic tension of the heroine’s solitude is broken, in both Mascagni’s and Ihimaera’s operas by the chorus bursting on stage in jubilation, ready to celebrate their respective festivals.

Ihimaera’s interest in following Mascagni’s schema so closely indicates the direction he envisages for his opera project. In the Wilkinson interview, the librettist speaks of the influence of Mascagni’s rustic drama on his conception of *Waituhi*. Ihimaera explicitly links Maori and Sicilian cultures, in that his

opera hopes to transplant the “tribal-oriented people” (103) of Sicilian verismo into his local version. He finds that Mascagni’s music is passionate and direct “heart music,” values which he accords with the Maori stress on “emotional expression” (107). Verismo, which means “realism” in Italian, refers to a minor genre of literature and opera briefly important at the turn of the twentieth century. In the newly united Italy, a celebration of regionalism was reflected by a literary rejuvenation inspired by rural life, local traditions and dialects. Verismo techniques have been noted in operas by Mascagni, de Falla, Smetana and Janacek, all of whom were strongly attached to both aesthetic and political revolutions of their times. Janacek’s and Smetana’s work came to embody Czech nationalism and, as such, staging their operas in Prague and internationally throughout the twentieth century brought support to the turbulent task of nation building. Sicilian *Cavalleria*, Neopolitan *Pagliacci*, by Ruggero Leoncavallo, and Andalucian *La Vida Breva* were written for national competitions at a time when the art of opera seemed to be dying out. Like English romanticism, the Celtic Revival and Maoriland writing, verismo is another example of how art can be a site for renaissance and revolution in reflecting social concerns of the period, and thus conceptually similar to Ihimaera’s Maori nationalist imaginary. Furthermore, innovations in opera over the course of the twentieth century consolidate verismo’s tentative foray into making the art form more real and more relevant to its audience. Significantly, Ihimaera labels *Waituhi* “music theatre,” a term which resonates with Kurt Weill and Bertold Brecht’s collaborations in the post-war period to make opera appeal to a broader audience through increased realism and direct political messages (Weill 191-194). This new direction was further supported by concurrent developments in musical styles, including Arnold Schoenberg’s atonalism, Anton Webern’s tonal technique and Pierre Schaeffer’s experimentalism, to which Ross Harris’s score for *Waituhi* is indebted (Commons n. pag.). In their partnership, Harris and Ihimaera hope to have

created a “new idiom,” one that encourages identification on the different levels of classic opera, avant-garde music theatre and Maori stage show. *Waituhi* is thus a clearly complex and ambitious project which combines influences from a variety of sources to promote Maori cultural and political sovereignty. Ihimaera’s use of nineteenth-century Italian verismo as a model meaningful for the artistic expression of contemporary Maori culture is yet another illustration of Thiesse’s, Fanon’s and Glissant’s insistence on the trans-historic and international valence of nationalist discourse.

The project’s coordination and reception, on the other hand, respond to different directives than Ihimaera and Harris’s ambition to combine Maori and European art forms. Like *Into the World of Light*, *Waituhi* illustrates the strongly separatist imperatives of Maori Renaissance and sovereignty movements of the 1980s. The desire for Maori to demonstrate their culture’s strength and richness effectively obscured more formal artistic considerations in the opera’s staging. For example, all the singers and actors were Maori and actively involved in Maori culture groups such as *kapa haka* performance. Furthermore, the set was designed by well known Maori artist Para Matchitt. In keeping with the project’s strong Maori emphasis, *Waituhi* was reviewed almost entirely on the merit of its Maori components, for which it was congratulated for demonstrating Maori culture’s ability to adapt to non-Maori and contemporary artistic influences (Cresswell; Rakete; Simpson; Thomson). In stark contrast to the acclamations for its Maori aspect, reviewers remained baffled by the operatic parts and, diplomatically, preferred to plead ignorance of opera rather than risk passing judgement on the quality of the arias. For example, Richard Cresswell tentatively finds that the arias “overcomplicate rather than enhance and support the action [. . . ] but that may reflect my operatic ignorance” (Cresswell n. pag.).

The opera’s reception, held up as a successful example of flourishing cultural expression in accordance with the Maori Renaissance, effectively

masked its operatic aspects. The New Zealand audience's lack of comprehension of the opera's influences undermines Ihimaera's project to use the "singing word" as a suitable mode to transmit Maori culture, thereby revealing a gap between the creators' intention and the audience's reception. That the audience failed to pick up on the significant influence of verismo and avant-garde opera—despite signposts in the opera programme—reveals some incongruities in the translation of the European art form to Maori cultural expression, as well as to contemporary New Zealand in general.<sup>1</sup> In *Waituhi*, knowledge of Mascagni's opera brings a depth and resonance to the Maori opera that recalls a time and place where opera was commonplace, accessible and inspirational. As a nationalist style, verismo's unembellished, earthy, unabashedly provincial tone mirrors Maori Renaissance aims, and therefore it would seem fruitful to highlight these similarities. Yet the resounding silence towards *Waituhi* as an opera illustrates the highly selective reading of Ihimaera's texts that, from the beginning of his career, established the writer as synonymous with the Maori literary genre. To interpret Ihimaera's operas systematically in relation to the writer's Maoriness precludes audiences and critics having to do their own work to access the opera in all its complexity. The public uncertainty of the value for Maori expression in the seemingly incongruous opera genre reluctantly admits to a certain ideology in which Maori are presumed to be shut out of an imported upper class European art form, a genre commonly perceived as the apogee of high art and thus unsullied by any social or political commentary, and thereby excluded from the bicultural arena.

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<sup>1</sup> An equivalent debate exists in regards to the impact of literary and operatic verismo. Verismo literature, exemplified by Giovanni Verga, criticizes the harsh realities of poverty, famine, war and other social difficulties and disparities of the turn-of-the-century. Verismo opera, on the other hand, tends not to connect with these issues, something which highlights the difficulty of translating across genres. Mancini and Rouveroux, "Le verismo existe-t-il?," *L'Avant scène opéra : Leoncavallo, Mascagni*, 4-13, see also chapter three.

## Postcolonial Politeness<sup>2</sup>

*Waituhi*'s reception reveals several contentious issues concerning the relationship between minority artist or writer and the Western audience or reader. Encouraging minorities to take control of their own cultural output and commentary has led to reluctance from cultural outsiders to question the value of such work judged by Western artistic values. Furthermore, the postcolonial reader's willingness to identify with the minority perspective by privileging the writer's authority and authenticity is often at the expense of recognizing the complex and multiple, often cross-cultural creative influences in the work. For example, the Pakeha audience was so anxious to understand *Waituhi* as a Maori concept that it forgot to look to its own performance traditions as well. By contrast with the majority of reviewers' emphasis on cultural concerns, in an *Opera Australia* review, opera critic Jeremy Commons critiques *Waituhi* as a performance. He finds that the show was severely compromised by the inexperienced actors and singers, and to a lesser extent, the unprofessional orchestra. Most of the cast could not read music and had little or no classical singing or theatre acting experience. Consequently, according to Commons, Harris's score was inappropriate and altogether too difficult for singers who struggled to hit the right notes. Furthermore, Matchitt's set design was also inappropriate. Although the panels of abstract Maori patterns were visually arresting, the set was cumbersome and did not "act," having the effect of bunching the players in the centre of the stage (Commons n. pag.). In the art world, such criticism is valid and legitimate, and yet here it stands out against the lack of negative opinion by reviewers and interviewers in local magazines in New Zealand.

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<sup>2</sup> The question of postcolonial "politeness" is addressed by Diana Brydon, James Meffan and Mark Williams in their introduction to an unpublished collection of essays on "culturalisms." The argument is explored in some detail in chapter five, "Indigenous Postcolonialism."

The confidence and authority with which Maori writers have taken control of their fiction, as well as all other levels of literary production, circulation and criticism, has effectively discouraged input from outside their own culture. With the key exception of Stead's trenchant criticism of the literary quality of Maori fiction, Pakeha critics tend not to comment on literary value, as already evident in the carefully guarded, increasingly distanced analyses in the 1970s by Pakeha critics Rhodes, Oppenheim and Simms.<sup>3</sup> Pakeha acquiescence with the aims dictated by Maori for its own representation is part of a larger postcolonial sensitivity to marginality and agency. As well as making room for Maoritanga within a newly bicultural nation, the 1980s also saw an equivalent Pakeha literary historiography, looking back through its own past for alternative histories in order to usurp the supposed straight line from English to colonial to Pakeha New Zealand identity that had been documented in earlier anthologies, most notably in Curnow's 1960 *Penguin*. Wedde and McQueen's 1985 *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* is representative of this bicultural shift, featuring women, whalers and the Maori in what Mary-Louise Pratt calls the narrative of "anti-conquest" (*Imperial Eyes* 7). Wedde's national anthology presents examples of Maori writing with both the original Maori and translated English text, but it does not translate the cultural context in which the original was conceived, often as oratory for ceremonial occasions. This accords with Wedde's ambition to let the Maori voice stand "on [its] own terms" (*How to be Nowhere* 63). Wedde's focus on presentation rather than interpretation removes any expectation that the task of a national anthology might be to

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<sup>3</sup> There is ongoing criticism—from Maori but also, in a self-regulating reflex, from amongst Pakeha themselves—of Pakeha assuming to speak on behalf of Maori. As well as Maori criticism of Pakeha and foreign scholars for their academic work on Maori society and culture, a similar discretion is apparent in Pakeha fiction, where few Pakeha writers have central Maori characters. A notable exception is Tom O'Connor, who scrupulously sets out the credentials which have earned him the Maori cultural authority to write an historical novel of Te Rauparaha, *Tides of Kawhia*. The hesitancy among Pakeha writers to engage with Maori culture in their work indicates that Pakeha are seen, and perhaps more importantly, see themselves, as outside of Maori experience.



evaluate the literary merit of its poetry. Indeed, Wedde's acknowledgement that Maori "have something to say and are saying it" puts agency firmly in Maori hands (60; Dowling, "Interview" 175-175). More recent examples of the same Pakeha accordance with bicultural politics include Mark Pirie's *The NeXt Wave* (1998) and Fiona Kidman's *The Best New Zealand Fiction Two* (2005). Both anthologies select Maori writing containing features of Maori cultural specificity of form and content. The editors reformulate the same stance towards Maori cultural imperatives as those described by Maori anthologists: in his introduction to "Generation X," "new" New Zealand writing, Pirie identifies the drives for Maori writing "[to fulfil] socio-economic and political purposes" (5), while Kidman describes the Maori writers in her collection as "Maori voices that speak with intensity from their point of belonging" (17). If Maori writing has been liberated from its earlier need to document, to now celebrate cultural strength in diversity, as *Te Ao Marama* proudly proclaims, then Pakeha anthologists have proven wary of demonstrating this.

Wedde's, Pirie's and Kidman's polite cultural recognition runs the risk of encouraging the idea over and above its successful execution—something that Stead is particularly disparaging about, taking to task, for example, some of the translated Maori in Wedde's *Penguin* ("Two Views" 298-301). While questions of literary value remain unasked in regards to Maori fiction, it is more difficult to skirt quality judgements in *Waituhi*, where there is an audible difference in the singers' confidence and the audience's appreciation between operatic sections of the opera and the *haka*, *karanga* and chorus numbers.<sup>4</sup> New Zealand critics' reluctance to judge the performance's quality is somewhat at odds with *Waituhi*'s professional staging, drawing on the names

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<sup>4</sup> My comments are based on audio recordings of the concerts. My thanks to Witi Ihimaera for providing cassettes of *Waituhi*. Commons also notes in his review: "[o]n the occasions when the opera moved towards traditional chant or action song, [. . .] the cast gained confidence and the performance gathered zest."

of a well known writer (here, librettist), composer and singing coach, and performed in a national theatre. In addressing the effects of Western critical silence towards postcolonial fiction, Chelva Kanaganayakam cites Zulfikar Ghose's bald statement that "post-imperialist guilt is responsible for a lot of bad art that the former imperialists dare not criticise" (Ghose qtd in Kanaganayakam 60). This is a polemical charge that Kanaganayakam tempers with the proviso that it is primarily the responsibility of the culture concerned to make such judgements: "[g]ood and bad are labels that we cannot dispense with, but their authority must come from the nation that is being written about" (60). Australian anthropologist, the late Eric Michaels, in *Bad Aboriginal Art*, reiterates Kanaganayakam's culture-specific stance. Although he initially sets out to evaluate Aboriginal painting, Michaels concludes, "these works are to be judged first and foremost in terms of the social practices that produce and circulate them" (162; see also Muecke, "Repressive Hypothesis" 416). It is clear that Maori cooperative, inclusive "social practices" have been important in encouraging the rejuvenation and flourishing of Maori arts. As Ihimaera puts it in terms of the selection process for *Te Ao Marama*, the *kaupapa* is driven by a "Maori standard of excellence and quality"—the criteria of which is, nevertheless, unexplained (Williams, "Interview" 294). However, as the lack of attention to verismo in Ihimaera's opera reveals, too sharp a focus on, and celebration of the Maori cultural aspects of the show reduces its significant and enriching artistic influences and, finally, does not engage with the opera in the context of performance art to which it undoubtedly belongs.

To read *Waituhi* as an opera and within the historical continuation which includes late-nineteenth-century verismo and Weill's music theatre, counteracts the standard interpretation of *Waituhi* as a "Maori" opera in order to concentrate on the artistic elements most likely to stand up to translation into a non-Maori, non-New Zealand context. Following *Waituhi*'s season in Wellington, a tour in Paris was considered, with the support of the French

Embassy in Wellington. Had that production eventuated, it is likely that the verismo connection would have been emphasized in order to connect the Maori performance with those operas frequently performed on European stages. Indeed, the verismo composers were strongly attached to both aesthetic and political revolutions of their times, yet not confined to them, as attested by the ongoing popularity of these operas throughout Europe. By contrast, *Waituhi*'s short life span and the fact that it did not travel to Paris suggests that an overemphasis on local objectives—in this case choosing cast and set designer based on Maori cultural skills rather than operatic competency—risks limiting the work's meaning outside of its immediate context. While it is clearly a cultural product of its times, it appears that *Waituhi* did not possess the artistic qualities necessary to ensure longevity.

In the context of Pacific writing, Michelle Keown asks why this region is underrepresented on postcolonial syllabi, citing Graham Huggan and Pierre Bourdieu to suggest organized exclusion by a consumer-driven international publishing industry (8). While Keown accurately and usefully draws attention to the commercial motivations which surround the publication of postcolonial texts, Sharrad offers a more text-centred reason. In his review of fiction by new writers in Pacific anthologies—whose policies are similar to Huia's—he suggests that this literature is fully concerned with its local context and is thereby not relevant, or not translatable into an international domain. Sharrad argues that this local rootedness ought not be construed as negative, but as altogether different from the aims and expectations of international postcolonial fiction and its academic theory. The merit of Sharrad's position is that he acknowledges the importance and usefulness of national, regional or local art for the communities in which and for which it is produced. Sharrad's suggestion that such work may have limited export potential is not intended as a criticism. Instead, he recognizes the pressures of expectation that his academic position on the "global cosmopolitan literary circuit" brings to his

reading of work that is more intimately local than his evaluative criteria make room for (“Re-viewing Reviewing” 209). The same comment applies to Commons’s critique of *Waituhi* in that his criteria of European performance art do not have the capacity to address the show’s local production. Following Sharrad, my reading of *Waituhi* acknowledges and appreciates the show’s cultural importance. To point out artistic weaknesses as an opera does not deny excellence in a cultural frame, in which Matchitt is a renowned New Zealand artist and many of the singers in *Waituhi* are internationally successful in *kapa haka* troupes.<sup>5</sup>

The debate over the validity of assigning Western value judgement to postcolonial minority fiction exemplifies tensions between writing and reading perspectives that potentially talk at cross-purposes. As seen in the previous chapter, Maori literature rejects the primacy of both Western literary expectations of form and content, and the non-Maori reader. Instead, Ihimaera, along with many other writers and editors including those of *Te Ao Marama* and *Huia*, claim that Maori writing is by and for Maori, with an inclusive and supportive *kaupapa* charter dismissing the notion of literary judgement as a Western consideration ill-adapted to Maori arts. Responding to such a stance, Evans suggests in his recent survey of current Maori fiction that the aura of self-sufficiency cast by Maori literature gives an impression that Pakeha are simply “irrelevant” to Maori concerns (“Pakeha-Style Biculturalism” 30). Evans’s comment, supported by the *laissez faire* Pakeha (non)approach to Maori fiction, is certainly a compliment in its indication that Maori literature has achieved the sovereignty and Renaissance aims of self-management. Nonetheless, there is perhaps also a danger in such myopia. In particular, Maori self-sufficiency raises the question of whether a cultural framework is capable of adequately accounting for all artistic output. Commons’s critique that the set

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<sup>5</sup> In fact, following *Waituhi*, Matchitt’s sets were sent to the Festival of the South Pacific, where they were installed in a gallery in New Caledonia (Thomson).

designer and the show's cast did not do justice to *Waituhi*'s production, and the fact that the performance did not go on tour, suggests otherwise. Maori control of *taha* Maori, things Maori, has created a situation in which Maori are the producers, distributors, teachers and critics of their work. The question of self-determination here leans towards that of self-regulation, as the Western sense of art is subsumed into a culture-centred model. Ihimaera's emphasis on *kaupapa* as the driving force of Maori fiction creates an understanding of Maori art and literature as bounded by culture, a position that *Te Ao Marama* and Huia's collections endeavour to mitigate by celebrating diversity and richness. As Ihimaera puts it in the "Kaupapa" of the final volume of *Te Ao Marama*, "The Spiral":

Our belief is that the more informed our work is by Maori cultural aspects and understanding, reo (language), whakapapa (genealogy), mauri (life principle) and wairua (spirit), the more Maori it is. But it is also our belief that the constant going out and returning [. . .] possess the kinds of tensions which can push our work, informed by kaupapa Maori, into a new form that is an amalgamation of both.  
(*Te Ao Marama* 5 17)

The spiral image offers a range of positions through its inward-outward turning, across a spectrum from tradition and stasis to innovation and movement. However, the spiral is a wholly Maori construct that remains locked into its own loop. The bicultural climate which encourages Maori literature to demonstrate its difference, both in Maori controlled selection and judging processes, and in the forms and content of the fiction itself, has fostered the Maori writer's role as representative of his or her culture and community. According to Wevers, the strongly autobiographical and realist "impulse to document" in much Maori fiction is the result of the Maori Renaissance encouragement for writers to bear witness to their own experiences as Maori ("GenX" 386). This close rapport between writer and fiction is borne out in the lengthy edifying explanations of editorial selection and the authors'

backgrounds and credentials in *Into the World of Light* and *Te Ao Marama*, continued today in Huia's authors' notes. In many of the authors' notes in Huia's anthologies, the way writers choose to describe themselves strongly resembles markers of Maoriness in the fiction, particularly an emphasis on connection to the land and sea, *whanau* and *whakapapa*, Maori food, language, and the practice of other traditional arts such as carving. The authors come across as ambassadors for the success and strength of the Maori Renaissance.

Despite the editors' efforts in *Te Ao Marama* and Huia's anthologies to continually redefine boundaries in order to contain all forms of Maori expression, it is difficult to imagine that all writers envisage their work within a Maori frame. The question remains to be addressed whether the labelling and packaging of Maori literature might be too restrictive for some writers who, although Maori by heritage, might not wish to be known as such. While it is difficult to discern whether or not Maori writers are dissatisfied with the tendency for their work to be subsumed into the genre of Maori fiction, the parallel domain of Maori fine art offers some notion of the issues at stake. In his study of Maori art exhibitions of the 1990s, Peter Brunt indicates a conflict of interest between art and culture. He notices that new, avant-garde art, such as by art school graduates and women artists, is collapsed into a traditional and cultural framework by Maori curatorial strategies:

Since 1995 there has been a kind of resurgent traditionalism—a 'call to order'—in the curatorial framing of the 'new Maori art' as the first paradigm [of traditional art] finally asserted control, which it did not by opposing the 'new Maori art' (which was clearly a burgeoning unstoppable phenomenon) but by wresting it from its conceptual framing in the likes of 'Choice!' in order to restage it under its own, more legitimate, guidance. (235)

While the "new" Maori artists originally aimed to record their dissatisfaction with and difference from "traditional" art and artists, institutional curating brings them into the fold under the umbrella of similarity and continuity based

on a shared cultural heritage (235). The primacy of cultural belonging, which overrides the individual artist's counter-discursive or critical intentions, echoes *Te Ao Marama's kaupapa* which legitimates any fiction by a writer who is Maori. By way of explaining such inclusiveness, Ihimaera cites a Maori sense of collectivity and continuity as an attribute of tribal people, and thus an indicator of fundamental differences with Pakeha notions of individuality: "I actually think that as Maori people we are tribal and we belong to a cooperative rather than a competitive fraternity in terms of the arts" (Ellis 171). Nevertheless, elsewhere Ihimaera contradicts himself, suggesting that Maori culture cannot presume to fully account for each writer's conception of his or her work: "[t]he time may be coming when Maori will be writing from a less collective response and more of an individual response" (Williams, "Interview" 292).

Differing aims for Maori art and literature become evident when the work is detached from the polite biculturalism of the national context, as exporting cultural expectations reveals potential discrepancies between communal Maori priorities (curators, anthologists), and those of the professional artist. In an article in the same collection as Brunt's, the timely *On Display: New Essays in Cultural Studies*, Jonathan Smart recounts the presence of South Island tribe and corporation, Ngai Tahu, at the New Zealand pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 2001, chaperoning the two artists representing New Zealand, Jacqueline Fraser and Peter Robinson. Both artists have Ngai Tahu ancestry, and their work does have Maori inflections, as well as drawing inspiration and influence from European haute couture and the baroque (Fraser) and Pop, op art and quantum physics (Robinson). As an international festival, the biennale is not, officially at least, a forum for the manifestation of indigenous, minority or even other kinds of cultural expression other than fine art. Smart reveals the very different motivations fuelling the tribe's and the artists' presence. According to the pavilion's "Bi-

Polar” exhibition catalogue, “[b]y eluding classification and engaging contradiction [. . . the artists] open up a new horizon, the potential to speak meaningfully across the divide” (Smart 157). In opposition to these elusive qualities, Ngai Tahu focuses on belonging and continuity, drawing attention not only to the artists’ connection to Maoritanga, but also to Italy’s connection to Maori, in the Maori Battalion service in Italy in World War Two (158). At the same time as the Maori presence at the biennale foregrounds New Zealand’s unique culture and history, the artists’ own agendas are more personally and internationally oriented: at the time, Robinson was living in Berlin and, on the back of her Venice exposition, Fraser dropped her dealer relationships and exhibition ties to New Zealand (160).

The ambition to define and encapsulate Maori art and literature as cohesive has masked the debate over differing ways of identifying as Maori taking place between Maori tribes and between Maori and Pakeha on a national socio-cultural and political level. Since the reawakening of Maoritanga in the 1970s and 1980s, the foregrounding of demonstrative, expressive culture as the predominant sign of a chosen Maori identity has been an operative feature of negotiating the Maori side of biculturalism. The strong public emphasis on cultural connectedness is very close to the values espoused in the “Kaupapa” of *Te Ao Marama* and evident in the curatorial packaging of Maori fine art. The conflation of public culture and personal identity may be problematic at the point where an individual’s sense of Maoritanga differs from the perceived public conception, a point made by several social anthropologists including Belinda Borell on Maori and Polynesian mixing in Auckland, Toon van Meijl on disaffected urban youths, Hal Levine, and Steven Webster.<sup>6</sup> Their case

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<sup>6</sup> Van Meijl’s example of the experience of urban adolescent “dropouts” attending a *marae* training centre illustrates the discrepancy between “public presentations” (55) of the culture, based on learning Maori language, rituals and traditional values, and the youths’ “private feelings” (62) about being Maori, through their lived experience of low educational achievements and unemployment. His study highlights the gap between the prevailing (public) sense of Maori culture and (private) individuals who do not identify with that:



studies illustrate the difficulty of accounting for the heterogeneity of Maori lived culture within the parameters of biculturalism. The emphasis in each of these studies on the multiplicity of Maori experience coincides with growing wariness in New Zealand towards the pervasiveness of (bi)culturalism in civic discourse and the expectation that diverse social, political and economic issues can be dealt with through cultural understanding (Spoonley et al. 1996; Liu et al. 2005; Brydon et al. ms).

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[The disadvantaged youngsters] know they should construct their cultural identity as Maori in terms of cultural ideology, but they cannot, and they realise they never will. For that reason also, an increasing number of young people no longer wants to make an attempt to subscribe to the public discourse prescribing Maori people that they have 'to know who they are, where they are from and what they are on about.' (64)

**Private Life, Public Writing: Inside or Outside the Whale?**

A perception of Maori writers as representative of and for their culture means that both Maori and Pakeha receive work which is not demonstrably Maori in outlook or content with some hesitation. The way that *Waituhi* was welcomed for its Maori components and ignored for its operatic aspect is illustrative. Close mapping of Maori literature and art onto Maori culture and lived experience raises questions about the function of literature in society. The question of whether art should chart social concerns or remain aloof from politics, and the position of the artist as cultural representative or marginalized figure, are long-standing debates, to which postcolonial literature, and in particular indigenous writing, has proven particularly sensitive. When Maori fiction emerged in the 1970s and 1980s to uncover what Ihimaera calls a “parallel,” “underground” New Zealand literature, its desire to establish its own terms of reference, including an oppositional stance to Pakeha cultural nationalism and literary expectations, is understandable and, within Thiesse’s terms of nation building, natural. Similarly, as Bourdieu’s and Casanova’s studies of historical literary development show, the current form and function of Maori literature is far from unique, as literary newness always arises from reaction against its canonical predecessors. Indeed, when Arvidson aligns Ihimaera’s politicized literary “rebellion” with Marxism as a challenge to the “‘well-wrought urn’ approach,” he identifies an old literary argument in the debate over literature’s obligations to beauty or truth (120). Ihimaera’s acknowledgement of alternately community-based or individualistic motivations for Maori writers, and his description of *Waituhi* as “political theatre” yet also “imaginative” rather than “representational,” indicate a less clear-cut position for Maori literature than bicultural differentiation would seem to recognize.

The two positions are neatly summed up by George Orwell's and Salman Rushdie's opposing stances towards the writer's responsibility to record his or her social context. In "Inside the Whale" (1940), Orwell expresses his revulsion and justifiable fear of the rise of fascism and the Second World War atrocities that were just beginning to register in the United Kingdom. Faced with the bleak reality of Conradian "horror" on England's own doorstep in Europe, he rejects politically engaged writing—which he also calls "purposive" (127). Instead, he asks writers to "[g]et inside the whale" (158), a sheltered spot of social quietism, passivity and irresponsibility from which to write with unobstructed and individual "emotional sincerity" (154), which E. M. Forster calls "innocent of public-spiritedness" (E. M. Forster qtd in Orwell 155). Orwell's charge, to "[g]ive yourself over to the world process [. . .] simply accept it, endure it, record it" (158), conceives of literature as a rendering of the personal and private, embryonic, space which the writer inhabits with the passivity of the ordinary man who, for Orwell, must be the hero of modern literature.

Rushdie forcefully argues the position against artistic quietism in "Outside the Whale" (1984), which looks back on Orwell's pessimistic prognosis for literature and society. Affronted and exasperated by the reduction of India to colonial clichés in several British- and American-directed films about India in the 1980s, Rushdie decides to "make a fuss" (101). Whereas Orwell's ordinary men are passive and helpless, Rushdie's post-1960s ordinary men—and now, women—lead protests and revolutions. Ordinary people, he asserts, do not live in the womb-like seclusion of the whale, but outside, "in a world without hiding places" (99). Rushdie's taking a stand on behalf of a minority is postcolonial in that he advocates engaging with politics in order to assert the minority perspective to subvert cultural misconceptions and appropriations. Whereas Orwell has the individual retreat to a selfhood which

he imagines as constructed in the privacy of one's own home, Rushdie takes the individual outside the whale and into the public forum.<sup>7</sup>

Ihimaera's fiction corresponds to both sides of the debate over fiction as the art of the individual imagination or inspired by a motivation to document socio-political and cultural issues. While his 1970s fiction, his editorial policy in *Into the World of Light* and his Turnbull lecture correspond to Rushdie's call to make literature a forum to express cultural concerns, *Waituhi*, in its opera genre and significant influence from European traditions, is at least partly motivated by artistic expression not easily contained by biculturalism. In several interviews, Ihimaera makes a distinction between his writing that is motivated to write on behalf of Maori, driven by sovereignty, and that which is more personal, which he calls "selfish." Among his selfish preoccupations are writing about gay identity in *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* (Ellis 179), and opera (Wilkinson 103; Ellis 181). Ihimaera equates "selfish" writing with individuality:

I am becoming less and less a person who is writing on behalf of a culture and believes he has a role in articulating their concerns and not his own; I have become more a writer who is articulating selfish concerns. (Wilkinson 103)

Ihimaera's frequent insistence on his selfishness may be intended as a comment on his own personality, a sign of humility in interviews which unwaveringly approach him and his work as a beacon of Maori success. The comment is also a warning to interviewers and readers to not associate all his fiction with the same representative motives. In other words, not to dismiss Orwell's whale as

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<sup>7</sup> Eli Zaretsky, in "The Birth of Identity Politics in the 1960s: Psychoanalysis and the Public/Private Division," describes the epistemological break in the conception of the public and private spheres. This provides one frame for seeing Orwell's and Rushdie's opposing conceptions of the role of art. A by-product of the independence and liberation movements of the fifties and sixties, a monumental realignment of boundaries between public and private spheres brought aspects of identity that had hitherto happened behind closed doors out into the open, often in a performative fashion. (243-259)

outdated in the Maori Renaissance or postcolonial domain. For example, in an interview in 1998, Ihimaera suggests that he would like to write a book as “a kind of birthday present to the millennium” (Ellis 180), but one is unsure which of his two publications of the year 2000 he is referring to; *The Uncle’s Story*, a novel which moves between a rural Maori village, Auckland, Vietnam and an Indigenous Peoples conference in late-1990s Canada, or a play, *Woman Far Walking*, presented at the International Festival of Wellington and published by Huia. The play’s dialogue is a cut-and-paste recycling of Ihimaera’s earlier confrontational novel, *The Matriarch*, and opera, *The Clio Legacy*, to re-enact the massacre of Te Kooti’s followers at Ngatapa. To read these works as representative of Ihimaera’s perception of where New Zealand is placed and where it is heading into the twenty-first century reveals radically different convictions: the former suggests an outward-looking vision in which Maoritanga is connected to other minority and First Nation struggles, while the latter shows New Zealand as remaining firmly entrenched in the polarities of biculturalism that predominated in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Ihimaera’s non-Maori operas, *Tanz der Schwane* and *Galileo*, his 2006 ballet, *The Wedding*, his gay novel *Nights*, his “Maori sci-fi” novel *Sky Dancer*, and his participation in Bill Manhire’s *Are Angels OK?* collection of collaborations between writers and scientists, further complicate expectations that Ihimaera’s voice represents Maoritanga, or that he conceives of all of his work as driven by cultural imperatives. Although Ihimaera consistently emphasizes that he is, above all, a Maori writer, his conception of what Maori writing may consist of is by no means singular or static:

There is no such thing as a Maori voice. There are many voices, tribal or, more and more, individual. As for me, I’ve never wanted to be predictable, and I am so proud to have many voices in my kaupapa. They make me shift around. (Williams, “Interview” 295)

If Ihimaera sees different ways of writing, then this entails that there are similarly different ways of reading.

Ihimaera's oeuvre oscillates between work which asserts Maori identity, in a literature which he labels "race relations" (Ellis 176), such as *The Matriarch* and *Woman Far Walking*, and "selfish" writing, such as that about gay identity, in *Nights* and his love poems "Dio Mi Potevi" and "Waiata Aroha," and in experimenting with other genres, particularly opera and ballet, but also science fiction and fantasy in *Sky Dancer* and *Are Angel's OK?*. In two interviews, one in national magazine, *The Listener* (Tim Watkin, "The Homecoming"), the other on National Radio (Kim Hill), Ihimaera clearly delineates two very different relationships that Maori have with contemporary New Zealand society. The first is an issue of Maori sovereignty asserting Maori rights, and is thus concerned with Treaty redress, recuperation of culture and history, and the grievance process over the devastating impact of colonization and Pakeha assimilation politics. The second is that of negotiation between Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders of their shared cultural inheritance and future:

'The problem is people think of it as one debate. But it's two dilemmas,' [Ihimaera] says. There's the relationship between Maori and the Crown, which, for as long as the tribunal process lasts, is a legal one, and therefore adversarial. 'That needs to be addressed and addressed quickly.'

But the relationship between Maori and Pakeha is quite separate. 'That's going along very well.' He has two daughters with a Pakeha mother. The cultures, he is confident, are 'crossing over'. (Watkin, "The Homecoming" 22)

Understanding the two, quite different, aims for Maori negotiations of sovereignty and cultural strength helps identify different interpretive strategies for Ihimaera's fiction. Like the "adversarial" Tribunal process, literature of race relations must expect, in Orwell's and Rushdie's terms, to be purposive and "to make a fuss," employing, for example, historiography, confrontational social

realism and polarized identities in a way that challenges the reader. By contrast, the second kind of writing, based on international themes and artistic modes, does not set Maori in opposition to Western cultural and artistic influences, but rather works with them. This writing, therefore, cannot be reduced to an allegorical function of representing Maori from a different angle; although this may be one, partial, interpretation, the work invites other readings.

The earlier description of a cultural frame for Maori literature and a corresponding Pakeha quietism in its interpretation has clearly developed out of the predominantly separatist sense of biculturalism over the past thirty years. However, in an early newspaper interview Ihimaera espouses a quite different conception of biculturalism, one which incites Umelo Ojinmah to diagnose in the mid eighties growing cultural inclusiveness. In describing literature's potential for multiple interpretations, Ihimaera expresses the need for "an equality between Maori and European" (Roy Murphy qtd in Ojinmah 4). Within biculturalism, Ihimaera understands cultural mixing as working in both directions: not only will Maori take on board Pakeha culture, but so too will Pakeha adopt and interpret features of Maori:

Maori people will have to begin to understand and to have more grace about the creative spirit of Pakeha people. We are not the only ones who will interpret our culture . . . now or in the future.  
(Murphy qtd in Ojinmah 58)

Ihimaera's positive biculturalism here indicates that differing interpretations are inevitable and even desirable. Here, he offers Pakeha a legitimate response to Maori fiction by suggesting that they will discover their own interpretations of Maori through the text. Ihimaera's understanding that different audiences will interpret Maori culture differently acknowledges a relationship between Maori writer and Pakeha reader—a sense of reciprocity that is lacking from most definitions of Maori literature concerned with demarcating boundaries. The presence of a contract between writer and reader appeals to reader response

theory common to Western literary reception. In Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" and Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?," fiction's potential for polyphony lies not with the author's intention but with the reader's interpretation. The text creates a dialogue between writer and reader that, in its subjectivity, multiplies cross-cultural influence and inter-reference depending on the time, place, and the reader's background. Such a position is radically different from current writing, reading and critical practice in New Zealand. Nevertheless, although postcolonial discourse challenges a reader-centred view by privileging minority agency and encouraging minorities to control the way their cultures are represented and received, Ihimaera's comment is a reminder that postcolonialism is merely one way of reading. Just as an international perspective reveals other ways of reading *Waituhi*, a look at conceptions of the writer-reader relationship outside of a national bicultural optic liberates the "selfish," private side of Ihimaera's fiction from an overly representative function.

The parallel development of Francophone postcolonial literature, particularly its different understanding of the private or public space of literary production, challenges the ways of seeing that seem ingrained in the Pakeha quietist approach to Maori literature. Although France's colonial power of the nineteenth century is second only to the British Empire, her current conception of and relationships with her (ex)colonies are markedly different. Indeed, while the terminology of decolonization and, later, the postcolonial has featured in Anglophone spheres since the 1950s, French literary theory has begun to use the term only very recently, notably with Jean-Marc Moura's *Littératures francophones et théorie postcoloniale* (1999). Even so, the language of postcolonial studies remains, for some eminent writers and commentators, including Francophone African literature critic Lilyan Kesteloot, an inadequate and reductive way of reading and labelling (Kesteloot 326-327). Other writers and critics, whose backgrounds and fiction could be considered postcolonial,



such as Lebanese-French Amin Maalouf, and exiled Czech Milan Kundera, firmly maintain a French critical approach in their essays.

The French hesitation to embrace postcolonial theory may be compared with the postcolonialism of English literary studies. Following certain conjecture in the 1980s, under the label “new” or “Commonwealth” literature, of which Rushdie’s “Commonwealth Literature does not Exist” is perhaps the best known, the postcolonial frame of reading is little challenged today. The founding precepts of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin’s famous *The Empire Writes Back* remain intact, with the recent second edition of their equally seminal *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* enlarging the categories of the first edition (Ashcroft et al. 1995, 2005). In noting the lack of critical challenge to the theoretical precepts of the *Reader*, Elleke Boehmer recently identifies the way that postcolonial reading of the 2000s continues to link minority literature with issues and debates rather than with aesthetics: postcolonialism reads the text as the *world*—always linked to a postcolonial, predominantly national, space—rather than as the *word*.<sup>8</sup> Such preoccupations are reversed in the French context. Indeed, while the Anglophone term “postcolonial” names sites, French postcolonial literature is more commonly called “Francophone,” a term which designates language as the primary site of textual demarcation.

In her preface to the English translation of *The World Republic of Letters*, Casanova delineates the different optics of English and French literary traditions:

[These traditions] have remained almost wholly foreign to each other: the postcolonial critique, which has played an important role in reintroducing history, and in particular political history, into literary theory; and the French critical tradition, based exclusively on the internal reading of texts, frozen in a certain aestheticizing attitude, refusing any intrusion of history—and, a fortiori, of politics—in the

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<sup>8</sup> Elleke Boehmer, “A Postcolonial Aesthetic: Repeating upon the present,” keynote address at *Re-Routing the Postcolonial* conference, the University of Northampton, 3-5 July, 2007.

supposedly “pure” and purely formal universe of literature. This is not, in my view, an insuperable antinomy. (xiii)

France’s constitutional foundations are based on a model of citizenship rather than of culture, which is seen as private and individual rather than of public concern,<sup>9</sup> a position that echoes Orwell’s sense of personal responsibility in “Inside the Whale.” Similarly, in French literature a writer’s own cultural registration—deemed private and personal rather than representative—does not hold a prominent place in literary interpretation, which, as Casanova signals, is based on textual analysis. This holds true for Francophone writers outside the hexagon, from former colonies and current French dominions or territories, which, by rights of a common citizenship, are not acknowledged for the cultural, ethnic, or religious differences they might have. Hence, in postcolonial French fiction, literary tropes of colonized identity common to Anglophone postcolonial fiction, such as displacement, voicelessness and a history of violence, are not interpreted for their political statement. Instead, cultural disturbance is registered through language, theme and imagery. Thus, for example, the horror of the Algerian war in Assia Djebar’s *L’Amour, la fantasia*, is painted in grand operatic hyperbolae; exile becomes the non-location of the desert or the sea in Malika Mokeddem’s *La nuit de la lézard* and *N’Zid*; and the frustrated (in)articulation of the Creole, for Martinican writers, Aimé Césaire and Patrick Chamoiseau, spills onto the page in a poetic effusion of words failing syntax. Demonstrating a text-based approach to minority fiction, in *Orphée Noir*, the influential preface to Léopold Sédar Senghor’s *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (1948), Jean-Paul Sartre defines the “negritude” which is the focus of the collection as “a

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<sup>9</sup> This was most explicit during the 2005 “crise en banlieue” riots in state housing suburbs of Paris. Alternately condemning unemployment, high-rise architecture, a lack of education opportunities and the need for target funding in low socio-economic zones, the government was adamant that ethnic conflict was not the root of the violence, even if the population concerned was largely of North African (Maghrebin) and African immigrant origins (including second and third generation).

complex notion [which] is, at heart, pure Poetry”; “less the theme than the style” (xxix). This is markedly different from Maori anthologies, which invariably place Maori literature within key socio-historical markers of the seventies and eighties, such as the Land March, Springbok Tour, and the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal.

The French model of literary theory and criticism is valuable in that it recentres the text, only attaching these close readings to socio-political contexts secondarily, and thereby reinserting an active role for the reader in the creation of a text’s meaning.<sup>10</sup> For Casanova, the French and English perspectives are mutually enriching rather than exclusionary, and indeed some French literary critics have combined the two methods. Moura’s text brings to bear an English postcolonial approach to Francophone fiction. By thereby revealing the socio-cultural and political criticism of the colonial legacy inherent in North and East African and Caribbean literature, he argues that the postcolonial text, in its ability to address both aesthetic and socio-cultural issues, exemplifies the innate hybrid potential of fiction. In this way, he collapses the opposition between purpose and beauty, arguing the productive tension between them (158-160). In another example of employing both French and English interpretative techniques, Durix focuses on the role of the reader in Anglophone postcolonial literature. In *Mimesis, Genres and Post-Colonial Discourse*, he acknowledges the necessity of basing any consideration of the text in the “ideological determination” from which it is written, thereby putting the onus on the reader to shift his or her perspective to meet the postcolonial writer’s specific cultural focus (57). However, in order to place textual politics, rather than cultural politics at the centre of the ensuing debate between postcolonial writer and Western reader, Durix maintains the primacy of the text itself as the site of that

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<sup>10</sup> One could compare the essays in *Commonwealth*, a French-based journal in which the majority of contributors are European, with those in *JNZL* or *SPAN*. See also specific essay collections, such as the text-based approach in Jean-Pierre and Carole Durix (eds.), *Reading Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things*, as compared to the more politically driven R. K. Dhawan, *Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary*.

negotiation. To concentrate on the text reinstates the pleasure of the text, a key consideration in Durix's interpretation, and one which allows the critic to focus his argument on an accepted plurality of both text and readership. He stresses the importance of the reader's identification with, and projection of the fiction in a way that is internally meaningful to that particular audience (58). Valorizing the personal response echoes Ihimaera's comment that the Pakeha "creative spirit" will invariably lead to differing interpretations of Maori culture and its writing. A text-centred and reader-privileged stance equally argues that all perspectives are valid and valuable for building up an impression of a culture. For example, in the African context, Durix claims the importance of European writers, notably Kipling and Conrad, as well as African writers as all valid and relevant to generating understanding of that environment, for Africans and outsiders alike (63-64, 68-69). To adapt this argument to Maori culture would extrapolate Ihimaera's view of the "creative spirit" to include different and perhaps contradictory stances from Maori writers, as well as creative writing about Maori by Pakeha. While the "frozen [. . .] aestheticizing" of a French literary perspective also contains its contradictions and blind spots, it offers a different approach to the postcolonial text by not privileging identity politics. Individually incomplete, employing New Zealand bicultural, postcolonial, and French textual analyses reveals a range of roles and relationships between writer and reader through the fictional text. In regards to Ihimaera's work, this approach rejects the singular frame from which he is read in New Zealand, allowing a separating out of alternately purposive public writing of race relations and his personal, "selfish" writing.

### “Purposive” Literature: Writing of Race Relations

Both the Watkin and Hill interviews, in which Ihimaera advocates his conception of dual Maori relationships in Treaty redress and cross-cultural Maori-Pakeha mixing, are motivated by his rewriting of his 1970s work. In an unprecedented and surprising move, Ihimaera edited and changed the endings of *Pounamu Pounamu* stories, re-released as a revised edition in 2003, followed with the novel, *Whanau*, updated and renamed *Whanau II* (2004), and *Tangi*, renamed *The Rope of Man* (2005). Although these rewrites are unusual, he describes them as necessary:

I was a colonised person when I wrote those books. It's been a whole process of personal decolonisation that I've had to go through to do this. Part of that decolonisation is to get out of my family. Trying to create for myself a sense of independence; a sense of political independence and a sense of sovereignty that allows me to see with my own eyes and with my own judgement the sorts of things my grandmothers were trying to tell me. 'What you see is not what it's all about'. [. . .] I was born brown with a white soul. Over the years I've had to find that brown soul again. And thank God, I've done it.  
(Watkin, “The Homecoming” 19)

Ihimaera's motivation to reclaim the “brown soul” of an indigenous perspective ties his rewrites to the postcolonial function of “writing back,” a term coined by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in their early book *The Empire Writes Back* to describe the decolonization impetus of minority writers. Within the politicized optic of Ihimaera's “personal decolonisation,” *Whanau II* departs significantly from the earlier pastoral *Whanau*. The new novel is much closer to *The Matriarch* in its aggressive tone and revisionist objectives. It is a novel of race relations, or, as Ihimaera puts it in his National Radio interview, “a kind of laboratory experiment [of] Maori concern about the Treaty process,” motivated by Ihimaera's tribe's Waitangi Tribunal process claiming recognition as an *iwi*, and thereby seeking to reclaim land wrongly taken in the late 1800s. In *Whanau*

*II*, Ihimaera revisits, for the fourth time in his fiction, the fall of Ngatapa *pa*, fort, an historical event that is clearly important for the writer, a potent symbol in his repertoire of historical injustices against the Maori that at once encapsulates East Coast Maori resistance during the New Zealand Wars, the importance of Ringatu prophet Te Kooti Rikirangi, the inhumanity of colonial forces, and the misrepresentation of history. The Ngatapa scene makes a strong argument for the need for Maori fiction to differentiate itself from Pakeha literature in order to expose aspects of history and ways of storytelling hitherto forgotten or erased.

Readers are first introduced to the colonial raid on Te Kooti's Ngatapa *pa* in Ihimaera's first novel of race relations, *The Matriarch* in 1986. The scene is repeated in his 1991 opera, *The Clio Legacy*, the 2000 play *Woman Far Walking*, and the 2004 rewrite *Whanau II*. In Act Two of *The Matriarch*, "The Song of Te Kooti," Ihimaera rewrites aspects of the New Zealand Wars from a Maori perspective that focuses on the movements of Te Kooti. In his redress of the Pakeha historical annals in which Te Kooti is a rebel, agitator and political prisoner, Ihimaera instead describes his role as Maori warrior, tribal chief and Ringatu prophet. Hence, these scenes of the novel are conveyed with an air of romantic heroism that presents noble savage figures fighting a "religious war" (*The Matriarch* 154). A documentary blow-by-blow approach reactivates history in which the Maori are shown not as agents of history but as victims of the Pakeha and, through Te Kooti's fatalistic prophecies and biblical allusions, God's will. The Ngatapa killings bring to an abrupt and disturbing end a long chapter recounting the protracted battle between Te Kooti and Crown troops:

And so they began to prepare for death, praying as the prophet had taught them, and singing the songs of Jehovah [. . .]

Then the time is nigh. The firing squad raise their rifles. The sun glints on the long barrels. And the women begin crying and the children, not knowing why their mothers are crying begin to scream. And some of the men, wishing to die in the stance of the warrior begin to haka, a final act of defiance. And they edge closer to the cliff's edge

so that they will fall; better to fall than to have your head taken from your body and given unto Pharaoh.

The shots ring out. The sound is shocking, echoing and echoing across the valley. The prisoners jerk and dance to the obscene song of the bullets, and the blood sprays and gouts from bodies and limbs and heads ripped through by the lethal lead. Then they begin to fall, pitching over the side of the cliff, 120 men, women and children, crowding the air in the long slow dive into death. (177-8)

Ihimaera's style is recognizable by its heightened romantic and biblical verbosity, especially in the profusion of adjectives and weighty images full of visual and sound effects that connect the mundane and earthy with the spiritual and mystical. Evident also is Ihimaera's talent for conjuring a mood of elegy through lyricism. In particular, the visual long shot that ends the sequence creates a lingering, haunting and poetic tone: "[t]hen they begin to fall, pitching over the side of the cliff, 120 men, women and children, crowding the air in the long slow dive into death."

This page from *The Matriarch*, in manuscript form, reappears in the archives for Ihimaera's second opera, *The Clio Legacy*. The five-part song cycle focuses on one moment from each of the lives of five, allegedly real, pioneer New Zealand women. Part Two: Te Turitumanareti (1845–5 January 1869) enacts the Ngatapa killings in spoken recitation with Maori *karanga* and *haka* for a Maori women's choir. In ten short stanzas, the narration reconstructs the Te Kooti sequence of *The Matriarch*, expanding the recitative with the prayers, songs and challenges that can only be indicated in the novelistic version. The performance medium serves the function of Ihimaera's emotive imagery in the novel: it demonstrates more convincingly than the opera *Waituhi* the potential for music and theatre to convey Maori culture more accurately than the novel form. For example, the *haka* embodies defiance, the keening *waiata tangi* is strongly elegiac, while the novel's "echoing and echoing across the valley" becomes, in the opera, a repetition of words aided by a reverberating microphone:

And when we are shot down  
 We shall fall we shall fall  
 Over the cliff over the cliff  
 Crowding the air  
 In our long slow dive unto death  
 (*Waiata tangi solo voice keening then falling and fading into silence*)  
 (Clio libretto ms)

The same sense of poignancy is retained in the later play, *Woman Far Walking*, and the rewritten novel, *Whanau II*. In the play, the event is one of a lifetime of battles between the heroine, Te Tiriti O Waitangi Mahana (who is named after the Treaty of Waitangi), and Pakeha settlers, soldiers, police and reporters. The play presents a kaleidoscope of events and people in the history of New Zealand under the guise of revisiting one woman's 160-year long life. It is also a re-presentation of Ihimaera's thirty-year long career as writer of Maori issues. Indeed, there is little new storyline in the text, rather, Ihimaera dramatizes parts of *The Whale Rider* (sea imagery), *The Matriarch* (the Te Kooti sequence, the Land March), *Dear Miss Mansfield* (extract from "A Contemporary Kezia"), *The Dream Swimmer* (influenza epidemic, family infighting), *Bulibasha* (American film and pop music clichés), and transposes parts of earlier productions *Waituhi* and *Clio*. Almost all the libretto from Part Two of *Clio* is directly carried across into the Ngatapa scene in *Woman Far Walking*. This is minimally rearranged and elongated with a few dramatized paragraphs from *The Matriarch*.

Finally, in the chapter "Children of the Israelites" in *Whanau II*, Ihimaera finds yet another way of textualizing the event. As in *The Matriarch* and *Woman Far Walking*, the elder recounts the story of Te Kooti to the *mokopuna*, child. This time, though, as the old man, Paora, tells it to his great-grandson, Pene, the story comes alive and is so real that the pair physically journey back in time to relive the 1868 drama and interact with the real participants:



The old woman took Pene by the hand and pulled him with her. Tamati Kota (Paora) tried to stop her, but the old woman gave him a look of rebuke. ‘Let the boy see, priest,’ she said. ‘Don’t sanitise the history.’ She turned to Pene. ‘When the soldiers fire, I will protect you so that you will not be shot’. (*Whanau II* 98)

The paragraph proceeds to repeat *The Matriarch* sequence verbatim, interspersed with the old woman’s direct speech, similar to Tiri’s dialogue in *Woman Far Walking*. The woman’s determination to make the young boy see the event first hand leads her to rebuke Paora for wanting to protect his great-grandson: “[d]on’t sanitise the history.” In this bald statement, Ihimaera divulges the political and critical way he envisages the process of “personal decolonisation” which inspired the rewrite. When he looks again at *Whanau*, “to see with my own eyes and with my own judgement,” that vision is one of ongoing struggle to (re)present a Maori view on history that he believes is still marginalized.

In all four texts, The Ngatapa sequence cannot be read in any other way but as an indictment of colonization. Ihimaera’s most direct criticism towards the Pakeha reader, the infamous, oft-cited “you, Pakeha” occurs in the Ngatapa episode of *The Matriarch*, ostensibly directed at the historical settler or soldier, but more generally the majority of readers: “Yes, Pakeha, you remember Matawhero. Let me remind you [. . .].” In the play, Tiri and Tilly take up the same stance towards the audience:

*The wind starts to howl. A bullroarer increases the tension. TIRI and TILLY advance to the very apron of the stage, as close to the audience as they can get.*

TIRI (to audience): It is 5 January 1869. Your Pakeha soldiers took our fortress this morning. They found only the wounded, fourteen men, sixty-six women, the rest children.

