

**Poetry in a Time of Calamity:  
A Humanities Response to  
the Canterbury Earthquakes**

**Paul Millar**

Te Hiranga Rū QuakeCoRE Annual Meeting  
Whakatū Nelson  
7 – 10 December 2020

**UC**  
UNIVERSITY OF  
CANTERBURY  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha*  
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

[paul.millar@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:paul.millar@canterbury.ac.nz)

**PP TITLE**

**Poetry in a Time of Calamity: A Humanities Response to the Canterbury Earthquakes**

**MIHI**

Kia ora koutou,

**Introduction**

Many of you know what it's like trying to carry out disaster research when you're caught up in the aftermath of a disaster. For me as a researcher, the last decade has often felt like living a dual existence, in which objective intentions related to research weren't easily separated from subjective experiences of the quakes' aftermath. I think this created a tension in which my professional and personal selves struggled with each other. I hope to capture a little of that tension in this paper, so I'm going to bookend some comments on my research in the aftermath of the Christchurch earthquake, with a couple of more personal reflections.

**Useless Scum**

Here's the first. Our 2014 general election took place 16 days after the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Darfield quake. Like most Cantabrians I was over earthquakes by then—not so much the geological aftershocks—the personal, social and cultural aftershocks were taking a larger toll. And 'Dirty Politics' had just entered the nations vocabulary! One particular revelation got right under my skin. A 'Peter Smith' had written to Cameron Slater attacking East Christchurch, the side of town I lived on, where recovery was by now far less evident than in the wealthier, less Red-Zoned, West. Smith wrote: *"I said to someone today National should let them rot, after all they are useless scum Labour voters especially in the areas where the earthquake hit..."*

That's how, on the afternoon of the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2014, I marked the Darfield Quakes 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary by doing what every Humanities Academic should do in such a situation. I wrote a poem. It's a poem that encapsulates a personal mood, and a particular moment. My speaker is an East Christchurch working man.

# A Small Ode on Useless Scum (Four Years on from the First Canterbury Earthquake)

*I said to someone today National should let them rot, after all they are useless scum Labour voters especially in the areas where the earthquake hit...*

Peter Smith to Cameron Slater, quoted in *Dirty Politics* by Nicky Hager

How strange to be a useless scum,  
My sister's one, and so's my mum.  
We breed up scumlets in the East,  
Our nasty, rancid, Lefty yeast  
Contaminates the nation's bread  
And drives rich folks to wish us dead.

Among themselves, and on their blogs,  
They speak of us as rabid dogs,  
Ferals who don't deserve to live,  
Bludgers who take and never give.  
Ten thousand shakes is just the thing!  
It makes them dance, it makes them sing.

When all our gardens turn to swamps,  
When on our faces nature stomps,  
And every day means interaction  
With yet more pond liquefaction,  
I'm sure they're right, I'm sure they know  
How we should live down here below

The Bombay Hills, the stars that shine,  
The power base, the poverty line.  
For they're the ones who make the rules,  
Those jumped up self-important tools,  
Busy drinking pinot noir,  
Their heads stuck firmly up their... Ah!

I think I hear a quiet voice,  
My mother's, she don't have a choice,  
Her tidy little bungalow,  
Received a kicking from below,  
And now she lives in my back room.  
"It's better than a whited tomb,"

She tells me when I bring her tea.  
"There's others far worse off than me:  
Poor widow Brown, who pined to death;  
The babe that never took a breath,  
Because its mother went to see  
A doctor in the CTV!"

"But tell me son, you're looking blue,  
Is everything all right with you?"  
"I'm angry mum, I must confess,  
There's too much pain, too much distress.  
It shouldn't still be bad like this,  
It's like we've had the Judas kiss."