TILLY: We should have known that you would have no mercy.

Kill us if you will but know this, Pharaoh, after us will come others. Ka whawhai tonu matou, ake, ake, ake!

(43-44)

In particular, the final phrase, “[k]a whawhai tonu matou, ake, ake, ake!” “struggle without end, for ever and ever!” connects the historic past to the ongoing redress process in the present. The statement was a regular refrain during 1970s and 1980s demonstrations, and is also the title of Ranginui Walker’s important and popular 1990 text on the Maori sovereignty movement. In the face of this kind of writing, Pakeha readers, sensitive to bicultural etiquette, must accept both Ihimaera’s reclamation of a forgotten moment in the history of race relations, as well as his anger—as much for the historical bias that effaced it from history as for the atrocity itself—as an act of grievance. As one newspaper reviewer of *Clio* describes the “massacre,” which she found the most vivid part of the opera, “[i]t is presented as historically true, and I am surprised to find myself ignorant of an atrocity of such magnitude” (Lindis Taylor, n. pag.). By her lack of knowledge, the reviewer acknowledges the need to allow Maori writers to speak for themselves in order to redress the balance of history, and in so doing activate the grieving/grievance process. The reviewer’s abashed tone stems not from a legacy of Pakeha guilt that feels in some way responsible for events such as Ngatapa, but of not having access to both sides of the national (his)story, of not being informed. A sense of sympathy for counter narratives makes such fiction inescapably postcolonial, made possible in its specific New Zealand context by the period of biculturalism. In regards to *Whanau II*, Prentice accurately summarizes the novel’s historical place in her review in *The Listener*:

*Whanau II* is a novel that could only have been written in quite this way once the processes of recovering colonial history were opened up through the Treaty of Waitangi Act and Amendment, and once the place of Maori culture in postcolonial New Zealand had displaced the largely one-dimensional image of Maori life as homely and pastoral. (Prentice, “Burden of Souls” 47)

Indeed, the politics that remain implicit in *Whanau*, in *Whanau II* become overt, as the vignettes become more like “essay chapters,” and history and fact are elevated through the authoritative characters of village elders Miro and Paora, who were unthreatening, child-like figures in the earlier version, as well as through the frequent intervention of a first-person authorial narrator (“Burden of Souls”; Author’s Note, *Whanau II* 229-232).

Ihimaera’s continuing confrontational stance towards the Pakeha reader (*Whanau II*) or audience (*Clio, Woman Far Walking*), in scenes such as Ngatapa, and, more generally, his constant repetitions which work over the colonial past, indicate that for Maori, decolonization has not been a process to work through then leave behind, but must be continually revisited in literature as it is in broader society’s questioning of national identity formation. Indeed, a currently unresolved point of contention in New Zealand race relations is the Pakeha expectation that the country will eventually move on from its legacy of Pakeha colonial guilt and Maori postcolonial historiography. Ihimaera’s repetitions certainly indicate an ongoing need for the recuperative gesture underpinning Maori literature of antagonistic race relations. However, his editor at Reed Publishing, responding to a draft version of the *Whanau II* manuscript, is uncomfortable with the force of some of his authorial interludes, which she describes as “preachy, didactic, strident” in some places:

Watch for passages where you’re hitting the reader over the head with a bit of four by two! I have suggested cutting one such passage – it’s where one of the characters is indulging in a Pakeha-bashing sesh. The novel is political, and needs to be no holds barred in some places and in some respects, but there’s a fine line to tread between this and alienating the reader. (Kootstra n. pag.)

In stark contrast to the negative reaction that passages of this tone inspired from readers and reviewers of the earlier *The Matriarch*, comments on *Whanau II* seem more accepting of this polemical “us-versus-them” stance. It appears that the majority of reviews of and letters to the author about the three rewrites

*Pounamu*, *Whanau II* and *Rope of Man* are positive.<sup>11</sup> This indicates a certain Pakeha acceptance of, and perhaps respect for aggressive, accusing outbursts that biculturalism and the Treaty redress process allow and in fact encourage.

The purpose and success of writing of race relations such as those texts discussed above depend on a particularly narrow gap between fiction and reality, and an equally uncontested faith on the part of the reader in the author's authenticity and authority. Although purporting to be fictional, the author's authority to speak for a minority viewpoint makes the components of the purposive text also take on an aura of dependable realism. For example, the reviewer for *Clio* unconditionally accepts Ihimaera's version of events at Ngatapa. In accordance with bicultural and postcolonial sensitivity to minority expression, the Maori writer's cultural authority is paramount and unchallenged. This in turn establishes a particular rapport between writer-narrative, and subject-reader in that the reader is actively encouraged to identify the writer with the narrative subject and the subject with reality. In *Whanau II*, as in a significant amount of Maori writing, historical figures and real settings cohabit with the fictional. This creates a blurring of fact and fiction intensified by a direct link between the author and the site, in Ihimaera's ongoing fictionalization of the village he grew up in, Waituhi, and its local history. This is especially evident in *Whanau II*, motivated by his tribe's Treaty claim, a process which uncovered a wealth of documentation that Ihimaera had not known about, and "reawakened" Te Whanau A Kai tribal history that the writer wanted to record (Hill). This kind of factualized fiction creates the illusion that the author is communicating directly with the reader, who feels personally addressed by such fiction, as evident in the uncomfortable Pakeha response to Ihimaera's "you, Pakeha," or in the guilty tone in which the *Clio* reviewer

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<sup>11</sup> Ihimaera's archives contain many congratulatory cards, letters, e-mails, as well as reviews from local and national newspapers and magazines gathered by a clippings service. I am grateful to Nicola Frean, Special Materials Librarian at the J. C. Beaglehole Room, for raising the question of whether Ihimaera also keeps negative letters and reviews, and thus whether perhaps the archives give a misleading picture of public response to his work.

admits that she was unaware of Ngatapa. For Maori literature, the role of the reliable narrator is crucial in building on the line of trust, which extends from the reader's sympathy towards the writer-as-representative.

Certainly, postcolonial writing must negotiate its own relationship between fictiveness and reality, and between writer and reader, rather than accept the model of Western literature. Indeed, postcolonial literature came about quite differently from other genres associated with either style or period: minority writers emerged, as did their cultural independences, by asserting their right to be recognized on the grounds that they had always been present, albeit suppressed or ignored by the dominating mainstream. In other words, they emerged within the framework of nation building, and thus share a desire for recognition and autonomy, which can only be gained through struggle. For European critics Bourdieu, Casanova, Kundera, and John Berger, who trace the historical rise of the role of the artist, the hallmarks of Western writing include obscurity, genius and the setting of new precedents. By contrast, presence, commonality and a distrust of obscurity—seen as marginalization—are those of the minority writer. As Gayatri Spivak and Sneja Gunew have noted, in order to make the literary tradition their own, postcolonial minority writers have often focused on communality and on integrating orality and the bardic tradition into a written medium (“Questions of Multiculturalism”). This has effectively sidestepped the deification of the individual writer of Barthes’s “Author-God,” but it has instead reconstituted the writer in the role of cultural spokesman and representative. Indeed, Barthes distinguishes the modern figure of the heroized author whose genius is admired from the “mediator, shaman or relator” of non-Western, cultures, who performs a function rather than accumulates status for him or herself (168).

As a three-time winner of the Montana National Book Award, with a prominent role as editor, mentor, professor and spokesman for Maori literature, Ihimaera’s author-function is both Western and postcolonial. His canonical

status in New Zealand letters earns him what Bourdieu calls the “cultural capital” of a “consecrated” writer. The command with which Ihimaera’s fiction is interpreted as speaking authoritatively on behalf of Maori corresponds to what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe as a “minor” literature, written in a “major” language by writers who become major figures themselves. For the French and Italian theorists, the representative nature of minor literature, which expresses collective values, is inherently political:

What each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others are not in agreement. The political domain has contaminated every statement. (“Kafka” in *Norton* 1598)

Ihimaera’s writing of race relations concurs with Deleuze and Guattari’s schema on both counts—as representative and as inherently political. Ihimaera accepts representational responsibility in order, as he puts it in the Hill interview, to balance the national historical archives. In this, he conceives of fiction as a useful vehicle for communicating Maori claims to a broader public. He believes that writing of race relations has possible real redemptive social implications: in short, that art *matters*. Nevertheless, Deleuze and Guattari’s argument has met with criticism from postcolonial critics because their conception of minor literature does not allow the writer any other modality. The private side of Ihimaera’s fiction illustrates that Deleuze and Guattari’s categorical schema is too restrictive. The Maori writer’s literature of purposive race relations sits alongside his “selfish” writing which neither aims to represent nor to separate, but to describe ways in which Pakeha and Maori cultures are “crossing over,” as he says in the Watkin interview.

### The Private Side of Maori Writing

In the parts of the opera that deal with land issues, *Waituhi* may be described as a purposive work—as Ihimaera explains, music theatre is political. However, Interpreting *Waituhi* only for its Maori aspects, as a work of race relations, is unfortunate because it fails to register the artistic depth of the opera genre and European influence that a text-centred approach illuminates. In *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, the biased focus on Maori identity issues in the text’s reception in New Zealand actually falsifies the text. Ihimaera’s “selfish” writing, motivated by his personal *kaupapa* which inspires him “to shift around,” responds to a quite different conception of his role as a writer than his self-proclaimed motivation to bear witness to his times as Maori, in his writing of race relations. He explains the need to write his first gay novel, *Nights* as bound by a personal rather than cultural obligation:

Although my being gay was the best-known secret in New Zealand, I had not formally, in the way I always like to do – honestly and with honour – made a public statement about it.  
(Shepherd, “The Storyteller” 57)

Ihimaera’s self-proclaimed “selfish” novel is also his first gay novel and the only work to date that features a Pakeha protagonist and non-Maori setting. The writer explains this motive as stemming from a wish to maintain “an inclusive approach” (Findlay 76), to represent the “commonality” of all gay New Zealanders (Ellis 179). Another reason to focus on Pakeha gay experience is to centre the novel on sexual politics rather than on identity issues. Ihimaera remarks that *Nights* is, as much as anything “an analysis of divorce” (Shepherd, “The Storyteller” 57). The novel’s title, from de Falla’s musical composition of the same name, further points to this novel as informed by Ihimaera’s own love of classical music. These initial provisos indicate that this book is to be read differently from his work that directly addresses race

relations by way of a Maori perspective. Thus a bicultural lens looking for Ihimaera as representing Maori may be less adequate than a text-centred study.

From the novel's beginning, in which David, the as-yet-unnamed first person protagonist, enters the sign-less black door of The Steam Parlour, Ihimaera creates an atmosphere of anonymity (7). The carefully vague descriptions of place, and the nameless and faceless characters of the Auckland gay scene, provide a way into a fictional world, or perhaps more accurately, a real world full of illusion, fantasy and dreams. Throughout the novel, the theme of illusion is reinforced by overlapping different kinds of fiction, including fairytale, mythology, opera, ballet and cinema. Accentuating fictionality is a key to making *Nights* a work of fiction and not an autobiography. Indeed, the published version is a rewrite of two earlier, more explicit and brutal attempts, which Ihimaera felt compelled not to release "out of deference" to his family (Findlay 77), because the script "was too close to the people in it" (Shepherd, "The Storyteller" 57).

Unlike in his Maori fiction, in which profound knowledge of Maoritanga brings overarching meaning and cohesion to plot and characterization, from its very beginning, *Nights* conjures images of detachment, uncertainty, and even wariness. Like many of Ihimaera's novels, *Nights* opens with the moment of arrival at the novel's central location. In his Waituhi novels, including *Whanau*, *Tangi* and *Whanau II*, the arrival and departure motif allows the writer to describe the characters' deep connection with the land and tribe. For example, *Tangi*'s portentous opening lines, "[t]his is where it ends and begins. Here on the railway station, Gisborne, waiting for the train to Wellington" (1), are given weight by the narrator's explicit attachment of meaning to the location before the narrative events of the *tangi* have had time to unfold: "[b]ut I will leave my heart here, to be reclaimed when I return. This is where my heart belongs; this is where my life begins" (2). In *Nights*, however, David's arrival at The Steam Parlour is somehow dirty or



devious, and although he feigns confidence, his movements possess only a semblance of control, as he feels under pressure and watched:

I park the car down a side alley. Get out and lock. Quick steps take me away from the rain and along the pavement, following the curved wall of glass frontages. Each window is a mirror of desire. The headlights pinion me, popping flashbulbs like a photographer leaping out of the darkness, Gotcha. (7)

In the novel's opening page, the travel motif of constant driving around Auckland slides into voyeurism: David's attachment to place is either superficial, as he cases gay joints seeking instant gratification, or tenuous, such as his nightly drives to the family home he has left, to secretly check up on his ex-wife and daughters.

The aimless driving, urban setting and nameless, stereotyped characters add a sense of dislocation to a story that is further fragmented by lack of authorial interjection. This is a striking change in technique in Ihimaera's work. In the majority of his Maori novels, the non-Maori reader relies on the omniscient narrator to provide the appropriate Maori context for character and setting. When the *whanau* on the back of the truck arrive in Waituhi in *Whanau*, for example, drunk, singing, sleeping or bickering, the author balances their frivolity with the following interlude:

[The village] is a backwater place and there is no reason why it should be here except this; the Whanau A Kai live here. This has always been their home and this will always be their land. It is their hearth. (7)

In this extract, it is the traditional Maori attachment to the land, rather than these characters in particular, that make this site meaningful. Seriousness and conviction of tone in this passage override individual relationships so that throughout the novel, the historic and ancestral fact of Te Whanau A Kai makes being Maori the predominant factor, even though some characters do not "act" Maori at all, and even reject their family and community. In *Nights*, however,

neither ethnic nor even sexual identity provides a secure frame or overarching meaning. The emphasis on fragmentation, fictionality and posturing deflects the reader's expectations that this gay novel sets out to describe a neat, reconciled and unitary sense of identity. Indeed, throughout the novel, David must negotiate each of his roles as lover, husband, father, son, friend and academic, with each role caught up in a complex combination of differing hopes and expectations. Because the action unfolds for the reader and narrator at the same time, as David, post-coming out, goes about creating new relationships with his friends and family, there is a strong sense that life is a sequence of events which require negotiating as best one can at the time, usually with limited or incomplete information. This linear, plot-driven technique, exacerbated by the singular narrative viewpoint, is markedly different from the often circular storytelling of Ihimaera's Maori novels, in which myth, family and land ensure the continuity of Maoritanga. Whereas in Maori fiction myth plays an integral part in Maori conceptions of the self, in *Nights* fiction and performance undermine reality. The most cutting example of this is David's conveying his marriage and family life within a "once upon a time" fairytale, in which the pretence of "playing Happy Families" (37) cannot save his broken marriage nor protect his young daughters from the distress of divorce. In effect, the lack of authorial steering and the slice-of-life narrative structure allow no moment of transcendence or way out of the constant pressure to name oneself. In this, the novel is particularly bleak, describing contemporary urban society as consisting of irreconcilable fragments.

Despite significant differences of content and style between Ihimaera's fiction which portrays a Maori world, and that of the Pakeha urban gay world in *Nights*, many reviewers, interviewers and literary critics turn to the writer himself for elucidation. Ihimaera is clear that the issues facing marginalized sexuality and ethnicity are the same:

This book provides another example of a culture, the gay culture, attempting to be respected and to obtain its sovereignty. [. . .] There's no difference to me between the issues. They're issues of space, they're issues of recognition of culture and they're issues of the need, the right and the insistence to be who you want to be. That's what Maori people have been saying all of these years, and that's what gay men and women are now doing. (Findlay 76)

In fact, although in interviews about the book Ihimaera accepts a representative role as a gay Maori, citing his role as the first chairperson of a Maori gay and lesbian support group, in recent interviews he signals that on a personal level, his family has never mentioned his being gay, that it has never been an issue (Watkin, "The Homecoming" 22; Shepherd, "The Storyteller" 57).

Due to similarities between gay and Maori writing that Ihimaera enumerates in interviews, commentators on *Nights* have tended to focus on the Maori aspect of the novel, represented by the highly symbolic Noble Savage character and, at a remove, Ihimaera's own double identity as both gay and Maori. The Noble Savage, who is seen only through the eyes of the Pakeha protagonist, is a minor figure in the book. In his daily routine, David notices him occasionally in passing, literally, driving by in his car. In the five times David comes across him in the novel's timeframe, which spans at least six months, they have only brief exchanges and one, page-long conversation. In the 300-page novel, the Noble Savage occupies two and a half pages at most. Despite this seemingly slight role, the Noble Savage's lines are the most often cited from the novel. An extract centring on this character is anthologized in *Te Ao Marama* 5. Findlay opens her interview with an extract from the novel of the Maori gay and lesbian *karanga* and *haka* at the Auckland Hero parade, and continues throughout her text to draw links between gay and Maori identity, and Ihimaera's own roles in these spheres. In Ellis's interview, Ihimaera admits that he identifies most closely with the Maori character, and reiterates the similarities in issues facing marginalized gay and Maori in New Zealand. Nonetheless, the emphasis on the Noble Savage has created an unbalanced

view of the book, in which the graphic depiction of gay sex acts, and poignant portrayal of coming out and family rupture is glossed over in favour of the cultural politics of ethnic marginalization which occur outside the novel. In fact, even within the novel, the Noble Savage's role is out of joint with the rest of the text, which takes extraordinary care to retain the focus on the individual and experiential and to avoid grand gestures of socio-political commentary. In a gay text that nevertheless manages to pass over the potentially tense—but arguably unavoidable—issues of AIDS and discrimination against homosexuals, the Noble Savage's cultural politics are jarring, adding a purposive angle to an expressly non-political text.

The New Zealand critical emphasis on these overt signposts reveals the pervasive expectation of Maori writing as representative and as a vehicle for social commentary. In this novel, as in writing of race relations, readers collapse the gap between fact and fiction and thereby hear Ihimaera's voice in the narrator's story, even though the narrative strategies would seem to discourage such an approach. In other words, New Zealand readers cannot read *Nights* as anything but a novel of race relations, or as at least allegorically pertinent to Maori cultural sovereignty. However, the difference and distance offered by a text-based reading undermines the seemingly natural elision of sexual to cultural politics in the national arena. Reading the text at face value, rather than pre-emptively inserted into a socio-cultural context, shows how quickly the issues which seem most evident in New Zealand become confused by an overseas lack of understanding of, or interest in, the local economy of Maori writing, which necessarily changes its meaning when projected onto the international literary scene.

By way of illustrating the gap in a writer's reception in his or her own country and overseas, in *The Postcolonial Exotic* Huggan compares Margaret Atwood's reception in Canada and the USA. Huggan attributes Atwood's celebrity status in Canada as much to her role as ambassador for Canadian

literature as to the quality of her fiction itself. Indeed, the factors he enumerates, (a popular public speaker who has fostered her own public image; a spokesperson on national literature; a representative for that literature on the international scene . . .) are equally applicable to Ihimaera's status in New Zealand (214-215). By contrast, Huggan notes that Atwood's nationality is little mentioned in the USA, where her work is labelled and studied within other frameworks, such as feminism (225). Huggan's study illustrates how strongly the extra-textual context, particularly knowledge of the writer and the cultural time and place of writing, informs reading practices. Demonstrating reader responses based on other systems and references, and thereby judging and appreciating the text according to different criteria, highlights the importance of the reader to all textual analysis, and thereby deflates the monopoly of postcolonial reading strategies. Distance reveals the plural ways of reading applicable to Maori fiction, as a reader unfamiliar with Ihimaera's own sexual identity and Maori cultural politics would not—possibly even could not—interpret *Nights* in the same way as a New Zealand readership. Accepting this, as Ihimaera does in his early newspaper interview stressing that “[Maori] are not the only ones who will interpret our culture,” recognizes that the bicultural and postcolonial reading biases that predominate in contemporary New Zealand literary analysis, although taken for granted, are historically and culturally conditioned.

The strength of the Maori Renaissance and sovereignty ambitions for self-determination created a flourishing of Maori fiction, of which Ihimaera's experimentation with genre, subject matter and narrative voice are exemplary. However, the understanding of biculturalism as based on respect for deep cultural differences has created a literary environment in which Maori and Pakeha writers and commentators do not really engage with each other. The politeness expected of Pakeha towards Maori cultural expression, aided by the

postcolonial reading frame which privileges minority expression and has little to say about reader response, precludes debate, replacing potentially vigorous discussions on literary value with the comfortable, well-worn rhetoric of minority empowerment. What is problematic in this tacit agreement is that Maori writing and the Pakeha response to it is enmeshed in a self-supporting web of cultural politics, and thus confined to it. For example, the restrictedness of a culture-centred vision of art and literature is evident in the unsatisfactory New Zealand responses to Ihimaera's opera *Waituhi* and gay novel, *Nights*.

For Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, culture is created from constant friction between and exposure to differences encountered from both inside and outside. His emphasis on movement makes culture not a concrete object but a constant engagement among its various parts. Cultural engagement is a reciprocal dialogue in which minority self-representation and the response to it is a mutual process of negotiation and authorization. Seen through Bhabha's theory, Maori culture would be that which arises from constant challenges both from within Maoridom and from Pakeha. Yet within the Maori art fraternity, as Brunt's description of curatorial practices in Maori art reveals, conflict and contestation is pre-empted by a community approach, while Pakeha reviewers' lack of criticism towards the clearly amateur performance of *Waituhi* similarly backs down from confronting Maori practices. It is not possible to talk of cross-cultural exchange from such a position. When Bhabha argues that "the meaning of culture" comes from "the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between*," he presupposes an existing climate of debate, from which an "*inter-national* culture" can be envisaged:

It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this 'Third Space', we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (209)

Bhabha's idea contains a sense that alienation, or at least instability, is healthy for cultural exchange, whereas New Zealand's bicultural politics, which include redress in Treaty claims, positive discrimination, and the respect of a bicultural charter in public office including arts bodies and universities, seem to be aiming for consensus.

Like culture, fiction also thrives on an uneasy relationship with, for example, the reader, reality and the constraints of its very form. In a literary parallel to Bhabha's insistence on hybridity emerging out of contestation, Mikhail Bakhtin's work on polyglossia and polyphony explores language and the novel genre to show a complex process of cross-cultural interaction, borrowing and blending. Constructed out of the diversity offered by both language and the immense wealth of literary tradition, fiction also arises out of conflict in the way it brings together its composite parts while simultaneously leaving traces and echoes of its disparate sources (356-366). Reviews for *Waituhi* which focus solely on its Maori rather than operative parts ignore that it is a composite work whose energy—as much as its tension—lies in its ambition to blend different art forms.

Huggan's discussion of Atwood's reception in Canada and the USA provides a postcolonial example of the old debate between purposive, representative literature and that conceived by the writer on a more private level, responding to personal artistic interests and influences. While, in the Atwood discussion, Huggan does not presume to judge whether one reading strategy is more fruitful than the other, in an earlier chapter of his text, his either-or method of questioning minority writers' self-definition reveals that the impulse to distinguish postcolonial fiction for its difference remains strong:

The politics of definition conjures up a series of openly contradictory questions: are so-called marginal writers self-designated combatants with a clearly defined political agenda, or are they called upon to revitalise a listless mainstream culture? Is marginal writing adversarial or paradoxically assimilative? Does it work toward social change, or

does it tacitly preserve the status quo while claiming to celebrate cultural difference? (*Exotic* 85)

The usefulness of reading Ihimaera's fiction from both postcolonial and text-centred angles, from both in and outside the whale, is to replace the "or" in the above citation with "and." As alternatives to a bicultural or postcolonial viewpoint, French textual study and a revalorization of the reader's response and the pleasure of the text illuminate aspects of Ihimaera's work easily masked by too strong an insistence on cultural politics. As Casanova puts it, these ought not be "an insuperable antinomy."

The usefulness of the contradictions between literature as public or private, representative or individual, lies in the tension between the stances and, perhaps, the very impossibility of their resolution or reconciliation. For Maori literature, this implies the need for ongoing dialogue between the positions, something which requires acknowledgement of the debate's non-reconciliatory nature. Such engagement cannot be played out if writers and their work are always conceived of, and imagine themselves to be representative, because this is by nature a process of instating criteria of belonging and exclusion, which inevitably run up against indefinable declensions of authenticity and authority. In a social, rather than specifically literary context, Wedde approaches the New Zealand dilemma of ongoing conflictual and confrontational race relations by urging engagement with the difficulty of postcolonial and bicultural relations. He asserts that the recognition of "difficult difference" ("Inside Job" 118) may be a basis on which to build equilibrium through "paradox, engagement, good faith, activism and contingency" (117). Wedde's argument makes a claim for inhabiting Bhabha's "third space," of reclaiming cross-cultural interaction as a level playing field that allows difference to surface and be tackled head-on, rather than pre-empted or circumscribed by bicultural or postcolonial biases.

Wedde's notion of "difficult difference" applies to reading Maori literature as representative *and* individual, public *and* private. Through his



different works, Ihimaera makes paradoxical claims for Maori literature, claims which must be engaged with on their own terms, and not through a pre-conceived template which fixes Maori writing into a rigid category with an expected content and way of reading: Ihimaera occupies both sides of Orwell and Rushdie's whale. A cultural approach may be an appropriate and useful viewpoint through which to interpret Ihimaera's literature of race relations, as for example the reader accepts the revisionist history and antagonistic stance towards colonizers and Pakeha in work such as *Woman Far Walking* and *Whanau II*. However, an understanding of *Nights* and *Waituhi* as private and personal, rather than motivated by and attached to national race relations, accepts alternative reading positions. Ihimaera's "selfish" writing calls for a similarly selfish response from the reader, privileging the pleasure of the text in a personal reaction to the work "innocent of public spiritedness," in Orwell's words. A text-centred reading does not deny that both works are also deeply implicated in cultural politics: a product of its times, in the early eighties *Waituhi* makes a strong and emphatic claim to the complexity of land disputes, while the issues of gay identity in *Nights*, as Ihimaera points out, parallel those of Maori struggles. Nevertheless, focusing on techniques in the fiction itself releases other meaningful elements of these works too easily overlooked by a cultural bias. Ihimaera can, and should, be read from both directions: the individuality of his writing and his sense of responsibility to the Maori community as separate but combined aspects of his oeuvre. In order to more fully explore the cross-cultural elements already present in Ihimaera's work, the following chapter replaces a bicultural and postcolonial reading strategy with a transnational and trans-historical regard. To take Ihimaera's fiction beyond the limitations of reading only within a binary of New Zealand race relations allows a more reader-interactive engagement with the text according to the values of dialogism set forth by Bakhtin.

## CHAPTER THREE: INTERNATIONAL AESTHETICS

### Underreading and Overreading

Ihimaera's constant search for new ways of writing, through different genres, in collaborations, and in his rewrites, exemplifies the mobile nature of Maori cultural expression. In his 2003 novel *Sky Dancer*, Ihimaera records another "first" for Maori literature by entering the science fiction genre. The novel is about a mythic, epic battle between sea birds and land birds, enacted in real-time in small town modern New Zealand thanks to a portal enabling time travel and a quest sequence that, like video games, collects symbolic keys for an epic mission which involves human transformation and anthropomorphic birds. The key birds in the battle, and the human characters who intervene, are all Maori. However, the Maori aspect is substantially played down, and indeed it is not revealed that the two main characters, the rebellious teen Skylark and her naive and child-like mother Cora, are Maori until quite late in the book. In place of Maori culture, the novel centralizes a wealth of other cultural references and connections. Reviewers have pointed out similarities between *Sky Dancer* and *Lord of the Rings* and its hero, Frodo, *The Whale Rider* and its heroine Kahu, Luke Skywalker, *The Dream of the Rood*, the Holy Bible, particularly Revelations, the Book of Mormon, Hitchcock's *The Birds* and Hollywood action movie clichés (Iain Sharp n. pag.; Ihimaera departmental e-mail; Bilbrough 57).

The cinematic references, Hollywoodesque dialogues and focus on action align the novel with the genres of adventure quest, science fiction and fantasy, rather than with ethnographic realism. For example, in the early pages of the novel, it becomes apparent that the seabirds are targeting Skylark, providing the kind of animistic portent that, in his earlier fiction, Ihimaera explains in terms of Maori mythology and superstition, the most notable

examples of which are the spiders in *The Matriarch* and the whales in *The Whale Rider*. The connection between the heroine of *Sky Dancer*, with her obviously symbolic name, and the attacking seabirds, however is not divulged. Ihimaera sets adventure-movie cliché in place of an explanation:

“I’ve never seen anything like it” [. . .]

“Oh my baby,” Cora screamed. “My baby, she’s alive.”

Skylark’s head cleared. She saw her mother wringing her hands, reprising her role as a distraught parent on *Shortland Street*. “I’m definitely back on the planet,” Skylark said to nobody in particular.

“You were attacked by a bird,” Cora explained. “This lovely gentleman —” she pointed out the Maori fisherman — “he saved you.”

“Call me Mitch,” the man said, smiling. “Mitch Mahana.” (15)

Among, or perhaps in spite of, the inflated cinematic dialogue and inter-reference, including, in the above citation, Hitchcock’s avian gothicism, New Zealand medical soap opera *Shortland Street*, and James Bond heroism, reviewers have emphasized an allegorical meaning in the text with contemporary Pakeha-Maori race relations. For example, Iain Sharp interprets the novel as “full of sly sociopolitical resonances,” giving as an example a battle between a native fantail and an imported Caspian tern, which the fantail wins: “[f]rom a symbolic point of view, this is stirring stuff — a triumph for the Tangata whenua — since the fantail (piwakawaka) is said by some Maori to be Aotearoa’s first inhabitant” (Sharp n. pag.). In a more negative review in *The Listener*, Norman Bilbrough is troubled by the juxtaposition of the “frivol[ous]” pop vernacular and weighty allegory:

Possibly the story is a metaphor for contemporary situations: the destruction of what was once an essential primeval world by raptor humans; the threat of colonisation to Maoritanga; the eroding of our fragile ecosystem by consumerism, etc. [. . .] And most likely it was the author’s intention to undermine any serious moral tone that might creep in. But I think the story requires that kind of weight; it needs a constant moral agenda instead of presenting as a rather quirky entertainment. And no matter how inventive magic realism can be, it requires a cohering and authentic relationship with reality; even if the

connections have to be spelt out, and written simply on frequent signposts. (57)

Bilbrough's view is that the many guises the story wears, from romance and road movie to fantasy, give the novel an "identity problem. In a sense it's too inventive," something which he finds negative because it obscures the novel's message. Bilbrough's view sets up a binary relationship between reality and fiction, social message and entertainment—with the first side of each pairing expected to be the weightier. His reading, however, is thwarted by the novel's categorization as science fiction, or, in one review, as young adult fiction, both genres in which any moralising—if, indeed there is any—is submerged by narrative modes that privilege imagination, often to the point of escapism. Bilbrough's disappointment in the novel reveals that his expectations are less concerned with the possibilities of fiction as with those of *Maori* fiction of the kind expected of Ihimaera. In a similar manner to his unprecedented Pakeha gay novel, *Nights*, the discrepancy between what the text and the writer each represents highlights the way that the New Zealand literary community has become accustomed to interpolating a Maori agenda into each novel. Ihimaera's fiction thus cannot stand alone, because the writer's cultural politics are expected to be "spelt out" and "signpost[ed]." As a result, Bilbrough, who is also a published New Zealand writer, is "lost," "confused" and finally "exasperated" by a novel that does not stand up to the kind of culturalist interpretation that his reading position expects.

Ihimaera's response to Bilbrough's critique is angry and dismissive, berating the reviewer for "substandard" work:

[Bilbrough's critique] indicate[s] he is operating from a somewhat conventional, limited, outdated aesthetic applying a much too subjective theoretical approach, and without due understanding of the postcolonial, postmodern, metafictional text which plays with time and utilises pastiche to transcend boundaries and interrogate the structures of meaning. Obviously when a critic of limited means applies limited criteria [he reveals?] his lack of understanding of any work which

operates within the contexts of the diasporic, indigenous, glocal and global novel. (Ihimaera handwritten draft)<sup>1</sup>

Ihimaera's emotional response does not define exactly how he sees Bilbrough's interpretation of *Sky Dancer* as "limited." In particular, he is unclear about his stance towards the usefulness of aesthetics and literary theory in judging a work of fiction: he chides the reviewer for applying an undefined "outdated aesthetic" and theoretical perspective, yet defends his novel on aesthetic terms of metafiction and pastiche. Rather than a question of literary aesthetics in general, I suggest that Ihimaera takes exception to Bilbrough's perception of his novel as lacking in *cultural* aesthetics, and his criticism that this novel fails to abide by the standard tropes of Maori fiction, in which the expected weighty metaphors and moral agendas are reinforced by the seriousness of tone and reliability of the Maori narrator/author. Ihimaera especially rejects the reviewer's closing comment: "Ihimaera has handfuls of balls in the air. I wish he'd stuck with just a few." Instead, the writer emphasizes the text's plurality as positive. For Ihimaera, Maori writing ought not be confined to a straitjacket of simplicity and similarity, but be recognized for its complex use of the tools of fiction.

Although he targets Bilbrough personally, rather than national critical techniques generally, the brunt of Ihimaera's retort is levelled at a perceived shallowness of critical reading practice that, in Ihimaera's view, fails to engage with the whole scope of his novel. Ihimaera's tone here expresses frustration at the seemingly restricted reading frame of New Zealand's literary criticism, a charge that finds a precedent in earlier forceful arguments by Stead and During. In their articles, both Pakeha critics argue that New Zealand literary criticism ought to look at its literature differently, to override the strong cultural nationalist impulse to instead position New Zealand literature within

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<sup>1</sup> Ihimaera is unsure if he submitted his rebuke to *The Listener*, or whether the magazine chose not to publish it (personal communication).

perspectives offered by international literary modes and theoretical positions. Ihimaera's editorial rebuke, which similarly encourages his readers and critics to treat *Sky Dancer* differently, may be read through Stead's and During's arguments.

In an important challenge to New Zealand literary criticism, Stead's 1979 essay, "From Wystan to Carlos – Modern and Modernism in Recent New Zealand Poetry," argues for the need to bring an international perspective to local output. His article defines British and American modernism and the impact of international and historical modernist influences on New Zealand poetry from the 1930s. Stead does not suggest that national reading practices are limiting, however he argues that an international approach is complementary: "a new point of observation is likely to alter the picture, and it is surely time for a change" (139). By way of justifying his proposition, he reminds his readers that New Zealand fiction is already part of the international domain of English literature:

Let's propose then that we take the international fact of the English language as our basis and consider our poetry historically, as part of the broad development of poetry in English during this century – not in the provincial spirit that we must subserviently follow what's happening "Overseas", but rather in the spirit of an affirmation, recognizing that we are part of the community of the English language and that is something which gives us considerable freedom of action. (140)

While Stead introduces an international perspective to New Zealand letters by tracing the history of modernism, During imports literary theory to local criticism and analysis.

In the first issue of the experimental Auckland literary journal *AND* (1983-1985), During begins his essay "Towards a Revision of Local Critical Habits" by asking a potentially divisive question: "[i]s New Zealand literature underread?" (75). He contends that New Zealand reading practice tends not to challenge its critical modes, nor look too closely for texts that seem to ask for

different readings. In the context of the journal's aims to import rigorous literary theory to New Zealand literature, During questions local uses of modernism and postmodernism by setting New Zealand fiction against that by English and American writers, particularly Joyce, Auden, Eliot and Pound. His critique equally applies in the early 2000s to the seemingly static, singular sense in which Maori literature is construed, with the question of underreading having particular resonance in Ihimaera's reaction to *Sky Dancer's* review.<sup>2</sup> To counter current critical practice, in his article During demonstrates an "overreading" of one of Sargeson's most-read short stories, "The Hole that Jack Dug." This overreading consists of a close textual study, employing semantics and semiotics inspired by Freud and Barthes (79), which aims to show how multiple interpretative strategies uncover aspects of the work previously ignored. Throughout his analysis, During calls on a range of international theorists and writers as points of reference to his New Zealand examples. Thus Allen Curnow's poetry echoes Mallarmé and W. C. Williams, Stead's view of modernism does not correspond with that of Fredric Jameson or Ernst Bloch, Sargeson is indebted to Sherwood Anderson, and Wystan Curnow's postmodernism is not as strongly defined as Charles Olson's. The roll call is impressive and intends to impress. In a similar way to the earlier literary magazine *The Word is Freed* (1969), *AND* intends to shake New Zealand literary criticism from what these young academics consider a complacent and self-contained methodology, for the most part founded on Curnow's vision of the local, truth and reality. By attaching the local to the international and the postmodern, During's overreading reveals "a play of differences and levels" (91) based on an image of the artist self and text as

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<sup>2</sup> I have somewhat inverted the directions of During's under/overreading. His argument criticizes New Zealand letters for interpretation that is "separate from and adequate to the texts themselves" (75), in effect for not being suspicious of the author's intentions or aware of the politics that govern its social context (76). The opposite is true of interpreting Maori fiction, in which what the text says is brushed over for the social and cultural context of its writing. My use of During's concepts instead rests on overreading as a technique of going against the grain of common critical practice.

“formed partly in someone else’s terms – the terms of international and world-historical modes” (92). During’s privileging of textual strategies and criticism requires the New Zealand writer to be lifted out of his or her local context and inserted into a field of international literary trends and techniques.

Stead’s aesthetic considerations and During’s theoretical readings both ground New Zealand literature in a primarily literary field of analysis with the intention of moderating the focus on cultural idiosyncrasies that Curnow’s privileging of the “local and special” encouraged. The international scope of their comparative readings shows New Zealand writers and academics to belong to an international “community” of English language and literature. To turn their arguments to Ihimaera’s fiction is to analyse Maori literature for what it shares with its Pakeha and European partners, in effect, to stress similarity rather than difference as the basis on which to construct literary analysis.

The task demanded by Ihimaera’s desire to escape apparently “limited criteria,” is twofold. He defends *Sky Dancer* from a literary standpoint rather than according to cultural criteria, positioning it within “the postcolonial, postmodern, metafictional text which [. . .] transcend[s] boundaries and interrogate[s] the structures of meaning.” This may follow During’s and Stead’s application of international literary aesthetics and theory to the local referent. At the same time, Ihimaera’s aim to “operat[e] within the contexts of the diasporic, indigenous, glocal and global novel,” adds another dimension to the concept of an international literary “community of the English language.” Ihimaera’s use of these sociological and economic theories suggests that Maori writing chooses its affinities with several kinds of communities. For clarity’s sake, this thesis will engage with these two aspects separately: this chapter, “International Aesthetics” reads structural, stylistic and intertextual influences in Ihimaera’s texts within the framework of international Western literature, in effect looking for similarities. The next chapter, “The Local and the Global” positions Maori specificity within the globalization of literature in English and



its attendant cultural dissemination, now commonly theorized by diaspora and transculturation.

### Fiction as a Site of Textual Plurality

To apply During's technique of overreading to *Sky Dancer* provides a text-centred rather than a culturally based interpretative strategy. In Rushdie's terms, this allows the text "the privilege of being the arena of discourse, the place where the struggle of languages can be acted out" ("Is Nothing Sacred?" 427). Rushdie's essay, which highlights the plurality of fiction, claims that fiction is a site of interaction on many levels. Thus, although cultural politics may be interpolated into interpretations of the novel, the text cannot be reduced to one overarching, definitive signification:

[T]he novel has always been *about* the way in which different languages, values and narratives quarrel, and about the shifting relations between them, which are relations of power. The novel does not seek to establish a privileged language, but it insists upon the freedom to portray and analyse the struggle between the different contestants for such privileges. (420)

Privileging the plurivocality of the text shrugs off the immediate attachment of a cultural or moral agenda which, as During says, elides discrepancies and difficulties in the text by superimposing the dominant literary and cultural reading position. By contrast, During's phrase-by-phrase parsing of the beginning of Sargeson's story aims to be "vigilant" (79) to the text itself, to be aware that

[e]ach work may function on a number of levels for instance; what is presented on the surface may be undermined somewhere or somehow else. Overreading [. . .] actively seeks out such moments of disunity. (76)

Through his analysis of different levels of the text, such as language, the interplay of author, narrator and reader, and its relationship with reality, During reveals fiction's capacity for plurality, which destabilizes interpretative authority.

It is clear from the novel's outset that *Sky Dancer* does not take place in Ihimaera's pastoral nostalgic or social realist modern Waituhi. Instead of a *marae*, cemetery and the remains of a *pa* providing the boundaries of community, as in *Tangi*, *Whanau* and *The Matriarch*, this small coastal town contains the iconic New Zealand pub, fish and chip shop and community hall offering housie, as well as a video shop, a takeaway bar, "a massage parlour advertising in Korean and Japanese" and an "all-night diner" (11). This setting indicates that Tuapa is a different community to the rural Maori enclave of most of Ihimaera's fiction. Even though such locales are probably found in many New Zealand towns, Ihimaera is not aiming for a sense of normalcy or reality as much as for a sense of distance and difference. This is signalled by the carefully chosen multinationality of the shops and of the language used to describe them, particularly the Americanism "diner." From the outset, the village setting points the novel in several directions. Ihimaera's Tuapa may resemble a real New Zealand town, but it simultaneously suggests a movement away from similarity, towards a difference marked by the particular juxtaposition of local and foreign locales and language. In his analysis of heteroglossia in the novel, Bakhtin describes "the author's freedom [. . .] of saying 'I am me' in someone else's language, and in my own language, 'I am other'" (314-315). Bakhtin here describes plurality and distance as underpinning the relationship between the novel's language and its mimetic value. For Bakhtin, the novel is a privileged genre because the mimetic truth function is already in a contested state of play, something which allows fiction to highlight the behind-the-scenes polyphony of every utterance. It is the author's knowledge and control of inter-related, multiple linguistic signifiers which make the novel the site of intentional hybridity:

[T]he novelistic hybrid is *an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another*, a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image of another language. (361)

The word “diner” is one such example of a signifier deliberately placed to bring into play multiple semantic references. During’s technique of overreading is here revealing. To a New Zealand audience or readership,<sup>3</sup> the diner carries echoes of 1950s and 1960s American movies, or later, sit-coms, in which it functions as the community gathering place, featuring colourful local characters as well as providing a stage for key moments in the film’s action, notably romantic or confrontational. Tuapa’s diner fulfils the same function, as the drop-off point and site enabling many of the main characters to meet and interact. Notably, the diner is an anachronism, casting Tuapa and its predominantly middle-aged clientele as significantly behind the times, trapped, linguistically, in recalling the one-liners of their movie-going youth. Ihimaera continues to play on the spatial and temporal distance indicated by the unfamiliar setting of the fictive American diner in the opening dialogue between the main characters Cora and Skylark, and the locals, which is a pastiche of Hollywood film characters and famous one-liners:

“You’ve broken down, Miss?” [Lucas] asked, all solicitous, as if Cora had stubbed a tiny red-painted toe. “I’ll get Arnie to tow your Jeep in . . . Hey, Schwarzenegger!” he shouted, turning to the far end of the garage.

Arnie, the apprentice mechanic, did, in fact, look like a Maori version of Big Arnie himself. The hair was American crewcut. The face was handsome in a pretty-boy kind of way. The body was unbelievable. Even in his overalls, Arnie was a sight to see.

“The little lady’s Jeep is just up the street,” Lucas told him. (12)

In Bakhtin’s terms, the Americanisms in the text “brin[g] different languages in contact with one another,” here superimposing an American 1950s-era film dialogue onto a New Zealand setting and in the mouths of Maori characters. Bakhtin’s “living image” of a Maori community becomes heteroglossic,

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<sup>3</sup> The New Zealand word for such an establishment is “cafe,” “tea rooms,” or “restaurant” for something more substantial.

illuminated by a foreign language. In *Sky Dancer*, one of the strongest questions of illumination is how the overdetermined “diner” and misplaced Hollywood pastiche may be seen to illuminate the New Zealand and Maori setting and storyline. This is a difficult task, because overlaying an American film-scenario-like script on a Maori fishing town, Tuapa, and Maori characters, including Arnie, Cora and Skylark, challenges the reader’s expectations of a familiar Ihimaera setting to the point of rejecting any direct relationship with a possible real community.

Recognizing the text as primarily fictive, in the fantasy genre, and self-referentially aware of its fictionalization, in the tradition of American pastiche, requires engagement with notions of mimesis, of the text’s relationship with reality and the textual strategies that signal its departure from conceptions of the real. Both Sharp’s and Bilbrough’s reviews of *Sky Dancer* note the text’s contradictory stance towards Maori fiction’s usual viewpoint. Both reviews point to possible allegorical meanings that concur with Maori myth or parables, at the same time as they acknowledge that the novel’s many levels of overt fictionalization disturb such a reading. Their responses underline the destabilizing effect of fiction, which both repeats reality and repeats itself. For J. Hillis Miller, fiction does not “fit” the real world, and so a novel may surprise the reader and thereby destabilize any ambition to provide a concrete or definitive analysis:

The hypothesis of possible heterogeneity of form in literary works has the heuristic value of preparing the reader to confront the oddness of a given novel, the things in it that do not ‘fit’. (5)

Hillis Miller eagerly takes the non-“fit” of reality to open out the text as a site of tension created between two forms of repetition, between a classicist understanding of repetition as imitation, the copying of a predetermined original, and Nietzsche’s concept of the fundamental disparity which makes like objects only “ghosts” of one another, that which Deleuze calls simulacra.

The non-“fit,” which in Hillis Miller’s view makes even realistic texts ironic (4), recalls in the postcolonial context, Bhabha’s sense of the subaltern’s self-conscious mimicry, of being “not quite” like the dominant discourse (86). Ihimaera’s use of mimicry applies to both the Hollywood pastiche—Tuapa is not quite like an ordinary New Zealand town—and the way he twists the usually serious tone of the Maori content to parodic effect—Tuapa is not Waituhi. In Bhabha’s terms, Tuapa is an ambivalent site that “continually produce[s] its slippage” with expected mimesis (86). On a linguistic level, the town’s name also signals a deflating seriousness: in Maori, one of the significations of “tuapa” is “to frolic.”

The recycling of recognizable Hollywood clichés in *Sky Dancer* exaggerates the fictiveness of Tuapa and its characters while at the same time downplaying the novel’s Maori aspects. In fact, the imported American cultural references sustain the plot development. The first of the novel’s climaxes is triggered by Cora’s performance in the Broadway musical, “Bye Bye Birdie,” while the second, the turning point in the final war of the birds, is sparked by Arnie and Skylark’s implementing battle sequences from their favourite Hollywood films. Conversely, the aspects of Maoritanga usually portrayed so seriously in Maori fiction, are minimal. This inversion is intimated from the novel’s beginning, in Ihimaera’s familiar arrival motif. In *Sky Dancer*, Cora and Skylark’s moment of arrival in the village is deflected with farce, when Cora’s bad driving has her almost hit two old Maori women crossing the road. The women are only briefly described, in caricature, “hair covered with scarves, dresses of a formless black” (11), as the Jeep passes them by and continues into town. This introduction to what transpires to be the two key Maori matriarchs in the novel is deflated with comedy, as Cora takes her hands off the wheel and covers her eyes:

“Mum,” Skylark asked after a while, “do you think you could take the steering wheel again?” With Cora, you had to keep on joining the dots.

“The wheel? Oh! Yes, of course.”

Puffing nervously, but still shaken, Cora guided the Jeep into Tuapa.  
(11)

When Bilbrough disparages the novel as “quirky entertainment,” he takes exception to a superficiality that is not balanced by a compensating “serious moral tone.” In its inverted focus that emphasizes the comic and ridiculous and plays down the potentially meaningful meeting with the Maori women, the above extract may be illustrative of the aspect of the novel that Bilbrough indicts. For the critic, the novel does not wear its Maoritanga with enough earnestness. This is true if Bilbrough’s conception of Maori is based on expressive culture. Skylark, Arnie and Cora do not express any recognizable Maori cultural traits; they do not speak Maori, are not deeply attracted to nature, and show no particular respect for their elders.<sup>4</sup> Instead, they wear their Maoritanga lightly, and the shared references of their daily routine owe more to Hollywood movies, Cora’s minor celebrity status, and Broadway show tunes than to a common recourse to traditional Maori practices. Maoritanga here is what Evans, in his argument against a current mode of New Zealand writing heavily influenced by postmodern disillusion and a trend for disassociation of place, calls “Maoriness” as “something lightly applied like make-up” (“On Originality” 79). Evans’s dissatisfaction with this kind of writing is based on the way it caters to stereotypes of Maori, including the brokenness of urban modernity salvaged by recourse to a spiritualized nature. Evans argues that this stature is deeply ingrained in the collective national consciousness, with the

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<sup>4</sup> Importantly, it is the two Maori matriarchs who, through an impressive network of *whanau* and *whakapapa*, discover Cora’s Maori roots, although not until half way through the book. This minor mystery eventually reveals the Maori connection which links Cora and Skylark to the Maori quest to save Manu valley, permitting, by the novel’s close, a Shakespearian—and wholly Maori—restoration of balance in nature and family.

Maori position reified by post-Maori Renaissance Pakeha sensitivity (“On Originality” 78-80, “Pakeha-Style Biculturalism” 17-19).

Ihimaera’s Maori characters in *Sky Dancer* are, indeed, stereotypical. From the brawn-but-no-brain Arnie to the out-of-date traditional *kuia* spinning stories and recounting myths to the unaffected cool teen, Skylark, each fulfils a role that is as clichéd as the Hollywood dialogues they speak in. Yet, these Maori caricatures serve a different purpose in this novel than those in his 1970s work. Ihimaera’s early fiction features self-deprecating humour which sends up Pakeha stereotypes of Maori. Examples include middle-class Pakeha, Mr Simmons in “The Other Side of the Fence” who sees the Heremaia children as lazy and happy-go-lucky (*Pounamu*), or the Pakeha boss who considers his Maori workers as lax: “you want five days off to go to a *funeral*? Ridiculous! [. . .] You Maoris will just have to learn to live with the times” (*Whanau* 53). Contrary to this, *Sky Dancer* inverts its parody so that, rather than exposing Pakeha *unawareness* of Maoritanga, the way the novel downplays and makes fun of clichés about traditional Maori culture flusters the exorbitant sensitivity brought to Maori fiction by post-Maori Renaissance, bicultural Maori and Pakeha, exemplified by Bilbrough’s review. In effect, *Sky Dancer*’s humour sends up the *seriousness* towards Maori culture that has resulted in the kind of facile, formulaic portrayal of Maori characters that Evans takes exception to. Ihimaera wants to lighten up. As Sharp says in his review, Skylark is a heroine “stroppy enough to challenge timeworn conventions,” and elsewhere the novel “has a bit of fun at the expense of traditional marae protocol” (Sharp n. pag.). From this perspective, Evans’s intended criticism of “Maoriness [. . .] lightly applied” is perhaps a sign of *Sky Dancer*’s success. The novel’s departure from the known tropes of Ihimaera’s Maori fiction not only exposes another view of contemporary Maoritanga, but its reoriented perspective quite possibly also attracts another audience. In an early interview, Ihimaera explains the



importance to Maori culture of attracting a wider audience among Maori, particularly urban youth:

[L]et's face it, with American influences and the whole pervasive subjection of all cultures to internationalism, what you've sometimes got to do is to give your own culture a new currency, a value which young people can respect – and they certainly cannot respect something which they might regard as being out of date. So we've moved into the electronic age. (Wilkinson 99)

Among these innovations, Ihimaera gives the example of cultural groups making songs about space invader video games: “[e]ven these machines, we can still put Maoritanga into them” (99). Rather than portray the kind of Maori expressive culture expounded by the Maori Renaissance, in this novel Ihimaera caters for the kind of “shiftless,” “unemployed,” urban Maori youth who “plays the machines, plays cards, gets into trouble” (99) who form the subject of van Meijl’s study mentioned in chapter two. As van Meijl indicates, many young urban Maori feel threatened and alienated by tradition which is meaningless to them. *Sky Dancer* marks the first time that Ihimaera’s own writing has engaged with this sector of Maori society. The privileging of action adventure, and recourse to Hollywood and video game formulae is a means of keeping up to date in a way that might appeal to a broader—or altogether different—group or groups.