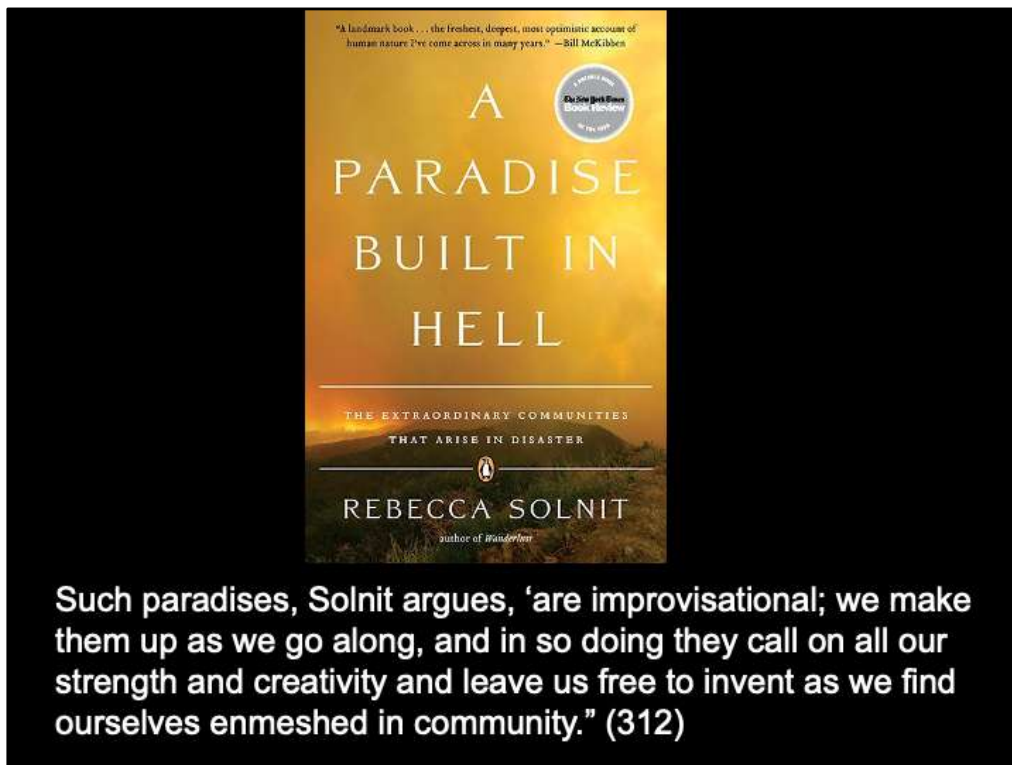
"They came on down and paid us homage,  
They said that they'd all keep the promise,  
Pledged in the nation's living room,  
The vow to make it better...soon.  
It looked so good, like angel's plumage,  
And now it stinks like so much sewage."

"Four years on and what's to see?  
No home for you, no job for me,  
The school got closed, the kids might drown  
Because the pools are all shut down  
So no one east of Backbeham  
Has anywhere to learn to swim.

"The roads aren't safe, the pavements munted,  
And folk like us are feeling hunted  
By sentence-splitting unisurers,  
Who should be judged by twelve good jurors.

....

I don't often have a poem turn up and present itself like that one did. Writing it turned out to be quite cathartic, which perhaps encapsulates my dominant post-quake experience that what was the worst of times could also be the best of times, especially when it came to creativity and community.