Remembering the primacy of the text is important to the reading of a novel such as *Sky Dancer*, for which trying to establish the writer’s ideological position is at least partly thwarted by the text’s multiple dimensions which serve to undermine such a stance. The novel can grasp but not definitively pin down the gaps in its own production. This is why, for Bakhtin, a good novel does not strive to map empirical data but to create artistic “images of languages” (366). Overreading the “images of languages” in *Sky Dancer* reveals the hybridity of the novel genre, including the heteroglossia inherent in language, which Ihimaera purposefully engages in with his Americanisms and

Hollywood anachronisms, and the unresolved, unstable relationship between mimesis as similarity or difference, in this text enacted by a portrayal of Maori culture and community that does not quite fit with post-Maori Renaissance expectations. The text's polyphony undermines a straight cultural reading which, as explored in the previous chapter, relies on a serious tone which supports stable, well-defined boundaries of belonging. Contrarily, as attested by reviewers' references to multiple visual and written texts, including *The Whale Rider*, the Bible and *Lord of the Rings*, *Sky Dancer's* influences come from everywhere, and its cultural touchstones are present on several levels, from individual words, such as "diner," to recycled scenes from well-known action films, to a parodic inversion of Ihimaera's earlier portrayal of Maoritanga. Among possible interpretations, Bilbrough's reading is valid, but it makes the mistake of thinking that it is reading correctly, rather than offering one reading among many. Anti-mimeticism as literary device counters Bilbrough's understanding of *Sky Dancer* as a failure because of its unclear, unreal relationship with the Maori culture that exists outside of this text. Ihimaera's suggestion that this novel caters to a younger audience familiar with fantasy, science fiction and the syncopated flow of time in video games accepts this different version of Maoriness as relevant and valid. From this perspective, *Sky Dancer* may be placed alongside, rather than in opposition to Ihimaera's Waituhi novels. By understanding the non-fixed plurality inherent in each text, and by reading different texts with their different perspectives, the novel genre is seen to be not singular but heterogeneous, based on a web of aesthetic relationships between and within texts, writers, and readers, constantly revised and repositioned in accordance with changing cultural and historical perspectives.

### Fiction as an International Artform

In *The Postcolonial Exotic*, Huggan studies the rise of African literature in English into widespread international publication and circulation via the Heinemann African Writers Series, launched in the early 1960s. In response to his initial question, “what is African literature?” (34), he sketches some definitions of “ethnographic” fiction, in which culturally-specific information, indigenous concepts and a normalized local setting provide “political purchase” by challenging Western representations of African societies (40). In other words, the AWS collects the kind of literature that supports nation building “writing back” against the dominant discourse. While Huggan accepts the indigenous impulse to want to take over its own literary production and output, he suggests that to reduce African literature and Western publication and literary criticism to a binary “us/them” mechanism “negates the transculturative potential inherent in a lengthy history of European encounters” (55). He cites African critic Kwame Anthony Appiah, who encourages African writers to engage with, rather than erase the European influence: “since it is too late for us to escape each other, we might instead seek to turn to our advantage the mutual interdependencies history has thrust upon us” (Appiah qtd in Huggan 56). Huggan uses Appiah to suggest that a way out of exoticizing ethnographic fiction is to privilege aesthetics. In the following quote, the word “Africa(n)” may be replaced by “Maori”:

Europe is, like it or not, a part of Africa; and that African literature is best regarded as neither celebratory self-expression nor reprehensible Western imposition, but rather as a hybrid amalgam of cross-fertilised aesthetic traditions that are the historical outcome of a series of – often violent – cultural collisions. (56)

Appiah and Huggan both argue that African fiction which aims to work solely within what Appiah calls “nativist topologies”—which Wole Soyinka earlier called “Neo-Tarzanism”—is utopist (Appiah qtd in Huggan 55). Yet there is

another kind of wishful thinking built into their demand for acknowledging African-European “interdependencies” (Appiah), “transcultur[ation]” and “cross-fertilis[ation]” (Huggan), for these terms suggest an even flow between Africa and Europe, indicating that Western fiction might potentially be as influenced by Africa as African literature in English is by its contact with the West. This is clearly not the case, for the British Empire imposed a Western education on its colonial subjects without taking on board a reciprocal understanding of its colonies’ cultures: even though Forster, Conrad and Melville’s experiences abroad led them to register an unease with colonialism, it would be inaccurate to suggest that they suffered cultural loss or displacement in the same way as the indigenous Indian, African or Pacific Island populations their work portrays. Even in settler societies such as New Zealand, where Pakeha have defined their identity away from their colonial forbears precisely by adopting features of Maori culture (see Bell; Brown; McCreanor; Mikaere), Pakeha reticence indicates that whites feel unable to tap into the native resources that Huggan’s supposed cultural amalgamation has allowed. The inequality of influence between indigenous or minority and Western cultural and artistic discourses does not make Huggan’s aim to read minority literature through Western aesthetics redundant, but it does require that the study of aestheticism be embedded in a politics of power relations. As demonstrated by Bourdieu’s considerable sociological work from the 1960s-1980s, Deepika Bahri’s work on the Frankfurt School, and Casanova’s global literary analyses, aesthetics and politics are not confined to a postcolonial context of “writing back.” In fact, postcolonial fiction may be inscribed within an international, historical field of literary production, that which Bourdieu calls “the field of cultural production” and Casanova “the world republic of letters.”

In an early study, “Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception,” Bourdieu attempts to isolate and enumerate the “unconscious deciphering

operation” (215) and the “complex code” (218) which go into creating a work of art. Firstly, he separates art from other forms of cultural production in that its primary motivation is to serve art, not other social, cultural or political functions. Thus “artistic competence” is

knowledge of the strictly artistic principles of division which enable a representation to be located, through classification of the stylistic indications which it contains, among the possibilities of representation constituting the universe of art and not among the possibilities of representation constituting the universe of everyday objects or the universe of signs, which would amount to treating it as a mere monument, i.e. as a mere means of communication used to transmit a transcendent signification. (221-2)

This principle means that installing a painting—or even, famously, Marcel Duchamp’s exposing a urinal—in a gallery or museum or, equally, publishing a book as a novel or collection of short stories, automatically enters that object into “the universe of art,” which works by rules of representation that are different from those of other forms of cultural communication:

The perception of the work of art in a truly aesthetic manner, that is, as a signifier which signifies nothing other than itself, does not consist of considering it “without connecting it with anything other than itself, either emotionally or intellectually”, in short of giving oneself up to the work apprehended in its irreducible singularity, but rather of noting its *distinctive stylistic features* by relating it to the ensemble of the works forming the class to which it belongs. (221-2)

Thus the appropriate context for commentary, criticism and judgement is by way of comparing art with art, literature with literature. While Bourdieu’s approach seems to negate the political force of national or postcolonial literature, he stresses that foregrounding aesthetics does not mean conversely denying art value outside of its own politics. For Bourdieu, all art is intricately involved with the shifting cultural and social politics within which it is produced, a bind between art and society that makes up the “field of cultural production.”

Bourdieu's essays collected under "The Pure Gaze: Essays on Art" in *The Field of Cultural Production*, sets the notion of the aesthetic "pure gaze" within the institutionalizing of art in France through formal education and in museums and galleries. Bourdieu's observations lead him to conclude that the "charismatic ideology" which imagines great art and literature to represent universal truth, is, instead, appreciation fostered by these institutions, made neutral and internalized by cultivated classes (233). In other words, artistic "essences" are really "norms" (263). The class-based categories for Bourdieu's empirical research might seem incongruous in New Zealand, which has fiercely defended an assumption of a classless society. Nevertheless, many of Bourdieu's claims concur with Maori criticism that Pakeha and Western literature is elitist, self-serving and shuts out Maori. This argument is present in Ihimaera's anecdote of his early difficulty to find a publisher willing to take a risk on Maori fiction (*Turnbull*: 51; Williams, "Interview" 282), in Huia's insistence that new Maori writers need culture-specific support, and in Ihimaera's interview statement that the reason that so much Maori fiction continues, in 1998, to recycle early-1980s issues of race relations is that "the novel is alien to the indigenous form" (Ellis 169). It is somewhat surprising, then, given such arguments *against* the relevance of English literature for Maori, that so many Maori continue to produce fiction that is recognized, anthologized and marketed as short stories and novels. On the other hand, the fact is compelling evidence for the deep cultural imbrication and dynamic interaction between Maori and Western (filtered through Pakeha) cultures, supporting, in effect, Appiah's and Huggan's suggestions of a need for such acknowledgement. In a country where the vast majority of Maori are educated in a mainstream system (based on a British model) from pre-school to secondary school,<sup>5</sup> and thus brought up on a diet of English, American and

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<sup>5</sup> In 2005, one newspaper reports that although 31% of Maori children attend *Kohanga reo* pre-schools, this figure is significantly reduced to 7.8% of Maori children enrolled at *Kura kaupapa* or bilingual units at mainstream primary schools. Sarah Boyd, "The Kohanga

New Zealand texts, with the attendant school exercises of creative and essay writing, the attractiveness of fiction and the impulse to write it in English is understandable, arguably even natural.

In characterizing Maori literature's place in the Western literary tradition, Bourdieu's questions of "distinctive stylistic features" and the "class to which [art] belongs" are negotiated on several fronts, taking into consideration Maori, Pakeha and international cultural influences. Maori fiction certainly belongs to Maori literature, defined at length in the previous chapters, but it also belongs to New Zealand and to English literature, in all its problematic connotations of canon, consecration and judgement which support Bourdieu's attachment of art to cultural and social elitism. One impulse is to react against this legacy, as anthologies of Maori writing have done, with the explicit aim to subvert fiction, either structurally or in its content. This creates a concept of literature which, under pressure from a perceived exterior threat, draws boundaries of self-definition and internal cohesion as a quasi-independent unit, an exclusionary position that Appiah and Huggan disagree with. Furthermore, it reveals an understanding of fiction as wholly outside of the Maori imaginary—"alien," as Ihimaera puts it—a foreign form that can therefore only be engaged with from a position of exteriority and as a site of contestation. This perception is at odds with studies such as by Bourdieu, Casanova, Bakhtin and Edward Said, that trace the rise and development of the novel form across several centuries, languages and nations, and which

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Generation" in *The Dominion Post*, April 9, 2005. An initiative sparked by the Maori Renaissance, Maori language and cultural immersion preschools, *Kohanga reo* began in 1982, followed by a Maori language branch of State primary schools, *Kura kaupapa* and, in the 1990s, Maori language options in tertiary education. The first generation of school-educated (as opposed to home-taught) mother-tongue Maori speakers is now making an impact in all areas of New Zealand society, including health and justice, but particularly in media, education and the arts. This shift is mapped in Maori anthologies: whereas *Te Ao Hou* and *Into the World of Light* mainly collected Maori language writing from older Maori, in traditional forms and subject, *Te Ao Marama* and Huia's collections feature new and interesting Maori language work by younger writers brought up in the language and culture. My argument here obviously does not include such writing.

demonstrate the genre as an assemblage of multiple influences, languages and realities. As the overreading of Ihimaera's *Sky Dancer* demonstrates, an alternative view conceptualizes Maori fiction as belonging to the Western literary paradigm, an ensemble of texts within which Maori fiction's "distinctive stylistic features" may be discussed in the terminology of the shared literary tradition.

Whereas "shared tradition" might, in an ethnographic context, be problematically construed as synonymous with a "static past," Bourdieu's concept of literature as emerging from a field of cultural production is predicated on a constant state of friction and movement, in which the writer positions him or herself within or against the consecrated literary models of the time:

When we speak of a *field* of position-takings, we are insisting that what can be constituted as a *system* for the sake of analysis is not the product of a coherence-seeking intention or an objective consensus (even if it presupposes unconscious agreement on common principles) but the product and prize of a permanent conflict. (34)

Bourdieu's "position-taking" through "permanent conflict" is similar to Bhabha's location of culture as emerging performatively: literature and culture are not objects but events, produced out of difference but using the tools, or "common principles," available to all. Just as Bhabha's theory opens a space for minority cultures to create themselves through engagement with other cultures—no longer schematized as centre and margins—Bourdieu's theory sees all texts, central or minor, consecrated or avant-garde, as produced out of interaction with other writers and readers belonging to, or in conflict with, their cultural environment. It is thereby false to imagine Maori writing as positioned against a static, hegemonic bastion of impenetrable Western literature: the very fact of their writing in English is an entering into dialogue with notions of aesthetics, canon and genre within the terms of literature. Ihimaera's frequent differentiation between Maori as a "sacred" language and English as "profane"



(Jussawalla & Dasenbrock; Sharrad, “Temporary Suspensions”; Williams, “Interview”) in effect distinguishes between a “talismanic,” indigenous language which has fixed boundaries and constrictions, and a historical and international plurality available in English: “I can ransack wherever it’s been, Greek culture, Roman mythology, American literature, I can do all that” (Williams, “Interview” 175). In other words, fiction in English is pre-programmed, in its historical and international transitions, to cope with difference, to be, as Rushdie puts it, “the arena of discourse [. . .] where the struggle of languages can be acted out.”

The suitability of reading Maori literature from an international and aesthetic perspective is by no means uncontested. Firstly, and as discussed in chapter two, not all fiction by Maori aims to respond to an international literary scene, with national or minority interests having a strong bearing on the kind of writing produced. A second criticism against privileging a global literary reading is that mapping the impact of the foreign “outside” on the native “inside” is problematic for minority discourses, which often register their culture’s changes in terms of cultural loss. The consensual reflex to read difference in Ihimaera’s work and Maori anthologies, discussed in the previous chapters, highlights the pervasiveness of this standpoint. The negative connotation of Western literary influences on indigenous and minority writing is registered by Franco Moretti’s use of the word “interference” in his argument that, following Appiah and Huggan, nevertheless suggests is inevitable. He cites cultural and literary theorist, Itamar Even-Zohar:

[T]here is not one single literature which did not emerge through interference with a more established literature: and no literature could manage without interference at one time or other during its history. (Even-Zohar qtd in Moretti 79)

Moretti extrapolates “interference” to continue: “[n]o literature without interference. . . hence, also, no literature without compromises between the

local and the foreign” (79). According to Moretti’s position, then, an indigenous writer’s choice to express his or her culture in fiction in English necessarily accepts a certain level of “compromise,” a term which insinuates that the local emphasis risks being mediated, perhaps even diluted. The issue of retaining local specificity in a global market forms the subject of my next chapter. In fact, Moretti’s earlier essay, “Conjectures on World Literature,” published in *New Left Review* in 2000, was severely criticized by academics who challenged his model which presumes a Eurocentric sense of literature as emanating from a Western European “centre” towards the “peripheries.” Bourdieu and Casanova’s arguments are similarly founded on a perception of Paris as artistic capital—a claim that minority artists and writers would certainly contest (Moretti, “More Conjectures” 80-81). One way around the charge of European centrism is to relegate Western literary criteria to a secondary role, instead interpreting indigenous fictions according to their own culture’s systems of the imaginary. In the context of Maori and Pacific fiction, both indigenous and Western critics have applied this technique. As well as the “Kaupapa” of *Te Ao Marama*, recent essays and texts centring indigenous conceptions include Wendt on tattooing (“Tatauing”), Robert Sullivan (“The English Moko”) and Eva Rask-Knudsen on the spiral motif, Bridget Orr on the *wharehenui*, meeting house, and Keown on the Polynesian body.

While accepting the validity—some would say desirability—of arguments against reading Maori fiction within the paradigms of English literature, one of the advantages of Bourdieu’s “cultural field of production” and Casanova’s “world republic of letters” is that they work across time and space in a way that exposes similarities. By contrast, other disciplines (Maori studies, sociology, English literature classified by genre, nation or époque) and discourses (Maori Renaissance and sovereignty, nationalism, postcolonialism) either do not notice the confluences, or work by agendas looking only for differences. To centralize the text and the international nature of fiction in

English reveals several levels on which postcolonial writers may defend their use of Western influences in their work. The heteroglossia of the English language and the fundamental hybridity of the novel form, combined with the profound infiltration of Western culture on those of its colonial subjects, effectively position the postcolonial writer within a literary community whose historical development demonstrates its cross-cultural possibilities. To see Maori literature within this historical and international vision does not ignore the politics of European centrism, nor the assumption that European norms are universal, which both Bourdieu and Casanova show to be constructed out of the same power dynamics as those which label other literatures minor and relegate them to the margins. Instead, it offers another shape to Maori literature than the one that has dominated in New Zealand since the Maori Renaissance. The following studies of *The Matriarch* and *Dear Miss Mansfield* respond to the cultural overdetermination of much of Ihimaera's fiction by instead overreading Ihimaera's textual strategies. The inter-reference contained in these texts exposes cultural and imaginative overlaps with many other writers, contiguities that redefine networks of influence in ways that challenge the texts' interpretation in a binary understanding of Pakeha-Maori and colonial-postcolonial positions. Bourdieu's and Casanova's theories shed light on Ihimaera's complex relationship to Pakeha and Western literature.

### **Inter-reference: A Verdian Matriarch**

Ihimaera's major novel, *The Matriarch*, the fruit of his ten-year "embargo," marks a new direction from his writing of the 1970s. As an attempt to "go vertically into our culture" (Ellis 171), the novel employs an epic structure, allowing Ihimaera to frame contemporary culture and protest within a long history that, on its Maori side, stretches back to the Maori origin myth, and for its Pakeha side, looks back to pre-colonial Europe. This provides a strong sense of continuity for the evolution of Maori culture from past to present, and the history of Maori interaction with Pakeha. In effect, the epic timescale emphasizes the multiple ways in which Pakeha and Maori cultures are intricately intertwined. Interpretation of the novel quickly became a sparring point for reviewers in the leading New Zealand magazines and among the academic literati. Although opinions diverged, spanning stylistic, thematic and structural aspects of the novel, a recurring doubt appears about *The Matriarch's* ambitions and success, a feeling perhaps best summed up by Alex Calder's review, in which he writes "WOW STOP BUT" (Calder, "Two Responses" 80). Titles of reviews and critiques which appeared shortly after the novel's release reveal a predominant understanding of the novel as a Maori-centred revisionist history. Trevor James's "Lost Our Birthright Forever? The Maori Writer's Re-Invention of New Zealand," Stead's "Ihimaera: Old Wounds and Ancient Evils," and David Dowling's "Historiography in some Recent New Zealand Fiction" all categorize *The Matriarch* as a novel of revisionist historiography which, within the 1980s Maori Renaissance and sovereignty movement, is openly antagonistic towards Pakeha.

While biculturalism provides a clear context for *The Matriarch's* revisionism, critics were less sure about how to interpret the novel's extensive inter-reference, which includes the Old Testament, Roman mythology, Greek tragedy, Venice and Verdi's operas. Many commentators read the European

aspects either as allegory, particularly the Hebrews' exile from the Old Testament (Williams, *Leaving* 125), and Italian Renaissance and Risorgimento (Beston 84; James 119-120), or within the postmodern context of fragmentation, polyphony and pastiche (Calder, "Two Responses" 84; Dowling, "Historiography" 60; Jannetta 20-23). A common criticism is that Ihimaera fails to hold together these disparate elements: Stead calls *The Matriarch* a "fail[ed]" novel because of the writer's inability to control conflicting elements of its multiple storylines and diverse narrative styles ("Old Wounds" 192); King's review, "A Magnificent New Zealand-Baroque Near-Success" finds Ihimaera's vision not "sufficiently penetrative to unify the many disparate parts into a single work" (170); for Elizabeth Caffin, the novel is "missing [. . .] a single confident artistic vision" ("A Fictional Performance" 52). In a later essay, Prentice provides one perspective from which to understand and to frame the above reactions to *The Matriarch*. In "Nationalism vs. Internationalism? Witi Ihimaera's *The Matriarch* and Critical Abjection," an essay which pivots on the contradictory "versus" of her title, she describes the novel as a "product of literary-national desire, and [appearing] out of the national-cultural body" (549). In an echo of Hulme's *the bone people* as the novel that "New Zealand has been waiting for" (Cowley 60), Ihimaera's much-publicized embargo and increasingly political outlook presaged the arrival of *The Matriarch*. Prentice suggests that the novel's success was measured against pre-defined expectations of a Maori Renaissance novel. This anticipatory situation is not unique to Ihimaera's 1986 novel, but also recalls Pearson's essays of the late-1950s and the 1960s expecting the emergence of a significant Maori writer. As a Maori Renaissance work and therefore centred on a search to assert a distinct Maori identity, critics expected the novel to seek "unity of [. . .] artistic vision, of tone and voice, and of event" (Prentice 550). However much *The Matriarch* is, certainly, concerned with revisionist history, an explication of key concepts of Maori culture, and the expression of modern-day

identity, the novel is also epic, operatic and baroque, all modes which resist interpretation in terms of singularity and unity. From this alternative perspective, the feeling that this work is too ambitious—as Bilbrough would put it, that Ihimaera “has handfuls of balls in the air”—is no longer a criticism, but a compliment.

It is difficult to account for Ihimaera’s use of Verdi’s operas within the optic of a political Maori text. To do so requires selecting the Maori writer’s citations from the two operas that deal overtly with race relations, *Nabucco* and *Aida*, in order to validate a tidy conflation of Ihimaera of the Maori Renaissance with Verdi of the Italian Risorgimento. This argument both prioritizes the writer’s and the composer’s roles as popular ambassadors for cultural concerns, and attaches Maori-Pakeha race relations of the 1980s to an international, historical continuum of battles for independence. What is unsatisfactory about analyses along these lines is that their determination to attribute a contestatory meaning to Verdi’s opera in *The Matriarch* relegates the novel’s performative and fictive aspects to a secondary role behind cultural politics. Heim presents a useful alternative in his consideration of music and cinema in *The Matriarch*. He finds that the visual technique in the Te Kooti sequence

transform[s] history into myth, removing it from the realm of social action and productive effort to the realm of visibility and consumption, where it appears as a picture, a spectacle or a symphony.  
(Broken Lines 199)

Here, questions of human agency are cast aside in favour of performance and effect. Heim’s perspective from outside the New Zealand bicultural optic suggests that the novel’s historiography may be unconvincing, even “ahistorical” (148). Instead, in the layering of other kinds of fiction, particularly opera, film and theatre, within the novel form, he argues for interpreting the

novel as “picture or spectacle” (148), as fiction rather than an imitation of reality.

Heim’s argument is revealing in terms of opera, arguably one of the most excessive of art forms. Indeed, opera’s success rests on its hyperbolic embellishment of reality, with the suspension of disbelief permitting its departure from mimetic expectations in order to create the ornamentation necessary for orchestral, vocal and staging virtuosity. Of all the arts, music most strongly resists a mimetic reading, an argument that extends to the dramatic gestures of opera, in which the storyline and libretto provide only the pretext for, not the meaning of, the performance. As one musicologist puts it: “opera remains an artificial form as the music is more an interpretation than an imitation of reality”—a comment that recalls Ihimaera and Harris’s claim that *Waituhi* is intended to be “imaginative” rather than “realistic” (Mancini and Rouveroux 886).<sup>6</sup> In general, interpreters are very wary of mapping concrete meaning onto form: aural composition may connote abstract senses but it cannot denote anything specific. Indeed, it is questionable whether music can communicate anything at all, an argument held by Pierre Boulez, who is renowned for his aesthetic purism.<sup>7</sup>

The non-mimetic function of opera and music leads to a reconsideration of Ihimaera’s interest in Verdi’s operas. Although aligning the cultural politics of the Maori novelist with those of the Italian composer is a valid argument, it is far from complete.<sup>8</sup> Firstly, of the two operas commonly picked out by critics, only *Nabucco* (1842) qualifies as a nationalistic work, written at the

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<sup>6</sup> “l’opéra reste en effet une forme artificielle, la musique étant bien plus interprétation que véritable imitation.” *My translation.*

<sup>7</sup> My thanks to Martin Lodge, Hilary Bracefield, and Valérie Baisnée for their invaluable input on this matter.

<sup>8</sup> In much the same way as I am here arguing of Ihimaera, Verdi’s biographers also tend to play down the composer’s involvement as a revolutionary. Indeed, as a wealthy landowner who spent much of his time living in Paris, his political reticence is understandable. Verdi’s genius as a popular artist was in responding to changing fashions that guaranteed public success.

height of Italian resurgence in the 1840s.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, *Aida* (1871), which appears in both *The Matriarch* and throughout *The Dream Swimmer*, exemplifies Verdi's elite works that dazzle spectators with extravagant sets. Rather than the grass-roots patriotism of the earlier period, *Aida* was written for the Italian Opera of Cairo in celebration of the completion of the Suez Canal, undeniably a bastion of colonial success. In a colonial act of appropriation, it is thought that the opera's libretto was taken from a Khedive storyteller and rewritten by Egyptologist Auguste Mariette (Milza; Falcinelli). By simplifying the author's acknowledgement to Verdi to a few citations from two popular operas, and by ignoring the five other operas that Ihimaera draws from (*The Force of Destiny*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Don Carlos*, *A Masked Ball*), critics and reviewers underestimate the extent to which opera informs *The Matriarch*'s structure and storyline. Ihimaera's interest in Verdi's operas has been significantly underread by New Zealand commentators who seek to tame the novel's disparate and tangential inter-references into the resolved, singular meaning of a Maori Renaissance novel.

The opera art form resists a singular, resolved reading. On the operatic stage, the different arts of symphony, singing and theatre do not sit together as collaboration, but produce tension in their difference. According to Michel Leiris, "the conjugation of opposites produced on stage leads the spectacle to the highest degree of tension" (Leiris qtd in Laplantine and Nouss 52).<sup>10</sup> This tension through strained amalgamation creates excess and effusion, which attaches opera to the aesthetics of the baroque, a style which emerged in Europe in the seventeenth century congruently with opera. As Laplantine and Nouss summarize:

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<sup>9</sup> Many of Verdi's earlier and lesser-known operas do feature religious and political freedom, on subjects including the Crusades, Peruvians against Spanish rule, and European nations struggling against empire. However, all the operas that Ihimaera chooses to borrow from, including *Aida*, are known for their foregrounding of personal relationships.

<sup>10</sup> "[L]a conjugaison de contraires qui s'y produit peut porter le spectacle au degré de tension le plus extrême." *My translation*.



The baroque stage reunites arts and genres, speech, image and music. In the baroque aesthetic, every element aims to overflow its limits, stretching towards the other and joining with it, in a constant dynamic of decentring, overflowing and transformation. The baroque is fundamentally an art of metamorphosis, of a *métissage* of forms. (50)<sup>11</sup>

Opera functions as a baroque interface which also contains a palimpsestic history of its own: opera as the highest expression of baroque excess; nineteenth-century opera as popular art in non-unified, illiterate Italy; opera as symbol of colonial high art; opera as today an obscure and anachronistic art; opera as rewrites of works of fiction adapted for the stage; opera as inspired by historical events and distorted for reasons of censorship; opera as carrying a social message; opera as pure *divertissement*.<sup>12</sup> Opera is itself dense with historical, cultural and artistic inter-references. As each performance reinterprets the work, it responds directly to various aspects of its past interpretations. This is evident in the way critiques and reviews often compare and contrast a production with those of previous directors, conductors, singers and choreographers. An exemplary case of intertextuality read across cultures, eras and art forms is Franco Manai and Kirsten Hanna's article, "The Italian Myth of Galileo in New Zealand Opera," which stands Ihimaera's libretto for his 2002 opera *Galileo* alongside Bertold Brecht's play *Life of Galileo* and Liliana Cavani's film *Galileo*. In Ihimaera's libretto, they find echoes of Cartesian philosophy, Lucretius' poetry and Dante's *Inferno*, and in John Rimmer's music, influences from fifth-century hymn and twentieth-century atonalism.

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<sup>11</sup> "La scène baroque est celle qui réunit les arts et les genres, le verbe, l'image et la musique. Dans l'esthétique baroque, tout élément cherche à déborder ses limites pour tendre vers un autre et le rejoindre, dans une constante dynamisme de décentrement, de débordement et de transformation. C'est fondamentalement un art de la métamorphose, du *métissage* des formes." *My translation*.

<sup>12</sup> For a more thorough discussion on the diverse functions of opera across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see my *Opera on the Marae*, mémoire de maîtrise, Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis, 2003.

To take the history of opera from Verdi's nineteenth-century Lombardia to Ihimaera's 1986 *Waituhi* equally demonstrates another layer of Laplantine and Nouss's baroque "transformation" and "metamorphosis." When applied to the postcolonial Maori context, opera again operates on another level of baroque difference. Although critics label Ihimaera's use of baroque effects, including Venice and Verdi, as attaching Maori to European high art (Williams, *Leaving*), the history of the baroque is already inscribed in a question of cultural difference, arising out of the influence of the discovery of the Americas on European art and culture in the seventeenth century. As the orderliness of Europe was flooded by reports of strange objects and peoples in the New World, the baroque was a term for all that was shocking or bizarre (Hampton 1-9). Within the process of internalizing the exotic that Christopher Pinney describes as the inherently creole nature of Europe, the baroque's colonial roots came to be applied to a European style of architecture, music and fine art, in which the "bizarre" came to mean, more generally, a dissonance or jumble of styles.

The principles of the baroque are also applied to the novel. Bakhtin's use of the term in "Discourse in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination* reinstates the sense of alienation and "bizarre" difference produced by the baroque. The Russian thinker proposes that the baroque marks a significant discovery in the novel's historical development, in the seventeenth century, as the attraction of exoticism allows "a re-clothing of surrounding reality in alien material, akin to enacting a sort of heroizing masquerade" (387). The "alien material of the novel" (386) means that self-expression and self-representation are portrayed with a certain ambiguity:

To find oneself, to realize oneself in the alien, to heroize oneself and one's own struggle in alien material [. . .] The Baroque feeling for the world, with its polarities, with the excessive tension of the contradictory unity permeating its historical material, squeezed out any trace of *internal* self-sufficiency, any internal resistance the alien

cultural world (which had created this material) might offer; it transformed the world into an externally stylised shell for its own special content. (387)

Bakhtin highlights how the baroque juxtaposition of images in the novel enacts the mimetic relation between the real and the fictional by creating tension between similarity and difference, so that the unknown and the strange or unexpected act on the known and the familiar. As a baroque text in which contradiction plays a major role, *The Matriarch* employs the operatic register. Opera may be read as permeating all levels of the novel's language, characterization, content and theme.

*The Matriarch*'s opening Prologue signals the novel's insertion into a realm of theatricality and opera, which underwrites the traditional Maori setting in a metatext of fiction. In the first two paragraphs, the narrator, Tama, explicitly labels the matriarch, also known as Riripeti or Artemis, an "imaginative reconstruction," and also intimates that the force of her personality has similarly turned his own life "into fiction from fact" (1). In another direct indication of the matriarch's artificiality as a character, her beauty and voice are likened to Italian soprano Renata Tebaldi, who was renowned for her interpretation of Verdi's heroines (13). From the outset, Ihimaera assumes the role of playwright. He offers stage directions on the novel's first page: "[the matriarch] was sitting with the child on the highest terrace"; details set design: "[t]he hill was a gigantic crescent staircase of eleven terraces, like the poutama pattern," "[t]he clouds, swirling through the sky, cast strange patterns like fleeting kowhaiwhai designs"; and indicates lighting for dramatic effect: "[h]er beauty shone out with a gleaming light," "[b]eneath the veil, shimmering like tears, were the pearls in her hair." Once the stage is set, the opera begins, as "the matriarch turned to [the child], and her voice thrilled with excitement" (1). The resonance of the matriarch's singing voice continues over the five-page Prologue as she sings or chants her ancestry from the beginning of the world to the coming of the Pakeha. The novel's

Prologue signals that Ihimaera offers *The Matriarch* as a musical composition: indeed, Ihimaera's long-term interest in, and comprehensive knowledge of music and opera are clearly influential in his expression as a writer.<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere, he makes explicit the connection between Maori expression, music and the novel:

[T]he Maori language is the singing word and therefore a source of that sense of music. Also music tends to me to be either very mathematical or else very emotional, and so the sorts of techniques that you use in the novel are of course the same as in music. There's a theme and then the theme is modulated in some way and there are variations on the theme. (Ellis 170)

The opera in *The Matriarch* and its sequel, *The Dream Swimmer* may be understood as part of Ihimaera's ambition to reclaim "the epic nature of our lives" (Ellis 173). This motivation sets these novels in a typical opera context: historical characters on a historical stage that provides a fictionalized space in which various responses and interpretations run the gamut of theatrical emotion and musical ornamentation. The opera theme is repeated and modulated throughout *The Matriarch*: the five-act novel is an opera in Bakhtin's sense of the baroque as providing an "externally stylised shell" within which Ihimaera contains the "special content" of Maoritanga.

In both *The Matriarch* and *The Dream Swimmer*, musical orchestration and ornamentation are used as description, as if the text is the musical score and the dialogue is the libretto. Thus the *karanga*, song of welcome on the *marae* is "a clear aria of crystalline purity, a Verdian arc" (*The Dream Swimmer* 343), and Tama's feelings for his mother an "adagietto of sadness" (362). The matriarch's voice is a "cantilena" of sound, (*The Matriarch* 45), and even puppies in the background yap "appogiaturi" (63). Throughout *The Matriarch* Ihimaera quotes, copies, adapts and alludes to Verdi's orchestration, characters,

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<sup>13</sup> Ihimaera studied music and piano from a young age. He regularly reviews New Zealand Opera productions in magazines such as *Pacific Way*, *Quote/Unquote* and *The National Business Review*.

plot and staging. This provides a subtext that lends weight to the action on the page. At the end of Act Two, “The Song of Te Kooti,” for example, the matriarch sings from Aida’s death scene, where the heroine and her lover are entombed alive:

And the matriarch began to sing, her voice a thread of sound, to the universe itself, ‘*Presago il core della tua condanna, My heart forewarned me of your condemnation.*’ They were strange words to sing, words of suffocation, of darkness coming with the sealing of a stone crypt, of being buried alive away from air and light (196).

Verdi’s set is also transposed onto the scene of *The Matriarch* without direct reference to the opera it derives from, as in Act Four, “The Statesman.” Riria takes the place of Amelia, the heroine in Verdi’s *A Masked Ball* who, in the second act of the melodrama, veiled and alone at midnight, climbs down a hill to pick herbs at the foot of the moonlit gallows. Ihimaera summons Riria to the scene: “[s]o let our call go echoing forth across the night, and let our meeting again take place on a landscape charged with symbolism – a lonely spot at the foot of a steep hill” (341). The chieftainess emulates Amelia, appearing “like a veiled shade” who “covers her face with shame.” Verdi’s orchestration echoes the heroine’s fear in the high and tremulous notes of a prayer that rises above the low and constant line of the principal theme. Ihimaera translates the quavering emotion of the soprano’s voice into *waiata*, a feature of which is the solo female voice rising above the chorus: “[a]ra, and listen to her waiata of fear and sorrow, keening across the night sky and conjuring up the lamentations of the dead” (341). Further operatic echoes are apparent in the action and dialogue of Ihimaera’s novel. From *Nabucco*, the power play between Nabucco and Abigail is similar to Tama and Ihaka’s double-edged relationship of obligation and betrayal. Abigail refuses to forgive her father who attempted to reject her as his daughter and condemn her to slavery:

Out! How dare you beg for mercy,

Your tears come too late and do not move me:  
 Audacious old man, you did not hesitate,  
 To dishonour me. (*Nabucco*, III: iii)

This situation is mirrored in Tama's refusal to absolve his grandfather Ihaka for attempting to put another heir in Tama's rightful place:

Yes, cry your heart out, old man, try to move me with tears, but none  
 of your tricks will work on me. I know them all, grandfather, trickster,  
 actor in the grand style, thief. (410)

Many of Ihimaera's opera-informed passages work well as simple imagery, even if the underlying references are only meaningful to attentive opera buffs. However, knowledge of Verdi's operas sheds light on parts of *The Matriarch* that critics find unexplained on other levels. For example, although it is true that Artemis is an ambivalent hero for Maori sovereignty—according to Stead, her magic is unbelievable and her feats achieve little (“Old Wounds” 192-193)—both her and Tama's actions are coherent within the rules of the Romantic opera hero and heroine. These are solo figures engaged in a Promethean struggle for liberty and legitimacy, compromised or thwarted by unjust social, ethnic, political, religious or familial constraints. Such circumstances mean that the hero's pathos hinges on his elevated moral stance rather than his exploits, with the heroine's qualities of prescience, intuition and understanding providing a focal point that generates the atmosphere of impending tragedy. Within this context, Artemis' arias, which are all from Verdi's tragic heroines, provide a framework of elegy, foreshadow tragedy and heighten drama as a way to colour Ihimaera's description of family dynamics, past memories and the retelling of history. When the narrator claims that “[h]ers is a blinding presence, imperious and commanding, bidding me forever forward to battle with the world of the Pakeha” (207), he identifies her as a Verdian hero, driven by desire in an impossible quest that can end only with her death.

An exercise in spotting the opera in the Maori novel, with the intention of asserting structural cohesion based on a different artistic vision, still falls into the trap of attempting to account for the novel by resolving apparent contradictions. Bakhtin's description of the baroque as anti-mimetic, and the musicological argument against music as representational, contest any such wish for synthesis. Similarly, to conceive of *The Matriarch* as a baroque epic challenges the coherence of reading it as a novel of race relations. In her study of postcolonial Anglo-Indian epic novels, Jacqueline Bardolph discusses techniques for foregrounding fictiveness, such as magic realism, the unreliable narrator, and the juxtaposition of non-European storytelling on the novel form ("Quel réalisme, quelle magie?"). Through this, she postulates that one of the important features of postcolonial epic is not progress or resolution but the textual journey through fiction itself. In regards to *The Matriarch*, Prentice notes something similar, claiming that Ihimaera's emphasis on the matriarch's fictiveness means that within the epic novel, Artemis is the filter through which all the novel's sections are to be seen: "Artemis is less the 'destination' than the 'vehicle'," so that "[w]ithin this teleological quest narrative [. . .] the process or the journey is the point of [Tama's] narrative" ("Nationalism vs Internationalism" 549). An emphasis on non-linearity illuminates the baroque nature of epic, in which counterposing different narrative perspectives and stylistic techniques foreground the self-referentiality and plurality of the novel genre. Bardolph illustrates her point by citing from Vikram Chandra's *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, in which the narrator is incited to "[b]e wily, be twisty, be elaborate. Forsake grim shortness and hustle. Let us luxuriate in your curlicues" (Chandra qtd in Bardolph 27). The baroque language of storytelling here coincides with Ihimaera's vision of the repeated "modulat[ions]" and "variations" of the musical theme which he says informs his vision as a writer.

Read as a novel of race relations, *The Matriarch's* inter-reference obscures the underlying message in which Tama's family history stands in for

the Maori people's struggle on a national level—the sense in which Calder interprets the novel as an epic (“Two Responses” 80-81). Both *The Matriarch* and *The Dream Swimmer* are failed quests in which the narrator takes his reader on a journey that spans several generations in the search for a way out of Pakeha domination of Maori. Nevertheless, by each book's conclusion, despite millennial, messianic, tribal, bicultural and international propositions, the hero has failed to resolve the central issue of Maori subordination. From Calder's position, the novel's secondary narratives, fragmented and distributed throughout the text, including Tama's visit to Venice, the Wellington *hui*, meeting of 1949, Ihaka's challenge to Tama's *mana*, Te Kooti, Wi Pere and Rastafarianism, obfuscate the main storyline. By contrast, within Bardolph's view of the epic as a fiction built out of inter-reference, such stories are integral and individually, internally complete. Indeed, *The Matriarch*'s lengthy departures from the main plot are embedded in the text in a manner reminiscent of circling, repeating and digressing techniques of oral narrative, anecdote and allegory. Opera plays a key role in these textual “digressions” as Riripeti's arias open and close each of the novel's five “acts,” and signal each cycle of intra-textual deviation.<sup>14</sup> Ihimaera's extensive embedding of Verdian opera makes an argument for the epic novel not as a linear progression towards a final destination, but a frame within which to contain stories within stories.

In a letter to James, Ihimaera explains the novel's “Italian connection” as a way to communicate to Pakeha the magnitude of central aspects of Maoritanga, including Te Kooti (a Maori Garibaldi), Ringatu teachings (the Israelites enslaved in Egypt), and Hawaiki (Venice): “I felt that New Zealanders were ignorant of their [Maori] history and needed a European

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<sup>14</sup> Each “Act” directly connects one Verdian opera to the Act's main theme: Act Two likens Te Kooti's struggle with Aida's capture in Egypt; Act Three re-enacts Nabucco's power play between his two daughters with Ihaka placing an impostor “brother” as heir to Tama's inheritance; Act Four describes Maori politician Wi Pere within the same dynamics as the political posturing in Verdi's *A Masked Ball*; in Act Five, intimations of the matriarch's mortality are akin to Desdemona's final aria in *Othello*. See my “Opera on the Marae,” *op. cit.*



analogue to begin to understand this importance and significance” (James 112). The implication that arises is that Pakeha are—or ought to be—familiar with opera, the Bible, and European references, just as he is: “Renata Tebaldi *does* look like my grandmother” (James 112). The way that Ihimaera normalizes his European referents concurs with the Cuban writer and critic, Alejo Carpentier’s insistence on the importance of inter-reference as a means of describing the unknown subject in terms which will be understood by the mainstream—by which he means Paris and New York. Carpentier aims to explain the South American landscape in European terms, which he insists is a “universal language.” In his essays on cross-cultural interdependence, Carpentier encourages openness to all cultural and historical influences:

[T]o understand and to know is not *to be colonised*. To be informed is not synonymous with submission [. . .] the study of foreign cultures, contemporary or past, far from leading to an intellectual *underdevelopment*, is an opportunity for the *universalisation* of a Latin-American writer [. . .] We are the product of several cultures, we master several languages and we obey different legitimate processes of *trans-culturation*. (Carpentier 301-302)<sup>15</sup>

Carpentier promotes “baroque prose,” particularly through adjectivation and metaphor (278) as valuable for defining and naming objects which are so far unknown to the Western reader by a process of contrast and similarity. Hence, instead of describing a foreign (that is, non-European) culture by employing physical descriptions, local language and glossaries, which Huggan summarizes as “ethnographic” fiction, and which Carpentier disparages for fostering exclusionist difference, Carpentier calls on a system of well known European literary, artistic and cultural references. For example, in his novel *The Lost*

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<sup>15</sup> “[C]omprendre et connaître, ce n’est pas *se faire coloniser*. S’informer n’est pas synonyme de soumission [. . .] l’examen des cultures étrangères, contemporaines ou passées, loin de conduire à un *sous-développement* intellectuel, est une chance d’*universalisation* pour un écrivain latino-américain [. . .] Nous sommes le produit de plusieurs cultures, nous dominons plusieurs langues et nous obéissons à différents processus légitimes de *trans-culturation*.” *My translation*.

*Steps*, the narrator from New York describes the spectacular geography of the Orinoco by comparing it to the world of Bosch, fantastic depictions of Babel, hallucinatory illustrations of the temptations of the saints, a Cyclopean staircase, a Gothic cathedral and a heavenly setting suitable for a Last Judgment tableau (171-172). Carpentier evokes the South American landscape in minute detail by actively engaging the Western reader's imagination. Thus, instead of a voyage towards a heart of darkness of failed articulation and alienation, inter-reference makes possible the narrator's journey into the forest as a symbolic awakening. Carpentier asserts that "[t]here is not and there will not be a crisis of the novel as long as the novel is an open novel, a novel destined to a wide audience [and] a novel composed of beautiful and strong variations" (358).<sup>16</sup> It is such openness that Ihimaera imagines in bringing into play "a European analogue" in his letter, above. However, calling upon baroque intertextuality, in Bakhtin's, Bardolph's and Carpentier's considerations, implies a certain complicity between writer and reader which presupposes a certain intellectual and motivational equality: the writer is not charged with elitism and the reader's knowledge of literature is broad enough to participate in the dense inter-reference. The fact that Ihimaera's readership failed to identify and engage with the range of operatic extracts and references in *The Matriarch*, just like with the verismo in *Waituhi*, suggests that the Italian inter-reference is largely redundant, excluding all but the most opera-literate reader.

Inter-reference in *The Matriarch* poses interpretative difficulties for the reader. The Old Testament, European mythology, Venice, opera, as well as Maori aspects, including language, myth, tribal lore, local history, protocol and oral traditions, are significant and enriching for those readers who can access them, but for those who cannot, they encumber and obscure. The broad range of intercultural references, of which passages cited in Maori and Italian are

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16 "Il n'y a pas et il n'y aura pas de crises du roman tant que le roman sera un roman ouvert, un roman destiné à un large public, un roman composé de belles et puissantes variations." *My translation*.

perhaps the most exaggerated, means that most readers find themselves excluded at one point or another. Parts of the text thus remain out of reach, something that frustrates the reader who is unable to fully understand and interpret it. This opacity enacts Bakhtin's description of the novel as "alien[ating]" in its "excessive tension" which belies unity. Baroque borrowing and inter-reference demand work on the reader's part. To accept that a novel as complex as *The Matriarch* speaks on different levels admits that it speaks differently to different audiences. This recalls Rushdie's claim, in regards to writing *Midnight's Children*, that he tried to create images and symbols which have different resonances for Indian and Western readers (Rushdie, "Lecture" 9). While Western literary criticism groups Rushdie and his novel with others from its own—already international—canon, including Cervantes, Garcia Marquez, Gogol, Grass, Rabelais and Sterne ("Lecture" 6), Rushdie feels that the novel owes more to the Indian tradition, including mythology, oral narratives, history and approach to family ("Lecture" 6-8). The novel's polyphony engages Western and Indian readers differently, something that Rushdie and his commentators signal as evidence of the novel's complexity. By contrast with this text-centred interpretation of diversity in Rushdie's oeuvre, questions of interpretation were altogether more difficult in regards to *The Matriarch*, in which cultural politics usurped textual practice.

The role of the Pakeha reader featured in many discussions about *The Matriarch* at the time of its release. At the same time as the hardworking Pakeha reader accepted the Maori Renaissance injunction to adjust his or her reading habits to embrace Maori ways of writing, the antagonism of emergent biculturalism of the 1980s called into question Pakeha competency to interpret a novel that centralizes the Maori by challenging Pakeha authority. Faced with accounting for those parts of the text outside common (Western) critical and reading experience, Pakeha acknowledge that their expectations to be able to access all elements of a Maori Renaissance novel might be out of place. Calder

describes the ensuing anxiety: “there is something, well, colonial in a Pakeha reader’s assumption that his reading habits were already adequate, already equal to a novel like *The Matriarch*” (Calder, “Two Responses” 80). As a quest for knowledge, the novel demonstrates the power of acquiring, owning and withholding information on multiple levels, with critics especially focusing on the novel’s aggressive stance towards Pakeha, antagonistic revisionist history, and pages in untranslated Maori. The way that the novel resists being “tamed” by academic elucidation indicates a subversion of the liberal notion that knowledge equals power—that which Said so thoroughly criticizes in *Culture and Imperialism*. Although this effort was almost solely directed at the Pakeha response to the book’s Maori content, the critical silence surrounding opera also illustrates, in a far less polemical manner, the difficulty and even danger of interpolating cultural politics into fiction which, by nature escapes mimetic expectations. Opera provides one kind of knowledge, structure and literary device, but one that exists solely on a level of textuality: doing the work to unravel opera inter-reference points only towards more fiction, and does not clarify or in any way reconcile the text with notions of truth or reality outside the text. The novel’s inter-reference creates confusion (if it is not understood), or effusion (if it is), ultimately emphasizing subjectivity and unresolved tension in a way that neither the narrator nor his Maori or Pakeha reader will ever resolve.

In the context of 1980s emergent biculturalism and the corresponding radical revision of 150 years of Pakeha-Maori race relations, and in accordance with the “repressive hypothesis” in which Prentice accurately inscribes *The Matriarch*’s publication (“Nationalism vs Internationalism” 549), the desire to make this novel representative of its period is understandable. In many respects, Ihimaera’s rewrite, *Whanau II* fulfils the role that critics of the 1980s searched for in *The Matriarch*. More than a rewrite of the 1974 pastoral novel, in its aggressive stance against Pakeha, its repetition of historical events such as

those involving Te Kooti, the Matawhero massacre and Ngatapa, and the novel's reconfiguration of the grandmother and child relation, *Whanau II* enacts the parts of *The Matriarch* pertinent to a national epic. By cutting out the extensive reference to cultures outside the immediate local context, the later novel explores more thoroughly historical and contemporary Maori-Pakeha relationships. Now that *Whanau II* has to some extent vindicated Ihimaera's desire to record the historical impact of colonialism on his village, Waituhi, it is perhaps no longer necessary to read *The Matriarch* searching for unity.

### Testing the Limits of Inter-reference: Rewriting Mansfield

Received largely as an investigation of Pakeha-Maori race relations, Ihimaera's extensive inter-reference in *The Matriarch* was largely overlooked. The critics' attention was somewhat diverted by more troubling aspects of the novel, notably the accusatory tone of Ihimaera's direct address to the reader "you Pakeha," and his apparent plagiarism of well known historical texts harnessed to his revisionist approach to the New Zealand land wars. In one of the most thorough examinations of Ihimaera's copying of paragraphs from Keith Sorrenson's entries in *An Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, Williams analyses the way that the Maori writer interpolates an emotional and angry response which not only challenges, but insults the Pakeha bias of colonial history, thereby exaggerating the difference between Pakeha and Maori perception of the same events (*Leaving* 130-131). Ihimaera's counter-discursive strategy is a forthright example of postcolonial "writing back," quite literally taking the Pakeha perspective of history and interposing his own commentary on it. Apart from Williams's critique, Ihimaera's unacknowledged borrowings—rectified in later editions—did not generate excessive debate in the media or in literary circles. This may be compared with the heated debate surrounding Jane Campion's possible plagiarism of Jane Mander's novel in her 1993 film *The Piano*, or, in an Australian literary example discussed further in chapter five, Helen Demidenko's *The Hand that Signed the Paper*. Plagiarism is one of the most serious of "crimes" in literature: its threat to key concepts of ownership, originality and authority may lead to very real consequences in the legal implications of copyright infringement. Although many critics pointed out Ihimaera's plagiarism, they generally contained it in his historiographical repositionings, so that his challenge to individual writers' ownership was turned into a metaphorical challenge to Pakeha authority, a common and acceptable feature of postcolonial "writing back." Given the leniency with which

Ihimaera's misrepresentation was met, it is somewhat surprising that the New Zealand reception of his appropriation of Mansfield's stories, three years later, was so hostile. In his 1989 short story collection, *Dear Miss Mansfield: A Tribute to Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp*, Ihimaera diverts the issue of plagiarism to one of outright rewriting.

In a similar manner to academic acceptance of Ihimaera's historiography in *The Matriarch*, the Maori writer's rewriting of Mansfield was received under the rubric of postcolonial "writing back." As such, the collection is largely interpreted as a search for difference from Mansfield's original stories, with the expected motivation of resituating the Maori in a place of centrality. Within this optic, critics employ a compare-and-contrast methodology between the considerable gaps which separate Ihimaera from Mansfield, namely, seventy years, 20,000 kilometres, gender and race. Distance and difference are evoked to question Ihimaera's compulsion to "respond" to Mansfield's work from a personal and Maori motivation, as he puts it in his epistolary introduction (10). Williams sees Ihimaera as radically "stag[ing] a cultural reversal," "captur[ing]" Mansfield and "revis[ing]" the original texts' meanings in a way that "upsets" the mainstream Pakeha vision of Mansfield's place in New Zealand and the place that Maori have within this ("On the Beach" ms). From a similarly contrastive stance against Pakeha and Pakeha writing, Caffin's resoundingly negative review finds Ihimaera too "knowing" and "aware" of his position as the foremost Maori writer, which she feels has led him to write a collection that "watch[es] his audience more carefully than his subject" ("K. M. Curios" 66). Within the French tradition of *analyse de texte*, Carole Froude Durix points to the differences that his gap-filling brings to the original, finding that Ihimaera "slips into those significant open spaces that are characteristic of a Mansfield text" (186). Liselotte Glage likens "the re-interpretations and the re-assessments" (321) of rewriting to the act of translation, showing the dangers and difficulties of retaining the original sense

in a foreign context. Although Glage acknowledges that all re-assessment is contingent on perspective, something which she indicates might help break down the oppositional sense of “writing back,” the way that she assumes that Maori and Pakeha readerships inhabit entirely different cultural legacies means that her study again points to gaps and differences in interpretative strategies from both sides.

Either as rewriting or “writing back,” then, Ihimaera’s collection was largely held to be in some way a corrective to Mansfield’s stories. Indeed, both techniques call into question the authority of the original: rewriting poses a direct challenge to a specific literary target, while “writing back” applies to a more general impetus to challenge the legacy of colonialism, as in *The Matriarch*. However, rewriting is not only a postcolonial phenomenon, and has existed throughout the history of literature, as Glage points out by citing Chaucer’s open claim that his *Troilus and Criseide* is modelled on the work of his literary forbears (322). Chaucer’s acknowledgement draws attention to the point that all rewriting to a certain extent pays homage to the previous text, and that an ambition to update, recontextualize or criticize the original presumes that it remains relevant in the present. Indeed, rewriting is an exaggerated textual version of the problematic mimesis of the text which, as Martin Heidegger puts it, is secondary to praxis, a question of “doing after: production that comes afterwards. The *mimesis* is in its essence situated and defined through distance” (Heidegger qtd in Melberg 4). In its evocation of similarity and difference, rewriting is also illustrative of the fundamental plurality and polyphony of the text as a site for refracting reformulations. This has always caused debate, concerned, as Said notes in *The World, the Text and the Critic*, with questions of originality and imitation, based on a conception of literary influence as filiation, a handing down through the generations. Said uses the genetic implication of the term to suggest that filiation conceives—quite literally—of a foundational respect for paternal literary authority. Hence, in



terms of rewriting, the second text is always considered in relation to the former, with its originality lying in its departures from its predecessor.

Postcolonial rewriting has altered the terrain on which contrastive analyses of rewriting are conducted because an aesthetic consideration, which presupposes English literature to occupy an internally cohesive field, is not sufficient for writers bringing exterior cultural and literary perspectives. Within the politics of “writing back,” critics of postcolonial rewriting often look for aspects of the text that undermine its predecessor’s cultural and literary authority, a tendency opposed by Huggan’s and Appiah’s insistence on the need to acknowledge all cultural and literary input. Key texts read in a manner intending to deconstruct an imperial perspective include Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which centres the mad Bertha Rochester of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, and Wilson Harris’s *Palace of the Peacock*, in which Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* journey to the interior is re-enacted multiple times until the South American jungle becomes assimilated and natural to a Creole imaginary. It is similarly within this optic of imaginative historiography (challenging not history but fiction) that commentaries on *Dear Miss Mansfield* argue that Ihimaera centralizes the barely discernible Maori and New Zealand referents of Mansfield’s stories.

Postcolonial studies have difficulty engaging with the other possibility of comparative readings, that of noting similarities with the earlier text. Although many critics agree that postcolonial writers integrate elements of the English canon, the rules of fiction and the novel form into their work, they frequently qualify this by insisting that the necessarily different focus of postcolonial writing (back) means that the English components are subverted, which often leads to irony and parody of the stylistic, structural and linguistic content of the English canon. Many postcolonial critics shy away from looking for similarities with English literature because this is seen as committing the error of assuming that marginalized writers simply use European forms to

describe non-European content, a stance which reinforces Eurocentric paradigms (Huggan, “Opting Out” 29). By way of countering this implied Eurocentrism, Arun Mukherjee challenges the idea that postcolonial writers are principally intent on writing “back” to the West. As part of her highly critical stance towards postcolonialism’s tendency to contain and account for all indigenous, minority, third world and settler society texts within the same unitary grouping, she claims a plurality of motivations, positions and intended audiences for postcolonial writers. Mukherjee claims that centre-margin binary thinking

leaves us only one modality, one discursive position. We are forever forced to interrogate European discourses, of only one particular kind, the ones that degrade and deny our humanity. I would like to respond that our cultural productions are created in response to our own needs and we have many more needs than constantly to ‘parody’ the imperialists. (6)

The questions of audience, and of the canonical or colonial texts chosen for rewriting, are both pertinent to a study of *Dear Miss Mansfield*, which benefits from overreading its similarities with Mansfield in order to highlight the significant influence of her work on Ihimaera. Far from a binary logic that according to Mukherjee imagines that writers only choose to rewrite parts of canonical literature that “degrade and deny” minority agency, Ihimaera’s collection begins with the much more positive aim to celebrate Mansfield’s achievements, to pay “homage” and to “say ‘thank you’” (9).

In his introductory letter to “Miss Mansfield,” Ihimaera describes his motivation to “respond” by way of offering a “personal tribute to [her] life and [her] art” (9). According to Glage, in this statement, Ihimaera “acknowledges [Mansfield’s] literary legacy and accepts her into his own tradition” (322). Glage’s comment is typically postcolonial, in that the canonical text and writer is integrated into the now centralized postcolonial position so that Ihimaera absorbs Mansfield. However, Ihimaera demonstrates a much more complex,

mediating relationship to Mansfield than Glage allows for. He makes a personal and direct address to the earlier writer in the introduction to the collection, and again in a second letter in *As Fair as New Zealand to Me*, a collection of letters by New Zealand recipients of the Katherine Mansfield fellowship to Menton, France. In the latter letter, Ihimaera collapses many of the gaps between himself and Mansfield on which a reading of difference depends. He composes the letter directly to “Katerina” in the present tense, as if she is still alive and corresponding with him. He broaches the distance between Auckland and Menton by signaling how well he knows the town, and responds to her life there by aligning her views with his own, including an opinion on the French and commiserating about bronchitis. The letter’s style is an affectation of Mansfield’s, a feminizing that comes across in Ihimaera’s case as camp, something which he even overtly signals by mentioning the New Zealand gay scene. He also recounts an anecdote of how the local police mistook him for an “Algerian gigolo” (103) on the beach in Menton. As well as laughing over the implied sexualization of the episode, the tale reveals something about how *au fait* Ihimaera is with shifting truths and blurred identities. Elsewhere, in another example of ethnic confusion, Ihimaera describes being mistaken for an Ainu while in Japan, a cultural confusion that he takes pleasure in (Peter Dowling). In this second letter to Mansfield, Ihimaera relishes assuming different roles, in being both a *poseur* and an imposter on the French Riviera. Such posturing draws out another link with Mansfield. Damien Wilkins reminds Mansfield readers that she, also, toyed with images of herself as exotic, dressing up as a gypsy, or in Arabian shawls or Japanese kimono, also evident in the many derivatives of her name, including the Russian “Yekaterina” and “Katya.” This imitation spills over to her writing: just as Mansfield slips into the voice of other writers, including Oscar Wilde and Chekhov, Ihimaera affects Mansfield’s style, tone and voice.

In his second letter, Ihimaera projects an intimacy with Mansfield—he gives her another nickname, the Maori “Katerina,” elsewhere spelt “Kataraina”—that imagines that they are speaking the same language, or more precisely, that he speaks her language. Inevitably, there is an ironical distance in this stance, which Ihimaera inflates in showcase fashion, recounting to his *confidante* the terrible reviews he had received for *Dear Miss Mansfield*:

One of the reviewers said that this was a mean trick of mine to play on a poor defenceless White woman who was living overseas. You, *defenceless*? Ha! [. . .] I had forgotten that you were such an icon. You should have warned me but, instead, what did you advise? *Risk! Risk everything! Care no more for the opinions of others, for those voices. Do the hardest thing on earth for you. Act for yourself. Face the truth.*

Darling, that’s the last time I’ll take your advice. It landed me right in the middle of doggy doo doo. (103)

The parody, however, is aimed at the New Zealand critics reading the letter, and not at Mansfield or his relationship with her: he takes her advice sincerely. This is reinforced at the close of his letter, which he concludes on the following, more serious note:

I still live by your advice, *Risk! Risk everything!* In Maoridom we might perhaps say it another way, *Tama tu, tama ora! Tama noho, tama mate!* If you stand you live! If you lie down, you die! I continue to drive my life with passion and commitment to the iwi Maori – and in the pursuit of that goal you had:

Of making our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World. (105)

Ihimaera accords his vision, of life as of art, with Mansfield’s. In doing so, he asserts that his Maori perspective is consistent with, not different from Mansfield’s own, as indicated in his citation of a Maori proverb as a kind of cultural translation of Mansfield’s own statement. Ihimaera does not see himself as writing against his predecessor, but rather as writing along with her.

In his collection and the later letter, Ihimaera draws attention to similarities he imagines between himself and the Bloomsbury expatriate. He

represents her as quintessentially a New Zealander, as marginalized as a colonial abroad in much the same way as he is marginalized as a Maori in mainstream New Zealand, and for her alleged lesbianism as akin to his gay identity. For each of Ihimaera's coalescences, a counter-argument exists to maintain distance: Mansfield's early notebooks register an impatience to get out of New Zealand and its restrictive colonial culture (Williams, "Beach"); her tendency to float between social groups leads Vincent O'Sullivan to describe her state of "discomposure *anywhere*" (13); the nature of her friendship or relationship with her Maori school friend Maata is unclear. Ihimaera certainly misinterprets Mansfield, but one comment in the introduction to *Dear Miss Mansfield* indicates that he does so knowingly: "[i]t is the modern way, Miss Mansfield, for us to have become as much fascinated with your life as with your stories" (9). Ihimaera offers his misreading alongside many others, including John Middleton Murry's selective packaging of her stories and journals after her death, and Pakeha New Zealand's appropriation of Mansfield as a national writer and icon of emergent Pakeha identity.

Ihimaera adopts a version of Mansfield that he feels is compatible with his own artistic vision and position in New Zealand society. The close personal connection that he creates with her is different from the way that he legitimizes his right to speak as a Maori. Whereas his *whakapapa*, genealogy, gives him an innate right to speak as Maori, his relationship with Mansfield is chosen. This exemplifies Said's theory of chosen affiliation, which sidesteps the hierarchical relationship implicit in organic filiation. Maintaining echoes of familial connection makes Said's affiliation more than a postmodern, indiscriminate, picking and choosing of literary influences, and more a kind of adopting into the family, of collecting writers and texts deemed meaningful. Affiliation allows Said to reconceptualize originality and repetition so that they are no longer linear and temporal, something which moves "backwards into lost primacy at best, and regained utopias at worst" (139). Rather than "inscription,"

rewriting is a “parallel script” (135) compiled as a “bibliosystem, a kind of activated library whose effect is to stimulate the production of forms of disciplined, gradually actualised freedom” (139). Within this system, writers choose their own affiliations. Said quotes Ian Watts: “[writers] invite us to share the larger transcendental [affiliative] or private systems of order and value which they have adopted or invented” (Ian Watts qtd in Said 19). In a passage which uncannily echoes Said’s point, Ihimaera describes the way in which his imagination responds to literary influences. He recounts studying Anglo Saxon literature as an undergraduate student, reluctantly, because he did not imagine that it was relevant to his life:

Forty years later, the impact of that course still resonates through my own work as I try to write a Maori literature in the language of English. Indeed, the Wanderer motif is very much embedded in my novels and in the next, *Sky Dancer*, you’ll find the same tree as in *Dream of the Rood* there in the middle of the forest – except that it’s a New Zealand forest.

So I am a firm believer [. . .] in opening up to [. . .] the possibilities, if I can, of transcendence through the discoveries possible in the magnificent accident, the reading the unexpected.  
(Departmental e-mail)

Ihimaera and Watts use transcendence to give some impression of the power of literary influence to make a new text more than the sum total of its composite parts, to break out of the binarisms that imagine a writer to only be writing back to his or her predecessors. In Said’s “activated library,” literary influence is generative.

While Said validates and normalizes literary influence by deconstructing the myth of originality, Judie Newman endeavours to break down the hierarchical relationship between original and rewrite by focusing on the original itself. She upsets the notion of historical primacy by challenging the supposition that the canonical author and text are set in stone. Her study of intertextuality and rewriting, including J. G. Farrell’s use of the Romantic

poets, Nadine Gordimer's use of Shakespeare, and Shashi Tharoor's mimicry of Forster, Kipling and Rushdie, reveals that "there are no master narratives masquerading as eternal verities" (100). A view of the canonical, colonial writer as shifting is particularly valid for the reading of Mansfield, a writer whose stories, as well as her life, remain elusive. This was amply demonstrated during the 1988 centenary celebrations of her birth, marked by many national and international conferences and publications, all of which read her and her work differently.

Said's and Newman's arguments aim to validate inter-reference and influence in ways that do not depend on colonial-postcolonial binarisms of primacy, hierarchy and position. Accepting their precepts dissolves another binary structure, that of the postcolonial prioritizing of difference at the expense of similarity. Peter Hulme argues a case for reading points of similarity and shared vision between postcolonial rewritings and their canonical counterparts. In "The Locked Heart: the Creole family romance of *Wide Sargasso Sea*," Hulme describes Rhys's family background, a task that provides insight into certain aspects of her novel, in the same way, he suggests, that the lives of Charlotte and Emily Brontë are often analyzed in relation to their novels. Hulme encourages close study of the local characteristics of such rewritings, in order to extract these texts' "counter-discursive strategies" (72). Nevertheless, he warns that the way in which many postcolonialists teach "revisionary couples" (72), such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* alongside *Jane Eyre*, and Coetzee's *Foe* alongside Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, risks instating a "pedagogical opposition" (72) between colonial and postcolonial that is too rigid and unnuanced. He concludes his paper thus:

[O]nce the local has been fixed, once the materials out of which a text has been made have been located and studied, the critical movement has finally to be outwards, towards the larger picture of which the locality forms only a part, for too easy a contrast between *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* would risk missing that Charlotte Brontë and

Jean Rhys do finally belong to the same world. Readings that focus on the counter-discursive strategies of *Wide Sargasso Sea vis-à-vis Jane Eyre*, though often carried out with impeccably radical motives, have tended to set the categories of “colonial” and “postcolonial” in stone, failing to see the multiple ways in which *Jane Eyre* is, in its production of its materials, already negotiating matters of West Indian slavery, even if the figure of Bertha is the only obvious textual residue of this negotiation. This is not to collapse differences but to argue for the need to understand the complex trafficking that exists between texts (and their authors) in the world, even ones that seem to invite consideration in terms of oppositions. (85)

Hulme’s study reveals that the different locations of Rhys’s upbringing in Dominica and Brontë’s on the Yorkshire Moors do not mean that their respective texts are diametrically opposed. In fact, the way these writers assimilate their environments and family histories into their texts is very similar. Hulme’s interest in how life carries over into fiction, and how fiction interacts with other fictions opens a space to illuminate “textual residue” and “complex trafficking” between colonial and postcolonial “couples” in a way that acknowledges both texts as in an unstable relationship with each other. These concepts are revealing in the following analyses of the way that Ihimaera picks up “textual residues” in Mansfield and trafficks her strategies for his own uses.

Ihimaera’s story “A Contemporary Kezia,” from *Dear Miss Mansfield*, benefits from Hulme’s reminder not to oppose a story’s locale. The latter half of the story replicates Mansfield’s “The Child-Who-Was-Tired,” from her first collection, *In a German Pension* (1911). In turn, Mansfield was accused of plagiarizing Anton Chekhov’s story “Sleepy Head” (1906), with which “The Child-Who-Was-Tired” shares remarkable similarities.<sup>17</sup> Ihimaera’s story is not as close to Mansfield’s as hers is to Chekhov’s, and, of course, Ihimaera’s collection openly acknowledges Mansfield’s influence. Nevertheless,

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<sup>17</sup> Middleton-Murry denies that Mansfield plagiarized Chekhov. He insists that the story is based on a personal experience and that at the time of writing she could not have had access to a translation of Chekhov’s story (Schneider 394).



comparing the three stories highlights some of the textual “trafficking” exposed in conscious or subconscious rewriting. To recall Hulme’s incitement to consider any text locally first exposes how Chekhov’s story is essentially late-nineteenth-century Russian, Mansfield’s is English Modernist, and Ihimaera’s is unmistakably Maori of its era. Like many Russian social realist writers, Chekhov portrays a harsh world for the peasantry. In “Sleepy Head” the child employed as housekeeper and nanny is locked into a life of hardship, as both her daily routine, which allows her no sleep, and her memories of her past life with her family, are full of duress. Even in the luxury of sleep, the child’s dreams mirror a reality in which one’s lot in life is borne with stoic acceptance:

Varka sees a wide road covered with liquid mud; along the road stretch wagons, men with satchels on their backs crawl along [. . .] And suddenly the men with the satchels and the shadows collapse in the liquid mud. “Why is this?” asks Varka. “To sleep, to sleep!” comes the answer. (“Sleepy Head,” n. pag.)

Mansfield rewrites Chekhov so that the alternative to the child’s daily routine is a romantic and modernist escape into a dream world. The story begins and ends with the dreaming image of “a little white road with tall black trees on either side, a little road that led to nowhere, and where nobody walked at all” (757). This pastoral, peaceful refuge of the mind’s eye intensifies the uncouthness of the German household, in which the child’s perhaps artistic sensitivity clashes with the inelegance of the Frau and Man. These contrasts provide the story’s social criticism of the child’s exploitation by a seemingly undeserving class of society. Such implied commentary makes *In a German Pension* deeply satirical, a satire which relies on the distance between the lower-middle-class Germany depicted in the story, and the upper-middle-class London of Mansfield’s readership.

In a reversal of Mansfield’s acerbic satire, Ihimaera rewrites her story with a sincere and sympathetic narrator, who suggests that the reasons for a child to be put to work may be culturally and historically acceptable. His

depiction of the child called by sacred weavers to take on their domestic chores is contextualized in the opening paragraph, which sets the scene of mid-twentieth-century rural poverty: “[e]verybody had a role in keeping the family alive and well. Your Nani’s role was given to her when she was four” (84). The child accepts her role, including its difficulties and punishments, unquestioningly, in a similar, although altogether more positive sense of fate and duty than that experienced by Chekhov’s peasant girl:

She was put straight to work and, because her mother had told her to be obedient, she did the work without complaint [. . .] The first few months, though, she got a lot of punishment from those two old ladies. I guess they wanted Nani to learn faster. (85-86)

Even though the story is cast in a positive light, the child still dreams of a way out of the immediate hardship of her tasks. As in Chekhov’s and Mansfield’s stories, the symbol of the child’s wish for escape is the road, although in Ihimaera’s story this is not only a dream. The child sits at the side of the road hoping and waiting for her mother to come and get her (87).

Across the different environments and different artistic treatment of these three stories, the pathos remains the same. Whether played out in Russian tenant housing, in a German townhouse or a Maori *whare*, each story maintains the focus on the child as innocent and naïve. It is this feature that enables the impact of each story’s last lines, where the child’s intense focus on escape into sleep, or in Ihimaera’s case, a way home, has her kill the baby, or the old weavers, with no understanding of her act’s repercussions. In an example of what Caffin disapprovingly calls Ihimaera’s “fatal” overwriting, “spell[ing] out the point already made by Mansfield” (“K. M. Curios” 66), the Maori writer ends his story by describing the old weavers’ deaths and underlining the child’s innocence: “[t]ell her [. . .] that she does not need to forgive herself for being a nine-year-old girl. After all, how was your Nani to know [. . .]?” (88). The narrator’s explanation does detract from the poignancy generated by the child’s

abandonment of the old weavers. However, as an embedded narrative within a contemporary frame story, in which the narrator tells his young children their Nani's life story, the tale and its emphatic ending is important for its rhetorical function.

In a further layer of rewriting, Ihimaera repeats the story of Nani's childhood in his play *Woman Far Walking* (20-29). "A Contemporary Kezia" is turned into direct speech but is otherwise only minimally changed, and in this version the scene ends with the child's leaving, thereby recapturing the tension and pathos of the event. The short story's inclusion in the play, which, as discussed in the previous chapter compiles incidents of conflict between Maori and Pakeha from the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi until the year 2000, dramatically revives Chekhov's social criticism. Within the play's openly aggressive stance, in which colonial history and the Pakeha are blamed for Maori social and cultural impoverishment, the child's story reinstates a strong sense of victimization that the fully Maori context of "A Contemporary Kezia" could not permit.

Beyond the level on which Ihimaera's short story rewrites Mansfield's in a Maori context, what is significant is the way that Ihimaera bypasses Mansfield's satire to instead reformulate Chekhov's couched criticism of Tsarist Russia in his own critique of the effects of colonization on Maori. Just as Hulme finds that Brontë's text contains traces that already configure postcolonial concerns, through Mansfield Ihimaera activates a postcolonialism already present in Chekhov. Said's affiliation and Newman's instability of canonical texts make possible an analysis of these three texts alert to interanimation or "complex trafficking." Indeed, the closest similarities between Chekhov's, Mansfield's and Ihimaera's stories are not contained in the plot but rather the way that the child who was tired functions across these texts, channelling social criticism by evoking the reader's sympathy for the underprivileged. This illustrates how the literary influence which inspires

rewriting may work on other levels than that of its content. Caffin remarks on something similar in her review when she notes that the most successful stories in Ihimaera's collection are those that depart most significantly from Mansfield's text (66). This suggests that Ihimaera's rewriting is not restricted to the subjects he writes about, a point which immediately undermines an argument based on his repositioning of Mansfield's stories to highlight or centralize the previously marginalized. In fact, the central characters across Ihimaera's oeuvre are very similar to Mansfield's. Hence, in *Dear Miss Mansfield*, it is not so much *what* Ihimaera writes as *how* he writes that demonstrates the point where his work converges most closely with Mansfield's.

Like Mansfield's, many of Ihimaera's stories feature a child narrator, as in "A Contemporary Kezia," and also several of the short stories in *Pounamu* and *New Net*. The marginalized Maori character takes the place of Mansfield's tendency to feature or empathize with the poor, lower class or victimized, often girls and women. In accordance with a common feature of the modernist vision, Ihimaera lends his characters a unique artistic sensibility that elevates life to art. This is most evident in the romantic, even sublime configuration of the Maori connection with nature, discussed in chapter one, and the staged, operatic posturing of the matriarch's teachings in *The Matriarch*. For Ihimaera, it is not the artist who possesses heightened sensitivity, but his and his characters' recourse to Maori culture that fulfils this function. By centralizing naïve children, the uneducated working class and the traditional learning of the elderly, Ihimaera privileges a Maori naturalness and attention to feeling which is often juxtaposed against an exterior Pakeha call to rationality and reason. Heightened sensitivity animates and underpins many of his stories: the Maori imaginary, including *whanau*, *whakapapa* and tradition, overlays and overpowers the often mundane reality of contemporary Maori experience, which includes rural poverty, unemployment and dispossession. In effect,

Ihimaera adapts Mansfield's technique of deflating the importance of the rituals of life, such as weddings, funerals, parties, holidays, balls, which retract into the background as she brings to the fore intimate details, sensations and emotions. Just as Mansfield concentrates on minute detail that all but the most sensitive, romantic characters miss, many of Ihimaera's stories also turn on vignettes that suggest that Maori see depth and resonance in things that Pakeha are too obtuse to see, or that are meaningful only to a Maori imaginary.

"The Affectionate Kidnappers," which rewrites Mansfield's "How Pearl Button was Kidnapped" from a Maori perspective, is perhaps the one story in *Dear Miss Mansfield* that most clearly and directly adopts a postcolonial stance of "writing back." The story challenges Mansfield's Eurocentric vision and, by extension, the Pakeha national literary perspective that has claimed Mansfield for its own. Unsurprisingly, this story is perhaps the most frequently cited in postcolonial comparisons of the two writers (Glage; Williams, "Beach"). A directly comparative reading of this story with Mansfield's highlights the Maori writer's ungainly efforts that, in their didacticism, leave little to the imagination. For example, what is only implied by the ending of Mansfield's story is spelt out in Ihimaera's, as a Maori elder imagines the event from the Policemen's perspective:

[A] little naked girl, kicking and screaming, beating her fists against two black women, a Pakeha blonde girl, looking for all the world as if she was going to be drowned. (113)

Yet in the closing moment, Ihimaera changes tack from the story's overt, antagonistic filling-in of background information. Instead, he adopts the earlier writer's technique of heightened consciousness, in which epiphany generates an intense emotional response to a symbol—often provided by nature—a focus that at once captures and reveals the character's subjectivity. As Mansfield wrote in a letter, cited by Wilkins in his discussion on "Prelude":

[In the New Zealand stories] I tried to catch that moment [. . .] I tried to lift that mist from my people and let them be seen and then to hide them again. (“Short Story Moderniser,” n. pag.)

Seventy years later, Ihimaera’s stance to his non-Maori reader is similar to Mansfield’s relationship with her English reader, and this final passage does indeed “lift that mist from [his] people” in such a way that the reader glimpses a worldview, and begins to comprehend its importance, despite the intense cultural specificity which obscures its complete meaning:

The two women sat in the gathering dark. Puti thought, I will never forget. All those little men in blue coats. Little blue men. With their whistles. Running, running towards us. With their police batons raised. It was – Suddenly, she felt Kuini nudging her and pointing down to the floor. Kuini’s voice was still and drained of life. “Anei,” she whispered. Although the light was waning, the pattern in the dust could still be seen. “Anei, te roimata toroa.” The soft sounds of waiata swelled in the darkness like currents of the wind holding up Kuini’s words. “E noho ra. Pearl Button,” Kuini said, “taku moko Pakeha.” The syllables drifted like two birds beating heavily eastward into the night. Then the light went, everything went, life went. (113-114)

Williams and Glage both understand Ihimaera’s closing image as “writing back,” an argument which rests on their point that the Maori language and cultural referents in the final exchange by the two *kuia* exclude Ihimaera’s non-Maori readers. And yet, this position fails to take into account the fact that this passage may be read in several ways, depending on the different cultural, linguistic and aesthetic skills brought to the text by different readerships, which are by no means split into neat Maori and non-Maori halves.

The imagery of encroaching darkness, countered by the spoken and sung Maori, together create the simile of “syllables drift[ing] like two birds beating heavily eastward into the night.” In its intense literariness, the images of the birds and the night elevate the women’s capture and punishment to a poignant, lyric finale that connects back with the ellipsis intended by Mansfield’s limited child-eye narration. For Mansfield readers, the italicized

phrases signal Ihimaera's borrowing from her original, in which "[l]ittle men in blue coats—little blue men came running, running towards her with shouts and whistlings" (Mansfield 534). For readers who do not understand Maori, Kuini's final words nevertheless successfully intimate the closure of the final sentence, while a sense of transcendence through nature is provided by the birds winging eastwards, into the morning light. For a Maori-literate audience, which includes many, but by no means all Maori, some non-Maori New Zealanders and foreigners interested in Maori culture and armed with a basic Maori dictionary, translating Kuini's farewell "Goodbye, Pearl Button [. . .] my Pakeha grandchild" finally adds little to the already evident meaning.

The key to Ihimaera's passage rests on the "pattern in the dust" in the waning light. This signals a Mansfieldian epiphany which lends a structure that to some extent over-rides the story's cultural and linguistic specificity. In Mansfield's epiphanies, a moment of insight is often imaginatively linked to a symbol that is meaningful only to the subject of the epiphany, such as the pear tree for Bertha in "Bliss," and the doll's house lamp for the Kelvey children in "The Doll's House." It is not important that the reader share in this luminous understanding, simply that he or she notices this particular literary device and accepts its importance for the character and thus for the story's *dénouement*. The way that the epiphany undercuts romanticism by highlighting the subject's marginality emphasizes modernist fracture. The intense desire to privilege or retreat into heightened sensibility is deflated by the story's refusal to linger there: in the above examples from Mansfield, Bertha's moment of connection with her "friend" is betrayed when she realizes her husband is having an affair with the woman, and in "The Doll's House" the ostracized children are unceremoniously sent away from the well-off Burnells. The epiphany in "The Affectionate Kidnappers" functions similarly in that in this pattern on the floor, the *kuia* understand the reason for and consequence of their actions, and yet are powerless to defend it. Whether or not the reader sees the symbol in the pattern,

the story's final message hinges on the *kuia*'s response to it: Kuini's "still" voice, "drained of life," and the heavy drifting syllables in effect foreshadow the closing sentence, "the light went, everything went, life went." The ultimate elegiac source of this vision stems from the irreconcilable tension between the epiphanic moment and the story's prison setting. For Ihimaera, the resulting schism between imagination and reality is based on a different sort of modernist rupture than Mansfield's, that of broken continuity in Maori culture brought by colonization. In Pakeha-dominated contemporary New Zealand, traditional resources of cultural strength are no longer immediately available to many Maori, having been broken by 150 years of colonization, and carrying little agency in mainstream society—an accumulation of losses that Ihimaera describes as a "faultline." As Williams identifies, in an analysis of Ihimaera's use of Mansfieldian epiphanies, the Maori writer's use of this device assumes a role of cultural critique, as "such a moment of recognition in itself does not change the circumstances that provoke it" ("Beach" ms). The epiphany at the close of "The Affectionate Kidnappers" textually enacts this "faultline": many readers cannot access its symbolic meaning, and even for the *kuia* who do understand the portent, it cannot save them from the Pakeha justice system, in which such symbolism is redundant.

From another angle, the above passage exemplifies Mukherjee's argument by which Ihimaera's modernism encompasses a Maori imaginary, targeting a Maori readership rather than "writing back" to a colonial set text in which Mansfield's vague sketch of the Maori might apply to Mukherjee's sense of "deny[ing] [. . .] our humanity." In keeping with Said's affiliation of chosen influence, Ihimaera adopts the epiphany to write of Maoriness within a wholly European aesthetic device, which he finds relevant and revealing for his own context. To uncover the signification of the "pattern in the dust" requires an understanding of Maori symbolism, in which Kuini reveals "te roimata toroa," the tears of the albatross, a sacred weaving pattern incongruously found in a



Pakeha prison. In Maori symbology, the *roimata toroa* pattern evokes tears shed for a loved one, and is selected “to depict disaster in war, death or catastrophe.”<sup>18</sup> Allusion to the myth of the sacred albatross returning from Aotearoa to Hawaiki is reiterated in the image of the “two birds beating heavily eastward into the night,” a journey towards the South Pacific site of both mythic origin and mythic return, as the spirit of the dead journeys back to Hawaiki. This indicates that the pattern is a premonition of the *kuia*’s death, which is again intimated in the story’s final line, “the light went, everything went, life went.” Across the different possible readings, Ihimaera’s closing moment retains knowledge or lack thereof in a literary context, of Modernist epiphany and Maori symbolism, rather than one of purposive cultural difference. This shows that, for Ihimaera, a Maori imaginary is not incompatible with Western aesthetic form and function: his Maori “response” to Mansfield, as indicated by his authorial positioning in his two letters, is inclusive and generative rather than contrastive and exclusionist.

Within the schema of postcolonial “writing back,” a study of mimeticism, inter-reference and rewriting is problematic because it disregards the epistemological break by which minority literature opposes or challenges the aesthetics of the English canon. This is evident in the expectation among New Zealand critics that Ihimaera can only access Mansfield and Verdi antagonistically: the colonial-postcolonial schism inhibits an engagement with texts within a singular field of literary expectations. Despite Bhabha’s “Third Space” of culture born out of conflict, Bakhtin’s heteroglossia of language and Rushdie’s insistence on the text itself as the “arena of discourse,” the relationship between postcolonial and Western literature continues to exhibit a

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<sup>18</sup> Information from the Auckland Museum Education Kit at [www.aucklandmuseum.com/site\\_resources/EducationPDF/Maori\\_03TukuTukuEdKit.pdf](http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/site_resources/EducationPDF/Maori_03TukuTukuEdKit.pdf), accessed 28 January, 2007.

strong tension that threatens to break into binary dynamics of centre and margin. Such polarity replicates, in a postcolonial context, Bourdieu's cultural field of production, in which the non-Western artist is the avant-garde demanding recognition from the consecrated centre. Even though the "centre" is a shaky notion, the English language, European fiction forms, and the fact that postcolonial studies are carried out in predominantly Western universities, continue to generate tension when faced with new work by non-Western writers. While arguing, with Bakhtin and Said, that the novel genre and English language work towards integration, the opposite drives of recognizing postcolonial difference are always present: nationalist and "nativist" recourse to pre-colonial tradition; use of the indigenous or minority language—most radically supported by Ngugi; resistance to the novel form as non-indigenous; conflict between postmodern play and the modernist search for meaning. Although there is the feeling in much postcolonial academic debate that the initial confrontational stance of minority discourse will eventually give way to an acceptance of literature as site of interaction, tensions generated by pairings such as national or international, postmodern or postcolonial, roots or routes, continue to circulate in journals and at conferences.

Due to its critical tendency to look for local specificity, postcolonial theory has difficulty accounting for the apparently inappropriate position held by those postcolonial writers who do not seem to challenge the English canon. Debates have focused on Michael Ondaatje, whose novels do not always actively support minority agency, or V. S. Naipaul, who stands by the form of English literature over and above cultural specificity (see Rutherford vi-vii). Postcolonialism is a problematic category as a genre of writing and as a means of grouping writers. It exhibits, on a larger scale, the same desire to label work as representative and to account for its differences therein as Maori fiction in New Zealand literature, discussed at length in the preceding chapter and also played out in Pakeha responses to *Sky Dancer*, *The Matriarch* and *Dear Miss*

*Mansfield*. Respect for Maori cultural and literary difference problematizes an analysis of Ihimaera's texts as attuned to influence via the heteroglossic novel, the epic genre, baroque opera inter-reference and literary influence. Arguably, rather than break down Western categories of literary classification and judgement, postcolonialism's expectation to remain different and distinct from other sectors of the English canon actually maintains and colludes with the Western tradition which separates and classifies by nationality, period or genre.

Ihimaera's stance, both in his writing as well as in interviews and in his public roles, demonstrates some of the tension created by imagining the colonial and postcolonial as binary. He oscillates between claiming that his writing is part of Western literature, or distinct from it: he at once aims to "pillage wherever the language has been" and "subvert" those cultural and literary traditions (Ellis 175-176). Nevertheless, an aim to undermine English literature is not always clear in Ihimaera's own work. For example, his fiction shows very little subversion of nationalism and romanticism, as discussed in chapter one, or a modernist search for transcendence, discussed above, although these are foundational to the construction of the English canon, and in fact have served to enforce and reinforce its self-supporting hegemony. Neither does Ihimaera employ irony and parody in the ways evoked by postcolonial critics. These techniques of subversion are often aimed at his postcolonial and even Maori audience rather than intending to undermine Pakeha reading habits or Western literary form. For example, in *Sky Dancer* he parodies post-bicultural political correctness that is cautious about making fun of Maori tradition, and in his second letter to Mansfield, his ironical distance mocks his readers rather than his relationship with Mansfield. The two specific cases of baroque opera and rewriting in Ihimaera's work open out the binary colonial-postcolonial positions. Rather than concrete terms against which a shifting postcoloniality must negotiate its relationship, the baroque, opera and rewriting have themselves arisen from and changed in response to historical pressures. This

illustrates Bourdieu's and Casanova's arguments for a global system of artistic production and change that applies across eras and nations. Thus, far from embodying a European high cultural ideal that is dialectically positioned against postcolonialism, both opera and the baroque are themselves shifting movements responsive to their environments. The baroque's emergence out of seventeenth-century colonial contact, and the importance of nineteenth-century Italian opera for provincial unification efforts, effectively prefigure postcolonial concerns. Similarly, the use of rewriting throughout the history of English literature has always engendered debates on primacy and originality, or alternately a call to acknowledge the heteroglossic capacity of fiction to constantly engage in, and be a site of, dialogue across time and space. Both these issues are at the heart of contemporary postcolonial difficulties of definition and ambition. Baroque opera and rewriting, then, carry the imprint of their historical "residue" which, when "traffick[ed]" in a postcolonial context, reveal new or forgotten contiguities. To highlight the constant movement at work throughout the (historical and international) evolution of literary style and form is to reject any notion that Maori literature's determination to describe its cultural specificity requires a rejection of Western fiction.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL

### Maori Modernity

*The Matriarch* and *Dear Miss Mansfield* play out textually some of the antagonisms between Maori and Pakeha cultures that defined the turbulent 1980s. By contrast, Ihimaera's fourth novel, *The Whale Rider* (1987), provides a much more positive model of Maori Renaissance cultural rejuvenation. In its style and form as much as its context, the short fable closely corresponds to a literature of nation building. The novel, set in the East Coast village of Whangara in the 1980s, describes a wholly Maori universe, in which the tribe's legendary ancestors, ancient esoteric learning, and spirituality inform the present. Non-Maori influences and the effects of modernity, including pollution, Maori marginalization, unemployment, and dispossession, exist as exterior threats but do not figure within the novel's tightly defined location. The story centres on Koro Apirana, leader of local tribe, Ngati Konohi, who seeks to re-establish the "oneness" of man, animal and nature that existed in pre-contact Aotearoa (27). His difficult task is to find an heir who is simultaneously worthy of his tribal knowledge and capable of leading the tribe into the future. The novel's tension, played out in the parallel development of Koro's search for a boy, and his granddaughter, Kahu's, deep connection with her tribal history, hinges on the difficulty of promulgating tradition in the broken context of a Maori present diminished by colonization. Koro and Kahu are heroes of the Maori Renaissance because of their belief in and reverence for traditional Maori culture as the key to a strong Maori identity in the present. In Koro's successful turning to the Maori past to save his tribe, it appears that in this fable Ihimaera advocates the redemptive potential in traditional Maori culture.

As During points out in “What Was the West?,” the concept of modernity underpins colonialism’s legitimizing claim as the bearer of civilization, industrialization and capitalism to the *terra nullius* of the New World and its indigenous populations. Within the modernizing frame of the project of settler societies, the autochthones must either “remain ‘stuck’ in the past or [...] Europeanise themselves. Only at the price of their destruction may they enter the mainstream of world history” (759). The mainstream, therefore, is modern while the indigenous population is primitive, a relationship that becomes entrenched in post-settlement history.<sup>1</sup> According to this pattern, *The Whale Rider* calls on pre-modern Maori traditions based on notions of *tapu*, *mana*, and a natural mysticism that sets Maori apart from the Western modernity of the Pakeha present, in which sacredness no longer structures social experience. Although a girl, and thereby lacking the *mana* of chieftainship according to traditional practices, Kahu is described as a “throwback” (30): she prefers Maori food, language and *kapa haka* to the Pakeha alternatives, she displays an affinity with the sea, particularly dolphins and whales, and she accepts her grandfather’s uncompromising rules of tribal hierarchy which subordinate females. Despite these setbacks, she proves her *mana* by passing tests that are wholly traditional and specific to the tribe. She recites her *whakapapa*, retrieves a stone thrown in the sea, and ultimately, rescues a pod of stranded whales by communicating with the bull whale and riding it out to sea.

During’s article challenges the strict dichotomy of primitivity and modernity which separates indigenous people from colonial settlers, disturbed by the “mutual misrecognitions and forgettings” (767) of their inevitable interaction. His examples from the colonial era, of whites “gone native,” and

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<sup>1</sup> For other articles and texts that similarly interrogate the supposed rigid boundaries between Maori and Pakeha, see During, “Postmodernism or Postcolonialism?,” “Postcolonialism and Globalisation”; Lamb, “Metamorphosis”; Anne Salmond *Two Worlds* and *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: Captain Cook in the South Seas*; Stafford and Williams, *Maoriland*; Turner, “Settlement as Forgetting,” “Being Colonial.”

Maori adopting sophisticated European mannerisms that allowed them to prosper in New Zealand and even circulate in English society, effectively show up the myth of neat racial binarisms. Close studies of early colonial contact between British and Maori indicate that Maori were keen traders, who quickly assimilated tools and technologies brought by colonial settlers, and who adopted Western processes in order to profit from farming, boat-building and tax collecting (Brown, 254-256; During, "What Was the West?" 767-769). During compares the cases of historical crossings between primitivity and modernity with 1980s Maori cultural and political demand for recognition. He finds that in the antagonistic separating out of Maori and Pakeha, negotiations and definitions of Maori culture and identity have tended to emphasize tradition, spirituality, genealogy, and a sense of Maoritanga as sacred, and thus outside the modern (764, 769-771). During's emphasis on aspects of colonial cross-cultural negotiation effectively challenges this separatist notion. Rather than endorse the idea of mutually exclusive, discrete Pakeha and Maori worldviews, he historicizes the Maori Renaissance as demonstrating a particular cultural amnesia that legitimates Maori claims to difference by de-emphasizing the past contact history in order to maintain Maoritanga "at the far side of the difference" (763). During's statement about "mutual [. . .] forgettings" of the colonial era equally apply to the revivalist Maori Renaissance:

[E]ach side has consolidated *and* dismantled the other's image, discovering at one social or political site the rhetorical strategies by which identity is produced, while disavowing them at another. (764)

During's formulation also echoes the techniques and politics of nation building. While acknowledging the necessity and the value of Maori sovereignty and Renaissance, During questions the binary presumptions underlying the formally recognized national biculturalism, describing a long history of cross-cultural Maori and Pakeha influence and recognition. His examples of colonial Maori

who took on seemingly Western concepts, such as prophet Te Kooti who adopted aspects of Christianity for his own Ringatu faith, and Rotorua tour guide Makereti, who studied anthropology at Oxford, make a claim for modernity as always already part of Maori culture and worldview.

The possibility of analyzing cultural modernity through an indigenous perspective is investigated in an Aboriginal context by Australian cultural critic Stephen Muecke in *Ancient and Modern: Time, Culture and Indigenous Philosophy*.<sup>2</sup> The book begins by defining modernity as any culture's ability to embrace newness and to adapt to change brought about from both internal and external influences (6). From this broad definition, Muecke argues that modernity did not arrive in Australia with Captain Cook, but was already present in Aboriginal cultures, as proven by their ability to employ a range of responses to colonization and modernization, including "compliance and collaboration, resistance and inventive adaptation" (138). Like During, Muecke emphasizes that negotiation and translation occurred from both indigenous and colonizing cultures, with both sides exhibiting moments of modernity and primitivity (138). Whereas During attempts to sidestep the awkwardness of collapsing the two seemingly opposed concepts by evoking the umbrella term "postculturalism" (767) to account for cultural imbrication as process, Muecke settles for the "indigenous modern," a term that semantically displays its ambivalence (138). In *The Whale Rider*, this title certainly applies to Kahu, as well as to those other characters who negotiate their Maori identities differently once outside of the tribal area, notably Rawiri's ambivalent experience in Papua New Guinea, and the Maori transsexuals in Sydney.

*The Whale Rider* appears to be a typical Maori Renaissance novel in its foregrounding of traditional elements of Maori culture which place Maori and Pakeha on opposing sides of During's modern-primitive divide. Nevertheless,

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<sup>2</sup> In the context of slavery and the plantation industry, Paul Gilroy's important book *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, also argues for premodern modernity.



the novel does engage with modernity. Far from being stuck in a mythic past that can no longer function in the manifestly modern—and increasingly modernizing—world, Kahu's struggle and success represent the kind of change that ensures the ongoing relevance of her tribe's traditions in the present and future. Kahu uses skills and structures that exist in Maori culture itself to challenge and extend cultural parameters. In the story's last chapter, Koro finally accepts Kahu with the acknowledgement that "[b]oy or girl, it doesn't matter" (121). With this statement, nestled between ritual prayers and a final mystic communion with the whales, the novel resolves two crucial questions about the future that Koro poses earlier in the book: "[w]ill we have prepared the people to cope with the new challenges and the new technology? And will they still be Maori?" (59). *The Whale Rider's* ending assures the reader that the tribe's future leadership goes hand in hand with change, made possible and accepted in and by a long history of similar such heroic deeds and mythic conquests (Kahutia Te Rangi 4-6; Muriwai 17; Porourangi and Tahu Potiki 27-28), built into the fabric of Maori lore and expressed in storytelling, carving and *whakapapa*.

Engaging with an indigenous version of modernity is not confined to the text itself, but is also part of the environment which gave rise to the novel. Ihimaera's inspiration for *The Whale Rider* and the conditions of its writing neither emerged from a desire to record traditional Maori culture, as *Pounamu* and *Tangi*, nor was it primarily intended as a response and challenge to Pakeha hegemony within the antagonism of bicultural differentiation, as *New Net* and *The Matriarch*. In 1986, in New York on a diplomatic posting and living with his male partner after having separated from his wife, Ihimaera describes writing *The Whale Rider* for his visiting daughters, inspired by the sight of a whale in the Hudson River (handwritten draft speech, New York; Moana Moeka'a; *Whalerider* DVD "Behind the Scenes"). The whale has particular resonance for the tribes of the East Coast Ngati Porou confederation, and

Ihimaera interprets its appearance in New York as no less symbolic than if it had appeared in New Zealand. In fact, Ihimaera systematically interprets the Hudson River as if it were Maori. As he recounts in an interview:

When I was in New York, for instance, and saw rainbow signs in the clouds or a swirl on the Hudson River—I have a kaitiaki whose name is Hine Te Ariki, who is in European terms a mermaid—then how could I not take heed? Does the Maori world stop when you leave the Pacific? So I would always look for those symbols or those signs even in New York, reinterpreting them as if New York was a Maori world—which it is. (Williams, “Interview” 285)

Ihimaera’s interpretation of indigenous symbolism in a foreign context, as well as his non-traditional family structure, both argue in a positive way for an indigenous adaptation to modernity. Even if the lyric novel does not overtly describe the antagonism of 1980s emergent biculturalism, or reflect Ihimaera’s own unconventional lifestyle,<sup>3</sup> these aspects underpin the novel’s attitude towards Maori culture and identity as comfortable with changing circumstances, rather than as threatened by forced adaptation. Ihimaera’s Maori worldview, or philosophy in Muecke’s terminology, transcends both spatial and temporal divides, as his claim that “New York [is] a Maori world” transports the indigenous culture from its native territory to a foreign one, and the 1986 Hudson River whale is translated into the retelling of an ancient legend. For Ihimaera, Maoritanga is neither trapped in a static past nor fixed in the set location of its origin.

To recognize that modernity is already inherent in Maori culture is to accept that the culture has a role to play in the contemporary national and international arena outside of the traditionalist and essentialist displays of pre-

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<sup>3</sup> Unconventional in the sense that Ihimaera is the eldest son of an eldest son. His father is the current guardian, decision maker and leader of Te Whanau A Kai, and traditionally this mantle of leadership would be passed on to Ihimaera in turn. In an e-mail to Margaret Meklin, Ihimaera enumerates how his life is “inconsistent” with normal succession patterns: “I married a Pakeha woman, I am now a gay man, I have had daughters (not sons) and I don’t live with the iwi [. . .] I am happy to relinquish that [leadership] role at the tribal level to my aunt who lives in Waituhi” (e-mail to Margaret Meklin).

contact authenticity that During cites as problematically locking Maoritanga into a non-modern primitivity. Or rather, as Muecke's longer study of Aboriginal philosophy allows, that indigenous negotiations across the traditional-modern divide are complex and multiple, applying diverse strategies depending on the desired outcome:

At the very simplest, being modern means having a range of inventive responses to the contemporary world. In Europe this meant responding to rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. In Australia, for Aborigines, [. . .] [s]urvival has literally meant a lot of creative work, not only of a modernist sort in culture, but also in the technological, bureaucratic and economic systems that are usually associated with modernity. (145)

Muecke understands modernity as the capacity to respond to influence, impact and imposition on all levels. When applied to culture, modernity as part of indigenous philosophy allows that a work of art, ritual or language is no less authentic for incorporating non-traditional elements (75). Muecke's reading of cultural change through Aboriginal modernity releases culture from the expected confines of the European spectrum, which ranges from primitive tradition to assimilated modernity, in which traditional cultural displays are performative rather than inscribed in a lived reality (Muecke 145; During 763; Turner, "Settlement as Forgetting"; Webster). The effect is twofold. Indigenous modernity, which does not coalesce the term "modern" with a cultural period or cultural content, allows that culture is a highly complex negotiation which cannot be separated from economic, political and wider social influences and pressures. Thus, the "creative work" of Muecke's modernity in effect legitimates cultural expression as much through entrepreneurial decisions as in accordance with cultural values. It is this matrix that Bourdieu calls "cultural capital," a term that exposes the potential value of culture within corporate logic.

On another level of mixing, one pertaining to content rather than usage, indigenous modernity understands the inevitability and naturalness of hybridity. This aspect echoes James Clifford's terminology, in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, of "tradition as hybrid process" and "inventive impurity" (176). On visiting an exhibition at the British Museum, "Paradise: Portraying the New Guinea Highlands" in 1993, Clifford is drawn to the many apparently incongruous signs of Western contact in photographs depicting Wahgi in traditional attire. Upon noticing that one young woman's ceremonial garb includes earrings made of beer can pull tabs, Clifford's first reaction is to deconstruct tribal authenticity: he is tempted to label these earrings non-traditional, in keeping with postmodern anthropological wariness for newness that maintains a clear us-them dichotomy. However, his own response disturbs him, particularly the power relations inherent in Western social science's claim to interpret another culture's display within its own self-enforcing terms and criteria. Clifford asks whether, from an indigenous perspective, beer tops might be assimilated into tribally controlled and regulated decisions on self-representation:

Why, one wonders, shouldn't people such as the Wahgi experience invention and hybrid process as part of their 'phenomenological reality'? (182)

"Hybrid authenticity," Clifford concludes, is the process of appropriating new materials through indigenous translation (185). Muecke's and Clifford's questioning of how exterior influences interact with indigenous ones, through a lens of what Muecke calls indigenous philosophy and Clifford native phenomenological reality, is pertinent to the following studies of the way that the apparently traditional Maori culture of Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* is hybridized and globalized in its conversion to film, in Niki Caro's 2002 *Whale Rider*.

### Crossing Genres, Crossing Technologies: *Whale Rider* Hybridity

Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* attracted little attention on its publication in 1987, following in the wake of *The Matriarch* and quickly passed over by the argument surrounding *Dear Miss Mansfield* two years later. It was not until the release of the film, *Whale Rider*, written and directed by Caro in 2002, that interest in the earlier book revived. Several earlier film scripts had been attempted for the novel's adaptation, including one by Ihimaera himself, before Caro's version (Archive boxes 1997/06, 2000/07, 2002/39, 2003/20). *Whale Rider* was an instant success in New Zealand and overseas, unexpectedly winning awards at film festivals in Toronto, Seattle, San Francisco, Rotterdam and the Sundance. As with earlier international exports of New Zealand literature and film, notably Hulme's *the bone people*, Elizabeth Knox's *The Vintner's Luck*, Alan Duff's *Once Were Warriors* novel and film, and Campion's *The Piano*, international success has ensured that Ihimaera's novel and Caro's film have quickly become iconic New Zealand "classics," in turn inciting academic analytical interest.