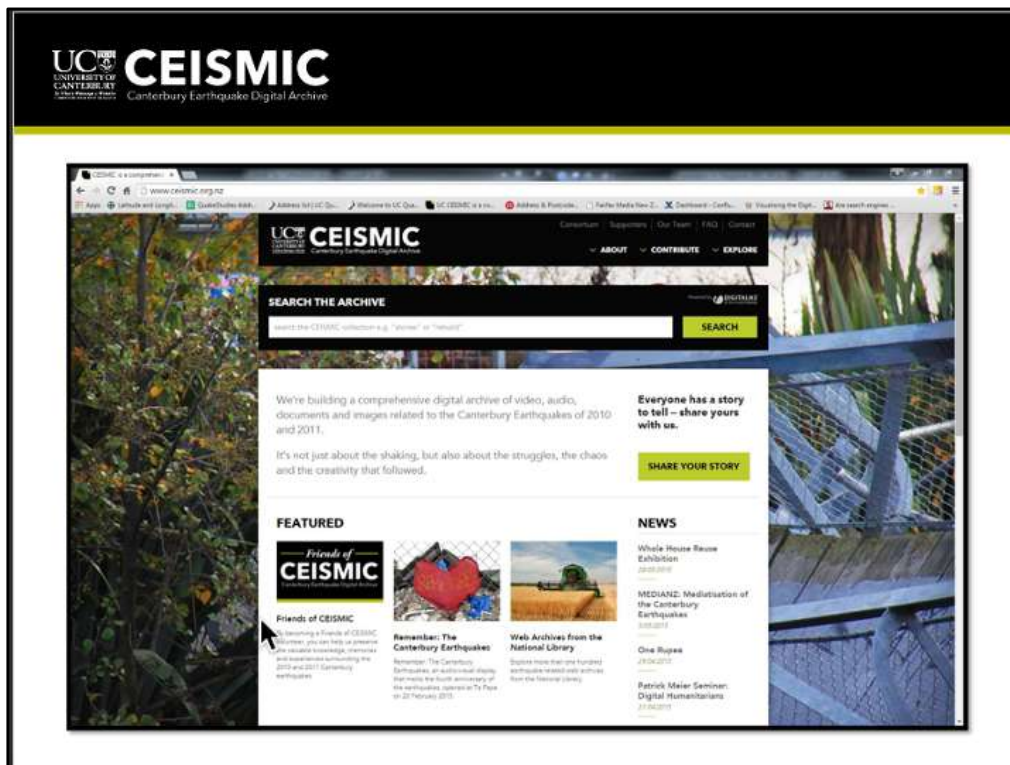


### PP Solnit Cover and Quote

Rebecca Solnit's book, *A Paradise Built in Hell*, describing the extraordinary communities that arise in disaster is my touchstone here.

As we know, an earthquake on its own is a healthy geological event—only when it impacts on vulnerable human populations does it become a disaster. Solnit documents numerous instances in which the human response to disaster has, in her words, created paradise out of hell. Such paradises, she argues, 'are improvisational; we make them up as we go along, and in so doing they call on all our strength and creativity and leave us free to invent as we find ourselves enmeshed in community.' (312)

I know that for many of you here, working in teams is the norm. It is for me now, but before the earthquakes most of my major research was solitary—when writing a biography, or a study of a particular poet, my most valuable collaborators were manuscript and reference librarians and archivists.



But because of this disaster I initiated the CEISMIC Canterbury Earthquakes Digital Archive, and found myself an accidental member of a dynamic, and growing, global community of humanistic scholars and knowledge workers committed to preserving people’s stories of disasters and learning from them. When I say ‘humanistic scholars’ I’m not talking about Humanities scholars—I’m referring to the improvisational academics I’ve been fortunate to work with across the sweep of disciplines who know the value of applying creative intelligence, social intelligence and cultural intelligence when it comes to finding wholistic solutions to the challenges we face.

It’s true that in the days immediately following 22 Feb 2011, as I watched my STEM colleagues communicating in their areas of knowledge, to the nation and the world, I experienced a brief crisis of relevance—wondering what my Humanities training had equipped me to offer my community in its time of unprecedented need.

James Smithies, a friend working in IT in Wellington, with a PhD in history, and a passion for an emerging discipline called Digital Humanities, pointed me to the 9/11 Digital Archive, run by the Centre for History and New Media at George Mason University in Washington. I saw a model we might emulate, put a proposal in a PowerPoint, and sent it to the UC Senior Management Team.

The response was beyond all my expectations. Vice-Chancellor Rod Carr replied personally. Remember what UC was going through

## Vice-Chancellor Rod Carr

- Give me a budget—I'm sold on this already. We have a statutory obligation to protect and disseminate knowledge and this is a unique opportunity to create an archive for collective memory, future research and the development of applied skills as well as the use of new technologies. (6 May 2011)

at PowerPoint is nearly ten years old, but re-visiting it, I'm pleased (and a little surprised) at how much of what we proposed we managed to achieve.

Here are a few of the slides and some comments on what was achieved.





PP The September 11 Digital Archive

Hopefully this decade old powerpoint theme will make you nostalgic for simpler times

We began by explaining what the September 11 Digital Archive had achieved. They were so successful that they eventually partnered with the Smithsonian Institute and have now been archived by the Library of Congress.

**UC** **CEISMIC**  
UNIVERSITY OF  
CANTERBURY  
Canterbury Earthquake Digital Archive

**CEISMIC: Canterbury Earthquakes Digital Archive**

**UCŌNGĀI TAHU RESEARCH CENTRE**

Te Rūnanga Mahara o te Kāwanatanga  
**ARCHIVES**  
NEW ZEALAND

Christchurch City  
**Libraries**  
Nga Kete Wānanga-o-Ōtāutahi

**CERA**  
Canterbury Earthquake  
Recovery Authority

**NZ ON SCREEN**

Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa  
**NATIONAL LIBRARY**  
OF NEW ZEALAND

Manatū  
Taonga Ministry  
for Culture  
& Heritage

**Canterbury  
Museum**

**TE PAPA**  
TOI AOTEA  
MUSEUM

**UC**  
UNIVERSITY OF  
CANTERBURY  
Te Ōkawa Ōhanga o Wānanga  
āwhakarewa o te Kāwanatanga

**NHRP**  
Natural Hazards Research Platform

Our partners included central and local government and UC's Ngai Tahu Research Centre





## THE UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY CAN GO EVEN FURTHER...



...by creating a more integrated digital archive to preserve the images, stories and media files bearing witness to the earthquakes' effects on individuals, our communities, the region and our nation.

We envisage this highly functional resource becoming of enduring local and international significance as it facilitates long-term research into disaster impacts, effects and recovery.

The archive will include a publicly accessible component, a secure space for teaching and research, and future-proofed data.

**We propose to name the archive...**

PP We immodestly declared that UC could go further than the 9/11 Digital Archive

Though we weren't being completely immodest—we knew the CHNM had faced difficulties working with government. When one federal government department—possibly the Coast Guard— donated material, the FBI turned up the next day wanting to know what they were doing. As it turned out, many government departments worked closely with us, with the National Library, Te Papa and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage becoming CEISMIC Consortium members, and DigitalNZ supplying our content aggregation services and search engine.

# CEISMIC's CONTENT

As expansive and  
comprehensive as the  
imagination of the  
University of Canterbury's  
scholars can make it.



## CEISMIC's content might include or facilitate:

- Studies on the impact of the earthquakes on distinct groups and communities, particularly [Tangata Whenua](#);
- Longitudinal surveys of aspects of earthquake recovery over years or decades;
- Digitisation of architectural drawings and plans of destroyed heritage buildings;
- Integration with the [Hypercities](#) platform in order to travel back in time to explore the historical layers of Christchurch's pre-quake city spaces in an interactive, hypermedia environment;
- Application of emerging techniques in the field of spatial humanities, using mapping tools to trace patterns of displacement and group movement;
- Application of data-oriented databases and operating systems to expanding data sets.

I said we'd be expansive and comprehensive in collecting content. I'll explain soon why I think we didn't fully succeed in our goal of being comprehensive, though I do think we're even more diverse than we anticipated.

Many hundreds of groups and individuals have contributed to CEISMIC—from Central and local government entities to individuals with a compelling story to share. Fairfax Media gave us everything—not just print-quality PDFs of every paper since the 4<sup>th</sup> September 2010, but thousands of unpublished images and an ongoing news feed. The Christchurch Star donated two key-years-worth of all their mastheads. We've archived recordings from conferences and symposia related to the Quakes. As well as community collections and academic collections, we've had material donated by, among others, the Canterbury District Health Board; Christchurch City Council; Environment Canterbury; the festival of transitional architecture; Gap Filler; Heritage New Zealand; IHCd; the Council of Trade Unions; the Defence force; the SPCA; and The Wellington Emergency Management Office. As well, we've administered our own contestable research fund, and found funding for CEISMIC learning-legacy postgraduate theses.

# CEISMIC

## Crowd-sourcing to create content



In addition to digital content from projects designed by scholars, CEISMIC will develop a series of interfaces to harvest both physical and born-digital materials. People affected by the quakes will be invited to:

1. Upload quake-related digital materials like emails, images, audio, video, personal stories, drawings, journals and diaries;
2. Log in and enter their personal earthquake stories and experiences via customised screens and tailored questionnaires;
3. Deposit for future digitisation physical documents and files relating to the earthquakes.