Caro's film invites reading alongside Ihimaera's novel. This is less a comparative exercise than one of continuation: Ihimaera's 1987 novel updates a local myth to fit national biculturalism during the Maori Renaissance, and Caro renews this version for an international film. In effect, the genre change extrapolates the kind of adaptation portrayed by Kahu's non-conventional role in the original novel. While the majority of film adaptations of novels are interpreted as completely separate from, or only loosely based on the work that inspired them, several major points of crossover between Ihimaera and Caro support reading *The Whale Rider* and its film version together. Firstly, Ihimaera played a key role in *Whale Rider*, as the film's associate producer and also as the link that made possible Caro's entering into the Ngati Konohi community of Whangara, to which Ihimaera claims *whakapapa* connections through his

mother and brother-in-law. Although both book and film plot are fictional, the story's setting and history are not, and so the Maori community, its *marae* and beach, and the founding myth of the whale rider, Kahutia Te Rangi, also named Paikea, remain crucially non-fictional in both works. The centrality of the real village of Whangara to the story, and its community's active participation in the film, maintains this connection and upholds a blurred boundary between the real and the imagined. Finally, Ihimaera's revision of his original novel for release as an "international" edition has created a unique situation in which adaptation goes in both directions, or, as Evans more cynically puts it, makes the international edition "the book of the film of the book" ("Pakeha-Style Biculturalism" 12). The updated novel is currently available in New Zealand, and one reviewer suggests that, along with his rewrites of *Pounamu*, *Whanau* and *Tangi*, the latter versions will eventually replace the original texts in future reprints (Boniface).

*Whale Rider* follows the novel very closely, with the few changes and additions modifying the storyline very little. Perhaps the most significant change is that of narrative voice, as the predominantly realist film genre is limited in its ability to recreate the high modernism of Ihimaera's lyric and sublime anthropomorphic narration by the bull whale, which describes the mystic and mythic connection between the whales and the Ngati Konohi tribe. In the absence of Ihimaera's trademark high lyricism, the film is predominantly realist: instead of anthropomorphic whales, Caro's whales are clips from nature documentaries or synthetic models. In a further change, the nostalgic link of continuity with the past that the whales provide in the novel is to a certain extent replaced by the introduction of a *waka* canoe to the film, which stands in for the mythic journey of the original whale rider ancestor. This displacement at once relegates whales to a benign, natural position more familiar to a twenty-first century audience (Prentice, "Transcultures," "Maori Renaissance" 104-105), while maintaining the focus on traditional Maori beliefs, this time in the

*waka*'s design, its ritualistic carving and send-off in accordance with Ngati Konohi custom. From a media or cultural studies approach, a discussion on the behind the scenes mechanisms which have "produced" Maori culture for a mainstream big-budget film tends to carry an implied criticism that the simulated culture on show diminishes the authenticity of Maori culture, and even, in its packaging, the "real" New Zealand. Such an analytical framework accords with Clifford's initial reaction to the beer can tops at the "Paradise" exhibition. A counter argument, based on the inherent modernity of indigenous negotiations of their culture's content, contends that the input of Whangara's people makes a strong case for the ongoing modernization and control of its culture.

Ihimaera's novel ends with Kahu waking up in hospital, after having nearly drowned while riding the whale. In this way, *The Whale Rider* ends on a note of intimacy, with the whales bringing together Koro and Kahu and thereby resolving the break between past and present, myth and reality, which Ihimaera describes throughout the text with the term "*interlock*." Caro's movie adds one more scene after this moment, effectively extrapolating this connection from the familial to the tribal, giving the last word to Ngati Konohi and Whangara. In *Whale Rider*'s finale, set on the beach in front of the *marae*, the restored *waka*, led by Koro and Kahu, who is named Paikea in the film, is set to sea with a traditional send-off. Until this moment, the film turns entirely around the village and its people, with all outside movement and interaction thwarted or denied: Koro scorns Porourangi's career as an artist overseas, rejects his son's foreign girlfriend, and Paikea tries to leave with her father but feels inexplicably drawn to stay. By contrast, *Whale Rider*'s closing sequence features two significant breaks with local tradition and with Ihimaera's earlier text. The changes point to a future non-insularity for this remote East Coast community. Porourangi's new wife is not a local Maori woman, but German, and instead of a local Ngati Konohi action song, the film closes with the

chanting of “Ka Mate,” the *haka* performed by the national rugby team, and an internationally recognized symbol of New Zealand. The mixed marriage and well known *haka* add points of identification for national and international audiences. The fact that these elements are clearly foreign to Ngati Konohi, but nonetheless accepted by the tribe in the story, is a more exaggerated version of Paikea’s own newly accepted leadership. In a somewhat less blatant version of the beer can tops, cigarette packets and Hawai’ian shirts that stand out for Clifford among the plumes and face paint at the “Paradise” exhibition, this scene indicates the process of “hybrid authenticity” as translation across generations (from Koro to Kahu), nations (from Ngati Konohi to Germany), and cultural codes (local *kapa haka* to the All Blacks’ *haka*).

Behind the scenes, other levels of cultural hybridity act out Maori assimilation of modern techniques and Western concepts in keeping with traditional protocol. *Whale Rider*’s DVD “Making Of” clips feature information about Ngati Konohi’s involvement throughout the film as well as input from other Maori craftsmen. These behind-the-scenes clips, such as in the making of the *waka* and the ritual of the canoe’s baptism, are portrayed with ethnographic candour. They invite the audience not just to witness a display of traditional culture, but also to understand the protocols and traditions behind it, a motivation reminiscent of the educative function of the Maori Renaissance in the arts, and ethnography in general. Of course, for *Whale Rider*, the audience’s impression of cultural authenticity is mediated by the known formula of Hollywoodesque box-office films, by which commercial demands tied to budget and projected sales mean that the desire for accuracy may be expected to succumb to the more practical aim not to get it right, but simply to make it look right. The question of cultural authenticity or its fake hybrid simulation is articulated around defining the *waka* as a cinematic prop or a real cultural artefact, and the filming of Ngati Konohi’s send-off as ritual or merely the staging of a ritual.



In “Te Waka: Building the Canoe” on the DVD, the viewer is informed that time and budgetary restrictions meant that the prop was built of laminated timber and fibreglass in one month, whereas a traditional *waka* would be carved out of a single *totara* tree trunk and might take years to complete. For *Whale Rider*’s *waka*, the carved prow and stern, designed and carried out by Maori carvers educated in the traditional and sacred skill, were made out of polystyrene in three days, to such a high standard that, according to the master carver “you can’t tell the difference between whether its real [. . .] or polystyrene.” Members of the Ngati Konohi tribe, who had taken the roles of extras throughout the film, then set the *waka* to sea accompanied by a traditional ceremonial blessing and send-off. This footage was included in the film. The polystyrene *waka* was attributed a somewhat higher cultural value than the average disposable theatrical commodity inspires.<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was not treated as a commodity at all, but as a real *waka* from its inception through to its positioning as local artefact: once the production had no further use for the prop, the *waka* was donated to the Whangara people, where visitors can now see it on display at the Ngati Konohi *marae*.<sup>5</sup>

The film’s behind the scenes hybridity cannot simply be construed along clear-cut lines of Maori acquiescing with, or being appropriated by Pakeha or Western directives. The production team’s consultation with the Whangara community, through cultural advisors including Ihimaera and Ngati Konohi *kaumatua* and *rangatira*, elder and chief, Hone Taumaunu, turns film making into a cross-cultural negotiation, with exchange of values, skills and knowledge from both sides. Although the *waka* was funded by a joint New

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<sup>4</sup> There has always been a market for fetishized movie objects and memorabilia, predominantly linked to the Hollywood movie cult. This was spectacularly passed on to New Zealand with Peter Jackson’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, filmed in New Zealand and with the majority of props built by the Wellington Weta Studios. An extensive collection was exhibited at the national museum, Te Papa in 2006.

<sup>5</sup> In another ironical wink in the crossover between authentic and artificial, the fibreglass material will possibly mean that this *waka* outlives its real wooden counterparts, while, two years later, the polystyrene parts were already crumbling away.

Zealand and German film production, and made out of unconventional materials, it was ascribed value because it was built by Maori and in accordance with agreed-upon values concerning design and use. Similarly, Caro's policy privileged Maori agency in leading consultation to decide how the film could adequately represent Maori culture. For Caro, a Pakeha, this included learning Maori language and protocol, and involving the Whangara community, shooting on location, renting accommodation there and including locals as extras (Shepherd, untitled 85; DVD "Behind the Scenes"). As Ihimaera quips in a pre-screening interview, "[a]ll the actors except five, are from the [Whangara] area so you'll have to excuse the bad acting because they are my aunties and uncles" (Moeka'a n. pag.). Caro is adamant that *Whale Rider* is first and foremost Ngati Konohi's story (Shepherd, untitled 82; DVD "Behind the Scenes"). For veteran Maori actor, Rawhiri Paratene, who plays Koro Apirana, the people of Whangara "were there to protect their story, and to protect their place—as individuals and as a community" (DVD "Behind the Scenes"). Such claims give Maori a strong position of agency, of active decision-making and control over how Ngati Konohi wishes Whangara and its people to be portrayed. Caro underlines that gaining "Ngati Konohi's blessing to tell their story" was fundamental to the project's success (Shepherd, untitled 84). Taumaunu sums up the experience of making the film as based on a close relationship between the film makers and local Maori: "[w]e have built up a beautiful relationship [. . .] built on mutual trust, mutual respect, and a lot of give and take" (DVD "Te Waka: Building the Canoe"). This emphasis on partnership counterbalanced the criticism Caro received from some quarters, questioning the appropriateness of allowing a Pakeha filmmaker to direct a film about Maori. Importantly, the film's cultural advisors support Caro: Ihimaera asserts, "Niki is one of the least ego-driven directors I've met. She's not doing this for herself: she prefers that her work stands for her" (Shepherd, untitled

83) and Taumaunu concurs “I never saw Niki as a ‘Pakeha’ or anything but a woman who spoke my language, who was humble and sensitive” (86).

The primacy of agency, consultation and permission, through a perspective of indigenous philosophy, connects the otherwise very different manifestations of Maori cultural output that occupy a range from traditional to experimental, from the ongoing circulation of Paikea’s founding myth in Ngati Konohi practice, to Ihimaera’s modernist novel, to Caro’s high-tech film. This shifts the question of *what* culture is, to one of *how* it may be produced and circulated, citing an adaptability that recalls Muecke’s claim for modernity as strategies of adaptation. Although Maori are by no means unanimously supportive of non-traditional usage, as the debate over Caro’s authority to direct a Maori film illustrates, according to Peter Shand

[t]he presumption of the consultative process [. . .] mitigates any potential discomfort inasmuch as there is the stated position that this use has been authorized. Thus the ability to question or interrogate that use with respect to some sort of indigenous moral perspective is seemingly curtailed. (76)

Consultation was operative throughout the translation of Ngati Konohi’s myth and history into a novel and onto the international screen. Indeed, Ihimaera’s *whakapapa* links, the immense respect he commands on the East Coast, and his introducing Caro to Ngati Konohi through protocol channels, facilitated the film project. In fact, the mutual respect, trust and cooperation that went into making *Whale Rider* has also been assimilated into the movie’s mythology, supporting on an extra-textual level an image of exemplary Maori-Pakeha relationships projected to the world: although the novel *The Whale Rider* depicts racism and the film *Whale Rider* addresses social problems within Maori communities, these issues were not raised by the film’s promoters, including Ihimaera, who travelled and gave interviews widely during the film’s première season. The laudatory tone used by the film’s director, producers, actors, and Ngati Konohi’s representatives in the DVD “Making Of” interviews

exemplify the negotiation, respect and potential partnership that New Zealand's biculturalism aims to achieve.

The polystyrene *waka* and Ngati Konohi's participation enact a kind of crossover hybridity that moves culture into commercial and international domains. The commercial aspect rejects the myth that the highest Maori cultural order features authenticity, tradition, originality and symbolic value, which once again contrasts a static native past with a dynamic Western contemporaneity. *Whale Rider* may be seen within a long history of Maori entrepreneurship, of legitimating cultural expression as much through executive decisions as a moral code of conduct. To stand a (modern) "consultative process" in place of a (traditionalist, ethnographic) "indigenous moral perspective," as Shand puts it, makes Ngati Konohi an active participant in translating their culture into modes aimed at outside audiences, both national and international. *Whale Rider* is a mere extension of the instances of nineteenth-century postculturalism that During cites. The difference is in the confidence: whereas During, writing in the late 1980s, at the height of sometimes aggressive, separatist Maori nationalism, uncovers behind the scenes cultural mixing that is masked by colonialism and separatist biculturalism, by the time of *Whale Rider*, audiences are watching it happen on screen and in highly publicized media debates: the very purpose of DVD "Making Of" clips is to expose the "secrets." The voice-over of the DVD's "Te Waka: Building the Canoe" affirms, "the story of how the *waka* was designed and created is one where legend, technology and tradition meet." The confidence with which Maori carvers show the chainsaw cutting the *waka* out of polystyrene portrays Maori as confidently in control and not at all victims whose cultural specificity risks being swamped by the steady roll of global capitalism. When the master carver claims that "you can't tell the difference" between real cultural and unreal commercial expressions of Maori culture, his statement is one of degree and of perspective. While "you," the audience

cannot see the difference, the craftsman certainly can. Of course, there are differences between a nineteenth-century wooden *waka* and a polystyrene and fibreglass one made for a movie. Maori agency means Maori control of and profit from its cultural production and output in a way deemed appropriate within that culture. To recall Muecke on modernity, agency is the privileged position by which the indigenous culture has access to the multiple layers of its representation, spanning local and global, traditional and experimental, ceremonial and commercial, quotidian lived culture and occasional staged culture.

Despite such projections of confidence and agency, criticism has been levelled at Maori willingness to adapt its traditions for a non-Maori audience. In particular, detaching Maori from its indigenous location and employing strategies of global corporate capitalism challenge the modernist sense of culture. It is significant that the first major debate on this subject arose over the 1984 “Te Maori” exhibition of tribal artefacts displayed at the New York Metropolitan museum—the first such exported display since the era of Maori Renaissance and sovereignty demands. Certainly, the political, economic and cultural sea changes in New Zealand of the 1980s have powerfully shaped the content and usage of Maori culture since. Over this decade, deregulation of the social state to a free market economy effectively launched the country into competitive global capitalism, while parallel socio-political restructuring into national biculturalism mobilized culture as politics. The concomitant Maori cultural rejuvenation is necessarily caught up in these changing deployments of culture as national and international selling points. As During points out, the national state deregulation and Maori sovereignty are “aspects of a single event.”<sup>6</sup> Drawing from both national biculturalism and market globalization

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<sup>6</sup>During made this comment in his paper “Aotearoa/New Zealand and the limits of culture,” at “*Biculturalism or Multiculturalism?*” conference, University of Canterbury, 1-3 September, 2005. Conference proceedings are being prepared for publication as a book, *Culturalisms*, edited by Brydon, Meffan and Williams.

since the 1980s, Maori cultural representation has developed in two strikingly different directions. The Maori sovereignty and Renaissance axis is geared to asserting foundational differences from Pakeha New Zealand, usually by citing pre-contact traditional arts and cultural practices. In the other direction, in parallel with state deregulation launching New Zealand into a free market economy, Maori employ strategies of global business to make sure that Maori benefit from the international interest in indigenous cultures. Ngati Konohi's participation in Caro's film is a case in point. Following the film's success, a local enterprise, Te Reiputa Ltd offered "Whale Rider Tours," guided visits of the location and stories behind the tribe and the film. In another spin-off of the film's success, a stage show production, intended to tour both in New Zealand and internationally, returned to the book's original storyline, nevertheless employing Rawiri Paratene and Vicky Haughton, the actors who starred as Koro and Nanny Flowers in Caro's film. Despite major publicity and much media hype, the stage show had only limited success.

On a much more serious level than in the *Whale Rider* film, joint culture- and market-driven decisions are at work in national politics, and in Waitangi Tribunal settlements awarded to tribes in recognition of colonial misdoings. Although the government's recognition of past wrongs is an important part of the grievance process, it is the financial packages that enable Maori tribes to take a more pro-active part in shaping their culture on an increasingly tribal rather than national level. One of the most successful has been South Island tribe Ngai Tahu, which has become a major corporate force in their region.<sup>7</sup> In the following interview excerpt, strategic advisor and tribal member, Te Maire Tau, outlines the tribe's strategies for best supporting Maori concerns:

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<sup>7</sup> Following a 1998 settlement of NZ\$170m, in 2004 Ngai Tahu reported total assets of \$392m, including a 28 percent rise in revenue (to \$146m) from their business interests in tourism, property, seafood and company shareholdings, and equity growth of 8.6 percent to \$291m. Bruce Ansley, "A Wealth of Talent."

As a tribe, we have to recognise that the world has changed. We're a capitalist democratic society with liberal values. As a tribe – and as a people as a whole – we have to accept that we're no longer a traditional community with traditional values, because capitalism won't back down. [ . . . ] The most successful groups dealing with Ngai Tahu are the ones who approach us in a corporate way without this smokescreen of liberal agenda. We find it very easy to do business with them, rather than us getting tied into the politics of liberalism. (“A Wealth of Talent” n. pag.)

For Ngai Tahu it is certainly not a case of corporate concerns replacing cultural ones. The tribe invests in business ventures in order to fund a long-term social plan to improve Maori standards, particularly in health, employment and education, as well as a cultural plan, which includes fostering their regional dialect, nature conservation including sites of historical and traditional importance, and employing Maori structures of business hierarchy and *whanau* living. Tau accepts that the notion of culture and how to protect it has changed not by choice, but by necessity: in the 1980s, the cradle-to-the-grave welfare state was replaced by criteria of bicultural positive discrimination, a race-based “liberalism” which Tau sees as useful in its time (enabling the Waitangi Tribunal settlements) but now redundant in the twenty-first century, giving way to corporate strategies. When Tau enthuses “[i]n my wildest dreams, the tribe in 50 years should be a global corporate,” tribe and corporation are seen to share features of organization, motivation and a complex vision of how the local and global connect and intersect.

While Ngai Tahu is one of the most conspicuous success stories of what economic sovereignty may achieve, on a smaller scale Ihimaera's tribe is perhaps more typical. As discussed in chapter two in regards to the motivations prompting *Whanau II*, Te Whanau A Kai are currently in the process of a Tribunal claim. In a Maori application of Western property management, communal ownership is guaranteed in Waituhi, which is governed by the Wi Pere Trust, on which Ihimaera and his father are Board members. The Trust is

also part owner of Tohu Wines, the first Maori owned and branded wine company. According to the company's CEO, Tohu Wines emerged out of three Maori companies (Wi Pere Trust, Wakatu Incorporation, Ngati Rarua Atiawa Iwi Trust) interested in finding a way to "export our culture. We couldn't do it as horticulturalists, but we thought we could as winemakers." Under the umbrella of Tohu Wines, Waituhi's wine is exported to the UK, Europe, USA, Canada and Japan (Michael Cooper n. pag.).

Despite such outward-looking and dynamic conceptions of culture expressed by Maori, including Ngati Konohi elders, the master carver for *Whale Rider*, and Ngai Tahu spokesman, there is some reluctance in New Zealand to envisage Maori culture as a complete way of living,<sup>8</sup> internally governed according to its own principles. Instead, the way that the nomenclature "Maori" tends to stand predominantly for cultural content, has, in recent years, contributed to a difficulty among both Maori and Pakeha commentators in accounting for non-traditional usages of Maoritanga. In particular, the deployment of culture in and for economic gain on an increasingly international level causes confusion, as what Muecke calls "inventive responses to the contemporary world" may be seen to empty out—or perhaps sell out—cultural value, whose authenticity is linked to a supposed pre-modernity, innocent of capitalist and consumerist ideologies.<sup>9</sup> Over the past two decades, New Zealand national media has regularly debated the appropriateness of diverse and increasingly diversifying manifestations of

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<sup>8</sup> In an oft-cited passage from *Patrons of Maori Culture*, Webster argues that since the 1960s most students of Maori culture (including many Maori themselves) have focused on traditional culture rather than everyday Maori society as they encounter it or live it. Although Maori are everywhere, Maori "culture" is assumed to occur elsewhere in some sense, even somehow outside history. Thus a certain ideological separation between contemporary Maori society and Maori culture becomes part of the ethnographic problem (8).

<sup>9</sup> By comparison with the much debated (but undecided) situation in New Zealand, the UNESCO mission to take up the French proposal of "l'exception culturelle" acknowledges that culture (mainly pertaining to national cultural traditions and national arts, cinema, literature) ought to be protected from commodification and globalization. See Jean-Michel Baer.



Maori expressive culture, mainly pertaining to rituals, traditions, visual art and literature. The debate surrounding the authenticity of Maori culture depicted in *Whale Rider* is typical of this unease. The fact that the fake *waka* is on the *marae*, and the real tribal ceremony is in the film poses questions about the ways of valuing culture, the extensive reach of globalization, and the popularity of its critical discourse in an era where originality and simulacra, the real and hyperreal, are apparently indistinguishable. Although Clifford, Muecke, During, and several other Pakeha commentators all stress the long history of globalization—that is to say, cultural change through cross-cultural influence—both Maori and Pakeha have apprehensions about the way contemporary globalization is changing the function of culture, no longer confined to its place of origin nor contained in a sphere uncontaminated by politics and economics.

In her examination of the Maori Renaissance, Prentice analyses *Whale Rider*'s simulated whale stranding with fake whales and computer-graphics made by the film's German special effects company, to question the meaning of Maori culture (104-105):

[T]here are urgent questions to ask about the meaning and uses of 'Maori culture' in contemporary globalisation [. . .] relat[ing] to a context where art and culture converge, and where culture and politics – specifically political economy – share a common logic. What challenges face contemporary Maori cultural politics as the post-colonial habit of addressing the position of Maori in relation to the nation state must deal with intensifying globalisation? As globalisation problematises the nation state, detaching identities and politics from specificities of location, will indigeneity be floated on the global cultural market? ("Maori Renaissance" 91)

Prentice's questions register a sense of pressing concern for the prospective loss of culture as a lived reality, giving way to a compartmentalized "culture-as-sign" (97). This position is clearly postcolonial in its well-intentioned—yet inherently modernist—sensitivity to minority cultural specificity that, through the implementation of biculturalism and its attendant focus on "cultural safety,"

has pervaded the New Zealand national consciousness since the 1980s. Postcolonialism offers Pakeha a way to distance their own view of Maori from that of their colonial forbears. The negative criticism surrounding the collapse of culture into political economy and marketplace values seems to hide a fear of reverse cultural essentialism. As explored in chapter two, and demonstrated in the reception of Ihimaera's work in chapter three, New Zealand discourse on biculturalism quickly assimilated aspects of postcolonial theory, which, when applied to Maori cultural expression, lends a template for Pakeha reception. The regard of the international audience, often negatively labelled a global consumer—arguably a latter-day colonist—undermines the hard-working, well-researched Pakeha who, in accordance with bicultural and postcolonial aims, strives to access the minority viewpoint by setting aside his or her own cultural and aesthetic expectations. By contrast, the international reader or spectator with little or no knowledge of Maori culture is clearly less sensitive to particularities of Maori protocol, authenticity and appropriateness than Pakeha. Within the terms of postcolonial differentiation, such incompetence is negative, often dismissed as reductive ethnic tourism, or what Huggan terms “the post-colonial exotic.”

Two of Ihimaera's more recent novels, *The Uncle's Story* and *The Rope of Man*, which take Maori culture out of Waituhi and into an international arena—“indigeneity [. . .] floated on the global cultural market”—defy any sense of loss and desecration. These novels suggest that when Maori intentionally interact with the global they adapt indigenous strategies and adopt foreign ones, in effect extending the nineteenth-century response to colonization to contemporary internationalization. Ihimaera's interest in glocalization, hybridity and diaspora, as he puts it in his defence of *Sky Dancer* against Bilbrough's review, connects with an emerging shift in focus within postcolonial studies, which revolves around cultural movement and interaction rather than the hybridity of cultural content. Indeed, this approach to minority

literature takes as given the hybrid nature of culture and identity. Whereas the previous chapter concentrated on the formal structural results of cross-cultural influence in Ihimaera's fiction, this chapter looks at movement itself, principally in the characters and the novels' plots. The following analyses explore how Ihimaera exports his Maori worldview or philosophy into an international context—often termed global—concerned with diaspora and transculturation. Looking at both content hybridity (what is Maori), and the process of hybridity (how it is deployed) in these novels, sheds light on the pressing need in New Zealand to question the strategies of assimilation and differentiation that give shape to contemporary Maori culture. Each of Ihimaera's novels explores different aspects of globalization. *The Uncle's Story* addresses how Maoritanga absorbs exterior influences and reconfigures existing philosophies. Despite being confronted by the need to change, in the different locations of urban New Zealand, Vietnam and Canada, the perspective and imaginative centre of this novel remain resolutely Maori. By contrast, even though Waituhi is the physical Maori epicentre of *The Return*, the second part of *The Rope of Man*, the characters' Maoriness form only one part of their composite identities. Nevertheless, although the protagonist, Tom Mahana, is described as an international New Zealander, the *kaupapa* of his Maori worldview is evident in his actions.

### Being Maori in the World: Chosen Communities

In his defence of *Sky Dancer*, Ihimaera inscribes his novel within contemporary currents of “the diasporic, indigenous, glocal and global.” Although each of these terms is distinct and merits further elucidation, they all share a preoccupation with identifying how cultures and communities perceive home, and, based on this, how they negotiate between local, national and international spaces. Ihimaera engages with the crossover of home and abroad in his interview discussion on the genesis of his book *The Whale Rider*. When Ihimaera reads Maori symbolism into a New York setting, he makes a claim for the detachability—or perhaps more accurately, the extension—of Maori culture from its indigenous and autochthonous location. More precisely, the movement is one of extending a Maori worldview from its local to a global environment, as maintaining the link with “home” is fundamental to indigenous identity. As he says in the same interview, “[t]he marae was and still is the heart of our culture, but the whole world is our *turangawaewae* now” (Williams, “Interview” 285). The Maori term *turangawaewae*, a place to stand, literally extrapolates a Maori viewpoint into a foreign setting. Ihimaera realizes that “I wasn’t just a Maori who was brought up in Waituhi, or a Maori New Zealander, but I was a Maori *in the world*” (284). This claim to worldliness allows him to expand his sense of being Maori to an international setting, and thus to describe New York as a Maori world. A strong sense of *turangawaewae* enables Ihimaera to carry his sense of the local to the global.

The neologism “glocalization,” which blends “global” and “local,” as theorized by Roland Robertson, brings into play these forces most clearly. Just as nation building is a worldwide phenomenon by which each nation uses the same set of tools and techniques to frame their own unique content, Robertson argues that locality is globally produced, as each locale is the unique assemblage of globally available strategies and components (31). Robertson’s

is not an argument for the homogenization of locality, as globalization's critics such as Jean Baudrillard would have it, nor for an understanding of one as the opposite of the other. Instead, he illuminates aspects of global awareness always already present in the local. For Anthony Giddens, globalization is a natural extension and consequence of modernity, which as James Mittelman delineates, began at least 500 years ago in European exploration and establishment of trade networks. Similarly, in her concluding chapter "Geography is not History," Bahri evokes a long history of modernization and globalization to argue that the postcolonial is neither an isolated nor singular event. Inscribing his own argument within a historical and international schema, Robertson places global exchange and "world formation" (35) in a broad sweep of territorial and historical (space and time) interaction and interpenetration between particularism and universalism (34). When applied to culture, Robertson's syncretic concept of mutually inclusive global localities and local globalities is similar to the theory of transculturation—which Wolfgang Welsch identifies as the process of cross-cultural "entanglement" (198). Ihimaera's conception of the compatibility of New York and Waituhi as both Maori worlds demonstrates a transcultural logic in which his "world-space" perspective means that New York is no further from a Maori locality than Waituhi: he connects two localities in ways that ignore or bypass the nation.

The social sciences' increasing interest in mapping cultural interaction and movement via local and global models challenges the more static construction of culture along ethnic or national lines. Instead of precepts of national homogeneity, held together by the boundaries of an "imagined community" and the nation-state as a controlling apparatus, Robertson applies Etienne Balibar's concept of "world spaces":

[World spaces] are places in which the world-as-a-whole is potentially inserted. The general idea of world-space suggests that we should

consider the local as a ‘micro’ manifestation of the global – in opposition, *inter alia*, to the implication that the local indicates enclaves of cultural, ethnic, or racial homogeneity. (39)

Hence, every locality contains the potential for receiving global products and processes, just as these global imports contain the possibility of being changed to fit the local environment (38). Robertson’s interest in tracing local-global interaction is similar to Muecke’s and Clifford’s mapping of ethnographic modernity. All of these critics stress each culture’s ability to adapt imported (global) influences to fit within their own (local) worldviews. For Jan Nederveen Pieterse, writing in the same volume as Robertson, *Global Modernities*, hybridity is the key to the specificity of global cultural “mélange,” because the multiple structures hybridity allows means that globalization is a multi-centred system of “crisscrossed [. . .] functional networks” which incite interaction on transnational, international, macro-regional, national, micro-regional, municipal and local levels (50). In a passage that echoes Muecke’s argument for a complex modernity, Pieterse argues for the multidimensionality of globalization:

Globalization, then, increases the range of organizational options, all of which are in operation simultaneously. Each or a combination of these may be relevant in specific social, institutional, legal, political, economic or cultural spheres. What matters is that no single mode has a necessary overall priority or monopoly. (51)

Pieterse’s interest in bringing multiple discourses into play demonstrates modernity’s ability to adapt to different circumstances, just as Robertson’s use of glocalization, an economic term derived from 1980s Japanese business jargon, once again demonstrates the desirability of allowing culture a polymorphous identity that encompasses social, political and economic aspects, and which pertains to movement as much as content. As Welsch puts it, “transculturality refers to a transition” (208).

In the ubiquitous term “culture,” Pieterse identifies two opposing concepts, which he claims are often used indiscriminately in discussions of hybridity. The first (culture 1) is a “localized” sense of culture, learned territorially, and is thus specific. The second concept (culture 2) is culture “as a general human ‘software’,” learned in and through “translocal” interaction (60-61):

Culture 2 or translocal culture is not without place (there is no culture without place), but it involves an *outward-looking* sense of place, whereas culture 1 is based on an *inward-looking* sense of place. Culture 2 involves what Doreen Massey calls ‘a global sense of place’: ‘the specificity of place which derives from the fact that each place is the focus of a distinct *mixture* of wider and more local social relations’. (61)

Whereas inward-looking territorial culture differentiates and thereby demarcates its boundaries with other cultural outsides, translocal culture looks for similarities between itself—which is already heterogeneous—and others. Pieterse’s culture 1 is typified by the aims of Maori Renaissance and sovereignty, which use the imaginary communities of nation building in a drive for self-definition and self-determination within the New Zealand nation-state. The more recent Maori interest in reinforcing and disseminating its culture using the tools of corporate global capitalism exemplifies culture 2. This is not to suggest that one form of culture replaces the other; as all the above-mentioned critics emphasize, “a” culture has many facets. If Ihimaera can confidently take his sense of Maoritanga out into the world, it is because he is secure in the knowledge that the culture is also thriving in the local community he has left behind. The ground shift from assimilation to bicultural politics in the 1980s has ensured the revival of Maori language, cultural traditions and arts, as well as the accommodation of unique indigenous systems of learning and conceptions of community and land, exemplified by Ngai Tahu’s success.

Pieterse's "crisscrossed [. . .] functional networks" and Welsch's transitional transculturality mean that an outward-looking sense of culture notices points of connection and similarity with other cultures that would otherwise be considered outside or foreign according to a territorial local or national construct. To refute the nation as a binding body entails identifying other patterns through which cultures establish relationships with other communities. As Pieterse puts it, "the other side of cultural hybridity is transcultural convergence" (60). While the nation focuses on differences, transculturation seeks similarities. This requires a process of what Clifford calls translation. As explored in earlier parts of this thesis, cultural strength is commonly held to be a prerequisite to and a defining element of collective Maori sovereignty and its members' identity. This tends to collapse complex identity into predominantly expressive culture, so that a Maori object or event, such as a *waka* or a *haka* is interpreted as mimetic and metonymic. Art, culture and reality are blurred so that, for example, Ihimaera's fiction is interpreted as close to reality, and the writer himself is seen as representative. By contrast, globalization means that identities and cultures travel, detached from the anchor of a bounded local, regional or national place. Translocal translation, the process of moving across localities of time and space, reinserts the imaginative function of cultural creation, the simile or synonym. It is a translocal sense of culture that Ihimaera's New York Maori world implies, because he seeks Maori signs outside of a Maori locality, and is therefore conscious that he needs to make an effort of translation in order to interpret local New York signs within his own frame. In the national context Ihimaera may claim that East Coast whales are Ngati Porou symbols, an assertion that Pakeha, believed to be outside of this life world, would not refute. However, in New York, the Maori interpretation of animistic portents is only one of many possible translations of a whale and swirl patterns on the Hudson River.



A culture's ability to look outwards requires its recognition of alternatives and differences: it can no longer claim to own the only way of seeing. In "A Global Sense of Place," Massey makes this clear when she claims that a locality exists by virtue of its disparate historical and international influences, something which makes it impossible to draw boundaries around a community, which means different things for different members (238). In other words, everybody perceives his or her environment slightly differently, and a locale is built out of what Pieterse calls the different "organizational options [. . .] in operation simultaneously." On the other hand, arguably too emphatic an emphasis on constant movement and fragmentation exaggerates the pervasiveness of globalization in the world today, glossing over the fact that the nation-state is proving remarkably tenacious both in terms of international state power relations and the cohesiveness of Anderson's imaginary communities. However, work by globalization theorists such as Robertson, Pieterse, Welsch and Massey, and on modernity, by Doring, Muecke and Clifford, are timely reminders that the nation is constructed rather than natural, and functions out of processes of cross-cultural translation and negotiation.

*The Uncle's Story* engages with multiple versions of local globality/global locality, or "a global sense of place" described by the above theorists and implied in Ihimaera's vision of "being Maori in the world." Interesting negotiations of Maoritanga are played out in the novel's oscillation between past and present, local and global settings. Inside the family and tribal dynamics of an East Coast rural Maori community,<sup>10</sup> the 1990s protagonist, Michael Mahana struggles for recognition as homosexual. Ihimaera outlines the difficulty of Michael's "fail[ure]" (16) in the novel's opening sequence, which dramatizes the oppressive patriarchal hierarchy, in which a man's *mana* is founded on continuing his father's *mana* by carrying out his wishes in terms of

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<sup>10</sup> The village is not named, although to all intents and purposes it resembles the Waituhi of Ihimaera's earlier books, in its rural landscape, vineyards and the Mahana family. Instead of Rongopai, the *marae* is Poho o Rawiri in Gisborne.

career, leadership role in the tribe, an appropriate marriage to another Maori, and children to continue the genealogy. As Michael tries to explain to his Pakeha lover, “[m]y people are among the most homophobic in the world [. . .] I’m not supposed to exist” (22). The novel’s principle story line, then, which begins with Michael coming out to his parents in the first chapter, is his attempt to reconcile being Maori and gay, on personal, family, tribal and social levels. His means of achieving this are to be found in foundational Maori principles, based on a masculine warrior tradition of heroism and leadership born out of a sense of love and duty to the tribe. Unlike in *The Whale Rider*, where the modern difference of Kahu’s tribal accession may be contained within a wholly local tribal cosmology, Maori homosexuality is a more complex issue, because local and traditional cultural mores are reluctant to incorporate homosexuality, as Michael’s comment, “I’m not supposed to exist,” attests.

Instead of looking to its own traditions, that which Pieterse would call culture 1, *The Uncle’s Story* employs an outward-looking sense of culture, by connecting Maoritanga with Michael’s uncle Sam’s war experiences in Vietnam, and his own diplomatic experiences in Canada. On a local level, the novel attaches the traditional concept of the Maori warrior to include the non-traditional (or at least, unacknowledged) reality of Maori homosexuality. On a global level, it joins this Maori warrior ethos to other communities and cultures, in Vietnam and in Canada. By forging strong ties through cultural contact, Ihimaera argues for an enlarged and strengthened Maori culture at home. The key to both Michael and his family’s recognition and acceptance of homosexuality is to be found in the past, in his uncle Sam’s Vietnam War diary, which describes both the atrocities of the Vietnam campaign and Sam’s own relationship with an American pilot, Cliff. These revelations in turn help Michael take a vocal stand against homophobia, both in New Zealand and at a First Nations’ conference in Canada. By moving between Michael’s local daily life as a 1990s gay man in Wellington, and the other worlds of Vietnam in the

past and contemporary indigenous rights issues in Canada, the Maori warrior dynamic is employed and translated into a range of situations, moving between temporal and spatial localities.

The Maori warrior ethos is introduced within the novel's first ten pages, under the pretext of Michael's father's recounting his own father's leadership in the Maori Battalion, which fought in North Africa and Italy in World War Two (15). Indeed, Maori warrior valour in the World Wars holds an important place in the New Zealand national imaginary, incorporated as a distinguishing feature of a growing separation from Britain. Stalwarts of Maori nationalism, such as Ngata and Walker, document and hold up the Maori Battalion's feats as a highlight of twentieth-century Maoritanga, exemplifying the Maori fighting spirit. Its renown in national history and literature includes recent novels by Grace and George. Memory of the Maori Battalion is also kept alive through Maori customs of chronicling important events and of honouring their ancestors' heroism: returned servicemen were honoured in their communities; many boys born in the next generation were named in memory of European and North African sites and battles; the Battalion's stories were told as legends through oral storytelling, including the weaving of *whakapapa* connections between families whose forbears served together. Maori methods of absorbing and making sense of an event exterior to a Maori worldview attest to the natural transculturation process, as variously described by Pieterse's culture 2, Robertson's glocalization, Clifford's translation, and Muecke's indigenous modernity. The Maori Battalion shows that adaptation to modern Western warfare has not necessarily changed the attitude to war according to specific Maori principles: as a global (international and historical) phenomenon, war is an example of Robertson's sense of the "local as a 'micro' manifestation" in which "the world-as-a-whole is potentially inserted." Thus a Maori war ethos may circulate indiscriminately from nineteenth-century land wars in New Zealand, to Michael's grandfather in Crete, France, Syria and Egypt, or Sam in

Vietnam. Aspects of Maori war culture which feature in the novel include fierce pride in its military tactics, the *mana* of chiefly leadership, *utu*, revenge, self-sacrifice, mateship, and compassion. These principles, arguably integral to war culture throughout the world and its history, have helped foster a myth of Maori as “natural” warriors, with the colonial “noble savage” perpetuated by Maori themselves as applied to each tribe’s local legends about their feats in mid-nineteenth century land wars and their survival throughout the twentieth century. In a more negative expression, since the 1970s urban drift, it has been used to account for the high incidence of Maori gang membership and urban violence, for example in Duff’s *Once Were Warriors* (1990).

In *The Uncle’s Story*, Ihimaera calls on many of these Maori warrior precepts, retold by Michael’s father, Monte Cassino, recounting his father, Arapeta’s war exploits in the Maori Battalion. Monte describes Arapeta’s military bravery as in his blood: “Dad relied on the warrior blood of his ancestors – their intelligence, their cunning and their ability to lead – to get him through,” recites names of fellow Maori soldiers, and explains the origin of his name (15). In the novel’s flashback sequences, Arapeta himself speaks. He couches his *marae* send off for Sam, Turei and George to Vietnam in ritualized oral performance detailing Maori Battalion victories, and bestows leadership and custodianship on Sam (39-43). Arapeta describes Turei’s death as an honour for his *iwi*: “[t]here was no greater accolade for a warrior consecrated to Tumatauenga, the God of War, than to die in battle” (171), and incites Sam to “avenge his death [. . .] take utu against those who killed him” (173). In a similar dynamic to Kahu’s succession in *The Whale Rider*, Ihimaera accounts for Maori participation in both World War Two and the Vietnam War within a fully Maori worldview. Within Maori philosophy, Sam, George and Turei’s military service make them Maori warriors and thus heroes, as Arapeta’s rhetoric at Turei’s funeral and George’s wedding affirms. However, Arapeta’s traditional Maori principles cannot accept Sam’s homosexual relationship with

Cliff. Consequently, Sam is beaten, buried in an unconsecrated place and manner, and his memory effaced from the family tree. In this response to his son's sexuality, Arapeta demonstrates a strongly masculine way of dealing with difficulty and difference that, in its violent overreaction, display of dominance and forced forgetting, shares many features of the psychological after-effects of war.

However, Michael's uncle's war story is only a subtext in the novel, and the Maori warrior ethos must be translated again, updated and exported from the enclave of pre-urban drift, rural Maori *whanau* community solidarity of Sam's generation, into bicultural, postcolonial, late-1990s urban Wellington and Canada. Michael's comment early in the novel, that Maori refuse to acknowledge homosexuality, cited above, foreshadows the traumatic climax that marks the end of Sam's story. Michael's Pakeha lover provides the way out of Michael's oppressive family and Maori dynamics. Jason refuses to accept the inevitability and unchangeability of Maoridom's intolerance for gays. Confronted by Michael's claim that for Maori homosexuality does not exist, Jason replies: "[b]ut you do, and *I* do too. It's all a matter of recognition for me" (22). The insertion of a Pakeha presence signals the generation gap between Sam's wholly Maori identity and Michael's 1990s urban hybrid Maoriness. Michael's university education and Wellington lifestyle have given him a Pakeha side. This does not negate his Maori identity. Rather, his profession as a Maori and bicultural art consultant, and commitment to Maoritanga, principally described in his friendship with Toi Maori executive, Roimata, yet again demonstrate in a contemporary context Maori dexterity at appropriating the tools of a Western education, national job market and global corporatism to ensure Maori prosperity: Toi Maori, the organization that Roimata works for (and that Ihimaera represented as General Manager) promotes Maori contemporary art. Michael's belief in the positive potential for taking the strength of Pakeha culture as well as Maori enable him to come out

to his family. For Dieter Riemenschneider, in an article about Maori glocalization, Michael's 1990s urban Maori identity does not only take into account Pakeha influence, but also the postcolonial "globe-wide consciousness movement of these [Maori and gay] minorities" (150). Michael, then, is a product of his times, as both Maori and gay aspects of his postcolonial identity are embedded in a glocal discourse (Riemenschneider 151). Whereas Sam is assailed by doubt that his sexuality is a transgression that has cast him out of the Maori pantheon into *Te Kore*, the void (155-156, 160), Michael is adamant that one should not have to choose between being Maori and being gay. Instead, Michael adapts the Maori creation myth to encompass the hitherto excluded gay tribe (256, 295-296, 365; Riemenschneider 151).

The novel begins with Michael asserting his own gay identity to his family, and ends with Michael asserting the gay identity of a young AIDS victim to his tribe. The difference between these two coming outs is the trajectory made possible by another defining battle for gay recognition in indigenous society, which takes place at a First Nations conference in Ottawa. The agenda for the indigenous arts conference is outlined as aiming to "consider the models available for indigenous cultures in terms of setting up our own network," at which Michael and his friend Roimata aim to participate in their professional capacities as bicultural consultants (132). At several moments in the novel the reader is encouraged to draw together the arguments for indigenous sovereignty with those of indigenous gay identity: Roimata chastises Michael for his preference for Pakeha boyfriends in the same conversation that she first mentions their prospect of going to the Canadian conference (131-132); by way of celebrating their invitation to Canada, she introduces Michael to Tane Mahuta,<sup>11</sup> nicknamed the "Noble Savage," and

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<sup>11</sup> Tane Mahuta, or "god of the forest," is the Maori name for an 800-year old native kauri tree that grows in a Northland forest and is a popular tourist site. The tree represents resilience (most of the forest was milled in the nineteenth and early twentieth century), and the image of the tree's branches sheltering a new generation of forest growth is pertinent to a Maori sense

founder of Te Waka Awhina Tane Maori and Polynesian gay support group (194-196). As Roimata sums up:

The issues of identity and space – of sovereignty, of tino rangatiratanga – that our people have been fighting for within Pakeha society are the same issues for gay Maori within Pakeha gay society! (131)

In this passage, Roimata coalesces indigenous sovereignty and indigenous sexuality into the same argument for a democratic right for recognition and agency, described as a “fight.” In this novel, unlike in the earlier *Nights*, issues of cultural and sexual politics are equally important and both fully developed. Ihimaera’s complex handling of the two themes in *The Uncle’s Story* highlights, by comparison, the strained and jarring nature of the earlier novel’s interpretation as a simile for Maori sovereignty.

As invitees to the First Nations conference in Ottawa, Roimata and Michael bring the Maori experience in New Zealand to another indigenous context. Here, the Maori warrior ethos comes to the fore as the pair argue against the grain of the conference, in which First Nations art funding is subsumed within the larger national funding framework. The Maori delegates contest this structure, arguing instead for a separate organization managed by and for indigenous peoples. Michael and Roimata’s conference speech is described in fighting terms: the force of the *karanga* can “defy” and “kill” (325); Roimata performs the *pukana*, “her fingers quivering in the movement of attack” (325); they incite First Nations people to “[m]aintain your sovereign goals, do not let go of your inspiration, hold to your strength. Remember your warrior spirit” (326-7); they end their talk “retreating with a haka” (327). Michael and Roimata adopt the stance of Maori warriors, updated into the

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of continuity and regeneration. Ihimaera’s descriptions of the gay leader of the same name symbolically echo qualities ascribed the original tree: as leader of the gay tribe, Tane Mahuta stands above the rest (195), and as a father, “[h]is body was carved from earth and sky. Its angularity had been made for holding children. Its strength for sheltering a family” (295).

ongoing battle for Maori sovereignty and devolution, and transposed onto that of the First Nations situation. Similarities between the two indigenous groups are generated by the shared experience of colonialism and victimization, as Michael points out in his speech: “[i]n the past our ancestors were shot, killed, maimed, murdered, and hanged [. . .] So were yours” (325). The First Peoples’ conference creates a kind of international federation of indigeneity.

In the novel’s “Acknowledgment,” Ihimaera points to his own experience at two Canadian First Peoples’ conferences, in 1992 and 1998 (373). The crossover between fact and fiction is here similar to his motivation behind writing *Whanau II*, in the sense that much of Ihimaera’s fiction is inspired from his life experiences. Ihimaera’s representative role, invited to the 1998 conference in the capacity of Te Atiawa Arts Administrator and General Manager of Toi Maori, is mirrored in *The Uncle’s Story* in Michael’s equally representative role for Maori and gay rights and recognition. The argument that the writer puts in the mouths of Michael and Roimata recapitulates the speech he gave within the rubric of “Models for Indigenous Arts Policy,” which makes an uncompromising stand for complete Maori control of Maori arts funding. At that event, in his role as a creative writer, Ihimaera addresses the conference theme of indigenous sovereignty, by reading extracts from his work which directly address difficult Maori-Pakeha race relations: “Dinner with the Cannibals” enacts Maori subjugation and dispossession by Pakeha, while “Sacrifice to the Volcano God” argues against the facile pigeon-holing of the native as exotic other. In an interview in which Ihimaera reiterates the conference’s focus, he stresses the similarities between New Zealand Maori and Canadian First Nations people:

I first came to this conference five years ago to support First Nations in their bids to improve awareness and promote their cultures. We regard that [support] as being extremely important. We see ourselves as being brothers and sisters in skin.  
(Conference Proceedings CDRom)



Ihimaera's description of "brothers and sisters in skin" stakes a claim for commonality between indigenous peoples that challenges the assumed naturalness of the modern day nation as the primary binding category of belonging. In the novel, the author draws attention to shared Maori and First Nations cultural priorities such as animistic nature, the importance of ancestors in the present, an inclusive cosmology of legends and contemporary art, a sense of the ritualistic, and the primacy of traditional song and dance. A sense of indigenous brotherhood is promoted with a more intimate cultural link by which First Nations inter-tribal friendly bickering closely resembles Maori. Compare the following passages:

'I thought you liked me.' Carlos pouted. 'And actually, you'll be pleased to know that I do have Maori blood [. . .] My grandmother was Parehuia Te Ariki. My tribe is Kai Tahu and I come from Otakou.' [. . .]

'Put it there, brother!' Roimata laughed and turned to me. 'Hey, Michael,' she said, 'I like this boy.'

But she wagged a finger at Carlos in warning.

'If you know what's best for you, don't come between me and – ' She pointed at me. 'Him. And don't forget I'm from Porourangi and you Kai Tahu are descended from Porourangi's younger brother, Tahu Potiki, so I'm from the senior line! Apart from which I saw Michael first and I've known him longer than you have.' (279)

'I'm Okanagan,' Lang said.

'And I'm Dakota,' Sterling said. 'Lang's a mountain Indian, I'm a plains Indian. Plains Indians generally steer clear of those mountain people.'

'If I was you,' Wandisa said, eyes twinkling, 'I would stay clear of them both and just stick with us Inuit.'

I couldn't help laughing. 'Sounds just like home.' (318)

These moments of cross-cultural recognition enact Pieterse's "transcultural convergence," made possible by an outward-looking, inclusive sense of culture.

Cultural similitude is not the only level of recognition and identification in Michael and Roimata's conference experience. Upon arriving in Ottawa,

they are met by Franklin, a conference organizer and patron: “[t]here’s a kind of recognition that happens when one gay man meets another. As soon as I saw Franklin I knew he was one of us” (315). Similarly, Lang, Sterling and Wandisa’s unconventional inter-tribal friendship is formed by another level of affinity, that of sexual orientation, which creates a friendship between them, Michael and Roimata. Lang and Sterling’s recounting of the Indian berdache tradition, in which gays, known as people of “two-spirits,” held a revered position in traditional Indian society, has particular resonance for Michael. Within their own tradition, Lang, Sterling and Wandisa attribute special significance to the fact that Michael has a twin sister, a detail which means that he is “destined [. . .] [t]o lead the berdache tribe” (330). Although Michael’s own Maori culture does not have a form of the Indian berdache, Michael’s sense of transcultural connection with Canadian indigeneity allows him to adopt this tradition as his own.

As Riemenschneider points out, both gay and indigenous identities hold currency throughout the postcolonial world. Ihimaera alludes to this kind of glocalization when he draws together Maori and First Nations similitudes both in person at the Ottawa conference and in his novel. In the interests of cross-cultural comprehension, *The Uncle’s Story* exemplifies Ihimaera’s non-exclusionist narrative voice, one that is clearly oriented towards a non-Maori and even non-New Zealand readership. This is especially evident on a linguistic level, as the language in the above passages does not overly challenge a non-Maori reader, as Ihimaera translates Maori terms or makes their meaning clear in the context. For example, in his *marae* speech, Sam’s father speaks of “*Tumatauenga*, the *God of War*,” and incites Sam to “*avenge* [Turei’s] death [. . .] take *utu*” (my emphases). Such explanations of terminology sit somewhat incongruously in the wholly Maori setting of the 1970s rural community. By contrast, in the international context of Roimata’s speech, in which she explicitly aims to apply the language of Maori activism to the First Nations

situation, her translations are important. Hence she describes “issues of identity and space – of *sovereignty*, of *tino rangatiratanga*” (my emphases). Such translations, then, combined with the cultural translation of the warrior ethos and indigenous self-governance into the Vietnamese, American and Canadian contexts, bypass bicultural national concerns by directly attaching a Maori worldview to the struggles of other minorities. For Riemenschneider, who demonstrates the same kind of cross-cultural translation in Ihimaera’s reconfiguration of the Maori creation myth to include homosexuals, such strategies confirm the novel’s “embeddedness in a glocal yet discrete Maori literary discourse that cannot readily be subsumed under the term ‘New Zealand literature’” (151). Consequently, readers are immersed in a vividly portrayed, local Maori world that has little interest in recording overt national race relations or in engaging with mainstream Pakeha New Zealand. Bicultural antagonism is passed over in favour of encouraging minority indigenous and gay concerns. In its interests of fostering understanding, the novel enacts cross-cultural convergence rather than separation and difference.