We did plenty of crowd sourcing, but as it turned out we didn't need to crowd-source everything ourselves. Our decision to create a federated archive saw most of the crowd-sourcing carried out by content-partners, such as the Ministry of Culture and Heritage's Quakestories site.

## CEISMIC will offer students



- Research experience at undergraduate level
- Research opportunities at graduate level
- Courses built around the CEISMIC collections
- Training in encoding digital texts
- Training in managing the digital library infrastructure
- Opportunities for cutting edge eResearch in the Humanities and Social Sciences
- Interdisciplinary teaching and research opportunities

Students played a major role in CEISMIC from the beginning. We created a new role called a Digital Content Analyst, and sent them to organisations to help improve content for uploading. They've worked on projects, used CEISMIC for work experience, taken courses, worked as RA's, and, as I mentioned, undertaken postgraduate research. One PhD was on journalism's response to the earthquakes, at the end of which the thesis's raw-material was deposited, including 25 interviews with journalists reporting on the day of the quake, which make riveting reading.



## CEISMIC will offer academics



- Technical infrastructure and support for research projects;
- An ever-expanding corpus of digitised materials;
- Opportunities for interdisciplinary and international collaboration;
- A resource to attract quality graduate students;
- The infrastructure to underpin funding applications for projects in the humanities and social sciences;
- The opportunity to design and build teaching programmes around aspects of the collection e.g. the teaching of social science methodologies, the production of histories from original materials, source documents for journalism studies, research into the impact of disaster on Education/Health/Law etc.;
- Content sharing, with files encoded and available for re-purposing according to emerging research priorities;


In numerous ways CEISMIC has offered many of my academic colleagues opportunities to research in new ways with new technologies. It has led to the development of our College of Arts Digital Lab—which has an ongoing programme of projects and some significant funding successes.

Ironically, to date CEISMIC has had an almost greater impact internationally than in Christchurch, where most of us avoid talking about the disaster if we possibly can. We've spoken all around the world, including at the Oxford Internet Institute and on a panel hosted by the City University of New York, alongside the project leaders of the 9/11 Digital Archive and the Hurricane Memory Bank. I was invited to speak about CEISMIC at the Japanese Diet Library in Tokyo, where they were developing their own archive of the Great East Japan Earthquake, called Hinagiku. From there I went as a plenary speaker to a disaster symposium in Sendai at Tohoku University. At the beginning of this year I was a plenary speaker at the TellNET Symposium on learning live lessons from disasters, held in Kobe. All of these opportunities have built relationships with researchers around the world interested in what we can learn from past-disasters to help others prepare and mitigate risk, particularly in this century of climate crisis. We've been referees for a number of overseas projects, including bids to the US National Science Foundation

**CEISMIC**

will offer the

**University of Canterbury**



- A resource capable of making a positive difference in our region as it seeks to recover from the quakes;
- A research and teaching tool capable of positioning the University at the global forefront of disaster recovery studies, particularly in the areas of humanities and social sciences;
- An interface connecting us with the communities we educate and serve;
- A high profile tool likely to attract substantial targeted research funding;
- A highly relevant point of difference, offering an opportunity to create unique research and teaching programmes focused on the earthquakes and their aftermath;
- A means for attracting quality scholars and students and a resource that might foster major academic partnerships, possibly at the inter-university level.

UC, particularly the College of Arts, has benefited from what CEISMIC has delivered.

Thanks to of CEISMIC, we developed New Zealand’s first Digital Humanities teaching programme, which now teaches into the Master of Applied Data Science. Through CEISMIC I became president of the Australasian Association of Digital Humanities, representing Australia, NZ and the Pacific on the international Association of Digital Humanities Organisations. DH is the fastest growing area of scholarship in the Humanities, bringing ‘digital tools and methods to the study of the humanities’ and promoting ‘collaborative, transdisciplinary, and computationally engaged research, teaching, and publishing.’

As for my project manager Dr James Smithies. He was head-hunted by the best in the business, and now runs the Kings College London Digital Lab, one of the world’s leading facilities.

As intended, CEISMIC continues to grow as other earthquake initiatives reach the end of their lifespans. I’m sure a lot of you were at the DPMC’s EQ Learning symposium at UC. We’ve just recently archived the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet’s EQ Learning Site, and we’re currently archiving the Ministry for Culture and Heritage’s Quakestories site.




In Rebecca Solnit's terms, as a result of this disaster I have found myself 'enmeshed in a community' unimaginable before the earthquakes. Not just (or even) a scholarly community, but a broad community of people who understand that collecting and curating images, stories and media about a disaster for the purposes of commemoration teaching and research can serve an important, long-term purpose.

CEISMIC

will offer the

people of Canterbury



- A place to preserve their earthquake images, stories and media;
- A secure, long-term digital record of the quakes and their aftermath;
- An extensive public access area, intended for use by individuals, schools and community groups;
- A resource facilitating research intended to benefit the people and the region;
- An ongoing record of Canterbury's recovery, preserved so that future decision makers can learn from these experiences.

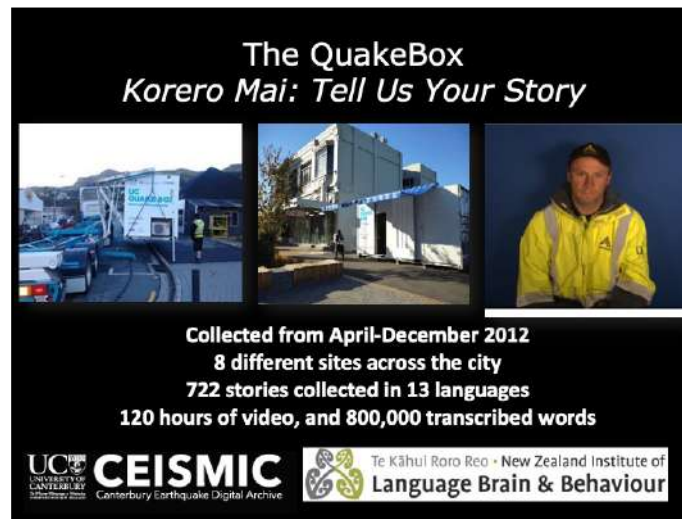
So what do we offer the people of Canterbury? Actually, everything promised here, and yet this is the slide I feel most ambivalent about.

CEISMIC's record of the Canterbury earthquakes' impacts, and the subsequent response, is more incomplete and unrepresentative than I'd intended. There is too little Māori and Pasifika content in the archive. Our determinedly open and inclusive digital memory project struggled to preserve its values when confronting issues of race, class, gender, politics and economics.

Despite our many efforts to ensure fairness and equity in what we collected, CEISMIC over-represents the experiences of the articulate, the resourced, the controllers of media, the networked, the beneficiaries of various sorts of privilege and the structures of power. The barriers to inclusiveness were never properly breached. Technology, despite its remarkable powers, tends to only look where its owners or creators direct it. One of the greatest challenges that the builders of cultural heritage digital archives must address, is how to be constantly vigilant to reach the nameless, faceless, silenced victims of any disaster. Such stories must be heard, and issues of fairness and equity must be addressed, if recovery from disaster is to be meaningful.

This concerns me greatly because CEISMIC—by virtue of its connections to major organisations and its location within the academy—has credibility, mana even, as some form of institutional authority. CEISMIC will become the basis of much of the future storytelling and research efforts around the earthquakes, which is why I think it is vital to emphasise the partial and incomplete nature of the archive.

Which is why I want to conclude with the QuakeBox Project, which has come closest of anything we've done to being representative..



In 2012 we outfitted a container as a recording studio, called it the QuakeBox, and began shifting it around Christchurch. This was a collaboration between CEISMIC and UC's Linguistics research centre the New Zealand Institute of Language Brain and Behaviour. Apart from varying locations for broad geographic and demographic coverage, we were deliberately hands-off. Subjects, who self-selected by walking in, were simply prompted to 'Tell us your earthquake story.' In 8 months we collected 723 stories, 120 hours of video, and 800,000 transcribed words in 13 languages (although most were English). 42 subjects identified as Māori and 5 recordings were in Te Reo Māori.

At first the corpus was used primarily for linguistics research. But a couple of years ago, as the recovery dragged on, it occurred to me to wonder what we would learn if we were able to go back and re-interview those people seven years later and ask them to update their stories. Following some helpful advice from Dr Phil Silva of the Dunedin Longitudinal Study, I assembled a multi-disciplinary team to put forward a Marsden bid.