*The Uncle’s Story*’s denouement hangs on an international symbolic event, as the Ottawa conference provides the novel’s pivotal moment. At the conference’s close, Michael speaks on behalf of First Nations gay men and women, leading a motion to “recognise the achievements of our two-spirit ancestors to all our traditions” (344). The rather melodramatic revelation that according to Indian tradition Michael is destined to be a gay leader inspires the protagonist to take home the affirmation of a heroic gay identity to confront Maori homophobia. As such, the Ottawa conference demonstrates a two directional flow of transculturation, which in both cases concurs with Welsch’s sense of transculturation as transition, in that both are agentive to cultural change. Michael and Roimata spark a new movement in First Nations sovereignty by encouraging them to demand full devolution in the arts, while the First Nations acknowledgement of Indian homosexuality, in the berdache

tradition, and Lang's grandfather's support at the conference (345), are an important affirmation for Michael that gay identity may be accepted in indigenous lore and leadership. Thus Michael translates the indigenous Canadian experience back to his own Maori locality by agreeing to lead an *ope* back to his home *marae*, carrying the body of a Maori transsexual prostitute and AIDS victim. The *ope*, an "odd tribe" consisting of transvestites, street kids and urban rebels, none of whom have ever been on a *marae* or learnt ritual protocol, nevertheless claim their right, as Maori, to be formally welcomed within the traditional framework of the *tangihanga* funeral (364). The woman's *karanga*, call of welcome onto the *marae*, voices the incorporation of newness into ritual etiquette in a way that marks the end of the transitive phase of transculturation, as difference is absorbed into an internally meaningful structure:

‘Welcome to this marae,’ Lilly called. ‘Welcome you strange tribe I see before me! Come forward, you tribe of men who love men and women who love women! Welcome, you brave gay tribe, whom none have seen before! Come! Bring your dead who is also our dead – ’

Our tribe was born that day. It was born out of a grandmother's compulsion to take her grandchild back to her bosom. Out of a need to accept that a new tribe was coming. That day we signalled, ‘Make way, we are coming through.’ (365)

In the novel's final paragraph, Ihimaera draws together the strands of present and past, local and global that have impelled the exploration of indigenous gay identity. In a shift of narrative voice, from the past tense in which the "I" narrator Michael addresses the "you" reader, to the present tense in which Sam is directly addressed, Michael concludes:

I have realised, Uncle Sam, that the telling of our stories will bring a location and a history to the world that we build. We who are gay and lesbian must fix the stories with firmness and solder their knots with purpose so that they become part of the narratives [. . .] all people tell about each other. (371)

Location and history in *The Uncle's Story* centre on the East Coast tribe to which Sam and Michael belong, but from which they have been cast out because of their sexuality. Re-finding and redefining the contemporary local hearth requires international and historical research: Michael goes out into the world and delves into the past in order to discover other stories, or new ways of looking at old stories, that "people tell about each other." As such, the novel enacts a transculturative process across time and space that creates localities among the potential "world-spaces" available, binding groups in ways unforeseen or inconceivable within classic structures of belonging such as ethnicity and nationhood. By affiliating Maori to First Nations cultures, and the Maori warrior ethos to the contexts of other wars (Second World War, Vietnam) and battles (Maori and First Nations sovereignty), Ihimaera legitimates and validates gay Maori identity at home.

### Cultural Specificity and Global “Scapes”

When Ihimaera claims, in his comment about New York as a Maori world, that “the whole world is our turangawaewae now,” he extrapolates a Maori sense of place from the *marae* “heart” into the global domain. His conception of international movement as carrying over the “heart” of Maori culture into a foreign context privileges this Maori identity over and above any other: in New York, Ihimaera retains a Maori worldview rather than fits in with the local culture(s). Clearly, both responses to global movement are possible: the transferring of “home” culture to the new setting, and/or assimilating to that new cultural context. I consider the applicability and difficulty of reconciling both discourses of diaspora and indigeneity in the following chapter. The above theories of the local and global correspond to Ihimaera’s interpretation of New York, tracing the attachment of a Maori cultural perspective to foreign places. Thus, in *The Uncle’s Story*, the main characters are still very grounded in Maori culture, both traditional, in the Mahana family’s East Coast *whanau*, and contemporary, as Michael works for Maori causes in a national, possibly governmental context. This deep connection to Maoritanga determines these characters’ responses to other cultures. Hence, Sam interprets a Vietnamese temple and village as Maori, and Michael and Roimata conceptualize Canadian First Nations’ cultures within their own framework. For these characters, like Ihimaera in New York, the Maori “heart” remains, regardless of location. While this is one materialization of local to global dynamics, glocalization theories allow for more fluid conceptions of movement and belonging, that which Clifford describes as “traveling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-traveling” (36). If globalization is a process that allows the possibility of completely detaching culture from the concepts of place provided by community, nation, ethnicity and indigeneity, it also requires different forms of cultural expression that do not rely on place.

Appadurai's terminology in his important work *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, has been influential in exploring the interface between the local and the global in contemporary manifestations of culture and community. A contributing source of Appadurai's success in the social sciences is surely the way that his book focuses on the imaginary as key to questions of identity politics, in effect updating national or ethnic belonging to a global level. Appadurai's bias is most evident in his coined terms *ethnoscapes*, *ideoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *financescapes* and *technoscapes*, in which the root "scape" recalls landscape, a socially constructed and controlled vision of nature (68). Landscape, as discussed in an earlier chapter, is foundational to delineating the national imagined community. Appadurai's "scapes" bring to the fore the inventedness of culture, extending Anderson's "imagined communities" to an imagined "world" (69). The difference between Anderson's study of nation building, and Appadurai's of globalization is that, whereas modernity was a set of values, born out of Enlightenment principles on which the nation and notions of race and ethnicity were based, globalization is a set of strategies. Within this rubric, Appadurai's finance, media, technology, ethnicity and ideology are "currents" or "flux," more or less static, across and through which identity is formed or fractured (84).

By contrast with the tools of nation building, such as landscape, myth, history and language, which fix cultural identity to locations and define an inside and outside, Appadurai's "global modernity" maps the ways in which a culture's systems of knowledge and information are non-fixed and highly interactive. Place is no longer conceived of as static and natural, but a socially constructed process, a perspective made apparent in the theories of local and global, outlined earlier. Robertson's use of the term "world-space" unhitches the local from the locale, in order to emphasize that to equate a place with cultural homogeneity is redundant or at least out-dated, giving way to what Massey describes as location as a global sense of place. This is not to say that

culture is no longer attached to place. Rather, the mobility of people, products and information that feature in globalization highlight the importance of the imaginary by which communities still manage to create a sense of unique identity. Appadurai's "scapes" are the means of enacting Robertson's glocalization in that they are imaginative processes which, although they are global practices and strategies, are employed and deployed differently in and by different cultures. In other words, Maori specificity is not to be found in a localized "heart," but rather in its particular use of the tools of globalization—the tools of modernity writ large.

Ihimaera's 2005 novel *The Rope of Man*, which comprises a rewrite of *Tangi* and a sequel, *The Return*, embodies the shift from local to global. *The Return* picks up where the prequel left off, following Tama—now called Tom—when he returns to Wellington from his father's funeral at Waituhi in 1973. The revised earlier section, *Tangi*, like the rewritten *Whanau II*, uses authorial interludes and an omniscient narrator to make explicit the socio-political commentary and Maori literary techniques which were understated in the earlier novels of the 1970s, a time of emerging Maori sovereignty and cultural Renaissance. *The Rope of Man* records the changing face of Maori culture and Maori identity over the intervening years. The sequel, *The Return*, describes a New Zealand nation of the early 2000s which is internationally savvy, and demonstrates, in ways foreshadowed by Ojinmah's study of Ihimaera's "changing vision," a very positive image of Pakeha-Maori biculturalism. Ojinmah's interpretation of Ihimaera as an advocate for cultural inclusiveness seemed in many ways simplistic in the 1980s, as it ignored the accusatory tone already present in *New Net*, the Turnbull lecture and editor's introduction to *Into the World of Light*, later borne out in *The Matriarch*, which Ojinmah's study predates. Unlike Ojinmah, Pakeha commentators have tended not to argue for positive, interdependent biculturalism. Keown's 2005 text interprets Ihimaera's work of the late 1990s as showing an increasingly "radical



and separatist stance” (127), as does Evans’s 2006 study of *Whanau II*. In order to maintain his argument that Ihimaera is an advocate of *tinu rangatiratanga* “different cultures—‘two treasures’—strong and independent” (Ihimaera qtd in Evans, “Pakeha-Style Biculturalism” 11), Evans ignores *The Rope of Man*. Ihimaera’s most recent novel paints a surprisingly optimistic—at times idealistic—vision of modern New Zealand, in which the Maori-Pakeha “dichotomies” of the mid 1900s have been replaced by a “laminated” and “blended” country in which “[t]he lives of two peoples had become inextricably entangled” (215). As discussed in chapter two, Ihimaera’s writing is split into two distinct motivations, each of which corresponds to his vision of two distinct facets of the Maori-Pakeha relationship. The grieving/grievance process of Treaty redress drives his writing of race relations, while the social and cultural “crossing over” leads to a more relaxed, less representative depiction of cultural mixing. *The Return*, more clearly than in any of Ihimaera’s previous work, illustrates this second, non-adversarial relationship.

In *The Return*, Tama Mahana, known as Tom outside his immediate family, is a middle-aged television news presenter. He lives in the most expensive apartment complex in London, has a French girlfriend, and his two children by his previous marriage to a Pakeha woman, although brought up in New Zealand, both work for international organizations overseas: his daughter is a corporate banker in Los Angeles, and his son travels the world for Greenpeace. Tom’s cosmopolitan lifestyle, which would have been called “yuppie” in the 1980s, and “jet-set” in the 1990s, is embodied by his TV show, “Spaceship Earth.” The programme epitomizes the corporate globalization of worldwide media. Tom describes “Spaceship Earth,” part of his “Richard Branson-type” boss’s WWN (World Wide News) network, as a challenge to the “American imperatives” of broadcasting networks such as CNN and Fox News (298). As his anglicized name suggests, Tom is known as an international media celebrity, yet his Maori ethnicity is largely unknown and not remarked

on (319). Rather, Tom's success aligns him with the global corporate imperatives of his job. The personal and professional objectives that shape Tom's lifestyle owe more to his life experiences and career trajectory than to any innate sense of Maoriness, to the point where the young Tama of *Tangi* is virtually unrecognizable. In fact, Tom's outlook and voice are so different from Tama's that Ihimaera must occasionally repeat certain events from the earlier novel in order to remind the reader of the narrative continuity.

Contrary to what readers familiar with Ihimaera's work might expect, the writer does not portray an uneasy juxtaposition between the rapacious corporate capitalism of the "global village," twenty-four-hour news industry (266), and a fiercely guarded, locally centred Maori identity. For example, there are none of the ritualized moments of asserting Maoritanga, such as performing *haka* and *karanga*, or evoking Maori symbols, legends or imagery of the type that are integral to Sam, Michael and Roimata's expression of their Maori identities in *The Uncle's Story*. If Tom's Maori identity is not evident at face value, then this must be attributed in part to his chosen lifestyle and career, which unlike Michael's and Roimata's, is not directly involved in supporting Maoritanga. *The Return* has more in common with Ihimaera's non-representative "selfish" writing. Hence, Tom is by no means a representative Maori, and yet, paradoxically, it is this independent and highly individualistic vision of internationally astute Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders that Ihimaera advocates and encourages in this novel. The fact that Tom did not return to Waituhi after his father's death, choosing instead to pursue an international career, somewhat limits his interaction with his Maori roots. This might seem like an argument against the ability of Maori to globalize and still retain the culture, but accords with Clifford's interdependent travelling and dwelling. Whereas Maoritanga in *The Uncle's Story* is mobile, exportable and applicable to other cultural contexts (dwelling-in-travelling), in *The Return* the modern global world has come to Waituhi (travelling-in-dwelling). Although

the village of Tama's youth has hardly changed, this is not a sign of stagnation, of a rural enclave that has not kept up with change and progress. Instead, globalization has stemmed the flux of Maori leaving their rural communities for urban centres, as new family dynamics and farming arrangements have made Waituhi prosper. Globalization's tools and strategies ensure continuity in and through ongoing modernization in Waituhi, and enable Tom to maintain his Maoritanga from afar.

The first two chapters of *The Return* bring into play all of Appadurai's "scapes," a point which demonstrates the way that these global strategies are often deployed together in order to build up a strong sense of cultural specificity. The novel begins in Tom's London TV studios workplace. The reader is quickly introduced to the character's international reputation through the mediascapes, or channels through which information is diffused (Appadurai 71). Tom is clearly a TV celebrity, but he underlines that his international reputation is the result of his career dedicated to expose "people power movements" and "man's inhumanity to man" (269). With "Spaceship Earth," Tom claims a quasi-subversive approach to the current mainstream mediatization of world news in support of minority groups. Instead of the focus on sensationalist news, the London-based "Spaceship Earth" takes a "humanist" approach:

Our viewers loved being taken by our reporters behind the news to scenes that were human rather than dramatic and made their impact not from montages of death, destruction and pestilence but from images of resilience, survival and the human capacity to fight back. (183)

It is not accidental that Tom finds an outlet to realize his personal credo to support the underprivileged in international television journalism. Appadurai stresses the interdependence of mediascapes and ideoscapes. He claims that both are "concatenation[s] of images" (72) which reinforce certain social values and perspectives. Appadurai lists the predominant and prevailing ideologies of

“liberty, well-being, rights, sovereignty, representation and [. . .] democracy,” the outcome of the dual philosophies of the Enlightenment and the nation-state (72). Appadurai’s argument that the media and the state jointly create and diffuse images of the world is by no means a new argument, and indeed recalls Louis Althusser’s “Ideological State Apparatuses,” Walter Benjamin on the impact of mechanical reproduction, and Anderson on the role of the printing press in the concomitant emergence of nationalism in *Imagined Communities*. The broad reach of global media, represented by Tom’s news show and his highly successful autobiography, is an effective vehicle for alternately promulgating or contradicting received ideologies in its continuous extrapolation of the local situation into a world-wide context. Nonetheless, Tom’s humanist or altruistic vision is tailored to fit within the needs of a multinational corporation. Far from a volunteer charity organisation, the show’s production team must keep a close eye on the ratings in order to justify Tom’s exorbitant salary (298) and to maintain the boss’s budget approval (270).

After his mother calls from Waituhi and asks Tom to come home, the protagonist goes out for dinner with his lover, Gabriella, before catching his plane. At the restaurant, they meet a crowd of young New Zealanders celebrating a birthday, who see Tom and Gabriella enter the restaurant as they simultaneously watch Tom on “Spaceship Earth” on the bar’s TV screen. One of the group approaches Tom hoping for an autograph for Tom’s autobiography. The mediascapes of television and book bring together these two groups, sparking a light-hearted, but meaningful connection for Tom:

Very soon, Gabriella and I were talking to the young New Zealanders as if we had known them all our lives. We were intimate strangers, all bound together by race, nationality and those two peculiar tensions that had always forced all New Zealanders to get on together: location and isolation. (179)

Tom describes these young people as part of the “huge diaspora of bright young New Zealanders, with skills that allow them to adapt and integrate with any

international community” (178). This description, especially his claim that he finds New Zealanders “all over the planet, but London is a special destination,” summarizes the moving attachments of Appadurai’s ethnoscape, which, through their emphasis on mobility, have more in common with diaspora than the static ethnicity or community of traditional anthropology and sociology. Appadurai defines ethnoscape as

the landscapes of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree. This is not to say that there are no relatively stable communities and networks of kinship, friendship, work, and leisure, as well as of birth, residence, and other filial forms. But it is to say that the warp of these stabilities is everywhere shot through with the woof of human motion, as more persons and groups deal with the realities of having to move or the fantasies of wanting to move. (33-34)

The adaptation and integration that Tom defines is displayed in the group dynamics which bring these New Zealanders together into a loosely-bound community that Appadurai calls a cultural “landscape of persons.” Tom discovers that the birthday girl, Caroline, and her boyfriend, a lawyer, have recently arrived in London. It is her boyfriend’s new workmate, a New Zealander who has been in London for quite some time, who rings around his own friends in order to constitute a group of New Zealanders so that Caroline will not be alone in a foreign city on her birthday (178, 180-181). Through this networking, the individual is integrated into an ethnoscape, a group defined by the common interests shared by their national identity, but contingent on work and travel.

All the characters presented in these first two chapters are far from their place of origin or in constant movement, motivated to travel for work purposes: the “Spaceship Earth” team prepares to take the show to New Zealand to film in Auckland studios; Tom’s daughter, who lives in Los Angeles, is on a work

trip in New York; Gabriella, a publicist, has moved to the London headquarters from the South of France. Although the young New Zealanders describe themselves as “just a bunch of young Kiwis” (177) on their OE (overseas experience), Ihimaera lingers on their work credentials:

The group had all been doing well in London and laughed about the New Zealand mafia in broadcasting, banking, business, law, medical practice and the arts. Gareth was a top pathologist at London City Hospital. Caroline’s job with her publishing company was taking her into international book marketing. (180)

The way that these characters hire out their skills and services represents one aspect of the global labour market that Appadurai describes as *financescapes*. For example, Tom’s daughter, who works for an international Swiss-based bank, represents the human dimension of the international circulation of money and investment. Although the international job market removes people from their families, the high salaries that they command equally enable them to keep in contact with “home.” The professional bracket to which these young people, Gabriella and Tom all belong is described as highly mobile, not only for work purposes, but also able to negotiate personal time for family and friends. Tom nonchalantly mentions having stopped over in New Zealand to see his mother on his last trip to Sri Lanka covering the tsunami, and discusses meeting up with Gabriella at the Cannes film festival on his way back to London from New Zealand (176). In all these passages, money and communication, or Appadurai’s *financescapes* and *technoscapes*, link communities across the world. The constant trafficking along paths of communication (telephone, e-mail) and travel (principally by air) reduce the temporal and spatial distance between home and abroad. In fact, there appears to be little time lag, if any, between the New Zealanders in London and those at home: the group discusses New Zealand current affairs, sport performances, TV shows and recent films, and the colloquial New Zealand speech that Ihimaera deftly evokes, enhances the impression of home away from home (180-181).

In many ways, the relationships between characters is described and maintained through channels of communication rather than face-to-face dialogue. Indeed, Appadurai's technoscapes, or modes of international communication (69-70), are deployed from the novel's first page, in which Tom's mother in Waituhi telephones him at work in London and asks him to come home. This event, which sets in motion the novel's plot, takes Tom and his TV programme out of their local London environment, a delocalization which demands a high level of technical support in order to make a seamless transition. In other words, it is not important that "Spaceship Earth" is filmed in London or in Auckland studios, as long as the techniques of production ensure the same quality. Furthermore, although Tom is instrumental in the show's preparation, he only arrives in Auckland from Waituhi half an hour before broadcast. Telephone, conference calls and e-mail make these negotiations possible. In a mirror image of how easily the young New Zealanders integrate in London, the English production team of "Spaceship Earth" is impressed with the way that Auckland-based TV3 accommodates them. In a conference call between Tom at his sister's home in Waituhi and his team at the Auckland studios, his English producer comments: "why didn't you tell me your local New Zealand technicians were so good? With their help John has the studio up to speed in record time" (272). This type of communication, often inserted in the beginning of chapters, allows Ihimaera to maintain the focus and rhythm of both strands of the novel's main plot. In a literary technique that echoes the negotiation between global and local, Ihimaera juggles two simultaneous storylines, that of the ten-year anniversary of "Spaceship Earth," and Tom's family get-together to make difficult decisions about their dying mother and a family secret.

In *The Return*, Waituhi's prosperity from wine growing represents in a fictional context the Maori dexterity ensuring cultural survival and strength through economics earlier demonstrated by Tohu Wines, Ngai Tahu

Corporation and Ngati Konohi's capitalizing on *Whale Rider* success. Throughout the novel, Ihimaera uses Appadurai's financescape as a global technique to maintain inflections of cultural and national specificity. Tom is both a global player and distinctly Maori and Kiwi. For example, his financial support of his family maintains Maori customs of *koha*, gift giving, and ensures ongoing land ownership. He donates money out of respect for his old school teacher, and pledges to top up his mother's estate so that, on her death, all his siblings will have equal cash settlements without needing to sell or split the family farm. In a similar adaptation of Western techniques to ensure local Maori prosperity, Tom describes the farming community's evolution from subsistence crops, supplanted by sheep and beef, to kiwifruit, and most recently winegrowing:

Waituhi had always been my Eden, but now it was a *new* Eden, glowing like greenstone [. . .] the vines flaunted a rich, dark green studded with the translucent grapes for chardonnay and chablis production (219).

The evocation of greenstone, always positively ascribed in Ihimaera's imagery, marks a seamless transition from the Maori *kumara* and *kamokamo* vegetables to describe imported grape varieties. Waituhi's agricultural response to market forces is not seen as making it less Maori or less important to Maori: the land is still "Eden."

In another textual replication of what the Tohu Wines director describes as finding an eye-catching Maori label that is internationally marketable, Tom seeks a New Zealand slant to his tenth anniversary emission of "Spaceship Earth," which is filmed in Auckland with a live studio audience. International in outlook, audience, and diffusion, the anniversary special carries inflections of its local production with the live New Zealand audience, a "local orientation" (250) intended to complement the programme's global outlook. For example, in the show's segment on Nelson Mandela and the end of



apartheid in South Africa, Tom invites to the studio South African immigrants to New Zealand, and interviews New Zealanders who protested in 1981 against the Springbok rugby tour:

All of a sudden, through the studio doors rushed South African students living in New Zealand. They came dancing, they came singing in celebration of the end of a rule of tyranny, and some of them were in traditional African costume. The audience began to applaud. As Paul mixed their images onto the Vidiwall, the portals exploded with the vibrant colours of freedom and joy. Among the group were friends of mine who had protested against the Springbok tour of New Zealand in 1981. Joining them – this time not in a haka but a Zulu war dance – was Henrik Kruger. *A blond South African boy? Doing a Zulu dance?* (306)

In bringing together aspects of the specific local and general global, Tom caters to different audiences. While New Zealanders might recognize and respond to the local inflection of the Springbok tour and increased immigration, foreigners will focus on the political freedom aspect of the apartheid clip. In global media, the notion of local audience is by no means attached to place: one imagines that the young New Zealanders whom Tom and Gabriella met at the novel's beginning will be watching the show in London, where they will nonetheless identify with and respond to the programme's New Zealand inflections despite their dislocation in a real sense.

The question of how a local culture is inserted into a global context fuels a major criticism of globalization. Instead of culture as a lived reality and "whole way of struggle," as Webster puts it, many critics who consider the impact of globalization as negative for culture see its value as reduced to "culture as sign" (Prentice), hyperreality (Umberto Eco) or simulacra (Baudrillard). These are certainly valid arguments, which nevertheless forget that all cultural constructions are purposive clusterings of selected elements, in response to economic and political forces, from the "imagined communities" of Anderson's nation building to Appadurai's focus on the imaginary in global

cultural flows. While globalization's critics tend to see culture as subsumed or even replaced by the corporate capitalism, politics, media and technology that shape and distribute it, Appadurai's "scapes" suggest that these are only the tools by which culture is deployed, and not culture itself. As the theorists cited in this chapter, as well as Bourdieu and Bhabha all agree, culture is not an end product but a process, born at the interstices of interaction. Moreover, to suggest, along with Muecke and Clifford, that all cultures contain an element of modernity which allows them to adapt and adopt to internal and external change, refuses the sense of loss and denigration with which many critics imply a demotion of culture from real to fabricated, as commercially-driven metonymies. Nick Perry, in his in-depth cultural analysis *Hyperreality and Global Culture*, also warns against a too easy collapsing of culture into commodity:

[S]uch an apocalyptical tone has come to seem wearily formulaic. [. . .] It is, therefore, important to insist on the tactical merit of approaching the cultural/economic/social relation from another side, one which does not take the meaning of commodification [. . .] as a theoretical given. (152)

While accepting the validity of such terms as simulacra, metonymy and the hyperreal, Perry does not see them as the negative opposites of more positively connoted pairs such as authenticity and naturalness. Instead, Perry analyses cultural "real fakes" (79), which, like the beer top earrings of Clifford's "hybrid authenticity," and the fibreglass and polystyrene *waka* of *Whale Rider*, hold their own currency.

Much current criticism of globalization seeks to unmask the behind-the-scenes motors of simulated or staged culture, in order to point out inauthenticity or the less negatively connoted hybridity. Recent examples in New Zealand literary criticism include Prentice's study of the synthetic, computer-controlled simulated whales used in the filming of *Whale Rider* ("Maori Renaissance") and Evans's critique of Maori writing as fed by "conventionalised

authenticities” (“On Originality” 80).<sup>12</sup> Clifford notices something similar in his experience of the “Paradise” museum exhibition of Melanesian Wahgi. At the same time as his Western anthropological eye picks out incongruence between traditional and seemingly inauthentic costume, he questions the validity of his way of seeing and thus key concepts of Western anthropology:

Does inauthenticity now function, in certain circles at least, as a new kind of authenticity? And having knocked certain purist assumptions off center, isn’t it time to sidestep the reverse binary position of a prescriptive anti-essentialism? (178)

Many arguments which chart the demise of culture through globalization, including Prentice’s and Evans’s critiques, employ this ironic and postmodern stance which, in academic circles, is construed as sophisticated by comparison with the apparently primitive sincerity with which Maori writers and artists, and their (credulous) audiences, interpret manifestations of Maori culture with reverence and faith. Yet, questions of faith and sincerity are pertinent to Ihimaera’s use of local inflections in *The Return*. In the above scene, a deconstructionalist reading would demote the New Zealand response to apartheid, here represented by white South African immigrants and the 1981 protests, as staged and inflated for television spectacle. However, throughout the novel, Tom’s mission to bring to his viewers “images of resilience, survival and the human capacity to fight back” (183) seems genuinely sincere, and there is no trace of irony in Ihimaera’s voice, which is modernist in its humanist search for transcendence of cultural and political entanglements. For example, in the passage cited above, Ihimaera captures the energy with which the young

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<sup>12</sup> Another aspect of this criticism is that globalization, like modernity, can also be seen as a new form of dominant culture imposed on minorities, who have little choice but to adapt. The speed of cultural change is here important to the ability of minority agency to keep abreast of change. Clearly, indigenous modernity of the kind Muecke propounds could not keep up with the waves of settlement brought by colonization, and indeed, the fear in many parts of the world (including Western Europe) that globalization risks destabilizing national economies also bespeaks a sense of out-of-control change. From this perspective, critics of minority globalization are right to be cautious and not lose sight of the very real cultural losses that major shifts in power such as colonialism and state deregulation have brought.

South Africans “rush” or “explode” into the room, “singing in celebration of the end of a rule of tyranny,” exhibiting “the vibrant colours of freedom and joy.”

In his review of the novel, Nelson Wattie, troubled by Ihimaera’s apparently sincere tone, comments:

It is hard to determine whether we should read the long description of a current affairs show as satire or as a positive picture of success. Similarly, the international life led by Tom is an extravagant New Age fantasy, but its protagonist seems to ask us to take it seriously.  
(Wattie n. pag.)

As well as in “Spaceship Earth” and Tom’s international career, Ihimaera’s optimism carries over into almost all aspects of cross-cultural interaction and identities portrayed as “positive picture[s] of success” throughout the novel. As Wattie says, this is neither very subtle nor always entirely believable, and in terms of Appadurai’s ethnoscaples, one is not sure whether Ihimaera is representing the global “realities of having to move or the fantasies of wanting to move.” In particular, the composite identities of Eric Amundsen and Henrik Kruger are exaggerated, and for some readers potentially uncomfortable or difficult to reconcile in an entirely positive way. The very presence of Amundsen, the unwanted outcome of Tom’s mother being brutally gang raped by Pakeha, is a reminder of Maori subjugation. The glib manner in which Kruger, a white South African immigrant, leads a *haka* (190) and does a Zulu war dance may be interpreted as inappropriate, insensitive cultural appropriations, particularly in New Zealand where, in 1981, Maori and Pakeha protested on behalf of the segregated Blacks against white South African apartheid politics. Nevertheless, Ihimaera’s sincere acceptance of these characters into Maori and New Zealand cultural frameworks exemplifies what Clifford calls “[c]ross-cultural translation.” Clifford’s term acknowledges a certain transparency by which both essentialist and anti-essentialist aspects are simultaneously in view, making the cross-cultural display “a partial, *translated*

truth [. . .] enmeshed in relations of power” (182). Tom registers this awareness in his rhetorical question, “[a] *blond South African boy? Doing a Zulu dance?*,” italicized to emphasize a certain tone of incredulity. For Clifford, this sense of awareness is important in recognizing cross-cultural translation.

In the part of the novel dealing with Tom’s family’s accepting Amundsen into their *whakapapa*, Ihimaera most clearly describes the power dynamics at work in undertaking the difficult, here traumatic, process of translation. He explicitly links the personal family negotiation with the larger national one:

[W]hat kind of shape was the family now being forced to take? Indeed, what shape was the New Zealand family taking, as new pressures, new challenges, new blood took us all beyond traditional kinships? All I knew was that the absorption of Eric Amundsen into our family was leading to transformations which we were struggling with [. . .] We had tried to grapple with issues of legitimacy, illegitimacy, legal and human rights. [. . .] There were lots of big issues and intimate ones ahead which would challenge our sense of humanity. We’d just have to make the best of it. (314-315)

Ihimaera applies rhetorical questions in order to register his awareness of the difficulty of searching for a middle ground of legitimacy and humanity that does not attempt to negate either side of postmodern fracture and hybridity, in “new pressures, new challenges, new blood,” and the opposing “absorption” and “transformation” that Pieterse calls “transcultural convergence.” As Clifford puts it, “[s]truggles for integrity and power within and against globalizing systems need to deploy *both* tradition and modernity, authenticity and hybridity—in complex counterpoints” (178).

One of the reasons why it may be difficult for readers to accept the sincerity of Ihimaera’s blended New Zealand vision in *The Return* is that the world Tom describes is so radically different from that portrayed in *Tangi*. In *The Return*, Ihimaera portrays a Maori ethnoscape that is almost the antithesis of the ethnic enclave depicted in the auto-ethnography of his first novel. As in

many of Ihimaera's stories and novels, *The Return* begins with a journey home. However, the preparations for this trip, described in the novels' first two chapters, are markedly different from any other in Ihimaera's fiction. In particular, Tom's casualness contrasts with the oppressive, suffocating grief of the opening of both the original and the rewrite of *Tangi*: "[t]his is where it ends and begins" (*Tangi* 1; *Tangi* 2005 12), in which Tama leaves Waituhi to return to work in Wellington. Both versions of *Tangi*, in which the first chapter is almost exactly the same, introduce the reader to a clear binary which separates the Maori home and family in Waituhi from the Pakeha work and friends in Wellington. The reader is under no illusion where Tama's loyalties lie: "I will journey away from Gisborne, but I will leave my heart here, to be reclaimed when I return. This is where it belongs and this is where my life begins" (13). The sequel to *Tangi* is foreshadowed in the character's certainty that he will return. However, the tone of that very return has significantly changed in the opening of *The Return*. Here, Tom portrays New Zealanders as at ease in maintaining long-distance family connections, and possessing an air of confidence in being able to combine family and work, regardless of distance and professional pressures. The train journey in *Tangi* separates Tama from his family, leading to melancholy reflections on his past, and juxtaposing his aloneness with the greetings and partings of other travellers whom he sees from his window. By contrast, in *The Return*, Tom checks into the Air New Zealand first class lounge, checks his e-mails, calls his daughter by cell phone, and starts working on his next TV show on his laptop.

Tama/Tom's Maori identity is not overtly signalled in either of the two novels' beginnings, although the tone set in the first few pages, in both cases, corresponds to the Maori worldview developed throughout the text. In the earlier novel, the elegiac mood and sense of schism come to represent both the importance of an anchorage in family and land, *whanau*, *iwi* and *whenua*, and the rupture in the 1970s caused by the massive demographic change in the

Maori urban drift. In many ways, it was the ethnographic candour of the original *Tangi* that launched Ihimaera's reputation as a Maori writer, and, as argued in the first chapter of this thesis, helped shape the self-referential, reverential tone of the emerging Maori literary genre. By comparison, in the early 2000s of *The Return*, Maori are integrated as part of the broader New Zealand "diaspora," part of the skilled, well paid, and highly mobile people of Appadurai's movement-based ethnoscares. The (literal) distance travelled in outlook and in confidence between Tama in 1973 on the plane from Wellington, and Tom in 2005, is summed up by Tom's comment from the first class lounge at Heathrow:

Once upon a time, travelling first class was so un-Kiwi, as if it was our born duty to sit at the back of the plane; but we were corporate travellers now, from the land of entrepreneurs. (182)

By systematically calling Tom a New Zealander, or Kiwi, rather than Maori, Ihimaera signals a different direction for Maori culture than that portrayed in the rewritten *Tangi*, one which seems to include rather than exclude Pakeha—although there is no mention of the significant influence of Asian, Polynesian and other immigrant cultures in this "blend."

In *The Return*, Ihimaera summarizes the New Zealand national character as directly linked to the way that Pakeha, over the past thirty years, have engaged with Maori to work through issues of race relations. In a fictional counterpart to what he has elsewhere called "crossing over," or a debate between "us and us" (Watkin, "The Homecoming" 22; Hill), Ihimaera recognizes that both Pakeha and Maori have been influenced by contact with, and have made concessions to accommodate one another. These configurations, an update of Durning's claim in "What Was the West?," register a two-way flow with a firm focus on convergence rather than difference. Ihimaera extends his notion of cultural mixing to include that of ancestry, recording the oft-cited line predicting that "within two generations every New Zealander w[ill] have some

Maori blood or at least a Maori relative” (320-321; Riemenschneider 139). Furthermore, *The Return* evokes a shared cultural history between Maori and Pakeha rather than the cultural separatism at work in *Tangi*. For example, when Tom and his Pakeha school friend reminisce about their high school English teacher’s challenge to “[p]rove to me that you are a New Zealander,” Tom chants his *whakapapa* and Michael produces his great-great-great-grandmother’s bill of passage from England to New Zealand (213-214). When Tom cites mid-century cultural nationalist Pakeha poets Denis Glover, Ron Mason and Curnow, and calls on New Zealanders to “create as personal a history [. . .] with this soil” (213), he consciously enacts pillars of imaginative nation building. In a turn of phrase that dramatizes Anderson’s and Thiesse’s studies of the role of the imaginary in nation building, the teacher expounds the necessity to legitimate one’s sense of belonging to a country:

‘Until it is created, a country doesn’t exist, boys! And how is a country created? It has to be named, claimed, possessed. It has to be written into existence, sung about, spoken into existence. People [. . .] have to develop their own identity.’ (213)

Importantly, in this passage Ihimaera acknowledges that both Maori and Pakeha may supply the tools to bring into being national belonging, albeit in different ways, as illustrated by Tom’s *whakapapa* chant and Michael’s historical document. On the novel’s final page, Ihimaera quite literally puts his own words in the mouth of his protagonist. As he explains in the “Acknowledgements,” Tom’s response to the question “what can Maori bring to the world?” are the words that Ihimaera wished he had said in a BBC talkshow (324):

‘All Maori and all New Zealanders jointly bring an example of what can be achieved in terms of excellence, equity and justice to all mankind. In our own country we are showing that it is possible to resolve issues of blood, race, ancestry and identity. Internationally, we



bring a certain grit, determination, moral compass and integrity to the world's future.' (322)

This focus on joint effort underpins much of the imagery in *The Return*, which, unlike the detailed descriptions of Maori funeral rites in *Tangi*, is not intended to depict Maori concepts as fundamentally different from those of other cultures, either national or international. For example, Tom's French girlfriend describes the homesickness of the group of young Kiwis in London as "mal du pays" and "love of country," which Tom retranslates as "aroa ki te iwi" (180).<sup>13</sup> The rope of man image of the novel's title is explained in a Maori context as *Te Taura Tangata* (191), for all New Zealanders as "an invisible umbilical cord" with the nation, an image repeated as a scene from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, of a spaceman whose line connects him to the spaceship so that he will not be lost, but pulled back to safety (227). *Te Torino* (252), the spiral metaphor for continuity, employed throughout Ihimaera's fiction and anthology *Te Ao Marama*, is translated into the double helix of DNA (276).

As with the warrior ethos in *The Uncle's Story*, all of the above images from *The Return* affirm the translatability of Maori culture in ways that are meaningful to outsiders and, in the other direction, through the literary devices of simile and metaphor, other cultures' images may be connected to Maori concepts such as the rope of man and the spiral. This two-way dynamic, in which Maori adopt external influences and adapt their own culture, illustrates Clifford's "cross-cultural translation" and Pratt's transculturation; processes and tools that are an innate capacity in any culture. These critics' anthropological studies of colonial contact and modernity may be extrapolated in the contemporary world on a global scale, as suggested by Appadurai's "scapes," which create and shape localities within a range of global

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<sup>13</sup> This passage exhibits a similar technique of translating or explaining Maori concepts as that described in the previous section in regards to *The Uncle's Story*. "Iwi" is not synonymous with "country," but usually refers to one's people, community and tribe. Ihimaera's unproblematic elision here further emphasises the primacy of non-alienation over and above accuracy.

possibilities, as espoused by Pieterse, Robertson and Massey. The translation of both cultural and linguistic specificity presupposes a desire to find common ground between cultures, worldviews and philosophies. This concurs with Pieterse's outward-looking culture 2, of which the basic assumptions include heterogeneity, networks, diffusion, translation and diaspora. However, at the same time as outward-looking culture fixes its horizons away from its local setting, the opposite assumptions of culture 1 are also at work. For Pieterse, the inward-looking culture 1 emphasizes society, nation or locale, community, authenticity, race and ethnicity. While culture 2 seeks identification, culture 1 foregrounds identity (61). Although *The Return* showcases positive outcomes for Maori culture, Ihimaera's most recent novel does not, or perhaps cannot, forget its roots.

As a sequel, *The Return* would normally be read as an update, extrapolation and continuation of the 1973 *Tangi*. From this expectation, the 2005 *The Rope of Man* describes a clear trajectory from culture 1 to culture 2. However, such a linear, progressive sense of literary vision is complicated by the fact that Ihimaera has at the same time revised *Tangi* with the same kind of authorial input and overt politicizing as discussed in chapter two in regards to *Whanau II*. The two halves of *The Rope of Man* make opposing claims about what it means to be Maori. Bald statements inserted in the new version of *Tangi*, such as "we are of the Maori race, a race with the indomitable courage of the undefeated" (99), and "I soon realised [at school] that maintaining my own personal sovereignty as a Maori was something I had to fight for" (120) give an embattled sense of holding on to Maori cultural specificity in an otherwise hostile Pakeha environment. This contrasts vividly with Tom's upbeat, positive and optimistic narrative in *The Return*. The two parts of *The Rope of Man* display the two aspects of the Maori relationship with Pakeha and New Zealand that Ihimaera separates into the ongoing claim for recognition of past wrongs through Maori sovereignty and, simultaneously, Maori integration

on national and international levels. In keeping with Ihimaera's explanation, in the Watkin and Hill interviews, of two distinct questions facing contemporary Maori, these two issues of sovereign independence and cross-cultural mixing are kept separate in *The Rope of Man*. In their contradictory stances, *Tangi* and *The Return* play out, in a literary context, the cultural counterpoints and struggles that Clifford draws attention to in the visual context of the museum. In a slightly different formulation of Clifford's call to understand culture as deploying "both tradition and modernity, authenticity and hybridity," in his essay on glocalisation, Robertson clarifies that his term

is not a question of *either* homogenization or heterogenization, but rather of the ways in which both of these two tendencies have become features of life across much of the late-twentieth-century world. In this perspective the problem becomes that of spelling out the ways in which homogenizing and heterogenizing tendencies are mutually implicative. (27)

In its movement from the deeply local *Tangi* to the global *The Return*, *The Rope of Man* neither aims nor claims to resolve the impact of the cross-cultural Pakeha and global interaction and influence on Maori culture. Instead, each of the novel's two parts presents an alternative perspective, with the former clinging to the remnants of a (perceived) homogenous, pre-contact cultural completeness, and the latter exemplifying a heterogeneous, globalized version of Maoritanga that is comfortable with its change. What appears problematic in Ihimaera's literary vision, across his oeuvre and most clearly in *The Rope of Man*, is that these alternatives appear to be irreconcilable rather than "implicative": Pieterse's inward- and outward-looking culture are discrete facets of Maoritanga.

To take indigenous modernity as the starting point for this chapter sets in motion a dialogue, perceived as natural and long-standing, between Maori and a range of Western terms that are often thought to be exterior or alien to

Maori culture. Hybridity, diaspora, transculturation and glocalization, terms that Ihimaera employs in defending his novel *Sky Dancer*, presuppose modernity in that they are all based on the possibility of cultural change and exchange. For many cultural critics, modernity, of which current corporate globalization and cosmopolitan migrancy are arguably the latest expression, is a set of strategies and a process rather than a cultural content. Within this rubric, which creates localities on and within a world scene, culture is caught up in social, economic and political configurations which are not static, but shaped by internal responses to external influences. In the global world order, there are no longer clear markers of what is or is not Maori. This makes it more difficult, and indeed more necessary, for Maori to police boundaries to ensure their culture maintains a shape that they approve of. One of the major uncertainties of Maori globalization—exporting both the culture and the people—is of defining the cultural parameters by which Maori culture remains recognizable and unique. The very question presumes a modernist sense of culture that defines by content rather than a process of negotiations at the frontiers of inside and out. By contrast, Appadurai's techniques take the pressure off Maori to have any particular cultural shape. At the same time as it becomes less and less evident for an outsider to define and locate examples of authorized Maori culture, increased Maori agency and an agility with globally available strategies, including trademarks, patenting and intellectual property law, ensure their own cultural welfare.

While there continues to be strong criticism towards government policy that does not acknowledge full Maori sovereignty and devolution, on the cultural front at least, biculturalism has had a very real impact. Tribe-based companies such as Ngai Tahu Corporation, the Wi Pere Trust, and the partnership that owns Tohu Wines, along with national bodies controlling copyright and intellectual property rights such as Toi Iho, the Maori Made Trademark, deploy non-cultural strategies in order to maintain and develop

across-the-board Maori success. In his bicultural consultancy business in partnership with Haare Williams, Ihimaera has also capitalized on contemporary national and international sensitivity which wishes to negotiate through channels approved by Maori. The last decade in particular has seen the negotiation of how Maori culture is to be presented and represented increasingly taking place in corporate boardrooms, in law courts and by local, national and multinational business partnerships, as well as in the more traditional meeting forum of the *hui* and on *marae*. In other words, globalization is resulting in Maori culture becoming potentially disarticulated from its place of origin and is using other languages to do so. Maori culture is branching out. It may still be found in Rotorua tourist sites, or the *Whale Rider* tours in Whangara, but is also increasingly national, such as on Maori TV, in tribal property and commercial investments. Aspects of Maori culture might equally appear in overseas mediascapes, technoscapes and financescapes that are not directly, or not obviously, connected to the indigenous culture of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Maori literature is also caught up in globalization. A blurring of national boundaries is evident in the increasing translation of novels into different languages, and interpretation into different contexts and media. This is most clearly demonstrated in Ihimaera's international version of the novel *The Whale Rider*, revised to fit better with the expectations of an international readership of the early 2000s. However, Ihimaera claims to keep Maori principles to the fore in all aspects of his literary career. For example, in a dispute with his publishers over the extent of his ownership of the text in one book contract, Ihimaera reminds his literary agent that he needs to protect his interests and the *kaupapa* Maori. He frames his contract negotiation in terms of retaining "the mana of the project and the partnership with Reeds"—by which he means control of further royalties and future financial spin-offs (letter to Ray Richards). This is another example of the close relationship between art, culture

and economics, which some New Zealand commentators find demeaning for Maori culture. Literature, as Bourdieu and Casanova emphasize, is an international business, and minority and indigenous literature, as Huggan's text *The Postcolonial Exotic*, and James English's *The Economy of Prestige* both argue, occupies a well-defined niche market within international publishing. It is thus increasingly difficult to study Maori literature without bearing in mind the extra-literary forces that go into its writing, publication, prize-winning and circulation. These forces, which are political and economic as well as artistic and cultural, must be considered on several different levels, including Maori, national New Zealand, postcolonial, and international, all of which interact with each other in complex and shifting ways. It is this emphasis on movement and negotiation that incites cultural critics, from Bhabha and Bakhtin, Casanova and Bourdieu, During, Muecke and Clifford, to Welsch, Pieterse and Robertson, to argue that the local is always already caught up in the international, the global, the transcultural.

Production practices in the film *Whale Rider*, Maori negotiation with change in *The Uncle's Story* and the cosmopolitan metro Maori of *The Return* exemplify the pertinence of the above theories of transculturation to contemporary Maori. However, and in contradiction, Ihimaera's rewrites from the same period, *Whanau II* and *Tangi 2005*, take a more embattled stance against the encroaching outside which is perceived as a threat to Maori specificity. The final chapter of this thesis, "Ambivalent Indigeneity," works between the parameters of local and global Maori culture and identity to look at the ambivalences and paradoxes with naming oneself (and one's literature) indigenous in the world today.

## CHAPTER FIVE: AMBIVALENT INDIGENEITY

### Indigenous Postcolonialism

Ihimaera's literary voice is by no means consistent throughout his extensive output, in its changing styles, content and genres. In portrayals of Maori culture, he alternates between a romantic lyric voice, concerned with capturing the subjective "heart" of being Maori, and a brusque, authoritative tone which enacts the antagonism of embattled race relations. His depiction of cultural change and the impact of exterior influences, both past and present, similarly veers between a positive stance indicating Maoritanga's ability to embrace modernity, and a negative one in which modernity figures as mere loss of tradition. These opposing attitudes were already evident in the 1970s, in the break between his lyric trilogy and *New Net*. With *The Matriarch*, readers discovered conflicting ideologies within the same text, which caused interpretative difficulties. In his latest novel, *The Rope of Man*, both sides are present in the two parts of *Tangi* and its sequel *The Return*. In one particularly complex piece of authorial positioning in *Whanau II*, Ihimaera's description of nineteenth-century Waituhi illustrates his contradictory styles and stances. As in the earlier novel of 1974, the story is carried by an omniscient narrator who is certainly Maori and has close knowledge of Waituhi, a fact which encourages the reader to align the narrator with the author:

The land was rich and fertile, in pleasing contrast to the barren Wharerata Ranges which enclosed the Bay. You descended from the ranges and obtained a splendid panoramic view of the lowland and the glittering blue-green sea curving like a sickle toward the harbour. The plain was intersected by three rivers which struck their serpentine course through handsome clumps of kahikatea and puriri forests and beside numerous wheat cultivations and groves of peach and other varieties of English fruit trees. The botanical intertwining of foreign flora with native flora was indicative of the blending that was taking place among Maori and Pakeha. Traders with blue eyes married Maori

wives and had their half-caste children. Captains of seafaring ships soon found that Maori were setting up their own fleets once they acquired the technology. Maori were very quick to learn and take on the agricultural skills that would enable them to grow crops and fruits to sell in the growing market centres of Wellington and Auckland. When the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches began to seek flocks, they found amenable and docile sheep who wished to come to God [. . .]

In the ebb and flow of Maori and Pakeha relationships some of the Maori tribes of Poverty Bay accommodated the Pakeha more than others. The situation was not cut and dried. Within Ngati Porou, Rongowhakaata, Te Aitanga a Mahaki and Te Whanau a Kai there were some Maori settlements which became known as rebellious or unfriendly, and those which were considered to be loyalist or friendly: domesticated, acculturated, absorbed into a Western ethos. It was not unexpected that the loyalist settlements were those who unwittingly abetted the missionaries in obtaining Maori souls for the Christian God. [. . .] the Pakeha used the Bible as a sword to split the people. (62)

The beginning of this passage, with its focus on natural features and farming, is typical of Ihimaera's frequent descriptions of the landscape of his home region, consistently described in the pastoral convention of a tamed and peaceful rural landscape. The depiction of Ihimaera's home area is infused with the same sentimentality and romanticism as that recounted by Tama in *Tangi* and *The Matriarch*. Yet in contrast with the sympathetic narrator, Tama, in earlier works, in the above passage the distanced, quasi-objective narrator produces a trace of irony in the slightly pompous "splendid panorama," "glittering blue-green sea" and "serpentine" rivers, as if Ihimaera is self-conscious about the landscape convention. However, the following sentences undercut this potential distance. In particular, Maori and Pakeha botanical and genealogical "intertwining" and "blending" recall Ihimaera's depiction of the painted meeting house, Rongopai, an iconic moment in *The Matriarch* (189-193), which is repeated in the same reverent, lyric tone in *Whanau II* (174-177). For example, the above line "[t]raders with blue eyes married Maori wives and had their half-caste children" echoes description of the panels at Rongopai which



feature figures “with blue eyes and short hair parted in the European way” (*The Matriarch* 192) and “Hine Hakirirangi, [who] wears a pretty European dress with a hint of a Victorian bustle, and holds a red rose to her lips” (*Whanau II* 175). The emphasis on Maori adaptability to encroaching European modernity concurs with Muecke’s “indigenous modernity”; mid-nineteenth-century Te Whanau A Kai retain their land and culture while prospering from colonial impact. Ihimaera similarly emphasizes Maori choice in the final sentence, in which Maori “wished” to adopt Christianity. However, the paragraph’s positive tenor falters with the expression “amenable and docile sheep,” which although positive in church rhetoric, for most readers familiar with the deleterious effect of colonial missionary proselytizing on indigenous peoples, cannot help but carry a sense of foreboding.

By contrast, the second paragraph changes tone to take an explicitly oppositional stance towards colonial British settlement, placing Maori in the role of “unwitting” victims, whose accommodating good-will is translated as naivety in the face of a scheming colonial power. By his complete change of viewpoint, Ihimaera contradicts his previous paragraph’s insistence on Maori modernity, so that the agricultural technology, quickly learnt skills, and profit from a new market economy, here have negative overtones, with Maori “domesticated, acculturated, absorbed into a Western ethos.” Furthermore, the embittered final statement, “the Pakeha used the Bible as a sword to split the people” is puzzling in a novel that otherwise paints a positive picture of the importance of faith in Waituhi, from Riripeti, the Matriarch’s charismatic leadership in the Ringatu tradition, to Bulibasha’s devout family-centred Mormonism. The Matriarch’s and Bulibasha’s cameo appearances in this novel point readers back to *The Matriarch*, *The Dream Swimmer* and *Bulibasha*, in which religion plays a crucial, binding role in maintaining *whanau* solidarity in the face of outside threats, including the colonial land grab, the 1918 flu epidemic and mid-twentieth-century urban drift.

Ihimaera's lack of thematic clarity, or a controlling artistic or cultural vision, has led to bafflement and some criticism over the course of his thirty-five year writing career. Critics have looked to centralize Maori experience in work that is not, or not solely Maori, such as *Waituhi*, *Nights* and *Sky Dancer*, as well as arguing for a cohesive and singular sense of Maoritanga in work that is fragmented and ambivalent, as in *The Matriarch* and the collection *Dear Miss Mansfield*. A critical desire to label Ihimaera a Maori writer in the vein of Maori Renaissance difference has led to the neglect of almost all his operas and has prompted critics to read texts such as *The Matriarch*, *The Dream Swimmer*, *Woman Far Walking* and *Whanau II* as indicative of Ihimaera's increasingly separatist vision, a position that ignores the non-separatist *Nights*, *The Uncle's Story*, *Sky Dancer* and *The Return* (Evans, "Pakeha-Style Biculturalism" 11; Keown 127). I have argued that such readings do not do justice to the complexity of Ihimaera's cultural outlook and literary skill. Nevertheless, an impulse to synthesize and homogenize Ihimaera's oeuvre is characteristic of national bicultural and international postcolonial literature. As discussed in chapter one, the identity building of cultural nationalism which created a distinct Pakeha New Zealand literature, notably by Curnow and Sargeson, set the precedent for a similar Maori initiative of self-definition during the Maori Renaissance and biculturalism of the 1970s and 1980s. As explored in chapter two, these national negotiations have been strongly influenced by postcolonial literature, in which the Western reader heavily relies on a reliable writer/narrator.

The interpretative difficulties presented by Ihimaera's work are symptomatic of a larger postcolonial predicament, that of understanding the place and future of postcolonial literature within the wider field of literary publishing and study. The debate over the extent to which postcolonial literature is (or ought to be) fundamentally different from "mainstream" writing generates issues such as the categorization of different kinds of colonial

experiences within the field, defining its intended audience, and critics' rights to label and interpret. Although themes of similitude or differentiation are present in other aspects of literature, such as between the artist's individual or representative role, and a text's mimeticism or imaginative originality, in the postcolonial context the debate is further complicated by Western critics' doubt as to the nature of the relationship between postcolonial subject and Western theory. Both writers and critics describe ambivalence towards a perceived imbalance in power relations whereby postcolonial fiction is expected to come from the margins, catering to a Western "centre" of academics and critics (Bahri 18-19; Huggan, *Exotic* 4; Mukherjee).

The contradictions and discrepancies in Ihimaera's position register this unease and indecision in that he is neither sure which role to assume as native informant or as literary creator, nor of the role he wants the reader to assume, as cultural outsider or as a member of a confraternity with the writer. This is evident in the tone of voice in the above citation from *Whanau II*, which swings from an ease with Western perspectives of landscape, hybridity and economic modernity in the first paragraph, to a seemingly self-conscious position-taking that sets the postcolonial minority against Western influence. In opposition to the first paragraph, which invites the non-Maori reader to identify with colonial Waituhi's cultural change, the antagonism of the second part excludes the reader, placing him or her on the side of colonial complicity in opposition to the narrator's indignation at Maori victimization. Whereas the non-Maori reader can picture the scene of the strongly visual first paragraph, he or she can only rely on the narrator to decipher the claims to Maori subjugation and domestication by colonization and Christianity. Ihimaera's second paragraph voices a reluctance to give up the control of access to his text and its meaning. His move from a descriptive voice to one that interprets on his reader's behalf reminds non-Maori readers of historical colonial guilt, which has the uncanny effect of making the Pakeha reader—who is familiar with the "legacy of guilt"

argument—feel doubly guilty for having unproblematically accepted, or even identified with, the cultural “blending” described in benign and positive language in the preceding paragraph. Here, Ihimaera’s authoritative tone upholds a tacit hierarchical relationship between writer and reader, one which assumes that Maori hold the key to describe, teach and interpret their culture.

The non-Maori reader and critic’s attempt to engage with the postcolonial predicament of similarity or difference through Ihimaera’s work is stymied by blocking devices through which the writer refuses negotiation in his text and with his reader. Ihimaera’s unprecedented rewrites in fact narrow the interpretative scope of these texts. The original collection of short stories and first two novels largely left interpretation up to the reader. *Tangi* was praised for plunging the reader into the disorientating immediacy of grief, while structurally describing key elements of Maori culture in its open emotionality, cyclical storytelling and segues between oratory, chant, and song. *Whanau* was popular for its clever switching of narrative perspective to give flashes of insight into members of a community without trying to synthesize or fill in the background, gaps and disjunctures of their polyphony. By contrast, in his rewrites, Ihimaera’s interpolation of an overt politicizing of race relations dampens the immediacy and intensity praised in the earlier work: death loses its mystery and disorientation now that the *tangi* ritual is explained, and the characters’ attitudes in *Whanau* are contextualized by the social and cultural history that has shaped them. The above citation from *Whanau II* demonstrates this change in style, in the way that the narrator’s description of loyalist tribes as “domesticated, acculturated, absorbed into a Western ethos,” and his charge that “the Pakeha used the Bible as a sword to split the people” take the place of plot and characterization to carry the story. Such insertions prompt Ihimaera’s editor to caution him for potentially alienating his Pakeha readership, and lead reviewers to warily signal the rewritten texts’ new stridency (Boniface; Prentice, “Burden of Souls”; Wattie).

In the above analysis, Ihimaera imposes the Maori perspective so that there is little room for the reader to interpret and translate the text according to his or her own structures of meaning. *Whanau II* is clearly a work of race relations in the way that it employs the early postcolonial technique of ethnographic realism, a kind of indigenous nationalism intending to “write back” against the grain of the Pakeha history of New Zealand. That Ihimaera employs this mode more than twenty years after the abrupt and difficult period of Maori sovereignty and Renaissance indicates a non-resolution of those demands. New Zealand’s unique institutionalized biculturalism, which encourages the present form and function of Maori literature, perhaps masks the debate played out in postcolonial circles over the staying power of the genre. In other branches of postcolonial literature, particularly in regards to cosmopolitan migrant or exiled writers based in Western centres, the early postcolonial expectations of a literature of difference, of asserting independence of cultural identity and literary form, have faded in favour of a growing interest in transculturation, globalization and the understanding of literature as a commercial industry. The way that Ihimaera’s passage from *Whanau II* backs off from this type of openness indicates a certain reluctance to follow this postcolonial trend.

There is a potential tension in the term and label “indigenous” that may help explain the constant wavering between voices and positions that implies an element of confusion about the role and significance of identifying as a Maori writer, and the appropriate relationship with the non-Maori reader. The ongoing predominance of nationalistic writing bespeaks a measure of protectionism, which includes reluctance to engage cross-culturally with other postcolonial and indigenous cultures. Indeed, the terminology of indigeneity and of nationalism share many features. The etymology of the term “indigenous” situates the native as naturally coming from and belonging to the land. While the claim to first occupancy is apparently clear, the meaning and value of that

original belonging in relation to the land and to other occupants in contemporary nation-states is contested. In New Zealand, the Pakeha claim to indigeneity as a means to separate their identity from that of their British colonial forebears, is refuted by Maori who consider their earlier belonging to the land an exclusive prerequisite to the indigenous title. In a much more exaggerated, unfortunate example of disputed legitimacy, in Fiji the periodic flare-ups of inter-racial confrontation between Fijians and Indians illustrates the difficulty of resolving rights when both communities have suffered a long history of victimization. In relation to this situation, Vijay Mishra poses the question of whether indigeneity is necessarily synonymous with the authority to govern a territory, a point which recalls the foundational, and again etymological link between “native” and “nation.”<sup>1</sup> Mishra’s contentious question is seemingly answered by Clifford’s documenting of the Mashpee Indian case, whose claim for recognition as a Native Amerindian tribe and the restitution of traditional lands was turned down because twentieth-century fragmentation and urbanization meant that they could not prove continuous ownership (Clifford, *Predicament* 284). The court’s decision suggests that indigeneity must be fundamentally connected to continuous occupancy of the land, a premise that casts into doubt the possibility of being simultaneously indigenous and diasporic. The Mashpee case also illustrates the important role served by national law courts in the identification of indigenous rights. In New Zealand, the recognition in 1975 (amended in 1985) of the Treaty of Waitangi as founding document set in place a constitutional charter of Maori-Pakeha race relations that informs and guides the bicultural state. In 1993, Canadian First Nations sought recourse in the United Nations to draft a declaration of indigenous peoples’ rights. The 1992 Mabo decision in Australia is similarly

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<sup>1</sup> Vijay Mishra, “Imagining the Nation: The Indo-Fijian Diaspora,” address at *Biculturalism or Multiculturalism?*, conference at University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 1-3 September, 2005. To appear in *Culturalisms*, unpublished conference proceedings edited by Brydon, Meffan and Williams.

heralded as an important step in official recognition and ongoing negotiation for Aborigines.

On a pan-indigenous level, the 2000 United Nations “Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of the Heritage of Indigenous Peoples,” which reinforces the earlier 1982 UN recognition of indigenous peoples, compiles some founding concepts by which to understand indigeneity. Paramount among these principles is the importance of collective ownership and the centrality of land as “essential” for the propagation of indigenous heritage. Furthermore, the guidelines stress the continuity of land, language and cultural heritage passed down through the generations. Recognition of these foundational differences with Western society gives indigenous peoples the right to self-determination: “to maintain and develop their own cultures and knowledge systems, and forms of social organization,” in effect to control the content and dissemination of their heritage. In support of such autonomy, the guidelines state that no national government, institution such as museum and university, or other non-indigenous group, has the right to display, represent or interpret indigenous heritage without that group’s consent. The three clauses under the heading “Artists, Writers and Performers” bring to bear legal considerations on defining indigenous literature and the non-indigenous position to take towards that:

[Clause] 41. Artists, writers and performers should refrain from incorporating elements of indigenous heritage, particularly those of a sacred character, into their works without the prior, free and informed consent of the traditional owners.

[Clause] 42. Artists, writers and performers should support the full artistic and cultural development of indigenous peoples, and encourage public support for the development and greater recognition of indigenous artists, writers and performers.

[Clause] 43. Artists, writers and performers should contribute, through their individual works and professional organizations, to the greater public understanding and respect for the indigenous heritage

associated with the country in which they live as well as with the international community as a whole.  
 (“Principles and Guidelines,” n. pag)

The UN document hereby defines indigeneity on precepts of inalienable difference, necessarily attached to land and heritage, administered by total agency and control. As applied to the New Zealand literary context, the above clauses suggest that Pakeha writers ought not write for and about Maori, nor appropriate Maori concepts such as *turangawaewae* and a spiritual connection with the land in their own writing. Pakeha should support the way that Maori have developed their literature, encouraging the publication choices of initiatives such as Huia—as indeed is the case, Huia is supported by the national funding body, Creative New Zealand. Implied in this clause is that it is not appropriate for Pakeha to criticize Maori writing according to non-Maori literary criteria. Finally, it is unclear how Pakeha might interpret clause forty-three, other than by promoting Maori literature by being positive about it.

The shape of Maori literature, including the Pakeha response to it, corresponds closely to the parameters and ambitions outlined in the UN guidelines, although New Zealand negotiations of issues of race relations, cultural identity and devolution predate the UN publication. Ihimaera’s rewrites remind his readers that these issues, which came to the fore in the 1970s and which provided an arena for Ihimaera’s early writing career, are today far from resolved. In particular, the above extract from *Whanau II* evokes two foundational aspects of indigenous identity that resonate as much in 2007 as in the 1970s, namely, the primacy of Maori as producers and controllers of their culture’s expression and interpretation, and the importance of ongoing evocation of colonial and assimilationist Pakeha wrongdoing. As discussed in chapter two, the primacy of cultural rather than artistic values in Maori fiction sidesteps issues of transgression, as perhaps most clearly illustrated in Brunt’s article on the curating of Maori fine art exhibitions. According to Bourdieu’s model of the field of cultural production, the avant-garde continually challenges



consecrated art with its innovation and boundary pushing, before being assimilated into the canon. This process ensures that art and literature is dynamic, constantly under pressure to respond to new artists' shifting priorities and the market's changing demands. The history of New Zealand literature reflects this pattern, with evolving, sometimes cyclical debate on fiction's form and function. Key moments include Curnow's call to record local reality in the 1930s, the challenge to the "man alone" trope with demotic, intimate and feminine writing from the 1960s generation, the import of European theory and postmodernism in the late seventies and 1980s, the question of global literature or local specificities in the 2000s. Debate and challenge within and about Maori writing is remarkably absent from this otherwise contested national space<sup>2</sup> a tendency directly connected to Maori self-determination.

Institutionalized biculturalism, no less than the UN-sanctioned guidelines for indigenous protection, infers that anything outside defined cultural parameters risks being seen as transgression, both in terms of what can be produced, and how this may be interpreted from outside the community. The way that the second paragraph of the above extract from *Whanau II* retracts from the confidence in modernization and hybridity of the first paragraph indicates a feeling of threat, a fear that embracing cross-cultural exchange might risk effacing the principles of specificity that have been so hard won. Ihimaera's rewriting and updating his 1970s fiction to the 2000s continues to activate confrontational Maori-Pakeha race relations. Furthermore, recent Maori and Pakeha anthologies, such as Huia's biennial collection, Pirie's and Kidman's anthologies, record Maori fiction of the 2000s that in some cases is difficult to distinguish from Maori writing of *Te Ao Hou* and *Into the World of Light*. This is not to contend that indigenous writing is locked into an intensely

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<sup>2</sup> With the key exception of Stead. Although there are relevant and valid points to his criticism of Maori fiction, his tendency to go into attack mode and to thereby marginalize himself has provoked reactive and equally impassioned defences, from Pakeha as well as Maori writers and literary critics.

traditional and local-specific mode. Indeed, along with Ihimaera, Maori writers Kelly Ana Morey, Alice Tawhai, Paula Morris and George have written novels acclaimed for their international allure. Nevertheless, these younger writers share with Ihimaera a vacillating determination to also abide by the tropes of earlier Maori fiction. In particular, Morris's first novel, *Queen of Beauty*, understates the Maori heritage of its principal character in her trajectory from New Orleans to Auckland. By contrast, her short story "Rangatira," collected in Kidman's *The Best New Zealand Fiction Two*, revisits a colonial moment in which Maori are evicted from ancestral lands. Movement back and forth between Maori and international centres goes against the grain of Bourdieu's and Casanova's theories of literary evolution, which are based on trends in literary development noticed across at least 200 years, throughout Europe, and in several languages. According to their model, Maori literature would be expected to open out from its earlier local specificity catering to a predominantly national book market, to adopt aspects of literary "universality," concerned with aesthetics rather than politics, and registering difference stylistically rather than in its content. While these attributes are certainly applicable to some fiction by the aforementioned Maori writers, their simultaneous defence of fundamental cultural and aesthetic specificities to Maoritanga in other novels and short stories suggests that the binary expectations of local/global, specific/universal, and difference/similarity remain an either-or option for many Maori writers. The usual liberal pluralist substitution of such binaries by a both-and structure appears redundant in the Maori situation: these writers' oeuvre contains both positions but they are mutually exclusive and incompatible. The continuation of the early style of Maori literature indicates that there are unvoiced protocols that define appropriate subjects and stances for Maori literature, a self-censoring that may come from the Maori writers and editors and, as the New Zealand reception of *Waituhi*, *The Matriarch* and *Nights* suggests, from readers.

Ihimaera refers to such protocols when he speaks of his constant reference to Maori *kaupapa* when he is writing, an act that requires prayers and guidance as he works in constant risk of transgressing Maori acceptability (Williams, "Interview" 292, 296; Ellis 176-177). Although he is vague about what kind of transgression he means, Pearson suggests one possibility in the issue of exposing Maori knowledge of a sacred nature to a general reading public ("Witi Ihimaera" 175). King describes another kind of sacredness in *Being Pakeha* when he recalls tension between his historical fact-finding ambition and some Maori families' reluctance to speak badly of their ancestors and past (153; also qtd in During, "What Was the West?" 764). From King's findings, During deduces that it is not possible for Maori to describe their ancestors or tribal history negatively, because "the relation between the past and the present is a matter of preserving the mana of one's ancestors" (764). An indication that a similar sense of duty is applicable to Maori literature was made clear in the indignation from some quarters over Duff's severe criticism of Maori romantic traditionalism, especially the depiction in *Once Were Warriors* of the unsavoury protagonist, Jake Heke, as the modern-day embodiment of a history of slaves and barbarism.

The constant return to the early colonial period is one key theme in Maori writing which might be considered within the terms of transgression. While Ihimaera might experiment with different genres, such as science fiction or opera, or with reality, as when he blurs fantasy, dream and myth, he does not experiment with narrative perspective or mimeticism in the apparently sacred issue of Maori impoverishment and victimization at the hands of rapacious British colonials and Pakeha: *The Dream Swimmer*, *Woman Far Walking* and *Whanau II* reproduce the stance which first appeared in *New Net* and *The Matriarch*. As Ihimaera states in regards to *Whanau II*, he considered it his job to write "a documentary novel" to balance the history books (Hill). Ihimaera's view of the past is unchanged and it goes largely unchallenged and uncriticized

by Pakeha commentators and reviewers. To question Ihimaera's militancy, or to suggest that there are perhaps *other* ways of interpreting colonial history, would be to transgress a keystone of the modern Maori-Pakeha relationship, one that is in fact inscribed in the bicultural state, based on an acknowledged Pakeha fault as the source of historical and contemporary Maori marginalization.

While Pakeha critics have refrained from questioning Maori writers' reluctance to look at the past in an unconventional manner, the Australian example of Demidenko's first novel, *The Hand that Signed the Paper*, demonstrates how an unexpected perspective in a literary work can spark important debates on contemporary cultural issues.<sup>3</sup> In *The Demidenko Debate*, Andrew Riemer's view of the role of fiction disputes Ihimaera's sense of duty to write "a documentary novel." Riemer's analysis of the negative reception of Demidenko's book reveals that in writing by and about disadvantaged minority groups, the reading public is deeply uneasy about applying a postmodern "anything goes" approach that accepts unusual, unconventional or unsavoury perspectives. In response to these rather rigid expectations, Riemer finds that the pressure to be representative results in minority writers' tendency for self-censorship "at times more rigorous than communal standards would demand" (222). In the debate over responsibility to the public, which may be community based or national, or responsibility to literature, Riemer opts to support artistic freedom over political exigencies:

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<sup>3</sup> The novel describes with abject sympathy Ukrainian peasants working in Hitler's Death Squads in Jewish extermination camps. The book was immediately and spectacularly denounced as anti-Semitic by the Australian media. This charge, extended to the author herself, as a descendant of Ukrainian immigrants to Australia, stemmed from the novel's lack of revisionist guilt to modify the characters' lack of remorse. The debate on ethics attracted extensive media coverage because it won two top Australian literary prizes, which led to questioning about the politics of selection for literary prizes. A further layer of controversy occurred the following year, when Demidenko was found out to have faked her Ukrainian identity (she was, in fact, an Anglo-Australian named Helen Darville).

It is as vitally important for contemporary writers to offend against the pieties of our time as for them to be at the cutting edge of morally and politically commendable preoccupations. A healthy and robust culture must tolerate the Helen Darvilles of the world, and anyone else who might hold uncomfortable and unpleasant views about Jews, about women, about Aborigines, about gays and indeed about any conceivable subject – and we should even be prepared to shower them with prizes and distinctions. All that counts in the long run is the achievement of their work, that difficult-to-define yet readily perceptible quality of the imagination which rarely has much to do with a writer's beliefs and obsessions or with the demands of ideologies. (272-273)

Certainly, this is not to claim that, in the Maori context, writers ought to refrain from describing victimization and marginalization in the style familiar to Maori literature. Indeed, the search for the truth is a shared feature of exiled, minority and indigenous peoples, and the desire to hold onto cultural memory is a key component of their identities. Clearly, Maori writers must be able to draw from all elements of their culture and its history. However, Riemer's persistent centralizing of literary considerations of style and mode argues that the writer's choice of perspective, such as choosing to address ravages of the colonial past, must be motivated by the fiction he or she wishes to create with it, and not, primarily, by a desire to record, as Ihimaera does, a "documentary," "failed" history. The primacy of fiction allows Riemer to save *The Hand that Signed the Paper* from perfunctory dismissal due to its offensive nature, and to accept certain valuable features that Demidenko/Darville's standpoint reveals. Her novel is a provocative, and at times poignant study of highly relevant issues in contemporary, multicultural Australia, concerned with the legacy of historical guilt, and the democratic liberal conviction that people are agents of their own choice rather than conditioned by social and cultural pressures.

In Demidenko's transgression of protocols dictating appropriate perspectives and the authority to write, the debate surrounding her novel points to some of the generative energies that literature may inspire. As Anthony Julius reminds his readers, in *Transgressions: The Offences of Art*,

transgression is almost always ascribed a positive value in art because it privileges openness and hybridity over convention (20-21). Australia has a history of literary debate generated by writers mocking the national literary institution by faking or assuming identities in order to “pass” as indigenous or minority, which has generated a significant body of research.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, the situation in New Zealand literary circles is characterized by a dearth of debate. Wevers and Williams trace the causes and consequences of a national lack of contentious writing and commentary, questioning the desirability of a literature that corresponds with rather than upsets national and bicultural imperatives. Their argument suggests that a lack of transgression is as prevalent in critical discourse as in the fiction itself:

Isn't New Zealand's contemporary literary scene remarkably tame and homogenous? Isn't there a lack of tension and range in the art scene, a beige middle ground where everyone dutifully practices their art form, failing to infuriate anyone, and the policy makers tread a comfortable path to common goals? (15)

These critics claim that one way to infuse some dynamism into New Zealand letters is that “[w]e need to argue” (17). However, according to both New Zealand biculturalism and the UN “Principles and Guidelines” in general, this becomes problematic when the object of that critique is Maori. Literary politeness, it would seem, closely corresponds to the expectations of biculturalism. New Zealand's reception of Maori literature has solidified over the past twenty years: while in the unsettled period of newly instated biculturalism in the 1980s early novels *The Matriarch* and *the bone people*

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<sup>4</sup> Other than Demidenko, key debates include the Ern Malley hoax, and the Aborigine Wongar, who was discovered to be Sretan Bovic, a Yugoslav anthropologist immigrant to Australia. While Peter Carey in *My Life as a Fake* parodied the Malley affair to great effect, echoes of Wongar appear in charges of inauthentic aboriginal heritage aimed at Mudrooroo. Australian literary criticism on passing includes Dawson and Nolan, Gunew, Gunew and Spivak, and Mudrooroo. Amid a dearth of trans-Tasman scholarship, Prentice's essays “Grounding Post-Colonial Fictions” and “Questions of Post-Colonial Representation” endeavour to open the debate in New Zealand.

sparked intense literary and cultural debate, little recent work has incited such interest.

If the “tame” literary scene contributes to the way that contemporary Maori writing appears to escape critical engagement, the less mannerly media has fewer qualms about voicing protest, albeit in feigning an objective stance by reporting on impoliteness from foreigners rather than Pakeha. In their introduction to an unpublished collection of essays, *Culturalisms*, Diana Brydon, Meffan and Williams give two examples in order to query the role of politeness in unequivocal acceptance of cultural practices. At the 2004 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australians complained about New Zealanders’ tendency to spontaneously perform *haka* whenever New Zealanders won medals. During a trip to New Zealand, the American travel writer, Jenny Diski, voiced indignation at the aggressiveness of the traditional Maori welcome to visitors. Confronted with these challenges to appropriate cultural use, Maori defended their cultural practices and turned the criticism back on the critics, claiming cultural insensitivity. For Brydon, Meffan and Williams, such defence forecloses on the debate and discussion constitutive of cultural exchange:

There is a problem when all questioning of a cultural practice is met so defensively. To be impolite is to be able to register scepticism or irritation in an encounter with unfamiliar codes or with codes whose values are questioned – but it is an exchange and as such valuable. Somewhere between the emollient advocacy of unqualified admiration for the other and the diatribes of hatred [. . .] lies at least the possibility of productive cultural encounter and exchange. (Brydon et al. ms)

The editors’ advocacy of open engagement with the difficulties of cultural difference is not necessarily at odds with minority self-regulation and reluctance to accept outside input. Rather, the essays in the collection, addressing New Zealand biculturalism along with Australian, Canadian, Fijian and Brazilian multiculturalisms, do not intend to denigrate bi- and multiculturalisms but to promote awareness of their pitfalls. Wevers and

Williams, along with the editors and contributors of *Culturalisms* all demonstrate a willingness to engage and to argue, a position based on confidence rather than fear of transgression, of saying the wrong thing. This stance, although valid in the academic frame of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural scholarship, is not immune to criticism. Even though some commentators on postcolonial debate are themselves from cultures labelled minorities, or whose long careers confirm their deep commitment to their nation's cultures, the postcolonial predicament of presumed unequal power relations between Western academic subject and minority object is never far from the surface.

Said gives an eloquent instance of the pervasiveness and the difficulty of dealing with cross-cultural interpretation and criticism in the postcolonial field. Despite his long career as commentator, spokesman and supporter of minority causes, the eminent critic is still vulnerable to the subaltern charge of collapsing difference in the service of mainstream academic hegemony ("The Politics of Knowledge"). In "Orientalism Reconsidered," Said considers the peculiarities of his seminal text's reception and criticism from various fields and disciplines. He asks whether

in identifying and working through anti-dominant critiques, subaltern groups—women, blacks, and so on—can resolve the dilemma of autonomous fields of experience and knowledge that are created as a consequence. A double kind of possessive exclusivism could set in: the sense of being an excluding insider by virtue of experience (only women can write for and about women, and only literature that treats women or Orientals well is good literature), and second, being an excluding insider by virtue of method (only Marxists, anti-orientalists, feminists can write about economics, Orientalism, women's literature). (215)

New Zealand institutionalized biculturalism, and the UN "Principles and Guidelines" propose the very option that Said contests, privileging indigenous "autonomous fields of experience and knowledge" and "possessive



exclusivism”—terms which are not construed as a “dilemma” which needs fixing, but as something positive, which needs protecting. By contrast, and in the same optic as the critics of cultural propriety cited above, Said defends the need for “counter-knowledges” that work across disciplines in order to constantly (re)define contexts in ways that move the debate forward (215).

The seemingly irrefutable presence of apparently fundamental differences between each postcolonial minority artistic, literary and cultural vision, and that of other minority and Western cultural outsiders, makes it difficult for even the most culturally sensitive critic to endeavour to interpret minority literature in any way that might risk contradicting that minority perspective. Indeed, for Stanley Fish, the task is impossible. In “Boutique Multiculturalism, or Why Liberals Are Incapable of Thinking about Hate Speech,” Fish turns the question of assuming a critical posture towards other cultures into a critique of facile liberalism. He postulates that notions of multiculturalism, heterogeneity and polyphony fail because they do not accept that beliefs can be fundamental. Instead, “boutique multiculturalism” is thinly disguised liberal universalism, which places tolerance in the place of vigorous debates which, although unlikely to be resolved, need to be argued out loud and clear. For Fish, failing to confront ethnic or racial difference is an unacceptable lassitude:

[D]o you really show respect for a view by tolerating it, as you might tolerate the buzzing of a fly? Or do you show respect when you take it seriously enough to oppose it, root and branch? (388)

The bold, provocative tone detected in Wevers and Williams’s challenge to New Zealand letters, in the *Culturalisms* introduction, and in Riemer’s, Said’s and Fish’s arguments, reveals a perhaps irresolvable incoherence between culture-centred demands, which support indigenous sovereignty based on fundamental differences, and literary demands, which privilege critique and through this, multiplicity of interpretation. For Riemer and Said, the import of

literary and intellectual work surpasses the risk of transgressing cultural etiquette: interpreting, comparing, criticizing and judging is necessary in the expectation that different perspectives might offer valid and valuable insights into literary production. This position is thwarted, however, by Fish's insistence on the existence of deep moral convictions that cannot tolerate such interrogation. In another kind of catch-22, in *Transgressions*, Julius also outlines limits to artistic representation—even in transgressive art—when faced with events such as the Holocaust that themselves violate social and fundamental human taboos (186-221).

Ihimaera appears to concur with Fish and Julius, in his unwavering, staunch support for Maori sovereignty and the precepts of cultural difference evident in the strong authorial authority of his literature of race relations, such as in the second paragraph cited from *Whanau II*. In an interview, he likens himself to the traditional elders and old whales of his early stories "The Whale" and *The Whale Rider*, whose attachment to tradition looks dated in the changing modern world: "I think I'm going to be one of those old whales that I sometimes write about, perhaps trying to draw the parameters too closely to what is Maori and what isn't" (Ellis 176). Elsewhere, he defines himself as "an old essentialist":

My job is to reinforce the structures of power and meaning for the Maori body politic. [. . .] I consider myself to be a Maori seeking sovereignty of both person and nation. Oppression is a historically-associated condition which Maori have managed to escape from though, of course, the primary structures of power are still Pakeha.  
(e-mail to Meklin)

Ihimaera's unequivocal declaration broaches no argument, as he quite clearly asserts his cultural registration over and above literary considerations, thereby siding with an essentialist and exclusivist view of indigeneity. However, this position marks only one aspect of his consideration of cultural identity through fiction. At the other end of the spectrum, he also supports diaspora.

### Indigenous Diaspora

The ongoing indigenous insistence on cultural differentiation and exclusivism is somewhat at odds with the trend in postcolonial studies over the past decade to move away from community-centred analyses to focus on movement and interaction. The revised second edition of *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, which includes new sections on diaspora and globalization, might perhaps best sum up this trend. One reason for this shifting emphasis is surely the importance—perhaps even the predominance—of a number of significant migrant writers, including Rushdie, Naipaul, Ishiguro, Seth, Ghosh, and Mistry, many of whom are also active cultural commentators. Indeed, Rushdie's critical writings have consistently conceived of identity formation as played out in movement between constituencies. As his character in *Shame* famously puts it, the immigrant is “a translated man . . . borne across” (*Shame* 24). The way that these writers have made their homes in the UK, USA and Canada, and in the English language, challenges the expectation that fiction comes from ex-colonies while criticism belongs in and to the West, a notion equally dispelled by eminent critics of non-European backgrounds working in Western universities, including Aijaz Ahmad, Bhabha, Gunew, Gassan Hage, Said and Spivak. Similarly, the postcolonial university “circuit” of fellowships, funding and guest lectureships ensures international support of writers who circulate between their home and overseas institutions. Recent New Zealand examples include Maori poet Robert Sullivan, currently at the University of the South Pacific in Hawai'i, and Ihimaera, recently Distinguished Visitor at the University of Tasmania, and soon to take up a residency at the Binger Institute in Amsterdam. The parallel development in sociology and anthropology of research into diaspora and transnationalism has also had an impact, as has the rapid rise and spread of theories of globalization.

Questions of movement might seem less relevant to white settler and indigenous peoples writing from their postcolonial locations than to migrant, exile and refugee communities, often writing from Western centres. However, the way that indigenous writing has also entered into the themes and jargon of cultural movement stymies an expectation of a split in postcolonial studies brought about by seemingly different imperatives of movement or rootedness. As explored in chapter four in regards to *The Return*, Ihimaera's interest in transculturation would appear to contradict the emphasis on locality and specificity for indigenous recognition and rights, in which literature has played such a strong part. Maori and New Zealand commentators have difficulty deciding how to interpret the growing Maori interest in corporatization and delocalization that global capitalism and increased movement facilitates. Evans's critique of recent Maori fiction, which he finds caters to a predominantly mainstream Western readership ("On Originality"), is representative of deep-seated expectations that postcolonial literature ought to portray significant cultural difference through structure, language and subject matter. For Huggan, English and Casanova, the tendency for minority writers to eschew writing of difference that is difficult, opaque and potentially inaccessible to a Western readership, reflects the power of the mainstream publishing industry to shape postcolonialism for a global market. While their studies are surely important in sketching common parameters of postcolonial cultural content, prize-winning and circulation, the broad scope of their texts restricts their ability to attend to questions of a writer's more immediate local or national motivations.

Rather than international postcolonial trends, the emergence of Maori writers and fiction is primarily linked to the Maori sovereignty and cultural Renaissance movements, and its ongoing promulgation is a response to national biculturalism. Although New Zealand's institutionalized biculturalism might

appear protectionist and exclusivist,<sup>5</sup> it is not intended to restrict cultural sharing between indigenous and non-indigenous, but to ensure that Maori profit from their intellectual and cultural property. Thus Maori literature has benefited from national prioritizing of its indigenous culture through, for example, targeted government funding, Maori control of its arts, tribal corporatization, and the global entertainment industry. From Huggan's or English's point of view, Ihimaera might be criticized for bowing to the trends of marketable postcolonial and globalization clichés in *The Return* and in his involvement in the 2002 film *Whale Rider*. Yet these interests reflect contemporary national, as much as postcolonial trends, as New Zealand encourages incoming tourism and investment at the same time as, in the outgoing direction, New Zealanders are travelling, working and taking their businesses overseas. Although he is no longer a diplomat, Ihimaera is well aware of his ambassadorial role for New Zealand as well as for Maori, as this following speech at the New York première of *Whale Rider* illustrates:

New Zealand is, of course, Middle Earth of *Lord of the Rings*. Tom Cruise will turn it into medieval China in his forthcoming movie, *The Last Samurai*. We are whoever you want to find. A place of adventure. A place of discovery. A place of culture. [. . .] Come down to New Zealand. There are great riches there in that lighthouse at the end of the world. And do enjoy *Whale Rider*.  
(handwritten draft speech, New York)

In the outgoing direction, *The Return* portrays New Zealand and Maori identity as diasporic. In this novel, Ihimaera's Maori protagonist, Tom, joins his own international trajectory to that of other New Zealanders, both Pakeha and Maori:

New Zealanders are taking their place in their own land and throughout the world. Wherever we meet, we cry, sing and chant our

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<sup>5</sup> This argument gained currency during the 2005 election campaign, as oppositional parties, the National Party and New Zealand First both called into question current Maori preferential treatment in the interests of a "one nation" approach.

songs through a hostile universe and, when we gather together, it is like a tribe around a campfire telling our stories of the iwi to each other. We are a great diaspora of brilliant innovative young minds whom New Zealand has educated and raised. To what purpose, if not for us to go back out into the world with all our entrepreneurial skills, the same skills that brought all our forebears to New Zealand in the first place? (321)

From the point of view of current New Zealand biculturalism, predicated on ineluctable differences between indigenous Maori and later settlers, Ihimaera's blending "we" is problematic. It suggests that the transculturation brought about by a common nationality, education, lifestyle and, most importantly, the sharing of collective narratives in "our songs" and "our stories," has subsumed the longstanding differences of history. This suggests an intimacy in Maori-Pakeha relations, a long-term relationship and mutual understanding that contradicts the bicultural emphasis on difference and distance. By joining the discovery and arrival stories of Maori *waka* and colonial ships to New Zealand, the narrator anticipates and dispels criticism that Maori are necessarily bound to their indigenous location and therefore out of the loop of diasporic networking and voyaging. The implication of return in Ihimaera's "go[ing] back out into the world" joins Maori to the analogous Pakeha enactment of foundational voyages from Great Britain. However, Ihimaera's position in the above passage is uncertain, as he shifts from the third person "they" of the first sentence to the first person "we" of the second. The first sentence reveals a slight hesitancy in the collapsing of Maori and Pakeha foci into an undifferentiated New Zealand "we," an unconscious distancing device that goes against the novel's emphatic insistence that Maori are as mobile and as *au fait* with globalization as Pakeha.

In the above passage, the image of New Zealanders meeting up around the world calls to mind the bar scene in London at the novel's beginning, which might be described as "a tribe around a campfire telling our stories of the iwi to each other." In this, Tom asserts that Maori can retain their deep connection to tribal land and traditions and also maintain an international metropolitan

lifestyle. The opening chapters of *The Return* exemplify a diasporic community of the kind that Appadurai labels *ethnoscape*. Tom and the young New Zealanders he meets in the London bar are adept at fitting in to their foreign environment; they have good jobs, social networks and interact with the locals. Nevertheless, their tendency to gravitate towards fellow New Zealanders, to talk of current events and signal moments from their home culture rather than—or in comparison with—London, illustrates the strategies of diasporic communities which retain and propagate their home cultures abroad. Ihimaera's novel also enacts another key feature of diaspora, that of nostalgia and yearning for return. Tom describes his love for his homeland in fighting terminology, of having "a country to live for and to die for," while his girlfriend puts it in the more plangent terms of "palpable" longing: "you New Zealanders wear your hearts on your sleeves. You people cry over your country even in pubs and bars" (180). The young New Zealanders describe their wish to return in equally emotional language: "I do feel the distance *keenly* and *yearn* for the time when I am able to return. A trip now and then usually keeps the *ache* under control" (181, my emphases). Ihimaera's vocabulary is inscribed in the rhetoric of divorce and displacement, characteristic of the exiled and persecuted peoples to which the term diaspora is usually attributed, such as Jews, Armenians, Irish and Africans. It would appear inappropriate to align modern-day New Zealanders in London with such communities, especially as Ihimaera's characters choose to go overseas, and can afford to return at will. Nevertheless, Ihimaera's formulation is typical of a shift in the term's terminology and a widening of its usage.

In a recent survey of the way diaspora is applied to a range of contemporary situations, the editors of *Les diasporas dans le monde contemporain* note the term's shifting meaning in the 1990s from a strict binary structure to that of a discursive, aleatory hybridity (Berthomière and Chivallon 16-17). The etymological sense of forced dispersion of diaspora's Hebraic

origins, which maintains a sense of cultural continuity through a strongly imagined connection to a lost homeland, gives way to postmodern fragmentation, in which diaspora is emblematic of “interstitial configuration,” refusing “the univocal evocation of identity maintenance” (17).<sup>6</sup> While these French sociologists inscribe this new trend in the terminology of deconstruction, postmodernism and cultural studies, this latter sense also connects with postcolonialism’s shifting bias, and the delocalization proposed by theorists of globalization and transculturation. Robertson’s use of “world space,” or the local as a micro manifestation of the global, means that “home” is no longer inevitably fused to locality:

Where, in other words, is home in the late-twentieth century? [. . .] in the present situation of global complexity, the idea of home has to be divorced analytically from the idea of locality. There may well be groups and categories which equate the two, but [. . .] [w]e must be careful not to remain in thrall to the old and rather well established view that cultures are organically binding and sharply bounded. (39)

In a similar call for postnationalist flexibility, Appadurai sees the end to patriotism: as diasporic communities are held together by the idea rather than the reality of a nation, that is to say, the “imagined community,” essentialist concepts such as blood and land are redundant. This inspires Appadurai to posit an idealist postnational, multicentred model for identity based on chaos theory of flux and contingency (232-233).

The place of indigeneity is problematic in the globalized diasporic model. If Clifford’s Mashpee Indians are successful in the second sense of diaspora, according to Robertson’s and Appadurai’s criteria, then that is at the expense of the former, more restricted and wholly negative sense of exile, which recognizes that forced migrancy nonetheless keeps the home fires burning in the collective imaginary. In fact, the metaphor of the home fire, in native guardianship of sacred and tribal ground, is a prerequisite for Maori

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<sup>6</sup> “[L]e recours à l’évocation univoque du maintien identitaire.” *My translation.*



*hapu* claims in front of the Waitangi Tribunal, as the maintenance of an unbroken tie to the land dually recognizes the existence of Maori ownership and—or rather, in spite of—the forced exile from that land by colonial displacement, urbanization and fragmentation due to Pakeha integrative politics. Thus, in the legal framing of the Waitangi Tribunal, and national framing of the Treaty charter, the form of diaspora that applies to Maori is more clearly related to exile, with its connotation of domination and marginalization, than with that of globalization’s postmodern choice. This causes some confusion in Ihimaera’s employment of the term in *The Return*, in which the rhetoric of loss and homecoming, in the language of longing employed by Tom and the young New Zealanders in London, belies the author’s positive approach to globalization discourse. His seeming lack of control of his term’s meaning, like the slippage from third to first person, indicates that although Ihimaera glibly employs generalizations such as “New Zealander” and “diaspora,” there is perhaps a limit to this. For Ihimaera, although not mutually exclusive, indigeneity and diaspora remain in problematic tension with an implied hierarchy, as the notion of home takes precedence over that of global non-attachment. New Zealanders are encouraged to “go back out into the world with all our entrepreneurial skills,” yet are also expected to return—or at least use a language of nostalgia that shows that they would like to.

In its physical moving back and forth between cultures and cultural spaces, travelling problematizes, or at least challenges, the rootedness of Maori culture. Ihimaera resolves this potential tension by claiming, in *The Return*, that all New Zealanders, like the migratory birds, the godwits, eventually return home. This generalization surely does not always hold true, but the Maori tenet “born a Maori, die a Maori and be buried by his people,” an affirmation Ihimaera evokes in instances when his cultural registration is under pressure, asserts a groundedness that overrides the disruptions of travel (Amery 14;

Findlay 76). Such a configuration of diaspora as culturally bounded movement, intimated in Ihimaera's allusion to Maori ocean-going antecedents in the above extract from *The Return*, prompts Clifford to offer some indigenous manifestations of diasporic identity. In the Berthomière and Chivallon collection, Clifford extends the notion of travelling in dwelling/dwelling in travelling in his earlier text *Routes* to a context of indigenous diaspora. Unlike the aspect of displacement inherent in the exile sense of the term diaspora, indigenous attachments to the land "begin and end with dwelling, lives rooted, profoundly, in one place" (Clifford, "Indigenous Diasporas" 50). Clifford's phrase, which echoes Ihimaera's stress on Maoriness at birth and death, does not preclude the possibility of indigenous migrancy. Clifford describes a spectrum of social practices along a continuum from stasis to movement which deploy traditional structures such as kinship to ensure that indigenous people living outside tribal areas do not empty out the rural hearths, but rather extend those territories (59). To adapt his study of the Native Alaskan Yup'ik to a Maori context, the anthropologist recognizes that "Maori" identity includes multiple possibilities, with the individual attaching his or her identity differently, depending on the context: as an individual, as part of a *hapu*, local family, as situated in tribal affiliation, as Maori, as pan-indigenous, as a New Zealander: for Clifford, "there is no linear, zero-sum relation between rural and urban, old and new, social performances or scales of affiliation" (60). In this, Clifford argues for a compartmentalized, complex and flexible indigenous identity, one that stresses rather than avoids tension and complexity on both individual and community levels. Maori cultural analogies to this perspective are found in the images of the rope of man and the spiral, both motifs that maintain connection and continuity, and to which Ihimaera frequently alludes in *The Return*.

Clifford's citing of Wendt, Hau'ofa and Teresia Teaiwa's studies of Pacific voyaging points to one sense of diaspora that could pertain to Maori

(*Routes*, “Indigenous Diasporas”). Indeed, in several articles, Hau’ofa and Wendt argue for a long history of inter-island movement and exchange across the Pacific. This translocality makes networks of greater and lesser blocs of pan-Pacific (linguistic, national, ethnic, economic) entities, with constantly changing dynamics. Far from perceiving island communities as isolated from European or American-centred commercial patterns of global movement, the notion of Pacific diaspora argues for a history of contact. Yet, Maori reluctance to include Pacific Islanders in their cultural and social configuration of bicultural New Zealand indicates another problematic incompatibility in the terms indigenous and diaspora.<sup>7</sup> The dualism inherent in biculturalism, which places Maori in the position of indigenous, original hosts, sets Pacific Islanders on the other side of that undifferentiated non-Maori other, as immigrants and overstayers rather than as relatives and guests.<sup>8</sup> Although Pacific Islanders inhabit an undefined grey area in this respect, grounds for seeing the Maori-Pacific Island relationship as binary rather than dialogic is found in the separate allocation of government funding in areas such as health.

Maori literature, intent on describing and defining its own life world, similarly excludes its relationships with the Pacific, an absence which is all the more striking because of the ever-increasing presence of “Pasifika” in other branches of Maori arts.<sup>9</sup> Evans notes, for example, that Rarotongan-New

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<sup>7</sup> Leaders of the Maori Party, Tariana Turia and Peter Sharples, may be redressing this situation in a 2007 move to reach out to Pacific peoples as allies for the Maori Party. In a recent statement, the Maori Party called for limits on immigration from Great Britain, Europe, the Americas and Australia, as this was unfairly diluting the “browning-up” of New Zealand. Dan Eaton, “Maori call for migrant cutback.”

<sup>8</sup> The language of host and guest is useful in the postcolonial context, although so far has found little favour in New Zealand discussion. Perhaps its most thorough study to date is in the context of French immigration from its ex-colonies, in Mireille Rosello’s *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest*.

<sup>9</sup> Examples include: visual media such as the “Panui Pasifika” programme on Maori Television Station, animated series *Bro Town*, films *No. 2*, by Fijian playwright Toa Frazer, and *Sione’s Wedding*, by the Naked Samoans; performatively, such as the new All Blacks’ *haka* or Auckland’s “Soifua” Maori and Polynesian cultural tourism and entertainment company; magazines such as *First Pacific: A PasifikAsia Lifewriting Journal*; in Maori-Pacific Island music such as “Nesian Mystik” and “Sheelahroc.”

Zealand writer Alistair Campbell, despite his significant writing about both Polynesian and Maori, “has had nowhere comfortable to ‘fit’” (“Pakeha-Style Biculturalism” 27). Similarly, in Maori fiction there is little evidence of Maori characters and their lifestyles interacting with those of their Pacific cousins, even though a significant number of short stories collected in *Te Ao Marama* and Huia’s anthologies, and no less several of Ihimaera’s novels, are set in urban Auckland, where Maori and Pasifika communities intermix. In a comparable silence, Maori fiction rarely engages with the experiences of other New Zealand immigrant groups of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, even though parallels might be drawn in terms of cultural and social marginalization. Writing from other minorities is a little documented aspect of New Zealand literature, and Maori lack of differentiation in this regard accords with the broader national silence in the arts towards its immigrant communities (see Nola; David Pearson; Wittmann). Outside of his fiction, Ihimaera is positive about the potential “cultural transformation” brought by immigrant difference, however he is firm about the state’s bicultural responsibilities to privilege Maori:

I don’t look at immigrants [. . .] as threatening unless they begin to influence national power structures so that they are malignant to Maori. What Maori have to make sure of is that they have the power to prevent this. (E-mail to Meklin)

Yet another surprising omission is the scarcity of other indigenous peoples in Maori fiction. In agreement with the UN’s identifying of common features of indigeneity, Maori share many cultural, social and political similarities with Australian Aborigine, US Amerindian, and Canadian First Nations and Inuit indigenous groups. As I suggested in chapter four, in a frame of cross-cultural interaction that attaches the local to the global rather than the nation, similarities and connections with other cultures become apparent. However,

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Ihimaera's recounting of his experiences in Canada in *The Uncle's Story* remains one of the few texts that explore such possibilities.

By contrast, Maori literature's engagement with the postcolonial interest in diaspora, transculturation and globalization expresses a preference for describing Maori-Western interaction rather than exploring the regional attachments which might anchor Maori in the Pacific. Recent novels that attach Maori to foreign urban centres include the New Orleans of Morris's *Queen of Beauty*, Shanghai in *Hibiscus Coast*, London in Morey's *Grace is Gone*, and Italy and Greece for the historical attachment of the Maori Battalion in World War Two in George's *Hummingbird*. Significantly, the Maori location of each of these novels consists of only a temporary trip home to family or tribal ground for protagonists who make their livelihoods elsewhere. Thus Maori diaspora is portrayed contrastively rather than as integral to the local Maori community of each novel's setting. Diaspora as difference and distance rather than indigenous continuity is also revealed in the titles of *Tangi* and *The Return*. The funeral wake is a temporary event and thus the novel *Tangi* marks a brief caesura in Tama's urban life. Similarly, while the later novel documents another of Tama/Tom's returns to Waituhi, this too is a short break that, thanks to technology and communication, does not even disrupt the steady structure of his London life.

While Tom in *The Return* and the younger Tama in *Tangi* successfully negotiate the dual Maori-urban, Maori-international responsibilities of their chosen paths within the timeframe of each novel's setting, the reader is less convinced that these characters offer a general blueprint for a sustainable future in which Maori retain distinct features of their cultural attachment while being simultaneously mobile. Pearson in 1982 first questions the viability of Ihimaera's early fiction as a potentially redemptive template for Maori culture negotiating between urban and tribal centres. In *Tangi*, Pearson acknowledges the dramatic effect of Tama's pledge to return to Waituhi after his father's

death to protect and provide for his mother and sisters. However, he finds that Ihimaera's voice is neither convinced nor convincing, as Tama's work skills are located in a Wellington office, not on the family farm, and with much of the *whanau* already dispersed, he will be hard pressed to cope on his own ("Witi Ihimaera" 171-172). In a prescient hypothesis, Pearson wonders whether Tama's future is "to return to meet the challenge of the city, spiritually refreshed by the sense of whanaungatanga" (172). In the rewritten *Tangi*, Ihimaera does not clarify the matter of torn loyalties, duty to the family or the individual. Tama is equivocal about his future plans: on the same page he agrees with his whanau that "[n]o matter where we go, we will always leave our hearts here," which suggests an acceptance of fragmented, urban living, yet he greets his Pakeha girlfriend back in Wellington already looking to return: "'[w]hat comes now?' [. . .] Will she come back to Waituhi with me?'" (164).

Contrasted with the intensely emotional portrayal of Maoritanga in *Tangi*, the mature Tom's much more pragmatic version in *The Return* gives the impression that Pearson's urban alternative is feasible. Indeed, Tama/Tom's siblings have resolved the lack of continuity criticized in the earlier novel, as they take on the family farm and support their mother, aided by Tom's financial support and Mahana Wine's business success, which includes his sister's strategic marriage to a winemaker. The impoverished Maori enclave of the earlier novel, peopled with the elderly and children, is now thriving. This, combined with Tom's ability to organize his workload in order to return to Waituhi when necessary, allows the protagonist to proudly claim, as in the prequel, that he belongs to the *iwi* and that Waituhi remains "the place of the heart, the centre of my universe" (219). However, a similar criticism to that expressed by Pearson might be levelled at the utopist conclusion to *The Return*. Tom, like Ihimaera, belongs to a pivotal generation of Maori who were born in the pre-urban shift of rural communities in which traditional Maoritanga still dominated social structure, but who were educated, and today predominantly

live in urban national and international settings. Ihimaera first describes this crossing over in the image of “striding both worlds” in his 1973 *Tangi*, repeating the same scene in *The Return* as “to straddle” Pakeha and Maori cultural expectations (203). Just as Pearson notes a schism between the rural and the urban in the earlier work, a contemporary equivalent is apparent in the generation gap between Tom/Ihimaera and their children. Although Tom unequivocally declares that his heart belongs in Waituhi, it is unlikely that his children would make the same claim, as they were brought up in a mixed marriage in a predominantly Pakeha cultural frame, and with considerable international experience. Tom’s contact with his children, by telephone, is sporadic and rushed, as they go about their hectic lives travelling and working overseas. Even though Tom depicts this as an exciting, positive, irrefutably modern way of living, the repercussions of such individualism for Maoritanga are unclear, as there is no sign that these young adults possess any sense of responsibility to their Maori *whanau* or Waituhi. Although Tom confidently declares that New Zealanders return like the godwits, and actually pleads with his son on the phone to visit his grandmother in Waituhi before she dies, this generation’s connection with place is tenuous because emotional and nostalgic rather than direct and continuous. Just as Pearson asks of the earlier Tama’s pledge to return, “who will he marry?” (172), a similar question can be asked of Tom’s children: with their father in London and their grandmother gone, whom will they visit? One can only imagine that Tom’s sisters’ children, brought up in Waituhi, are more likely candidates to carry on Maori cultural practices, both traditional, such as maintaining the meeting house, *marae* rituals, prioritizing the family, and modern, such as in land claims, corporatization and trust funds. Yet this is not certain either, as the national trend for young people to travel and work abroad may lead them away in turn, as it did Tama.

Ihimaera’s fiction to date centres around a Maori protagonist of his own hinge generation, and on plot lines that negotiate contemporary Maoritanga

informed by and situated in relation to history and the traditions of the past—a past that is still in living memory. His work does not address potentially tense relationships between his own and younger generations, or explore possible futures for Maori culture. This silence in Ihimaera’s oeuvre hints at the limits of globalization, hybridization and diaspora discourses as applied to the expression of a composite local-global indigenous identity in Maori fiction. Ihimaera’s enthusiastic embracing of diaspora in his latest novel threatens a deep sense of rootedness in the land and with traditional Maori community that, for older generations, are keystones to their identity. A sense of changing obligations to Maoritanga is evident in Ihimaera’s comparing his own “essentialist” stance, cited earlier, with his children’s ambitions:

[I]t’s appropriate for me and my generation to take a more essentialist position on [Maori identity] than it would be for my daughters, because they live in a different reality. My daughters don’t come from Waituhi, they’ve always lived in Wellington, so they don’t have the same sort of historical imperative I feel, to put things right.  
(Shepherd, “The Storyteller” 54)

The generation gap here enacts a change in the way of understanding Maori identity that resembles the shift from indigeneity to diaspora outlined above. Ihimaera’s emphasis on professional and economic diaspora, moving for work and money, illustrates a facet of Maori identity that is not culturally defined or controlled. This contests one of the principal ideologies on which Maori sovereignty and the Renaissance is founded, and on which the UN “Principles and Guidelines” charter is based, that is, the idea that one is born Maori (indigenous), and that cultural identity, therefore, is an innate, genealogically determined quality. To claim that there is a facet of Maori identity that escapes this rubric challenges the culturalism which pervades contemporary New Zealand’s social and political climate. It is contentious to claim that one chooses to be Maori, or that Maori is one, compartmentalized aspect of a composite, plural identity that, as Clifford’s indigenous diaspora suggests, is



potentially in tension with other aspects. However, the opportunities for detachment that globalization offers show the mechanism of this choice at work. With its presuppositions of hybridity and movement that challenge cultural homogeneity and community responsibility in favour of multiplicity and individual free choice, globalization calls into question the assumption of cultural patriotism on which minority and indigenous identity depends.

For the young, undifferentiated New Zealanders of *The Return*, “a great diaspora of brilliant innovative young minds” taking their entrepreneurial skills into the world, the link to home is potentially insecure, as are the cultural foundations which foster a notion of home in the first place. The generation gap is evident, for example, in a comparison of Ihimaera’s own international career and that of the majority of younger Maori. In 1986, Ihimaera’s New York experience prompts his claim of being Maori in the world. He interprets New York signs by calling on the cultural reference points, the whales and meeting house patterns, that he was surrounded with during his childhood in rural Waituhi. Furthermore, his diplomatic role from 1972 to 1990 meant that he was consciously representing Maori and New Zealand during his travels, a role that extends to his status as celebrated national writer and evident, for example, in his publicity promotion for New Zealand tourism in his *Whale Rider* première speech. Ihimaera’s representative role stands in contrast to the vast majority of Maori and Pakeha who have moved to London, Sydney and major cities in the USA for study and work purposes. The difference is clear in the respective international trajectories in *The Uncle’s Story* and *The Return*. Michael and Roimata choose to work for Maori, a decision which entails working in local communities and within government structures. Travelling here consists only of short visits with a representative focus, as in the Canadian conference. On the other hand, in *The Return* the young London-based New Zealanders, and Tom’s daughter in international banking, exemplify careers that can be adapted to almost any

country. Even Tom's son, who works for Greenpeace, represents a more general New Zealand, rather than specifically Maori career choice, as the organization is strongly associated with a national view of ecology and the environment.

Outside of fiction, the same choice mechanism operates in cities which boast a significant New Zealand population. In London, the New Zealand Embassy's Ngati Ranana Maori cultural group and urban *marae* centre welcomes Maori, Pakeha and non-New Zealanders to participate in Maori cultural events and *kapa haka*. This "tribe" is not based on indigeneity or a *kaupapa* intent on promulgating Maoritanga as a whole way of living. Ngati Ranana's function as one part of its members' identities contrasts with the extensive infrastructure proposed by Ngai Tahu Corporation—effectively a privatized version of the social state—which offers everything the culture needs to survive and prosper, from underwriting housing loans to providing tertiary education scholarships, from distributing learning media and books to creating work opportunities. Distance reinserts the fact that for many Maori, both in New Zealand and overseas, their Maoritanga is just one facet of the complex, multiple, composite layers which make up their identity.

Both Ngati Ranana and Ngai Tahu in different ways reflect the success of the Maori Renaissance reclamation of traditional foundations on which to base newly traditional ways to be Maori: the former offers a compartmentalized, and the latter a corporatized version of Maori culture. Both are indicative of the very real break that occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century, which changed the direction in which Maori identity has developed. Whereas Ihimaera can claim to have been born a Maori because of the time and place of his generation, an "innate" indigeneity based on a secure sense of *turangawaewae* that he may carry with him all over the world, this is not necessarily the case for post-urban drift Maori. For many Maori, including some of Ihimaera's peers, self-identification is not as much a case of being

born and brought up Maori as of (re)discovering Maori ancestry as an adult: Ngai Tahu advertises its services and Ngati Ranana is, for many Maori members, their first contact with the culture.<sup>10</sup> The choice to study the language and culture requires an effort that entails a degree of commitment to local, often tribally-defined, *marae*-centred communities: rather than moving away from New Zealand with a secure cultural identity, this implies gravitating towards a more intensely local sense of place than the predominantly urban and Pakeha experience of nationhood. Another sort of choice is in operation for Maori who place their children in Maori education, which has become increasingly separated from mainstream national schooling, to the point where there are young adults in New Zealand today who have limited skills in English. Clearly, Ihimaera's global, diasporic sense of Maoritanga, described in his own career and in his novel *The Return*, does not encompass these two common experiences of Maori identity made possible by national biculturalism.

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<sup>10</sup> Member profiles, [www.ngatiranana.org.uk](http://www.ngatiranana.org.uk)

### Eidolon and Ambivalence in Maori Identity

Both extracts from *Whanau II* and *The Return* discussed in the above sections display an uncertainty in Ihimaera's stance: the terms indigeneity and diaspora not only lack the scope to fully account for Ihimaera's vision of Maoritanga, but also work against each other. In the extract from *Whanau II*, consecutive paragraphs register sudden shifts in the narrator's stance towards his subject matter and his reader, while in *The Return* the same ambivalence is registered between consecutive sentences. Ihimaera's oeuvre demonstrates an array of such inconsistencies that upset attempts to classify and contain his Maori voice. Ihimaera alludes to his shifting positionality with the image of the eidolon, which he defines as a projection of himself which both is and is not real. The Maori writer identifies with the way his grandmother "used to make this image of herself and send it out, which was different to the sort of person that she really was for us" (Ellis 179). In his own case, Ihimaera is proud to be told, "Witi, you don't really exist, you're just a concept" (180). The term eidolon itself enacts its own fluidity: the concept is traceable to Plato, but Ihimaera equally describes it as a kind of hologram from Star Wars (Ellis 179) or, in an indigenous analogy, the trickster figure of Maui (e-mail to Meklin; Rask-Knudsen 2004: 61), or Tawhiri Matea, the wind, with which one elder described Ihimaera: "[w]e cannot grasp you because you are everywhere" (Williams, "Interview" 296; also qtd in Rask-Knudsen 61).

On another level of eidolon's refracted reality, Ihimaera's use of the term to describe his own personality slips into his different guises as author, narrator and characters of his own texts. Rask-Knudsen's study of Ihimaera's position in *The Matriarch* calls upon studies by other European postcolonialists whose interpretations demonstrate several layers of eidolon at work in that novel. In a blurring of fact and fiction, Jannetta posits that, for Ihimaera, "life and writing develop into an identical act" (Jannetta qtd in Rask-Knudsen 340),

while the text itself is stitched together of myths and histories that are not of Ihimaera's invention, but rather his writing of Maori oral narratives. For Joanne Tompkins, the way Ihimaera embodies plural perspectives makes the novelist a storyteller who "step[s] behind the tattooed face" to inhabit the stories of his ancestors (Tompkins qtd in Rask-Knudsen 339). By way of summary, Rask-Knudsen cites Bardolph's observation that Ihimaera juxtaposes

various styles, modes and storytelling conventions—whether complementary or contradictory—as though it were impossible to narrate the history of his people, from their origins to their present, with one voice. (Bardolph qtd in Rask-Knudsen 339)

To register a gap between the "real" Ihimaera and his authorship is to acknowledge and accept the plurality of his positions. The mask-like aspect of eidolon creates an important distance that separates the writer of fiction, and the art of fiction itself, from issues of cultural identity. By contrast with these European critics, many of Ihimaera's Pakeha and Maori commentators attempt to collapse his fiction into the writer's cultural and sexual registration, a tendency exacerbated by Ihimaera's central role in New Zealand letters, his editorial work, and the public knowledge of much of his personal history. The reception of *Waituhi*, Bilbrough's critique of *Sky Dancer*, and several reviewers' uncertainty about how to understand Ihimaera's rewrites illustrate the confusion created when the author does not correspond to bicultural and postcolonial expectations. Indeed, each of these chapters has begun by describing the impact of bicultural biases on shaping the reception and perception of Ihimaera's oeuvre: in New Zealand, Ihimaera's identity and that of his fiction is one and the same, a fact that his own insistence on his eidolon character has done little to dispel.

In a chapter entitled "Staged Marginalities," Huggan examines the common charge that minority identity, as described in ethnographic fiction, is staged and contrived rather than natural. The argument, perhaps most

infamously illustrated by Stead's attack on Hulme's Maori identity and the Maoriness she portrays in *the bone people*, replicates in a postcolonial literary context the same long-running dispute over the inventedness or naturalness of identities, particularly of nation and tradition. Huggan's position towards "staged" ethnicity is contentious, but one facet of his argument applicable to Ihimaera's chameleon-like eidolon is his claim that all identities contain performative elements (*Exotic* 95, 277). He cites Judith Butler on the performativity of the gendered body, which constitutes meaning through corporeal signs and various acts that makes gender "always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (Butler qtd in Huggan, *Exotic* 95). Drawing from Hanif Kureishi's work, Huggan reads postcolonial ethnic expression as also a matter of "doing." In a similar signalling of cultural versions of cross-dressing and fetishes, Perry in his chapter "Antipodean Camp" describes instances of New Zealand "'camping it up,'" fabricating performance of marginality while simultaneously signalling awareness of that act (6). Ihimaera's regular self-contradiction gestures towards this kind of performance and awareness, in that the eidolon principle acknowledges that positioning is about projecting, an act that Perry conveys with the phrase "the style *is* the meaning" (6).

As Ihimaera's *kaupapa* incites him to engage with many different aspects of Maoritanga and its artistic expression, the staged nature of eidolon entails that each change of context requires a change in position. Throughout his career, this has created an inconsistency of argument that Ihimaera does not seem uncomfortable with, and for which he has not been challenged. For example, to set the scene for the outward-looking Maori culture expressed in *The Uncle's Story*, the novel begins with a *marae* wedding for Michael's sister and her casino-owning Texan boyfriend. The same scenario structures the story that Ihimaera wrote for the Royal New Zealand Ballet's 2006 production, *The Wedding*. In both cases, the American link is part of Ihimaera's interest in

expressing Maori and New Zealand openness to the world. Ihimaera's opening night speech for *The Wedding*, voices this vision:

From the very beginning we wanted to create a production that was stubbornly populist, indigenous, contemporary, that would be fun as well as romantic and artistic and typically kiwi – a metaphor for this great wonderful squabbling multicultural and postcolonial tribal family of ours trying to find our future together down here at the bottom of the world. (Handwritten draft speech)

In stark contrast to this positive reading of cross-cultural relationships, Ihimaera takes the opposite view at the Canadian Indigenous Peoples' conference. In an aside during his speech decrying the "burden" of the white mainstream on indigenous culture and its arts, and promoting alternative indigenous networks, Ihimaera recounts his feeling of concern at seeing his daughter with a rich Texan boyfriend, when he would rather she marry a Maori and stay at home (conference proceedings CDRom).

It is difficult to know how to respond to such an anecdote, delivered as a confessional, personal story, and thereby expected to be heartfelt and serious. The notion of eidolon, however, projecting something that "isn't you, but it's you" (Ellis 179), offers a way of understanding that Ihimaera's viewpoint is not a problematic contradiction in his own identity, but tailored to fit the conference's context—at which he similarly chose to read from his fiction that stresses indigenous struggle against white society. Throughout his career, similar such contradictory stances abound in Ihimaera's interviews, articles and fiction, often by way of anecdote, an important feature of Maori oratory that he calls on to demonstrate both personal and general points. By nature, the anecdote is an ambivalent form of simile, one which blurs the boundaries between truth and fiction in the way that it is adapted to fit the context. For example, Pearson cites personal communication with Ihimaera in the 1970s to explain that the writer "had originally written the stories [*Pounamu*] with the aim of a wider audience and was a little disappointed" that the book was

predominantly sold to schools (“Witi Ihimaera” 168): in 1998, Ihimaera excuses that same early work for not being complex enough for some critics on the grounds that he wrote it expressly for the education market (Williams, “Interview” 281-282). In his 1981 Turnbull address, Ihimaera cites “[t]he classic tale of the writer who, when asked by a publisher ‘Who will read your books?’ responded that Maori people would. The publisher’s reply was ‘But Maoris don’t read books’” (*Turnbull*: 51): in a later interview, that “classic tale” is his own rejection by Albion Wright at Pegasus (Williams, “Interview” 282). Ihimaera’s stance towards Maori language in Maori fiction in English is also ambivalent. In his introduction to *Into the World of Light*, an anthology which does not include a glossary of Maori terms, Ihimaera claims: “to expect all Maori writing in Maori to appear with English translation would be to fail to understand what is happening to New Zealand’s no longer monolingual literature” (4-5). In a 2003 newspaper interview about his rewriting *The Whale Rider* for an international edition, in which most of the Maori language and some New Zealand-specific cultural concepts are translated or changed, Ihimaera states an aim to “remov[e] barriers of understanding” (Boniface).

Ihimaera also constantly updates and recycles between biography and fiction, using one to inform the other. His fictional Waituhi is so well known in New Zealand that readers may easily confuse fiction for reality. Ihimaera recounts that his ninety-year-old father complains that some people seem surprised to see him: as the subject of *Tangi*, they assume that he is dead (Ihimaera, personal communication). This fuzziness works equally in reverse: one of his daughters summarizes his novels as “yet another of Daddy’s autobiographies masquerading as fiction” (Sharrad, “Listening to One’s Ancestors” 4). Ihimaera relates being berated by one of his aunts for changing her name in his portrayal of her in *Whanau*: she wanted everybody to recognize her (Hill). In *Growing Up Maori*, a collection of biographies that Ihimaera edited, and which includes many prominent Maori politicians, artists and sports



stars, his father's story of his childhood and family essentially covers the main characters and historical events of *The Matriarch* and *The Dream Swimmer* (64-71). These examples suggest that Ihimaera's kaupapa to "be a witness for my times" (Avery 13; Findlay 77; Hill) is intensely personal, drawing from his life experience as in many ways illustrative of the Maori world he writes about. This may also be a contributing factor of his fiction's concentration on protagonists of his own generation, as discussed in the previous section. In acknowledgements or author's notes to *The Uncle's Story* (a Canadian First People's conference), *Whanau II* (Whanau A Kai Tribunal claim) and *The Rope of Man* (a BBC interview), Ihimaera expressly draws attention to real events that play a decisive role in the novels. One of his most frequently recycled anecdotes is that of the day his father challenged a reluctant Headmaster to enrol his son at Gisborne Boys High School. The scene is first broached in the fictional setting of *Tangi*, repeated as documentary in a *Listener* article (Findlay 79), and finds its latest fictionalization in *Tangi 2005*, where Tama's poorly educated father has, post-Maori Renaissance, found a patriotic eloquence that calls on "the indomitable courage of the undefeated" Maori (*Tangi 2005* 99). A close study from a Maori viewpoint of the interaction between fiction and non-fiction, through devices such as the anecdote, would shed welcome light on Ihimaera's technique, which suggests an apparent lack of hierarchy in attributing truth-value, originality and in distinguishing between pasts. Anecdote may be seen as a smaller scale version of his later rewriting. Both kinds of reformulations, which are unexpected in the European literary tradition, may be coherent within a Maori cultural frame.

One of Ihimaera's recent short stories, in Kidman's second volume of *The Best New Zealand Fiction*, exemplifies the performative, projected eidolon of his oeuvre. The overt posturing in this story creates an ambiguity which is compounded by the reader's uncertainty that the narrator, Wicked Ihimaera, might just also be the author, who shares this nickname (archives

correspondence). From the first sentence of “Meeting Elizabeth Costello,” the narrator aggressively reiterates postcolonial issues of displacement and marginalization, taking sides against a white Australian writer, Elizabeth Costello, whose Australian voice he brushes off as synonymous with the canonical English tradition (109-119). The narrator’s conference lecture spins through the range of postcolonial angles that have become the staple of analyzing indigeneity, speaking in impassioned clichés which are brought to a resounding finale: “[w]hen will we stop exhibiting all the classic symptoms of the Divided Self? Only when we stop feeding off the white breast” (117-8). Both characterization and plot feel suspiciously too neat and, indeed, the whole story is thrown into question at the end when Elizabeth Costello is revealed to be a man in drag:

In the mirror is reflected the image of somebody who appears to be Elizabeth Costello. But is it?

Whoever it is, is putting a wig on his head and slipping into female drag. *There’s more to our Elizabeth than meets the eye.*

At that moment, the whole history of western literature suddenly clicks into place. Why had [Wicked] never seen it before?

Appalling and chilling though it is, it all starts to make sense to him. (119)

The story’s final lines add another level of interpretative difficulty for the reader who, from the outset, seeks in the story the point of connection with J. M. Coetzee’s novel, *Elizabeth Costello*. While in Coetzee’s book the questions that the eponymous protagonist grapples with, and fails to resolve, are concerned with aestheticism, the art of fiction, and the value of the novel form as social commentary, in Ihimaera’s story the questions seem to remain on the level of identity. Yet the final lines obscure the apparently emphatic message about indigeneity, and the reader is left pondering what, exactly, “clicks into place” and “make[s] sense.” The text’s final ambiguity holds up a quite literal mirror to identity, the distorted reflection of which recalls the final section of

Coetzee's novel, on the harm of literary clichés to the writer's individuality (*Elizabeth Costello* 206-209).

Ihimaera's short story suggests the need to question postcolonial clichés on several levels. Perry's cultural studies framework sheds light on how to approach "Meeting Elizabeth Costello," in his description of a Japanese television car advertisement which "play[s] with the frame" of the audience's expectations of advertising clichés (*Hyperreality* 86). The apparently inverted gender roles—the woman in the couple is behind the wheel rather than the man—segues into ambiguous gender roles when it is revealed that the "man" is also a cross-dressing woman. The parallels with Ihimaera's short story are evident, as is the relevance of Perry's analysis. For Perry,

[the commercial] not only insinuates that each role consists of a repertoire of gestures rather than the manifestation of an essence. It also implies that their actual allocation is arbitrary and interchangeable, so that either party could have played the other part, or played the same part another way. (86-89)

What is striking here is how clearly the meaning of a certain role resides in the eyes of the beholder rather than the actor, an arbitrariness that is revealed by the speed with which the boundaries and meanings of one role change as soon as the viewer's frame is shifted. In Ihimaera's story, the characters of Wicked Ihimaera and Elizabeth Costello function in this way, as the postcolonial reader has no difficulty in accepting the validity of Wicked's oppositional stance in order to confront Costello's haughty claim that there is no such thing as indigenous literature (112). In the instant that she is revealed to be a man in drag, however, that oppositionality is subverted, as her (his) provocative antagonism becomes one of a "repertoire of gestures": Costello is playing a game with Ihimaera the character, and Ihimaera the author is playing a game with the reader. Perry's multiple interpretations of the car advertisement might equally be adapted to an analysis of Ihimaera's short story. If the reader believes that Wicked seriously supports his impassioned plea for the total

divorce of indigenous literature from the Western canon, then the story propagates the Maori challenge and subversion of English literature. If, on the other hand, the reader doubts the sincerity of either or both the narrator and the main character, then the ironic distance this generates turns the story into a symbolic challenge to postcolonial pigeonholing that expects such a show of protest. Or, to take Perry's reading of Barthes, Wicked Ihimaera does not "play" the Maori, or "copy" him, but only "signif[ies]" Maori, "and hence acts as a sign of pure difference," a ghostly figure, in Deleuze's terms that, like the eidolon, is only as solid as the immediate context which constructs him. Finally, though, Perry finds that the advertisement's most plausible interpretation is as a joke rather than serious commentary: "it might be read as a 'pleasurable' contemporary articulation of the enduring tensions between socially distinct subject positions and the discrete readings which they sanction" (91).

To interpret some Maori fiction, such as "Meeting Elizabeth Costello," but also *Sky Dancer*, as fun and playful as opposed to containing a core of serious socio-political "truth," does not mean that such fiction is less important, or that Ihimaera's eidolon trickster side is any less valuable for the exploration of a full range of Maori cultural expression. As Perry points out, humour can reveal "enduring tensions" because it occupies a liminal site that breaks down the possibility of "discrete readings." Indeed, the humour in Ihimaera's fiction is a severely under-explored element of his oeuvre. As the writer says, by way of explaining the impetus for his light-hearted novel *Bulibasha*, New Zealand literature has a history of taking itself seriously:

I was sick of reading novels that were always tragic or depressing. New Zealand fiction can be very myopic, always dealing with its buttonhole! I wanted this book to be humorous, to have some fun. I think New Zealanders have lost a sense of fun. (Amery 13)

Perry labels acts that mark their difference from reality as “exotic,” which is not, as it is for Huggan, a sign of the indigenous moving towards a Westernized view of itself, but rather an important position that registers different and difficult difference. Thus the exotic is “positioned somewhere between inscrutability and condescension along one axis, and between delight and apprehension on the other” (91). This neatly summarizes the available reading positions towards “Meeting Elizabeth Costello.” The story’s final sentences are inscrutable, which leads to apprehension in the reader who no longer knows how to interpret Elizabeth’s stance, nor, by extension, remain convinced that Wicked’s militancy is not deflated by this revelation. The Pakeha reader and commentator register the same sense of apprehension in categorizing parts of Ihimaera’s work as irony, parody or satire, such as Wicked’s confrontational anti-imperialism, or the farcical episodes with the Maori *kuia* in *Sky Dancer*: to insist that these characters are not to be taken seriously risks condescension, and this carries echoes of the negative stereotypes of Maori as happy-go-lucky and lacking a sense of social responsibility, characterizations that have not been recorded in New Zealand since Maori sovereignty and the Renaissance. As with the majority of irony, parody and satire in fiction, the author’s ambivalent narrative stance indicates the presence of a critique. As an oblique satire of postcolonial—here indigenous—rhetoric, “Meeting Elizabeth Costello” subverts the more radical, separatist expression of Maori sovereignty. While Ihimaera’s stance towards indigenous autonomy and self-regulation seems serious, such as in *Whanau II* and at the Canadian First Peoples’ conference, “Meeting Elizabeth Costello” slyly criticizes such a position. The ridiculing of over-inflated seriousness is also directed at Pakeha reading positions, playing on the sincerity with which the sensitive postcolonial reader approaches any minority text expressing a pained battle for recognition. Williams suggests that such acting has been around a long time, citing a Maori “war party” visit to England in the late-1800s in which the Maori act on the English expectations of

native savagery: “[Maori] perform the stereotypical expectations of Maori behaviour to amuse themselves and to mock those who would imprison them in an atavistic fantasy” (“Beach” ms). In another, contemporary context on the fervent but changeable Maori relation to whales, whaling and ecology, Prentice also suggests a possible non-seriousness in the way Maori support cultural claims by adopting or discarding Western values to suit (“Transcultures” 96).

Ihimaera’s eidolon shiftiness allows him to oscillate between positions towards his Maori subject and Maori and Pakeha/Western readership, often in many more complex and contradictory ways than Maori and New Zealand literary commentary has accounted for. Perry’s comment on the audience’s response to the ambiguous postures in the Japanese car commercial may be applied to the reader’s response to “Meeting Elizabeth Costello” and, at a remove, Ihimaera’s ambiguous, ambivalent multi-positionality:

[A] reading which approaches them solely in terms of their articulation of, and continuity with, extant local meanings, can achieve closure only by (over)emphasizing either their matter-of-factness or their ineffable mystery. It is, however, just because they tack back and forth between the(ir) exotic and the(ir) familiar, with a concomitant making of new meanings, that they make claims on our attention. (91)

Ihimaera’s eidolon challenges the reification of his fiction and his role as representative of a singular, comprehensive Maori worldview.

An analysis of transnational and diasporic postcolonial communities reveals the unique, if not problematic position that indigenous literature occupies within the larger postcolonial category and its theory, by noticing other contemporaneous postcolonial practices of identity and cultural formation. An emphasis on movement and adaptability in the world of migration and dual or multi-nationality deconstructs the local and the foreign to reveal that they are not binary or mutually exclusive. For example, in the context of South-East Asian origins and identity, Kanaganayakam, argues that

it is neither necessary nor desirable to draw one's boundaries around one, singularly conceived community or nation, as "the diasporic writer is one for whom belonging and citizenship occupy different spaces" ("Reading Space" ms). Looking abroad allows the issues of culture, identity and belonging that seem so static in New Zealand to take on new dimensions.

The uncertain response to Ihimaera's work such as *The Rope of Man* betrays a widely-held expectation that culture and identity are anchored to place and discrete from other aspects of society, especially economics. In response to the pervasiveness of this rather rigid concept of culture in recent configurations of New Zealand society, Levine argues for the recognition of cultural plurality:

[P]eople have ways of life and sets of experiences that are variable, changeable and dynamic [. . .] The non-essentialist view of culture, which emphasises its multiple sources and increasing fluidity, helps to counter the idea that it is something owned and controlled. (115)

While Levine's focus on the individual is problematic in public and official conceptions of culture which need criteria, his emphasis on "fluidity" might apply to Maori fiction. His description of culture as something that cannot be "owned and controlled" legitimates Ihimaera's eidolon persona and engagement with parody by accepting the non-representational nature of individuality. When Ihimaera is told "[w]e cannot grasp you because you are everywhere," this comment extends to his fiction: "Meeting Elizabeth Costello" implies that not even Wicked/Witi Ihimaera owns and controls Maori expression and interpretation, which at every moment threatens to escape with each new, surprising and unpredictable turn. In the shifting, contradictory positions in *Whanau II*, *The Rope of Man*, and in public interviews, which are nonetheless each portrayed as meaningful and heartfelt, Ihimaera suggests that the only authenticity for Maori culture and its literary expression is the here and now, wherever and whatever that might be.

The question that Huggan asks of a Western reluctance to allow indigenous writers the liberty to detach their depictions of their cultures from a singular, representative stance, applies to Ihimaera's eidolon posturing:

Why the critical hesitation to see indigenous writing in terms of a multiplicity of speakers, a complex tracery of shifting personae, identities and subject positions? (*Exotic* 175)

Huggan's question challenges the Western notion of singularity, a point also made by several Caribbean writers and theorists. As Chamoiseau puts it, *unicité*, or a singularity, permanence and fixity of culture and identity, is a Western construction, which applies neither to the identity nor the creative vision of the Antilles (212). Harris, also, insists on "creoleness," by which he means creative mixing (as well as racial and ethnic). Indeed, Harris shies away from what he calls the "consolidation" of West Indian identity, thereby challenging the need to channel identity into simplified homogenous or hierarchical categories through an exclusionist approach to roots, tradition and artistic influences ("Creoleness," "Frontier," "Subjective Imagination"). In his eidolon persona, already present in Maori tradition as the trickster figure Maui or Tawhiri Matea, the wind, Ihimaera embodies Huggan's "shifting personae, identities and subject positions," advocating, in effect, the ungraspable, generative creativity of Harris's "subjective imagination."

However, advocating plurality of cultural content, in terms such as creolity or hybridity, and in movement, such as diaspora and transculturation, fails to accurately account for the very real imbalance of power that remains an issue for minorities. At "Re-Routing the Postcolonial," a recent international conference which aimed to take stock of current trends in postcolonial literary studies, there was a general consensus that care must be taken that the language of globalization and cosmopolitanism does not eclipse other embattled claims for creative and cultural agency, of the kind that was brought to the fore in early postcolonial fiction. In other words, postcolonial studies have an ongoing



duty to support minority fiction that continues to challenge Western power structures as well as Western literary criteria.<sup>11</sup> From this point of view, indigenous literature still has a purpose to serve in continuing to call attention to ongoing lack of equality with the mainstream. This is also what Ihimaera advocates when he underlines the importance of the recuperative process of Waitangi Tribunal claims and its expression in a literature of race relations.

Belief in an element of social purpose in postcolonial literature acknowledges the ongoing need for “writing back” that continues today in indigenous fiction. Indeed, other indigenous literatures in English show the same propensity as Maori fiction to vacillate between writing that continually recalls their cultural and literary differences, and that which is not evidently indigenous. Although Mudrooroo’s response to charges of cultural inauthenticity is to shrug off expectations to write about aboriginality (263-264), key texts by Aboriginal writers, such as Kim Scott’s *Benang* (2000), continue to make strong socio-political points through literature. In Canadian First Nations fiction, Eden Robinson’s acclaimed first collection of short stories, *Traplines*, does not display its indigeneity. While this was marked as a departure in Canadian indigenous fiction, her first novel, *Monkey Beach*, returns to contemporary issues facing the Haisla community. Ihimaera’s alternating between local indigenous and global diasporic positions is thus perhaps typical rather than exceptional. In its concept of shifting selfhood(s), his eidolon persona plays out contemporary uncertainties about the individual’s attachment(s) to community, nation and the world.

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11 In particular, keynote speakers Bill Ashcroft, Diana Brydon, Simon Gikandi and Patrick Williams addressed a certain myopia in postcolonial studies that has failed to pay critical attention to China and India as challenging the Western conception of the nation-state (Ashcroft), to humanitarian and ecological issues (Brydon), to the place of refugees (Gikandi) and to Palestine (Williams). “Re-Routing the Postcolonial,” University of Northampton, 3-5 July 2007.

## CONCLUSION: COMPOSITE IDENTITY AND LITERATURE

Ihimaera's constantly changing, and often surprising fiction shifts between alternate positions, marked, at one end of the spectrum, by his highly respected and respectful Maori traditionalism in the tropes of indigenous difference, and at the other extreme, by his experimentation with genre, globalization and work that is not recognizably Maori. Ihimaera's shifting eidolon relationship with Maori culture, as illustrated by his positions towards indigeneity and diaspora, serves as a model for an understanding of Maori cultural identity and its artistic expression as multiple and composite. Due to his respected status and role as spokesman and ambassador for Maoritanga, Ihimaera's fiction is equally well received by a Maori, New Zealand and international public, each seeking and finding different aspects of Maori culture and identity in his work. The reception and interpretation of the film *Whale Rider* illustrates the plurality of responses that Ihimaera's work generates. Several magazine articles following in the wake of the film's success focus on a Maori emphasis, centring on Ihimaera's East Coast *whakapapa* and *whanau*, and also the significant contribution to both Maori sovereignty and Renaissance in the political activist and acting career of Rawiri Paratene, who played the elder, Koro, in the film (Matthews; Shepherd, untitled). On a national level, the film's success sparked articles featuring the unique New Zealand scenery, for example in an Air New Zealand magazine article promoting East Coast tourism with the heading "Whalerider Country" (Wilson). The film was also employed as illustrative of unique features of the national character. The striking photograph on the cover of *The Listener* to celebrate the national magazine's sixty-fifth anniversary sums up the strong emphasis on cultural identity persistent in New Zealand. Beneath the heading "Nation Far Walking"—a reference to Ihimaera's play *Woman Far Walking*—Keisha Castle-Hughes, the Maori schoolgirl plucked from the classroom by *Whale*

*Rider*'s talent scouts, dances in a paddock with famed rugby player, the ex-All Black Colin Mead. According to the magazine, the cover symbolizes

a picture of the New Zealand that has been written about in this magazine over the years: the rugged land, its people, their cultures, passions and stories. These two – in their differences, but also their similarities – represent the past, future and, as the coming pages display, the shaping of our country.  
(Watkin, "Nation Far Walking" n. pag.)

The article is written firmly in the tropes of cultural nationalism. On an international level, the professional Maori actor Cliff Curtis, who in *Whale Rider* plays Paikea's German-based Maori artist father, Porourangi, comes closest to representing Ihimaera's world-savvy metro Maori. The actor's career has been predominantly overseas, playing roles for brown minorities, including Colombians, Mexicans, Arabs and a Chechen. Ihimaera also accentuates the film's international reach. In his interview with Hill, he recounts how the film has proven inspirational for young women around the world:

I just enjoy the fact that the film is now in the Middle East. [. . .] In Israel all of these people were just watching this movie about a young girl who could have been an Arab girl.

It was a great honour to receive recently a transcript of a speech of a young woman in American Samoa who was inspired to go into politics from the movie because Pai's story was her story.

All of these interpretations reflect valid aspects of modern Maoritanga, on local, national and international levels.

In their careers, from Paratene's role as respected elder, Castle-Hughes as a model of bicultural upbringing and education, and Curtis's professional internationalism, *Whale Rider*'s actors embody facets of Maoritanga that are traditionalist, nationalist and transnationalist. Even so, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, these categories are socially constructed and based on general characteristics of similarity that are constantly (in)formed by

corresponding difference: they are not discrete entities, but permeable and interactive. Like Ihimaera, each of these Maori assumes different positions in different situations, registering a dialectical slide, rather than a solid crossing-over, from indigenous to diasporic, local to global. Thus, Paratene recounts a recent job in Australia playing the role of an Amerindian (Matthews), Castle-Hughes regularly goes to Los Angeles for auditions, and Curtis welcomes the opportunity to spend some time at home and support New Zealand-made films. Their ease with various expressions of their Maoritanga supports Clifford's view of a complex and flexible indigenous identity, which calls on family, tribal, national and international networks of belonging depending on the context. Rushdie's description of the multiplicity of national identity is here relevant:

In the modern age we have come to understand our own selves as composites, often contradictory, even internally incompatible. We have understood that each of us is many different people. [. . .] The nineteenth-century concept of the integrated self has been replaced by this jostling crowds of 'I's. [. . .] I agree with my many selves to call all of them 'me'. ("India's Fiftieth" 178-179)

Rushdie's evocation of the nineteenth-century integrated self as contrasted with the contemporary diasporic and migrant individual is pertinent to the Maori context, which, in the condensed period from the 1970s to the present day has experienced a similar shift. In accordance with Thiesse's and Anderson's stress on the collective, cohesive impulse of emergent nation building, Maori activism in the sovereignty movement and the Renaissance in the seventies and eighties presented a relatively united front. In recent years, with the revalorization of Maori culture accentuating tribal specificities, coupled with the settlement of some major Tribunal claims and the increasing

corporatization of culture, Maori culture has become increasingly fragmented,<sup>1</sup> for example into tribal trusts and corporations which, following the general trend of New Zealand's economic globalization, is marked by movement between local *marae*, urban centres and overseas. Maori heterogeneity of interests is evident on the political front, with Maori campaigners split between several parties and across the political spectrum; Winston Peters, leader of New Zealand First, Turiana Turia and Peter Sharples of the Maori Party, and disgraced Minister of Parliament, Donna Awatere of ACT.

The issues of composite identity equally relate to the complex nature of a literary work, made evident by multiple interpretative strategies, as illustrated by the different Maori, national and international receptions of *Whale Rider*. That the film was embraced by all audiences suggests different ways of seeing, a pluralism equally manifest in Ihimaera's original and international versions of his novel *The Whale Rider*. The earlier edition epitomizes biculturalism, with its Maori language, New Zealand idioms, Maori myth, local history and national issues of the 1980s. It supports the case for Maori literature as defined by culture-specific innovations in its unique style and structure as well as storyline. On the other hand, Caro's film and Ihimaera's modified international edition translate the local elements for a non-local audience. As Paratene puts it in regards to the film, "the Maori parts of the story are too foreign for Americans. [. . .] Americans related to the spiritual things, those things that were universal" (Matthews n. pag.). In promoting the film overseas, Ihimaera draws attention to these universal aspects, especially the young heroine's inspirational determination to overcome adversity. The coexistence of the two written editions, and the way that the film was differently interpreted by Maori, New Zealand and international audiences, takes away the essentialist, either-or argument that makes Ihimaera's alternate stances defending either

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Powhiri Rika-Heke on the units of belonging such as *hapu* and tribal "nations" most meaningful to Maori. "Tribes or Nations? Post or Fence? What's the Matter with Self-Definition," in *Not on Any Map*, 171-181.

traditionalism or cultural openness contradictory. As he puts it in *The Return*, in regards to Tom's autobiography:

The book had been successful in the UK and New Zealand, making the bestseller lists in both countries – but for different reasons. New Zealanders loved the first half about my growing up in Aotearoa. British readers preferred the second half about my life as an international television correspondent and anchorman. (251)

Here, Ihimaera points to the peculiar ability of fiction to speak on several levels to multiple audiences, a point which equally brings to mind Said's claim regarding the "worldliness" of the text, generating multiple readings contingent on changing times and analytical modes.

Ihimaera recycles, rewrites and comments on Maori culture and literature in different ways to suit different audiences, supporting Maori sovereignty, national bicultural, postcolonial and globalized perspectives. While New Zealand literary criticism has largely given greater weight and currency to his sovereignty and Renaissance aspects, Ihimaera's eidolon persona and constant experimentation in his fiction defy such prioritizing. Tom's response to his English readership in *The Return*, and Ihimaera's positive reaction to the impact of *Whale Rider* on Israeli, Arab and American-Samoan girls, suggests that an outsider's reading of Maori experience does not eclipse the text's importance from a Maori perspective. His acknowledgement of cross-cultural perspectives in his work's reception extends to his use of cross-cultural influence in his writing, in genres such as science fiction and opera, and issues such as globalization and diaspora. Ihimaera's apparent openness challenges the claims to difference that underpin much contemporary Maori writing and literary interpretation in New Zealand. Somewhat in opposition to the hard-working and diligent interpretative strategies of biculturalism and postcolonialism, Ihimaera does not reduce questions of international accessibility to the negatively connoted postcolonial exotic. His awareness of and keenness to change his stance to fit his reader's and

audience's changing demands does not reduce cultural specificity to a non-differentiated "Other" managed by global publishing and entertainment, as Huggan, English, and Evans argue. Rather, the overt performativity of Ihimaera's eidolon illuminates the complex processes of cultural translation by which Maori agency reaps the benefits of the West's interest in indigenous cultures by knowingly deploying certain aspects of its culture, while withholding others.<sup>2</sup> Ihimaera's work that is oriented towards an international readership, such as the second edition of *The Whale Rider* and the authorial explanations in his rewritten fiction, is akin to the polystyrene and fibreglass *waka* of *Whale Rider*. The film canoe confidently displays its departure from traditional practices, allowing these differences to stand, quite literally, alongside a real *waka* on the Ngati Konohi *marae*, just as Ihimaera's *Whanau II* and *The Rope of Man* sit on the bookshelf alongside *Whanau* and *Tangi*: indeed, in *The Rope of Man*, both sides of the Maori story are in the same book.

Ihimaera's wish to appeal to a wider audience does not cancel out his substantial body of work aimed at Maori and culturally literate national and postcolonial readerships. The positive impact of the Maori cultural Renaissance is strongly felt in New Zealand literature today, with the vigour of Maori-centred fiction evident in Huia publisher's robust book list, and biennial short story collections that promulgate the tropes of Maoriness that Ihimaera first modelled in his 1970s fiction and first anthology *Into the World of Light*. It is this very strength that allows Ihimaera to go out to explore unknown territory, to release his vision of Maoritanga from the confines of tradition, from the "sacred" language and forms of *te aho tapu*, the sacred thread and *te torino*, the spiral. The breadth of Maori written expression means that the outer reaches of the spiral do not eclipse or replace the central, original expression which, according to Ihimaera's "essentialist" belief in the centrality of his Maori

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<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed investigation of how minorities might wish to display or withhold their cultures, see Muecke, "Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis." In a Maori context, see my "How Maori Culture Won the West."

identity, is more valuable than his writing in the “profane” English language and for a non-Maori audience. The core of Maori literature retains its nationalist role supporting Maori cultural sovereignty.

All decisions of target audience, with their implied restrictedness or translatability, create opportunities as well as limitations. For example, according to Ihimaera’s *kaupapa* in *Te Ao Marama*, or his own distinction between the “sacred” Maori language and “profane” English, writing in Maori and in traditional narrative forms supports Maori Renaissance and sovereignty ambitions to strengthen cultural knowledge. Such writing, however, is tied to a restricted audience, with little resonance outside its local and cultural (rather than literary) context. At the other end of the spiral spectrum, writing in English on a non-Maori subject has little cultural prestige according to *kaupapa* priorities, even though such work may be the most successful in terms of attracting an international audience. When a text travels, or is translated into a foreign cultural context and/or language, other evaluative criteria are unavoidably brought to bear on the text. While it is arguably possible in New Zealand, and, to a lesser extent in the postcolonial domain, to replace Western evaluating practices with Maori criteria, in the international sphere the Maori novel (or film) becomes part of the broad category of English literature (or cinema). This means that even though Maori fiction may be written according to culture-specific values, once outside of its local environment, the text will inevitably be evaluated according to Western practices and expectations concerning the novel form and function, aesthetics, mimesis, representation, the reader’s willing suspension of disbelief, and the pleasure of the text. Although it may seem audacious to suggest that Maori fiction written with the intention of an international distribution must take into consideration non-Maori criteria, my emphasis on Maori cultural expression as controlled through knowing engagement with modernity and globalization, takes away the implied criticism of this assertion.



The text analyses throughout this thesis flesh out both sides of the nationalist-internationalist (perceived) dichotomy by seeking to account for the unique idiom of Ihimaera's specifically Maori worldview by emphasizing what Maori culture and literature share with others. The distance of a historical and international viewpoint illuminates aspects of cross-culturality masked by the close correlation, in New Zealand, between Maori fiction and lived Maori culture, played out through the conception of Maori writers as cultural representatives. The journey from the 1973 *Tangi* to its 2005 sequel, *The Return* embodies the parameters of Maori literature, in both ends of the spiral image Ihimaera so often employs. The differences between these two novels also equates with the distance travelled from the nationalism of chapter one of this thesis to the globalization and diaspora of chapter five. *Tangi's* mystic, lyric voice, recourse to myth, and unique structure, incarnate the specific, special features of a Maori imaginary expounded by the Maori Renaissance push for cultural recognition in the 1970s and 1980s. At the opposite end of the scale, *The Return* is equally a product of its times. It promotes an outward-looking sense of Maori culture made possible by the major shift in the national framework over the past thirty years. Contemporary Maori confidence is linked, on the home front, to institutionalized biculturalism and the general economic boom of a globally-oriented free market economy, as well as the international mainstreaming of indigenous legitimacy, no doubt aided by the popularity of postcolonial studies. And yet, as the opposing halves of *The Rope of Man* intimate, national and international biases cohabit with difficulty. Globalization and diaspora challenge the very founding precepts of the nation based on cohesion, solidity, unity and singularity of belonging. In contemporary New Zealand reading practices, the preponderance of biculturalism and postcolonialism diminishes the value—and in some cases even challenges the validity—of a cross-cultural approach to Maori fiction. However, increasing doubt from commentators in the social sciences that

biculturalism provides adequate frameworks within which to account for contemporary socio-cultural interaction perhaps signals the closing stages of this period. Similarly, a new generation of Maori writers, such as Morris, Morey, George and Tawhai, is offering fiction that is more international in scope and subject matter, a trend paralleled in Pakeha fiction that increasingly does not display its New Zealandness.

The cross-cultural optic of this thesis is inscribed in a perceived shift in New Zealand's relationship with its fiction over the last ten years, as literary nationalism mellows into a more permeable frontier with internationalism. While certainly marking an end of an era in New Zealand, this change sits comfortably within Casanova's account of a quasi-international trend in literary development for "literary legitimacy," "*la légitimité littéraire*" (63), one that is, nonetheless, always vigorously contested (58).<sup>3</sup> Her remark expresses the contestation always at work in any sort of cultural or artistic change. This is certainly evident in the Maori reluctance to relax the boundaries that define Maori cultural expression, in the backlash against Pakeha claims to indigeneity, in criticism of Pakeha who write about Maori or direct Maori films, and it is apparent in Ihimaera's and Morris's wavering between adopting a Maori voice speaking for Maoritanga, enacting the well known tropes of a literature of race relations, and a voice that may be international, or interested in different genres and subject matters.

Ihimaera's shifting positions as a Maori writer and towards Maori identity, and the New Zealand reluctance to equally emphasize both Maori and Western aesthetic and cultural influences in his work, reveal the difficulty—perhaps even impossibility—of simultaneously addressing the disparate aims of

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<sup>3</sup> The debate was led by Evans in a series of articles from 2001-2004 criticizing new New Zealand writing issuing from creative writing schools in Auckland and Wellington. In particular, he criticizes a trend for fiction involved in postmodern play and with an eye on the international so that New Zealandness is superficial rather than fully imagined. New Zealand writers and critics who argue against Evans include Bill Manhire, Tim Corballis and Chris Price, and Wilkins, "True Tales."

Maori, national, postcolonial and global demands for literature. Indeed, these discourses often appear theoretically incompatible: Maori sovereignty precludes “one nation” nationalism; the postcolonial privileging of the minority writer works against the reader-centred global literature as pure entertainment; and diaspora and globalization contradict indigenous and national specificity. Faced with the difficulty of interpreting Ihimaera’s oeuvre through these persuasive but contradictory theoretical perspectives, the technique of translation is useful in that it illuminates these tensions rather than attempts to supplant one by another. Clifford’s term “[c]ross-cultural translation” identifies a process that simultaneously maintains in view essentialist and anti-essentialist elements, such as tradition and modernity, authenticity and hybridity, roots and routes. Ihimaera’s technique of resituating key events in his fiction, and the texts themselves in the process of rewriting, is a form of translation that draws attention to potential conflict of interest between the local and the global, the Maori and the international. Shand’s study of translating Maori motifs and designs from a traditional environment to a commercial context is equally applicable to fiction. He acknowledges that translation involves notions of “fidelity and licence [. . .] creat[ing] an antagonistic but not irreconcilable tension.” For Shand, translation is a kind of appropriation, but one that understands that detaching the object from its original context does not displace or replace that original meaning, but rather adds another one (56). In other words, a translation is a kind of copy that exists separately from its original, which remains in its own “cultural milieu.”

The trajectory of *The Whale Rider* from novel to screen is illustrative of the need for a text to change in order to travel and translate cultural contexts. Ihimaera’s 1987 book elicited little interest in New Zealand and even less overseas. It took its adaptation to film to earn national and international attention, which in turn prompted Ihimaera to modify the novel to suit its new distribution. In *The Economy of Prestige*, English predicts that the film’s

success will confer “world-canonized” status on the novel, elevating *The Whale Rider* alongside Hulme’s *the bone people* as canonical texts in the postcolonial classroom (390). Another example of the increased distribution possibilities for Maori literature through context translation—which in this case also involves literal translation—is Maori film maker Don Selwyn’s *Te Tangata Whai Rawa o Weniti: The Maori Merchant of Venice*. Selwyn makes clear that the film, based on Pei Te Huinui Jones’s 1945 Maori translation of Shakespeare’s play, was motivated by and intended for an audience fluent in Maori:

Primarily we’re interested in resurrecting the language, which has historically struggled to exist [. . .] It’s important to connect to people, but in some cases you lose the essence of the culture if you try to translate too much. (Fickling n. pag.)

Although Selwyn’s film was highly acclaimed in its very restricted, post-production circulation, the project encountered financing difficulties because of its narrow market potential due to the limited number of Maori speakers. This has since been resolved without compromising the integrity of Selwyn’s project: the film is to be released on multi-language DVD (Fickling). The manner in which translation multiplies signification rather than replaces it means that Ihimaera’s internationalized edition of *The Whale Rider*, and his increased authorial explanation in *Whanau II* and *The Rope of Man* do not compromise the original texts. Contrary to the argument that sees the cultural autonomy of Maoritanga selling out to globalized commercial interests, Ihimaera’s international-oriented and non-Maori work stands alongside—separate from but part of—his collective oeuvre. Together they display the range of Maori fiction in English; Maori-specific, bicultural, postcolonial, international, with each interpretative strategy nonetheless subject to permutation and translation inherent in the potential of each text to cross cultures, readerships and languages.

By way of concluding his analysis of indigenous diaspora, Clifford insists on a non-exclusionary conception of indigeneity at the same time as he recognizes the inherent tension that holds apart indigenous cultural specificity. The nomenclature “Maori” holds currency as defining a culture, an identity and a literature. Yet as illustrated in Ihimaera’s careers as advocate of Maori culture, as a diplomat, a national figurehead, *kaumatua* and *rangatira*, businessman, and in his fiction, the scope of Maoriness, and indeed its strength, is best defined not by an inward-looking culture intent on fixing boundaries of belonging, but by its outward-looking capacity to interact with and be influenced by other cultures and literatures. Ihimaera demonstrates that Maoritanga is neither homogenous nor singular, but defined by diversity in composite elements that, in their contradiction, constantly challenge and extend the boundaries of Maori cultural identity and the Maori literary genre. In a literary vision inspired by Maori cultural concepts and non-traditional genres including science fiction literature, ballet, opera and screenplays, Ihimaera’s writing runs the gamut from essentialist notions of indigeneity to experimental internationalism. Clifford’s conclusion here applies:

We struggle for language to represent the fuzzy, and dynamic, edges of the ‘indigenous’ today without imposing reductive, backward-looking criteria of authenticity. Likewise, in the closing pages of *Global Diasporas* (1997), Robin Cohen properly declines to offer a sharp or exclusivist definition of his central term. Instead, he adopts Wittgenstein’s metaphor of separate, partially entwined definitional strands, making up the fibres of a polythetic ‘rope.’ (“Indigenous Diasporas” 62)

It is fitting that, at the end of a thesis which inscribes the Maori search for differentiation within an international, historical, and interdisciplinary field of cross-cultural interaction which reveals continuity, similarity and translatability, that *Te Taura Tangata*, the rope of man, one of Ihimaera’s key metaphors for a Maori worldview is, ultimately, also shared.

## GLOSSARY OF MAORI WORDS

All definitions are from the Reed *Concise Maori Dictionary*.

Aotearoa	<i>New Zealand</i>
Aroha	<i>Love</i>
Haka	<i>War-like chant with actions</i>
Hawaiki	<i>Legendary island in the Eastern Pacific from where Maori originated</i>
Hikoi	<i>To walk; protest march</i>
Hui	<i>Meeting; gathering; assembly of tribes</i>
Iwi	<i>People; tribe; nation</i>
Ihi	<i>Power; essential force</i>
Kaitiaki	<i>Spiritual protector, in this case a mermaid</i>
Karakia	<i>Prayer</i>
Karanga	<i>Welcome call onto the marae</i>
Kaumatua	<i>Elder</i>
Kaupapa	<i>Mission; purpose; project; policy</i>
Koha	<i>Gift</i>
Kohanga reo	<i>“Language nest” Maori immersion preschool</i>
Koro	<i>Grandfather, Male elder</i>
Kuia	<i>Female elder</i>
Kura Kaupapa	<i>Maori immersion primary and secondary school</i>
Mana	<i>Authority; power; prestige</i>
Maoritanga	<i>Maori culture; cultural strength and pride</i>
Marae	<i>Meetinghouse and gathering place</i>
Mauri	<i>Life principle; talisman</i>
Mokopuna	<i>Grandchild</i>
Nani	<i>Grandfather or grandmother; elder</i>
Pa	<i>Fortification; village</i>
Papatuanuku	<i>Earth Mother</i>
Patu	<i>Greenstone weapon like an axe</i>
Pounamu	<i>Greenstone (New Zealand jade)</i>
Powhiri	<i>Welcome ceremony on the marae</i>
Ranginui	<i>Sky Father</i>

Rangatira	<i>Chief</i>
Reo	<i>Maori language</i>
Ringatu	<i>A religion founded by Te Kooti based on the Old Testament</i>
Tangata Whenua	<i>“The People of the Land”</i>
Tangi	<i>Funeral wake</i>
Taonga	<i>Treasure</i>
Tapu	<i>Sacred; forbidden</i>
Te Ao Hou	<i>The Modern World – title of Maori Affairs Journal</i>
Te Ao Marama	<i>The World of Light – title of Anthology</i>
Tikanga	<i>Custom; cultural rightness</i>
Turangawaewae	<i>Home place; a place to stand</i>
Utu	<i>Revenge</i>
Waiata	<i>Song; to sing</i>
Waiata tangi	<i>Funeral song</i>
Waiata a ringa	<i>Action song</i>
Whakapapa	<i>Genealogy; ancestry</i>
Whanau	<i>Extended family</i>
Whanaungatanga	<i>Kinship; relationship</i>
Whenua	<i>Land; country</i>

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