The deeper we dug into this possibility, the more surprised we were to discover that no longitudinal study existed of the way a large cohort of subjects talk about recovering from a major disaster after a period of years. It seemed a significant gap in research. There were compelling reasons for asking participants to retell their original earthquake stories, and then describe what has happened since

## Retelling post-disaster stories facilitates

- Analysis of evolving narrative structure
- Understanding of the way people think, feel, respond and communicate
- Consideration of the changing relationships between people, spaces and places
- Investigation into how changes to stories relate to post-disaster factors



For example:

### PP4

Retelling will allow analysis of the evolution of narrative structure, studying repeated story-tellings can lead to deeper understanding of the way people affected by very lengthy recovery from disaster think, feel, respond and communicate.

Retelling will facilitate opportunities to consider the changing relationships between people, spaces and places in the context of disasters.

Retelling will allow us to investigate whether changes to stories relate to post-disaster experiences of recovery and adaptation, how factors such as ethnicity, gender, age, disability, socio-economic status, and geographical location might affect retelling, and the relationship between these narratives and dominant public and media discourses.



## Individuals' stories are

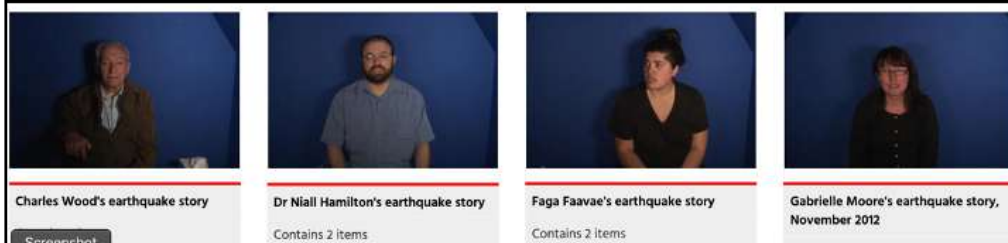
- Efforts to make sense of the world in crisis and uncertainty, to regain order and facilitate recovery
- Cultural performances that can foster dialogue, debate, and social action
- Show us what is personal and absent in the languages of public issues, policies, and broad population studies

Disaster narratives are personal efforts to make sense of the world in crisis and uncertainty, to regain order and facilitate recovery. Such stories are specific cultural performances, with aesthetic strategies and performative intents that can be re-contextualized to foster dialogue, debate, and social action. They 'ask us, as listeners/audiences to become more reflexive, they build community among us, and ...show us what is personal and absent in the languages of public issues, policies, and broad population studies'.



## Individual Stories vs Official Accounts

- Resist idea of disasters becoming safe and controllable over time
- In times of great grief and passion stories employed or appropriated to covertly politicise disaster behind guises of nation building or patriotism.
- **Disaster Narratives vs Resilience Narratives.** A crucial distinction if 'resilience' depends on a progressive-oriented dominant narrative that views the devastation and rebuilding of cities as a version of capitalism's process of 'creative destruction'.
- Stories resist efforts to homogenise or valorise disaster by, for example, revealing disaster vulnerability, impact, response and recovery to be profoundly gendered or ethnicity-based.



### Research around individual stores of disaster repeatedly emphasises the importance of having a counter to official accounts:

These stories often resist the idea of disasters becoming safe and controllable over time, by showing how they may exacerbate existing relationship problems or prevent communities faring equally.

Research into disaster narratives has shown how stories in times of great grief and passion can be employed or appropriated to covertly politicise disaster behind guises of nation building or patriotism.

Vale and Campanella distinguish between disaster narratives and resilience narratives. They note that resilience narratives use a collective voice to re-frame tragedy in positive terms. They argue that such distinction is crucial if 'resilience' promulgates a progressive-oriented dominant narrative that views the devastation and rebuilding of cities as a version of capitalism's process of 'creative destruction' [p.15]. Other research shows individual stories resisting efforts to homogenise or valorise disaster by, for example, revealing disaster vulnerability, impact, response and recovery to be profoundly gendered or ethnicity-based.

### The Marsden

I'm grateful that the Marsden Fund also thought the stories of ordinary people collected in this way were valuable, and they funded our multi-disciplinary, longitudinal study of post-

disaster narratives. We've had issues, we assumed we'd be dealing with a community recovering from trauma, not one re-traumatized by a white supremacist murdering 51 of our fellow citizens, or by a global pandemic and lockdown, but the project proceeds, and the initial indication is that the findings will be important and significant.

## Narrative accounts of Māori experiences

- Resilience and rejuvenation within whānau and communities
- Cultural confidence, whanaungatanga (social capital) and individual experiences of mana motuhake (agency/self-determination) in disaster responses and recovery
- Impact of the pre-existing socio-economic disadvantage on experiences of community resilience
- More vulnerable to natural disasters when government policies 'fail to respect indigenous rights and fail to acknowledge the relevance of indigenous knowledge to both social and environmental recovery'

UC MĀORI & INDIGENOUS STUDIES



Our project will pay particular attention to narrative accounts of the experiences of Māori participants.

### PP7

This research strand, led by staff from UC's Aotahi School of Maori and Indigenous Studies, will seek to understand factors that influence resilience and rejuvenation within Māori whānau and communities; including the role of cultural confidence, whanaungatanga (social capital) and individual experiences of mana motuhake (agency/self-determination) in disaster responses and recovery. They will also seek to learn more about the impact of the pre-existing socio-economic disadvantage experienced by our original interviewees on Māori experiences of community resilience and the relationship between people, government and discourse.

Mention Aranui not getting funded Story if time



Tracey Taia is one of our 723 interviewees. She's Tuhoë, and remarked that her Iwi's strong traditions of independence and self-reliance came into play during the earthquakes. She risked her life during the 22 February quake to save a dairy owner whose store was collapsing around him. From one of Christchurch's working class suburbs, her experience has raised questions that merit follow-up, for example, about the comparative experiences of people from different areas of the city. For Tracey it was: 'four days being at home with no power and water... you could hear the helicopters the police sirens ... [like] a war zone'.

Learning how Tracey, and hundreds of others like her, have coped in the seven years since they gave their stories, and understanding the influence of various cultural, social and political phenomena on their accounts over time, is an outcome of CEISMIC's commitment to collecting without a preset agenda, and being open to outcomes that are unexpected and unanticipated.

In our experience, attempting to predict what might matter, or control the narrative of the disaster is to limit what we can learn, and ultimately fail to maximise the good that can come from these terrible events. Every story, no matter how seemingly insignificant, is as valuable as more carefully crafted and approved narratives.

I'd like to finish with another poem—one a bit different from the angry polemic I began with—but equally a reflection of the time, this time finishing on a note of hope, more in keeping with what Cantabrians want for our future.

Driving around a quake damaged city gives you lots of time to think (often about the cost of shock absorbers). For months my evening commute from West to East was slow, bumpy, dusty and erratic—all you could do was keep your place in the caravan and follow the leader down whatever new path the road cones dictated. Hence this poem, which entertains the conceit that our caravan is journeying down some sort of Silk Road, but really the journey is about coming to terms with our changed lives.



## Travelling East

In a caravan at dusk  
we surge and idle  
over frayed roads  
half-digested by gravel.

Our exotic familiar turns  
road cones into buoys  
and side streets into  
navigable tributaries.

Where our weary meander  
nudges the silted river  
we discover new ways to  
sift and sort experience

## Travelling East

In a caravan at dusk  
we surge and idle  
over frayed roads  
half-digested by gravel.

Our exotic familiar turns  
road cones into buoys  
and side streets into  
navigable tributaries.

Where our weary meander  
nudges the silted river  
we discover new ways to  
sift and sort experience.

Some refuse to travel east.  
They say the orient is just  
warped bungalows  
on a grey sludge carpet.

Perhaps they fear reminders  
of how it felt to love the place  
before the weft ripped  
and the fringes unravelled.

But a marvellous pedalling girl  
whips around our caravan and  
weaves between the cones to cut  
her own path straight to the future.



Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa





It's the stories like these I love. The rescuers and the victim one year later. All in CEISMIC in print quality PDFs

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa