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“Contemporary Māori literature, like the forest of Tane Mahuta, has large trees that shelter a host of smaller plants and saplings, each of them adding to a richly varied continuum. Altogether they create a cathedral filled with song. Not only do we hear in this place the many traditional voices of this country, but new sounds are constantly arriving from city streets, from prisons, the marketplace, and corporate board rooms. The rhythms of these new sounds are exciting and multiform, drawing on languages and cultures that challenge and enrich the definitions of Māori literature. For a long time, Māori literature will be occupied with reconciling and absorbing all of them.”

*– Reina Whaitiri and Robert Sullivan in
“The Forest of Tane: Māori Literature Today” (76)*

**Preface:
Finding the Cathedral
Full of Song**

Finding the Cathedral Full of Song

The research for this thesis grew out of my reaction to several seminal teaching and learning experiences both in and out of the university classroom. One of the most



Kelly Ana Morey

influential occurred early in my academic career at the University of Auckland when, in 2005, I went to deliver a lecture to a dozen Pacific Literature MA students about the life and works of contemporary Māori author Kelly Ana Morey. At the beginning of the lecture I flashed a picture of Morey up on the screen and was startled to hear one student exclaim, “I’m surprised. She doesn’t look like what I would expect!” I am not sure if the student was responding to Morey’s youth, to her casual attire, or to the lack of pigment in her skin, but the comment is one I have grown used to hearing over the years when I speak to students about her texts.¹

As the class moved into a discussion about Morey’s novels, another student cried out, “She just doesn’t seem angry enough!” “I agree,” concurred a third. “She just doesn’t address *real* Māori issues the way Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace do. Do you think she does this because she is afraid she won’t get published?” Before I could respond, another student stepped it to say, “Yeah, I think you might be right. I went to a reading she gave last year and I didn’t even realize she was Māori until I took this class. That’s weird, isn’t it? If she wants to call herself a Māori writer she should be proud and act like one.”

Students participating in this class discussion were of Māori, Pākehā, Pacific Island and Asian descent, and they all seemed equally puzzled by my response, which was to ask them, “What is a *real* Māori issue? What does a *real* Māori writer look like? What

¹ This photograph of Morey was taken by her cousin, Emily Lane. Permission to print the photo in this thesis was granted via e-mail correspondence on 31 July 2008.

does she act like? What does she write about?” While squirming in their seats in recognition of their own unconscious essentialist biases, the only answer the members of the class seemed to be able to come up with was that a *real* Māori writer looked and sounded like Patricia Grace or Witi Ihimaera – a sentiment that I know would distress both of these pioneering authors.

It occurred to me during this discussion how important it is for New Zealand literary scholars to find ways to talk about *recent* twenty-first century texts written by both well-established authors like Grace and Ihimaera and by younger, less well-known Māori writers in ways that do not pigeonhole them as a result of essentialist expectations. Teachers, students and critics of contemporary Māori fiction need to become more aware, as Reina Whaitiri and Robert Sullivan are, that “contemporary Māori literature, like the forest of Tane Mahuta, has large trees that shelter a host of smaller plants and saplings, each of them adding to a richly varied continuum” (76). As a teacher, I want students to recognize, in both real and metaphoric ways, the beauty and the mana of our literary trees, while still finding a way to appreciate and nurture the saplings: the contemporary, post-“Māori Renaissance” works written by well-established authors like Patricia Grace, as well as the novels and short stories being written by a younger generation of Māori writers.

This desire to nurture the reading and discussion of texts written by a wide variety of Māori writers is echoed in the sentiments of Patricia Grace herself, who says,

We need Māori writers from every sort of background, writers who are from a more traditional background, or from urban backgrounds; writers who know a lot about their Māori heritage, some who don't, some who've felt the loss of that; some who know where their tūrangawaewae is, some who don't; and all the various experiences of being Māori need to come through in our literature for a large picture to be available of what being Māori is. Otherwise you get into stereotypes again if there aren't enough writers – stereotyping was the thing that I abhorred so much when we were only being written about by non-Māori writers. If we

are not careful, that can come about again by not having enough Māori writers. (qtd. in Bates 75-76)

Grace's fear that there will not be enough young Māori writers publishing has not come to pass, as Nigel Gearing points out when he writes, "it's a far cry from even a decade ago, with new titles [by and about Māori] now an almost weekly event" (117). What has proven true, however, is that in spite of the "boom" in Māori-authored publications, there is an ominous silence in volumes of literary criticism about contemporary Māori literature. With the exception of the "most significant contemporary writers of Aotearoa...Hone Tuwhare, Witi Ihimaera, Patricia Grace and Keri Hulme" (Whaitiri and Sullivan 76), there is little outside of popular newspaper and magazine book reviews that mention, much less critically explore, the works of second and third generation Māori writers.

The significance of this critical void became clear to me during a break between sessions at "The Place of the Child in Children's Literature" symposium that was held at the University of Auckland in 2005.² After a brilliant presentation by Dr. Jon Battista about ways to consider exploring Māori literature with children and young adults, the secondary school teacher sitting beside me wistfully commented, "I wish I could teach more Māori texts in my classroom, but I just don't have the background knowledge to feel comfortable doing it. Except for Patricia Grace's short stories – and *Potiki* – I can't find any information about other authors and their texts. Maybe it is out there, but I don't have time to look for it." My years spent teaching in high schools and universities in the United States and New Zealand made me enormously sympathetic to her hankering for more easily accessible background knowledge. Our short conversation helped cement in my mind how important it is to me that this doctoral thesis be accessible and useful to teachers and students in a way that can help get some of the twenty-first century texts written by Patricia Grace, Paula Morris and Kelly Ana Morey off the library and bookshop shelves

² "The Place of the Child in Children's Literature" symposium took place on December 3-4, 2005 at the University of Auckland and was organized by Dr. Rose Lovell-Smith. Keynote addresses were given by Margaret Mahy and Clare Bradford.

and into the high school and university classrooms of Aotearoa/New Zealand. This is one of my motivations for including both in-depth theoretical and literary analysis of the texts as well as the contextual information I know secondary school teachers and university lecturers will need: detailed information about the author's lives, commentary on their literary and cultural influences, and contextualisation of the way their works "fit" into the larger canon of both Māori literature written in English, and New Zealand literature as a whole. As Whaitiri and Sullivan write, "For a long time, Māori literature will be occupied with reconciling and absorbing" (76) the works of Aotearoa/New Zealand's contemporary indigenous writers. This thesis is one step along that critical journey.

“Māori use the word kaupapa in various ways. It is the term for purpose, agenda, intention, reason. At a deeper level it is the basis, the platform, the standpoint, the assured philosophy. And beyond that it is the medium through which wairua is made manifest, emerges in action in the palpable world. To be true one must find one’s kaupapa.”

*– James Ritchie in
Becoming Bicultural (204)*

**Chapter One:
Critical Fictions and Acts
of Survivance –
Defining the Field**

Finding a Kaupapa: The “Literature of Survivance”³

“The shimmers of tribal consciousness are heard in the
literature of survivance...”
– Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners* (63)

According to Native American writer and critic Gerald Vizenor, survivance “in the sense of native survivance, is more than survival, more than endurance or mere response” (*Fugitive Poses* 15). Survivance itself is an *action* – “an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry,” and therefore “the stories of survivance are an active presence” (*Fugitive Poses* 15) within the literary canons they inhabit.

The decision to employ Vizenor’s concept of survivance as the central conceptual motif of this thesis was originally inspired by my reading of Chadwick Allen’s 1997 doctoral thesis, *Blood as Narrative/Narrative as Blood*. In his study, Allen employs Vizenor’s concept of survivance to examine the ways in which indigenous authors use their texts as “a means of cultural survival that comes with denying authoritative representations of [indigenous peoples] in addition to developing an adaptable, dynamic identity that can mediate between conflicting cultures” (“Thesis” 65).⁴ Prior to reading Allen’s work I had been searching for a critical framework for conceptualizing the active/dynamic process of writing indigenous critical fictions,⁵ but was struggling to find any models within the realm of traditional literary theory that accurately and adequately

³ See Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance* (p. 63).

⁴ Allen’s doctoral work was eventually published as *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Māori Literary and Activist Texts* (Duke University Press, 2002).

⁵ The term “critical fiction” is used in this thesis according to bell hooks’ definition of the genre: “Critical fictions disrupt conventional ways of thinking about the imagination and imaginative work, offering fictions that demand careful scrutiny, that resist passive readership. Consciously opposing the notion of literature as escapist entertainment, these fictions confront and challenge. Often language is the central field of contestation. The way writers use language often determines whether or not oppositional critical approaches in fiction or theory subvert, decenter, or challenge existing hegemonic discourses” (56). I originally became interested in examining contemporary Māori women’s fictions within the more global framework of the critical fiction genre when writing my MA thesis, *Revealing What is Within: Patricia Grace and the Art of Critical Fiction* (University of Auckland, 2003).

describe the acts of survivance I was identifying in contemporary Māori women's fictions. Engaging with Vizenor and Allen's work helped me to find the theoretical and methodological kaupapa that enabled me to read these texts within an indigenous framework.

Like Allen's work, this study aims to examine acts of indigenous literary survivance. While Allen's work was concerned predominantly with texts written in what he terms "the early contemporary period" (*Blood Narrative 2*) or the post-World War II years to the 1970s, this thesis offers an in-depth look at specific texts written by Grace, Morris and Morey in the early years of the twenty-first century (2000-2005).⁶ Allen and I appear to have engaged in similar methodology in approaching our fields of study. In his introduction to *Blood Narrative*, Allen makes it clear that he focused on Native American and Māori texts written between the end of World War II and the early 1970s because "critics have largely avoided indigenous minority texts produced in the first half of the early contemporary period; political engagement and stylistic innovation are less obvious in these texts than those published after 1968" (*Blood Narrative 2*). I chose to focus on works written between 2000-2005 for similar reasons. Māori texts written after the (problematically labelled) "Māori Renaissance"⁷ have a tendency to explore fewer explicit or obvious acts of political resistance and survivance than the works produced in the 1980s and 1990s. This tendency results in our University of Auckland students making comments (such as the ones quoted in the preface of this thesis) that texts by young Māori

⁶ Allen's book, *Blood Narrative*, discusses acts of literary survivance in both Māori and Native American texts in the early contemporary period. Special attention is given to the works of Māori authors Witi Ihimaera, Patricia Grace, Keri Hulme, Apirana Taylor, Bruce Stewart, Harry Dansey, and Merata Mita and to Native American authors Ella Cara Deloria, Ruth Muskrat Bronson, D'Arcy McNickle, John Joseph Mathews, Leslie Marmon Silko, Joy Harjo, N. Scott Momaday, Gerald Vizenor, Vine Deloria Jr. and Dallas Chief Eagle.

⁷ I say "problematically labelled" because, as my supervisor Prof. Witi Ihimaera told me during a meeting in 2003, "The 'Māori Renaissance' is a term made up by Western academics. There was no 'flowering' of Māori art and culture in the 70s, 80s and 90s. Māori art has been flowering for centuries. Western academics just chose to finally notice and externally validate that art in the late twentieth-century." During another meeting in April 2008 he told me he prefers to think of what was happening artistically during these decades as a "Māori Revolution."

authors like Kelly Ana Morey “aren’t angry enough” and “aren’t Māori enough.” The kaupapa – or “main business” (Metge *New Growth* 279) – of this doctoral thesis is to dispel these notions and to reinforce the fact that Grace, Morris and Morey’s contemporary critical fictions are active works of native survivance that continue to reinvent concepts of indigeneity for twenty-first century Aotearoa/New Zealand.

What Does It Look Like? Literary Survivance in the Twenty-First Century

Embarking on an investigation into the methods of literary cultural survivance utilized in contemporary Māori women’s fictions necessitated first addressing questions of definition and identification: What is the difference between survivance and survival? Will acts of survivance be evidenced in the actions of characters in the literary narratives themselves, or in the actions of the authors who write them? And, if, as I have claimed, late contemporary works “have a tendency to explore fewer explicit or obvious acts of political resistance and survivance than the works produced in the 1980s and 1990s,” how will we know an act of survivance when we see it?

The answers to these questions are guided in part by the work that has been done in the past by theorists such as Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Alice Walker, Meredith M. Gadsby, Otto Heim and others, all of whom have argued that “writing is often a matter of survival” (Gadsby 177). For those living in minority communities or colonized nations, Audre Lorde goes even further, insisting, “it is better to speak remembering” because “we were never meant to survive” (256).

Nowhere are Lorde’s words more resonant than in postcolonial nations such as Aotearoa/New Zealand where for decades during the early colonial period it was believed

that the Māori were a “dying race” (Simon, Smith and Cram 224)⁸ “never meant to survive” (Lorde 256). In his history of Aotearoa/New Zealand, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End*, Ranginui Walker argues against these early-ethnographer doomsday scenarios, claiming,

For the Māori, the inheritors of a millennial culture, theirs is a struggle without end into the world of light. They know the sun has set on the empire that colonized them. They know too that it will set on the colonizer even if it takes a thousand years. They will triumph in the end, because they are the tangata whenua. (287)

As Otto Heim notes in *Writing Along Broken Lines*, in this passage, Walker clearly views Māori ethnicity “as a culture of survival” (Heim 23), and in these few powerful sentences he “shrewdly turns the tables on older accounts...which saw the sun setting on Māoridom and predicted an assimilationist future” (Heim 23).

This is “survival” in the purest sense of the term – the state of surviving – of “continuing to live or exist *in spite of*” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, emphasis added). Heim views Māori culture as a “culture of survival” specifically because it has thrived in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries *in spite of* those early sun-setting colonialist accounts. The term “survivance” as Vizenor and Allen use it, and as it is being employed in this doctoral study, incorporates all of these connotations, in addition to the ones added by the suffix “-ance” which “denotes an action” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). As Vizenor writes in “Crows Written on the Poplars,” “Survival is imagination, a verbal noun, a transitive word” (qtd. in Allen *Blood Narrative* 1). Survivance is therefore literally an *act* of survival, and it is manifested in the texts examined in this thesis both internally, in

⁸ In their book, *A Civilising Mission?* (2001), Judith Simon and Linda Tuhiwai Smith claim that the belief that Māori were “a dying race” began “with the speculations of politician Isaac Featherston in 1856: ‘The Māoris are dying out, and nothing can save them. Our plain duty as good, compassionate colonists is to smooth down their dying pillow. Then history will have nothing to reproach us with’” (224). In 1884 Sir Walter Buller, citing Featherston, told the Wellington Philosophical Society that it was a “fact that the Māori race was dying out very rapidly; that, in all probability, five and twenty years hence there would only be a remnant left” (Hiroa 362). According to Simon and Smith, the belief that the Māori were a dying race continued well into the 1890s (224). For further discussion on the Māori as “dying race” see Chapter 7 of Patrick Brantlinger’s book *Dark Vanishings* (Cornell University Press, 2003).

terms of the actions of characters in the narratives, and externally, by the authors who fight for survivance in a literary publishing world that is often slow to recognize and value works of fiction that challenge traditional (Western) modes of novel form, genre, and style.

Survivance in Grace, Morris and Morey's early twenty-first century texts therefore "looks like" characters in a rural marae-based community negotiating solutions to the negative effects of environmental degradation and addressing modern iwi health issues such as alcoholism and diabetes from an entirely intra (vs. inter) cultural perspective as it does in Patricia Grace's *Dogside Story* (2001). It looks like mixed-blood Māori characters fighting to honour and preserve all aspects of their ancestral heritages in Paula Morris's *Queen of Beauty* (2002) and *Hibiscus Coast* (2005). It looks like the subversive and challenging acts of Kelly Ana Morey's trickster characters in *Bloom* (2003) who cleverly reframe traditional Māori concepts in an utterly contemporary and postmodern light. But it also looks like acts of survivance on the part of the authors themselves – acts that manifest themselves in the subversion of traditional Western incest narratives in Grace's work, in the challenging of the "right" to publish whānau histories and stories in Morris's texts, and in the re-visioning of Aotearoa/New Zealand's colonial history in Morey's *Bloom*.

Key to these acts of survivance is the fact that they offer "more than endurance or mere response" (Vizenor *Fugitive Poses* 15) to the current social and political climate in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As bell hooks has said, "literature emerging from marginalized groups that is only a chronicle of pain can easily act to keep in place the existing structures of domination" (59), and it is therefore crucial to identify acts of cultural literary survivance in Māori fiction in those aspects of the literature that look forward – into te ao mārama, the world of light – instead of those that look only backwards in response to a colonial past. This image of te ao mārama is one that lies at the heart of my definition of Māori literary survivance. It is one that points to a future that exists in connection and

relationship to the past, and that incorporates the concept that “in the acquisition of knowledge, one progresses from a condition of ignorance or darkness to enlightenment (Ao Mārama)” (Barlow 4).

The connection between images of te ao mārama and Māori literature is one that has been long established by author and editor Witi Ihimaera who titled his 1982 anthology of Māori writing *Into the World of Light*, and his 1990s six-volume anthology series *Te Ao Mārama: Contemporary Māori Writing*. The symbolic impact of the image and the importance of its connection to a study of the history of Māori literature is beautifully summarized in Wiremu Kingi Kerekere’s “Taku Waiata” which he wrote as an introduction to *Into the World of Light*:

Horahia mai ki au ngā taonga tūpuna,
 Ngā kowhaiwhai, ngā whakairo, ngā pakiwaitara, ngā waiata
 Māori tuturu o tea o tawhito,
 Tuituia mai ki ngā tikanga o toku ao o tenei ra,
 Te ao tawhito, te ao hou, Māori, Pākehā,
 Homai ngā tohu tika, i runga i te aroha.
 Tohatohaina tenei kupu ki te ao katoa
 Puta ake i te po, ka ao, ka ao, ka mārama.

Give to us the treasured arts of our ancestors,
 The carvings, the designs and patterns, the stories and the traditional
 chants.
 Let us of this generation, try to combine them with what talents we
 have in this changing world of today,
 Give to us your greatest gift, ‘aroha’, love in its many connotations,
 It will bring peace, goodwill, friendship among peoples,
 And will take us from the world of darkness and ignorance, into the
 light of knowledge and understanding. (7)

It is in the effort to combine “the treasured arts of our ancestors” with “what talents we have in this changing world of today” that Grace, Morris and Morey continue to embark on creating works of literary cultural survivance for twenty-first century Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Exploring the Field and Identifying Gaps

Although Patricia Grace is widely considered one of “New Zealand’s literary treasures and a groundbreaker for all who have followed” (Shiels “Faith in Writing” 1), and Morris and Morey are award winning authors, critical academic responses to their short stories and novels have been relatively limited. To date there are no published texts, either biographical or critical, that focus solely and specifically on critical, scholarly analysis of Māori women’s fiction. In addition to there being no collected or extended studies available, the literary criticism that has appeared in journals, newspapers, magazines, and essay collections has almost entirely focused on discussions of Grace’s short stories and novels published before 1999, on Morris’s status as an ex-patriot New Zealand writer (as opposed to a study of her texts), and on Morey’s status as a prize and scholarship winner, instead of on the complex nature of her published novels. This trend has also been true in the postgraduate research essays and theses that have been completed thus far in New Zealand.⁹ With the exception of reviews that came out when the novels and stories were first published, very little work has been done on Grace’s Kiriyama Pacific Rim Prize winning *Dogside Story*, on Morris’s *Queen of Beauty* (2002) and *Hibiscus Coast* (2005), or on Morey’s Hubert Church Best First Book Award winner, *Bloom* (2003).

⁹ Previous postgraduate work done on Māori literature at the University of Auckland includes (but is not limited to) the following theses and dissertations: *Kaina, Kaainga and Aiga: The home experiences of marginalized minority characters as depicted in four New Zealand novels by Polynesian authors* by Meredith Anne Ogilvie (MA Thesis 1988); *Taki Toru: Theme, Myth and Symbol in Patricia Grace’s Cousins* by Courtney Bates (MA Thesis 1993); *Taku iwi, taku whenua, taku reo: The Construction of Māori Identity in the Novels of Witi Ihimaera, Patricia Grace and Alan Duff* by Michelle Maria Keown (MA Thesis 1996); *Migrant and Indigene: A Comparison of the Short Fiction of Yvonne du Fresne and Patricia Grace* by Anne Kirstine Mehlsen (Dissertation 2000); *Into the Time of Remembering: A Study of Patricia Grace’s Potiki* by Julianne Batchelor (Dissertation 1989); *Identity: Four Indigenous Writers* by Thomas Adam Taylor (MA Thesis 2001); *Contextualising Māori Writing: A study of prose fiction written in English by Witi Ihimaera, Patricia Grace, Keri Hulme and Alan Duff* by Julia Helen Calvert (PhD Thesis 2002); *The Structural Framework of the Māori Quest Story* by Tanengapuia Te Rangiawhina Mokena (PhD Thesis 2005); and *Me he korokoro komako (With the throat of a bellbird): A Māori aesthetic in Māori writing in English* by Jon Lois Battista (PhD Thesis 2004).

In spite of this lack of available critical material on the women authors in this study, there has been a steadily growing canon of scholarly publications emerging on New Zealand and Pacific literatures in general, and on a few key Māori texts, since the publication of Witi Ihimaera's *Pounamu, Pounamu* in 1973 and Patricia Grace's *Waiariki* in 1975.¹⁰ Many of these critical discussions, especially those taking place in the 1980s and early 1990s, tended to focus on "placing" Māori texts within the wider New Zealand literary tradition. These initial examinations seem driven by the need to compare and contrast Māori fiction to works written by well-established Pākehā authors, a trend that poet and academic Selina Tusitala Marsh believes has "a tendency to praise comparatively by using Western literatures as the yardstick for judgment" (7).

While the use of this yardstick may, in retrospect, appear to be racist and reductive,¹¹ many of these early comparative literary reviews and critical essays still recognised how early publishing Māori authors¹² were both utilizing and subverting the narrative tactics of "mainstream" Pākehā authors. The reviews were useful in that they examined how literature coming out of New Zealand, and Māori literature in particular,

¹⁰ Ihimaera has the distinction of being the first Māori author to publish a collection of short stories (*Pounamu Pounamu* (1972)) and the first Māori author to publish a novel (*Tangi* (1974)). Patricia Grace has the distinction of being the first Māori women author to publish a collection of short stories (*Waiariki* (1975)) and a novel (*Mutuwhenua: The Moon Sleeps* (1978)).

¹¹ Because Patricia Grace was the only major Māori woman author publishing in the 1970s, her works bore a great deal of this racist and reductive criticism. Perhaps the most stinging of these reviews came from critic John Beston who spurred a great deal of debate about the political nature of Grace's fiction with his 1984 article, "The Fiction of Patricia Grace," which claimed that "by renouncing unique qualities of Māori life as subject matter, by avoiding scenes of tension or aspects of discrimination (a word that never occurs in her fiction), Grace considerably narrows the range of what she can write about. Her reluctance to give offense deprives her of a forceful stance, without which a strong narrative stance is difficult to maintain" (52). Literary critic Mariam Fuchs refutes Beston's article in her essay "Reading Towards the Indigenous Pacific: Patricia Grace's *Potiki*, a Case Study." Fuchs's essay denounces Beston's reading as patronizing and simplistic, and expresses a concern that Grace's writing "is particularly susceptible to this type of analysis. Her apparently straightforward plots, clear diction, and nearly transparent prose make her fiction seem relatively uncomplicated. Because nothing blatant provokes the smooth surface of Grace's plots, critics do not feel compelled to marshal theoretical apparatus but rather assume that attention to the storyline is an adequate approach" (570). In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I argue that the political aspects of Grace's works were long over-looked and focus on illuminating the subversive political messages lurking between the lines of Grace's seemingly simple texts.

¹² The "early publishing Māori authors" I refer to here are fiction writers J.C. Sturm, Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace. J.C. Sturm's first published short story, "The Old Coat" appeared in *Numbers* in 1954, but her first short story collection, *The House of the Talking Cat*, was not published until 1983.

was stylistically and thematically unique in comparison to that being produced in other parts of the English-speaking world.¹³

In more recent years a number of critical collections have been published that explore Māori literature not necessarily in comparative terms, but as texts to be examined in their own right under the broader, more general umbrella of “New Zealand Literature.” Collections of New Zealand literary criticism published from the mid-80s onward tend to include a small smattering of scholarly essays on Māori publishing in general, or on specific Māori texts – usually those written by Ihimaera, Grace and Hulme (Dhawan and Tonetto; Schafer; Simms; M. Williams *Writing at the Edge*). Unfortunately, however, the publication of criticism on Māori literature is not growing at anywhere near the same pace as the publications of Māori texts. Even in 2008 it is rare to come across new criticism, either in print or at academic literary conferences, that addresses the works of Māori authors other than Ihimaera, Grace or Hulme.

Author and critic C.K. Stead exemplifies this practice of taking into scholarly account only the works of Aotearoa/New Zealand’s pioneering Māori authors in the steady-stream of literary criticism collections he has published over the past several decades. In his original 1981 critical collection, *In the Glass Case: Essays on New Zealand Literature*, Stead does not include any criticism relevant to Māori fiction, as was typical of collections published at that time. In his 1989 collection, *Answering to the Language*, he includes one essay on the works of Witi Ihimaera and one on Keri Hulme’s *The Bone People*,¹⁴ but in his 2002 collection, *Kin of Place: Essays on Twenty New Zealand Writers*, he adds no new criticism about Māori fiction whatsoever, instead reprinting the *Answering to the Language* essays on Ihimaera and Hulme. While he does

¹³ The most comprehensive definition and study of the characteristics of New Zealand literature can be found in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1991) edited by Terry Sturm. Additional useful definitions can be found in Chapter 23 of Allen Curnow’s *Look Back Harder* (Auckland University Press, 1987) titled “New Zealand Literature: The Case for a Working Definition.”

¹⁴ The essays are titled “Bookered: Keri Hulme’s *The Bone People*” and “Witi Ihimaera: Old Wounds and Ancient Evils.”

not directly refer to this omission in the introduction to *Kin of Place*, Stead defensively states that “politics is not much concerned with artistic merit and these days demands its pound of flesh in the form of special protection for, and attention to, what are conceived of as minorities and the disadvantaged” (6). He goes on to claim that he was determined not to allow politics to influence which “new” pieces of criticism he decided to include in the 2002 collection – ironically drawing attention to the politics surrounding both the inclusions and omissions in his collection. While there is no express mention of Māori fiction in Stead’s statement, it is nonetheless troubling that he chose to include no new scholarly criticism of Māori texts produced in the thirteen years between 1989 and 2002.

Many of the new academic essays on Māori fiction that have been published since *Kin of Place* can be found in collections of academic essays on Pacific literature in general (vs. collections focused solely on New Zealand literature). The best examples of this can be found in Michelle Keown’s books *Postcolonial Pacific Writing: Representations of the Body* (2005) and *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Oceania* (2007). In *Postcolonial Pacific Writing*, Keown examines specific ways in which Tongan writer Epeli Hau’ofa, Cook Island writer Alistair Te Ariki Campbell, Samoan writers Albert Wendt and Sia Figiel, and Māori writers Keri Hulme, Witi Ihimaera, Patricia Grace and Alan Duff “negotiate a central preoccupation in Pacific indigenous literature in English: the representation of the indigenous body” (*Postcolonial Pacific* 1). *Pacific Islands Writing* provides a much more general, but extensively researched history of postcolonial literatures and cultures of the Pacific. Keown’s texts are an important addition to the field of postcolonial theory and criticism – a field that for the most part has awarded much less critical attention to literatures of the Pacific than to “the literatures (and diasporas) of other designated ‘postcolonial’ regions such as Africa, Asia and the Caribbean” (Keown *Postcolonial Pacific* 8).

There has also been a slow trickle of scholarly texts published in New Zealand that focus entirely on Māori fiction written in English. The first of these, Judith Dell Panny's *Turning the Eye: Patricia Grace and the Short Story* (1997), has become an invaluable resource and curriculum guide for teachers and students of Grace's texts. Each chapter reprints one of Grace's short stories with commentary on the cultural context of the story, discussion topics for classroom use, and a glossary of Māori words and phrases. Panny followed this book with the publication of the more scholarly *The Culture Within: Essays on Ihimaera, Grace, Hulme, Tuwhare* (1998). Although a slim volume, Panny's essays briefly introduce important critical commentary on the mythological heritage of Ihimaera's *The Matriarch*, Grace's *Potiki*, Hulme's *The Bone People*, and Tuwhare's *Deep River Talk*.

While compelling, Panny's short texts allowed for assessment of only Ihimaera, Grace, Hulme and Tuwhare, arguably the most well-known Māori writers of the time. The publication of Otto Heim's celebrated book, *Writing Along Broken Lines: Violence and Ethnicity in Contemporary Māori Fiction* (1998) was therefore a much needed addition to the scholarship on Māori writing because it broadened the range of Māori authors being studied and discussed. Focusing entirely on Māori texts, Heim's book positions both poetic and fictional texts by Māori writers in the context of "a culture of survival" that "consistently turns weaknesses into strength" (25). The study considers issues of violence in texts written by Witi Ihimaera, Patricia Grace, and Keri Hulme, but also examines the works of J.C. Sturm, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Apirana Taylor, Alan Duff, Bruce Stewart and others in an attempt to examine the ways in which "writing that is marked by violence immerses itself in the most troubling aspects of existence, pain and suffering, and lays bare the moral snares of the imagination" (Heim 11). Heim's examination of this "culture of survival" helped to frame the acts of survivance I have identified in the works of Grace, Morris and Morey in the following chapters.

Also influential to my thesis is Dr. Jon Lois Battista’s extensive doctoral study, “Me he korokoro komako (With the throat of a bellbird): A Māori Aesthetic in Māori Writing in English” (2004). Battista’s study offers a rich, evocative foundation of research that establishes the existence of a unique Māori aesthetic, one largely unrecognized in late twentieth-century mainstream New Zealand critical discourse. Battista’s work proved particularly helpful in Chapter Four’s framing of the key aspects of a Māori aesthetic found in Kelly Ana Morey’s *Bloom*.

Methodological Influences

“I worked through Potiki chapter by chapter, letting one chapter, or one idea, lead to the next. (But also there was a sense of beginning in the middle, that the idea was central and could be expanded outward in wider and wider circles).

This way of working, of allowing ideas to develop and allowing one idea to come out of another, is the way I prefer to work.”

(Patricia Grace, “Influences on Writing” 70)

Patricia Grace’s frequent references to spirals, centers, and circles when discussing her own writing are an appropriate way to begin a discussion of the indigenous critical methodology supporting my study of Māori women writers. In *Potiki*, Grace discusses how individual stories told by her narrators delineate “not a beginning or an end, but mark only a position on the spiral” (*Potiki* 180). According to Eva Knudsen, this spiral “is a symbol of the Māori notion of moving on towards the point of departure. The spiral has no natural beginning or end, no uniform centre and periphery; these are in fact interchangeable – they flow into each other” (25). The spiral therefore offers an indigenous critical model for moving out from, while at the same time working back towards, the point of departure in this thesis – the indigenous/Māori texts themselves.

Exploring this concept, I have written this thesis in a spiralling pattern, beginning “in the middle,” with the texts themselves, rather than looking outwards and drawing back

to the page. This decision to write from “the inside out” meant first and foremost being grounded in “inside” close readings of the actual texts, and secondarily in the “outside” theory contextualizing them.

Writing from the inside out also meant spending many hours talking with and interviewing the authors of this study, and being sure at all times to be mindful of their stories and their knowledge in the assessment of their work. This attempt to respectfully incorporate the author’s views means that much of the methodology utilized in this study grows out of the communication that took place with the authors during personal interviews with them. If an author self-identified as a feminist, for example, or a postcolonialist, or a postmodernist, these frameworks were investigated as (possible) conceptual lenses through which to view her texts. In approaching literary analysis in this way I seek to move scholarship on Māori women’s fiction “not in a self-consciously academic pattern of theorizing, with its limitations and attempts at recolonization, but in directions initiated by the writings themselves” (Gadsby 14). I am indebted in this way of thinking to my teachers and colleagues Reina Whaitiri, Albert Wendt, Witi Ihimaera and Selina Tusitala Marsh who taught me early in my years of postgraduate study that utilizing a culturally appropriate research methodology “means that researchers should be listeners and learners rather than talkers” (Marsh 65). Like these academics, I work from the position of a listener and a learner first, and a researcher and a writer in retrospect.

A method of spiraling inquiry that recognizes both “insider” and “outsider” readings is perhaps best modeled by Eva Knudson’s examination of the Prologue to Patricia Grace’s second, perhaps most widely read novel, *Potiki*.

From the Centre
From the nothing,
Of not seen,
Of not heard,
There comes
A shifting,
A stirring,

And a creeping forward,
 There comes a standing,
 A springing,
 To an outer circle,
 There comes
 An intake
 Of breath –
 Tihe Mauriora. (7)

Published in 1986 after nearly a decade of highly politicized and internationally publicized race-relations disputes in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Grace's prologue might seem (to a Western researcher) to openly invite a postcolonial reading, with all of its theoretical emphasis on the binary relationships between the Western canonical literary "centre" and the indigenous literary works lying in the "periphery." In such a classic postcolonial reading, the "not seen / not heard" marginalized Māori people revolt against the colonizing influence (the "Centre") by organizing "a standing / a springing" into an "outer circle" or new world order, that allows for the celebrated intake of breath – Tihe Mauriora. "In other words," Eva Knudson notes in her reading of *Potiki's* prologue, "any critic well-acquainted with postcolonial orthodoxy but unfamiliar with Māori mythology will agree that these lines refer to the conscious dismantling of the European centre" (3). Knudson goes on to say, however, that an indigenous reading

reveals that postcolonial theory – despite the fact that it has liberated non-European literature written in English from an outdated universalizing form of criticism – is by no means always emancipation; its attempt to homogenize the postcolonial world vis-a-vis Europe may seem inadequate and perhaps even unfortunate to the indigenous writer or reader. The particular insight offered by the literature suffocates in this general approach to criticism. The lines of the prologue are not concerned with the psychological tension between postcolonial notions of centre and periphery and, as such, they are virtually devoid of Europe and the attempt to break an 'overseas' dependency syndrome. The prologue evokes a Māori noetic and functions also as a reference to the structure of an artistic tradition mapped out in the early stages of the cosmos. This is a modern Māori creation chant in strict accordance with 'marae protocol.' The centre to which it refers is that of the first circle in the spiral of human cognition. "From the centre, from the

nothing” alludes to a particular Māori interest in ‘nothingness’ as the realm of potential waiting and pressing for its own fulfillment. (3)

This compelling double reading of Knudson’s heavily influenced my decision to read passages in Grace, Morris, and Morey’s texts from multiple theoretical perspectives. The following chapters therefore frequently reference Western literary theory (or possible Western readings of a particular passage) before moving on to focus on specifically indigenous/Māori readings of the authors’ texts.

The works of other feminist, ecocritical, and indigenous literary scholars and theorists have also contributed to my research and have influenced my readings of Grace, Morris and Morey’s novels. Greg Garrard’s *Ecocriticism* (2004), James O’Connor’s *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism* (1998) and Cheryll Glotfelty’s numerous essays on ecocriticism and ecofeminism, including her introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader* (co-edited with Harold Fromm, 1996) all provided invaluable background in terms of definitions and the history of the field for the ecocritical reading of Patricia Grace’s *Dogside Story* offered in Chapter Two. Equally influential to the writing of Chapter Two was Ato Quayson’s work on disability in postcolonial literatures, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s seminal work in the field of disability studies, Juliette Mitchell’s examination of incest in *Siblings* (2003), and Aroha Yates-Smith’s many essays on Māori feminism. Taken together, these scholars offer a strong theoretical springboard from which to launch an examination of survivance strategies in *Dogside Story*, one that acknowledges the global work being done in the areas of ecocriticism, feminist theory, and disability and trauma studies and then moves on to recontextualize these concepts within a specifically Māori-centric framework.

Similarly invaluable to this study, especially to the readings of Paula Morris’s works in Chapter Three, is the work of Chicana feminist scholar, critic and activist Gloria Anzaldúa. Perhaps better than any contemporary feminist theorist, Anzaldúa has been able

to articulate the “borderlanded” space that so many feminist, minority, and mixed-race authors write from. Anzaldúa calls this borderlanded space “nepantla,” a word she uses “to theorize liminality” and that she associates “with states of mind that question old ideas and beliefs, acquire new perspectives, change worldviews, and shift from one world to another” (“(Un)Natural Bridges” 1). Anzaldúa proposes that authors writing from this liminal zone can provide challenges to essentialist thinking about race, class, and sexual orientation. Like Paula Morris, Anzaldúa believes that “today categories of race and gender are more permeable and flexible than they were for those of us growing up prior to the 1980s” (“(Un)Natural Bridges” 4). Authors writing today from nepantla spaces are able to “change notions of identity, viewing it as a part of a more complex system covering a larger terrain, and demonstrating that the politics of exclusion based on traditional categories diminishes our humanness” (Anzaldúa “(Un)Natural Bridges” 4). Because of the similarities between Anzaldúa and Morris’s approaches to identity theory (and in particular mixed-race/mestizo identity theory), Anzaldúa’s work seemed an appropriate place to start a discussion about living and writing in identity borderlands. For Morris, as it is for many members of the mixed-race diasporic Māori community, Māori cultural survivance is dependent on fighting for the right to assert identity from within borderlanded/nepantla spaces.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the profound influence that Jeanne Rosier Smith’s *Writing Tricksters* (1997), Jeanne Campbell Reesman’s *Trickster Lives* (2001), and Ricki Stefanie Tannen’s *The Female Trickster: The Mask That Reveals* (2007), had on my reading of tricksters in Morey’s novel *Bloom*. I had long been familiar with the traditional trickster figures of global folklore – figures such as Monkey, Coyote, Hermes, Maui and Br’er Rabbit – but the works of Smith, Reesman and Tannen helped me to recontextualize these traditional mythologies in a post-modern and specifically female/feminist context. As Jeanne Rosier Smith writes,

Tricksters challenge the status quo and disrupt perceived boundaries. Whether foolishly, arrogantly, or bravely, tricksters face the monstrous, transforming the chaotic to create new worlds and new cultures. In doing so, they offer appealing strategies to women writers of color who, historically subjugated because of both their race and their sex, often combine a feminist concern for challenging patriarchy with a cultural interest in breaking racial stereotypes and exploring a mixed cultural heritage. (2)

It is virtually impossible, after meeting Kelly Ana Morey the author, or the characters in her many texts, not to recall trickster characteristics. Both in her life and in her novels, Morey incorporates trickster antics to explore and explode notions of sexual, cultural and gender identity. For Morey, Māori cultural survivance for Gen Xers and beyond is dependent on these kinds of trickster challenges to the status quo, and on the trickster's ability to meld the traditions of the past into a contemporary understanding of Māori cultural identity.

Kaupapa Māori

The decision to work outwards from the texts and author interviews instead of inwards through a traditional theoretical lens is based solidly in indigenous methodological research practices. At the heart of this investigation lies the foundational concepts of Kaupapa Māori research.¹⁵ As a non-indigenous researcher, I am well aware of the sensitive ground I walk upon in utilizing Kaupapa Māori methodologies. According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith's essential work, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1998), "Kaupapa Māori research, as it is currently framed, would argue that being Māori is an essential

¹⁵ Kaupapa Māori theory is most often thought of in the context of educational theory and teaching methodology. According to Graham Smith, who has written extensively about Kaupapa Māori, "it is primarily an educational strategy, which has evolved out of Māori communities as a deliberate means to comprehend, resist and transform the crises related to the dual concerns of schooling underachievement of Māori students and the ongoing erosion of Māori language, knowledge and culture as a result of colonization" (27). In this thesis, however, when I refer to Kaupapa Māori I am referring to the academic research strategies outlined by academics such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (in *Decolonizing Methodologies*), Russell Bishop (in "Initiating Empowering Research?") and Kathy Irwin (in "Māori Research Methods and Practices").

criterion for carrying out Kaupapa Māori research...this does not, however, preclude those who are not Māori from participating in research that has a Kaupapa Māori orientation” (187). Smith also states that “a non-indigenous, non-Māori person can be involved in Kaupapa Māori research but not on their own” (L. T. Smith 184). For this reason, the writing of this thesis has been carried out under the guidance and supervision of Māori author and Professor Witi Ihimaera, Executive Director of the University of Auckland James Henare Māori Research Centre, Dr. Te Tuhi Robust, University of Auckland English Department Senior Lecturer Dr. Mark Amsler, and in constant consultation with the authors whose texts are under investigation in the study. It utilizes a Kaupapa Māori *orientation*, an orientation that demands a privileging of the following principles inherent to the Kaupapa Māori paradigm:

- 1) The research that involves Māori people, as individuals or as communities, should set out to make a positive difference for the researched.
- 2) The research approach has to address seriously the cultural ground rules of respect, of working with communities, of sharing processes and knowledge.
- 3) The research incorporates processes such as networking and community consultations. (L. T. Smith 191)

With these values in mind, an important goal of “Spiraling Subversions” is to provide useful information about the texts and the authors that can be used by scholars and university students in the future study of these works. It aims to have the positive effect of widening the breadth of scholarly works written about Māori fiction, inspiring interest in contemporary Māori women’s writing, and providing information necessary for both secondary school teachers and university academics to feel comfortable incorporating these fictional works into their curricula. The study is therefore educative as well as analytical, setting out to have the positive effect of keeping texts written by Grace, Morris and Morey in print by increasing demand for them from teachers/academics and librarians.

Finally, I have constructed this thesis in a manner that allows for the reading of each chapter individually, or for a reading of the entire work as a whole. This choice is driven by the desire to have this thesis ultimately be utilized by instructors and scholars of contemporary Māori women's literature who may not have the time to engage in reading the entire study. I have also tried consciously to provide clear definitions and explanations of the theoretical language used in the study, and a glossary is provided at the end of the thesis offering translations of Māori words and phrases.

These Māori words and phrases are not italicized or glossed in the main body of the thesis because Māori is an official language in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the country in which this thesis is being written, and because the authors themselves do not italicize or gloss when using te reo in the novels and stories examined in this study. As Patricia Grace says, "I use Māori language in my work...where the people that I've created demand that I do so because the words are their words. I do not italicize because the words are not 'foreign' to me or my characters and are indigenous to my country" ("Influences on Writing" 72). Incorporating the glossary instead of glossing within the thesis text was a compromise that allowed me to respect the fact that te reo Māori is not a foreign language in Aotearoa/New Zealand, while at the same time acknowledging that many readers of this thesis, both Pākehā and Māori, will not have knowledge of the Māori language. All of the authors discussed in this study approved the use of the glossary in this academic context.

The narrative and structural designs chosen for this thesis were also heavily influenced by my reading of Native American literary critic Arnold Krupat who says that when writing academic criticism that has the aim of being useful to a general reading public,

There is, at least, a discursive move that can be made, a gesture on the level of praxis, that is not really so difficult at all. If we choose to go on "verb-ifying" and "meta-izing," we can also commit ourselves to doing so in a manner that is less rarefied, less militantly distant from "ordinary

language.” I am far from urging a turn to “simple” and “plain” speech, rather, I am urging a turn away from some of the imperializing and exclusivist jargon...that has marked “high” criticism in recent years. (xx)

Krupat calls on academics to write more clearly, which in turn implies the need to *think* more clearly before we write. In an attempt to make this discursive move to “write more clearly,” I have chosen to use extensive footnoting as a means of making accessible the language of critique used in this study. Far from a naïve retreat from conceptual theoretical language, this is a critical choice made out of a conscious attempt to find appropriate language to articulate the findings of this study in a scholarly discourse that firmly rejects unnecessary pedantry.

Chapter Outline

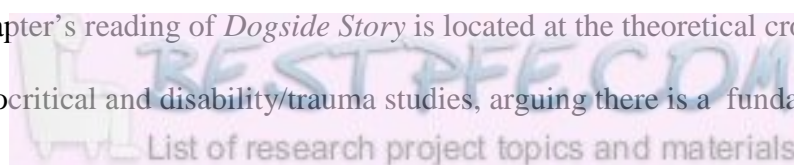
The remainder of this thesis argues that the early twenty-first century works of Patricia Grace, Paula Morris, and Kelly Ana Morey are important, innovative works of Māori cultural survivance that deserve serious scholarly consideration. Chapters offer critical analysis of key late contemporary texts by each author, emphasizing in each reading the ways in which the novels and stories offer “an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (Vizenor *Fugitive Poses* 15) as well as the ways in which the author’s texts offer “narratives of transcendence” (Gadsby 4) that point to a healthy future for Māori cultural survivance.

Embracing Audre Lorde’s notion of “the personal as political” (qtd. in Gadsby 16), the following chapters also emphasize the way in which each author’s approach to writing survivance fiction is largely driven by her personal history and whakapapa. Grace, Morris and Morey have had radically different upbringings and currently live and work in distant corners of Aotearoa/New Zealand (Grace and Morey) and the United States of America (Morris), giving each author a unique relationship to her own concept of Māori cultural

identity and her current relationship to tūrangawaewae. It was important to me to include authors with such a wide variety of life experiences because, in our increasingly transnational modern world, this allows for a study that embraces the multivariate Māori cultural traditions alive and thriving in the contemporary moment. Like Patricia Grace, I also recognize the importance of having a wide variety of artists, builders and writers contributing to Māori cultural survivance in the twenty-first century, and agree with the pioneering author's statement quoted in the preface to this thesis, that "We need Māori writers from every sort of background...for a large picture to be available of what being Māori is" (Grace qtd. in Bates 75-76). For all of these reasons, an extensive biographical section has been included in each body chapter of this thesis. In my reading of their texts, self-defined Māori authors Grace, Morris and Morey express the complex cultural identities born out of their complex and varied cultural and personal histories and it was critically important to me to reflect this in my readings of their texts.

Chapter Two, "Patricia Grace: Intra-Cultural Survivance," therefore begins by placing Grace's work in a biographical and historical context. Beginning with a recognition of Grace as the first Māori woman to publish both a collection of short stories and a novel (and as an innovative author both Morris and Morey credit as being highly influential on their own work), the chapter delineates not only facts about Grace's own upbringing, but illuminates her importance in the history of Māori literature written in English. The chapter then moves into a detailed critical reading of Grace's novel, *Dogside Story*, focusing on the way in which Grace's imagining of a rural marae-based community's ability to deal creatively with the challenges and problems facing contemporary Māoridom allows her characters (and her readers) the ability to envision a transitive and intra-cultural method of Māori cultural survivance.

The chapter's reading of *Dogside Story* is located at the theoretical crossroads of ecofeminist/ecocritical and disability/trauma studies, arguing there is a fundamental



structural affinity between the manner in which Grace depicts (in parallel narratives) the health and survival of the land (whenua) and the health and survival of the people of that land (tangata whenua). The reading also recognizes the ways in which Grace acknowledges and then subverts traditional (Western) literary depictions of environmentalism, ecofeminism, disability, incest, and child-rearing. It then proposes that by describing and then deconstructing these “classic” literary tropes within innovative and specifically Māori-centric cultural frameworks, Grace’s novel embodies a hope for the survival of not just one fictional community, but for rural Māori communities in general.

Chapter Three, “Paula Morris: Survivance in Nepantla,” builds on this sense of hope for Māori cultural survivance, but does so comparatively – from an ex-patriot Māori’s perspective. Unlike Patricia Grace, who currently lives with her extended family in a marae-based community in Hongoeka, New Zealand, Paula Morris resides in New Orleans, Louisiana, oceans away from her family and their ancestral lands. As an expatriate New Zealander of both Ngati Wai and English descent, Morris is acutely aware of cross-cultural issues facing New Zealanders both at home and abroad, and she is therefore keenly interested in exploring in her texts the unique “culture clash coming together” (Pistacchi “Conversation”) both in the mixed-race heritage of her homeland, and in the mixed-race blood of her characters.

Chapter Three’s readings of Morris’s novels, *Queen of Beauty* and *Hibiscus Coast*, and her short story, “Rangitira” (2004) therefore begins with an examination of the ways in which the author is writing from what Gloria Anzaldúa calls nepantla, or *tierra desconocida* – the borderlanded place. For Paula Morris, survivance means finding a way to exist, as a self-identified Māori author, in the constantly shifting, borderless, transnational spaces that make up our contemporary world. The chapter then offers an analysis of the anti-essentialist politics evidenced in *Queen of Beauty*, an examination of Māori-Chinese identity politics in *Hibiscus Coast*, and finally a reading of the ways in

which Morris's borderlanded characters in both of these novels, and in "Rangitira," identify and challenge (and are at the same time often complicit with) instances of cultural story appropriation in their acts of cultural survivance. The readings of these works aim to unearth the complex ways in which Morris's texts propose specific, active survivance methods for a contemporary generation of diasporic Māori community members.

Chapter Four, "Kelly Ana Morey: Postmodern Survivance," brings the study back to Aotearoa/New Zealand. Unlike Grace's life in a communal Māori community, however, Morey's life is lived largely in isolation. Living alone on a rural block of land in New Zealand's Northland, Morey, who is of Pākehā and Ngati Kuri descent, has lived much of her life away from the land of her ancestors. Raised largely in Papua New Guinea, and then in a mostly-Pākehā inhabited boarding school in New Plymouth, Morey spent a great deal of her life separated from her Māoritanga. In spite of this she says, "I've always known exactly who I am...hard to miss when all your Kaitaia relations are brown as" and she proudly calls herself "a Māori writer" (Pistacchi "Bio Interview") who has, as an adult, gotten back in touch with her Ngati Kuri cultural roots.

After examining the ways in which Morey sees herself as "rowing her own waka in her own way" (Pistacchi "Bio Interview"), the chapter moves on to do a reading of the subversive nature of Morey's self-defined "Māori novel" *Bloom* (Pistacchi "Morey in Conversation"). The reading positions Morey and several of her female characters in *Bloom* as "postmodern female tricksters," figures who "manifest the capacity to transform both an individual life and the collective consciousness of the culture [they become] visible to" (Tannen 3). Analysis examines the way in which *Bloom* openly resists nostalgic views of pre-settler Māoridom, rejects the primacy of Pākehā written histories of Aotearoa/New Zealand, and emphatically celebrates Māori culture in a contemporary context. Gerald Vizenor writes, "Trickster hermeneutics is survivance" (*Manifest Manners* 15), and this chapter therefore examines the distinctly postmodern trickster tactics Morey

utilizes in her acts of literary survivance – acts aimed at survivance of Māori cultural traditions in a strictly modern-day context.

Chapter Five examines the important role of the writer as a critical architect of Māori cultural survivance in the twenty-first century. Mark Williams says, “The carver, in Māori understanding, is not an individual so much as an expression of the communal voice...After so much cultural loss the carver reconstitutes the community’s knowledge, and this is true of other artists as well. The carver, the weaver, the builder – these make the community whole again” (“Renaissance”). The writer too, helps build community, whether it be for those still living in marae based communities (such as Patricia Grace), for those members of the ex-patriot Māori community living far away from their ancestral lands (like Paula Morris), or for a younger generation of Māori who have spent time away from or alienated from their Māoritanga (like Kelly Ana Morey). Authors publishing individual accounts of all of these perspectives, and many more, are needed to prevent future readers and scholars from feeling they can stereotype, essentialize or pigeonhole Māori fictions in the future.

In *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature* Lydia Wevers writes, “the power of language to silence or to rewrite cultural identity is never more evident than in the work of Māori writers” (“Short Story” 247). By asserting their voices and by presenting their own interpretations of both historic and contemporary social and political events in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand, Grace, Morris and Morey actively carve out a cultural identity for the Māori people within the New Zealand literary canon. The power to do this has grown out of their ability to speak and to publish their own stories, in their own terms. Speech, whether oral or written, is a right, and a right that Māori writers had to struggle in the past to assert. As bell hooks says, “moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and growth possible. It is that act of

speech, of ‘talking back,’ that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject – the liberated voice” (qtd. in Wall 11). The publication of survivance fictions is therefore a crucial way for “the oppressed, the colonized and the exploited” to talk back, and to ensure their voices have a vehicle for expression. It is a way of “imagining the world healthy” (Kingston 200), a crucial aspect to the politics of twenty-first century Māori cultural survivance.

“The conference was called, ‘Beyond Survival’ and what we were all interested in was the fact that we knew what the losses had been; we knew what the oppression was, we knew all the things that had happened to people because we’ve talked about them before. We’ve compared our stories, we know the histories: now we are saying let’s not re-tell those stories; let’s now move on from that and see how connecting with each other is going to benefit us all.”

*– Patricia Grace
(Qtd. in Bates 76)*

**Chapter Two:
Patricia Grace –
Intra-Cultural Survivance**

Patricia Grace: New Zealand Icon

Three decades into her publishing career, Patricia Grace is widely recognized as a key figure in contemporary world literature and in Māori literature in English. She has been lauded over the years as “one of our most highly respected and successful writers” (Cox 9), “the best contemporary writer in New Zealand” (Cooper 130), and is considered “one of New Zealand’s literary treasures and a groundbreaker for all who have followed” (Shiels “Faith in Writing” 1). In 1988 she was awarded the Queen’s Service Order, in 2003 she received a Ngā Tohu a Kingi Ihaka/Sir Kingi Ihaka Award from Te Waka Toi (the Māori Arts Board of Creative New Zealand), in 2005 was honoured as a “Living Icon of New Zealand Art” at the second biennial Arts Foundation of New Zealand Icon Awards, in 2006 earned additional praise (and an award of \$60,000) at the Prime Minister’s Literary Achievement Awards, and in 2008 won the Neustadt International Prize for Literature.¹⁶

Despite this honoured status, little critical work has been done on Grace’s fiction published after her second, and perhaps most widely read novel, *Potiki* (1986), and, with the exception of Jon Battista and Michelle Keown’s studies of *Baby No-Eyes* (1998), there has been very little critical work done on Grace’s texts published between 1995 and the present. This gap in the scholarly response to Grace’s work leaves many unexplored novels and short stories that are crucial to understanding the evolution of Grace’s modes of adaptive cultural survivance. When *Potiki* was published in the 1980s, “it was above all questions of decolonisation and cultural nationalism that demanded (fictional) attention” in Grace’s works (Drichel 4). More than twenty years on, these postcolonial issues still background narrative events in the author’s fiction, but they now take a back seat to

¹⁶ In addition to these honours, Grace’s publications have earned her a number of other prestigious awards including the PEN/Hubert Church Award for Best First Book of Fiction (*Waiariki*), the 1987 New Zealand Book Award for Fiction (*Potiki*), the 1994 Literaturpreis from Frankfurt, Germany (*Potiki*), the 2001 Kiriama Pacific Rim Book Prize (*Dogside Story*) and the 2005 Deutz Medal for Fiction & Poetry at the Montana New Zealand Book Awards (*Tu*). Grace’s work also earned her an honorary doctorate from Victoria University in 1989.

cultural survival strategies that focus on Māori-feminist politics, intra-whānau governance, and environmental protection issues.

Gerald Vizenor sees survival as “imagination, a verbal noun, a transitive word” (qtd. in Allen *Blood Narrative* 1). It is through the imagining of communities that are dealing creatively with the challenges facing contemporary Māoridom in what Grace calls “specifically culturally appropriate ways” (Pistacchi “Catching Up”) that the author is able to envision a transitive nature to Māori cultural survivance. In doing this, Grace recognizes that hope for cultural survivance can be found in utilizing traditional knowledges and applying them to modern day issues. “People today are more hopeful about the survival of Māori language and culture,” the author told Antonella Sarti in 1998. “There is more hope now than there was in the Seventies and Eighties” (Grace in Sarti 54). It is this sense of hope that lies at the centre of Grace’s survivance strategies, and it is this hope that permeates her twenty-first century works, texts that the author herself identifies as being written on a “different level” (Grace in Calleja 116) than her earlier fictional publications.

This chapter explores some of these new forms of creative, transitive acts of indigenous cultural survivance as they are evidenced in Grace’s 2001 novel, *Dogside Story*. The novel traces one marae-based community’s development of culturally appropriate survivance methods as it struggles to deal with issues ranging from environmental despoiling of ancestral lands, to the impact of widespread health problems, to examples of family violence and incest. I locate my examination of the text at the theoretical crossroads of ecofeminist/ecocritical and disability/trauma studies, arguing there is a fundamental structural affinity between the manner in which Grace depicts (in parallel narratives) the health and survival of the land (whenua) and the health and survival of the people of that land (tangata whenua). These structural homologies have the decisive effect of annotating the challenges facing Māori cultural survivance in the

twenty-first century by directly linking issues of community and environmental health to issues of indigenous cultural survival.

The reading begins with a biographical, historical, and theoretical context for “placing” Grace’s work within the canon of Māori literature written in English in order to provide a better understanding of the ways in which her late contemporary works both grow out of and are a departure from the literary foundations built around her. The reading also recognizes the ways in which Grace acknowledges and then subverts traditional (Western) literary depictions of environmentalism, disability, incest, and child-rearing all within the Māori-centric context of the *Dogside Story* narrative.

Placing Grace: Biographical Context

“I was born on Te Upoko o Te Ika, the head of the fish, that, a long time ago was fished up by demigod Maui from the great Ocean of Kiwa. Or, to put it another way, I was born in what is now known to most as Wellington, New Zealand.”
(Grace “Influences on Writing” 65)

Written as the introduction to her 1999 essay “Influences on Writing,” the above quotation can be read as a paradigmatic example of Grace’s ability to seamlessly meld the mythic and the personal, the views of the Māori and the Pākehā, within the fabric of her stories. Her poetic self-identification with the mythical foundations of her birthplace typifies her identification with her Māori whakapapa (Manchester 37), and is essential to understanding Grace’s belief that Māori mythologies “have relevance in the contemporary Māori world” (Grace in *Ruia Taitea*). This belief that Māori myths and the histories are alive within her and in her characters is critical to an understanding of Grace’s fiction, and to her understanding of herself as a “Māori writer.”

While there is no universal criterion for what it means to be called a “Māori author” or to classify a work as a “Māori text,” there are recurring themes in the ways in

which Grace, and her contemporaries like Witi Ihimaera, have identified themselves during their writing careers. In a 1991 interview with Thomas Tausky, Grace mulled over the question of self-identifying as a “Māori writer,” saying,

You don't set out to call yourself a Māori writer or call yourself anything, and then at a certain stage you wonder if there's such a thing as Māori writing, or is it all just writing. But you do realize after awhile that you're not in the mainstream, and you look at work by other Māori writers and you realize that there are lots of things that you have in common that makes it legitimate to say there is such a thing as Māori writing. Some of it might even stem from traditional things, traditional rhythms even though it's in English, and issues that concern Māori people. (Tausky 95)

In a 2003 interview with Paloma Fresno Calleja, Grace clarified her position, stating,

I don't object to [labels] – woman writer, Māori writer, New Zealand, Pacific or Oceanic writer, short story writer, novelist. The only adjective I would use for myself is “fiction,” that is “fiction writer.” But I've always known that I am Māori....I must say that I agree with Witi Ihimaera's definition of who is a Māori writer: they are people with Māori genealogy who identify as Māori and people who are accepted as Māori. His definition is culturally correct because it is part of our culture to be inclusive and it's part of our culture to say who we are. (Calleja 112)

Grace has always been generous about sharing with interviewers and biographers information about “who she is.” Born in 1937 to a mother of Irish heritage and a father of Ngati Toa, Ngati Raukawa, and Te Ati Awa descent, Grace “spent her childhood in Wellington, moving between her parent's home in Newtown and her grandmother's house at Porirua” (Else 37). These movements between the city and the countryside made Grace acutely aware of the bi-cultural dimension of her upbringing, and when speaking about her childhood she says, “I always knew as I grew up that I lived in two distinct worlds...There was the world of the city and going to school in a convent, in town. Then there was the world of my father's family, living amongst my relatives in the country in a Māori way of life” (Kedgley 49).

Town-life consisted of attending St. Anne's school where she was the only Māori student, and later St. Mary's College, where she was one of only two Māori students (Kedgley 49). While Grace says she enjoyed school and "didn't really want to leave" (Saker 26), she also admits that these early educational experiences introduced her to "the racism which is undeniably embedded in New Zealand life" (Saker 25). Grace says, "Being Māori was often negatively reinforced [in school]...I was aware, even when I was very young, that teachers had low expectations of my intellectual ability because I was Māori" (Kedgley 50). Resenting this attitude, she "wanted to do everything better than the next person" (Kedgley 50), and therefore worked hard to excel at school, eventually "acquiring a School Certificate and University Entrance without any difficulty despite being told in reports that she wasn't expected to" (Saker 26).

Because her schooling provided her with the opportunity to read books penned almost exclusively by canonical European male writers, Grace says, "I didn't think of becoming a writer. I didn't know one could aspire to that. It had never been put in front of me as an idea. We didn't have the opportunity then to know that writers were actual living beings that could live in New Zealand" (Manchester and O'Rourke 39). It was not until she was eighteen and enrolled in Wellington Teachers' College (Kedgley 50) that Grace read the works of Frank Sargeson¹⁷ and "the penny dropped as to what writing really was" (Tausky 91). In Sargeson's works Grace says she could "hear the New Zealand voice for the first time" (*Ruia Taitea*), and she "began to seek out New Zealand writers after that" (Kedgley 51). She also claims that certain women writers motivated her to believe she had

¹⁷ Frank Sargeson (1903-82) was born in Hamilton, New Zealand. He is best known for his novels and short stories that depict the New Zealand life and vernacular. According to the *Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, "Frank Sargeson was undoubtedly the most important New Zealand writer of short fiction in the years following the death of Katherine Mansfield. Like her, his reputation helped promote the recognition of New Zealand writing beyond the country's shores. Unlike her, he wrote his major works during a lifetime's residence in New Zealand" (Wattie and Robinson 476).

the power to write her own stories, especially Janet Frame¹⁸ and Amelia Batistich¹⁹ (Wattie and Robinson 214). Speaking of Batistich's influence on her work, Grace says, "Amelia was a New Zealander with a different voice. In her writing she called on her own background and experience. I learned a lot from that. And reading Amelia's work coincided with my decision that I would like to try writing. I realized that I had things to write about and that I should write about them in my own way" (McRae "Interview" 287).²⁰

These early influences inspired Grace to begin writing, just one or two stories a year, when she was a twenty-five year old mother and teacher living and working with her husband, Waiariki Grace, in a number of small towns in Northland, New Zealand.²¹ Encouraged by friends, she joined a Penwomen's Writing Club (Kedgley 52), and although she says she "lived too far away in the country to go to their meetings, I started to write short stories and poems and send them to Penwomen competitions...and to places like *Te Ao Hou*,²² farming journals and small provincial papers" (Kedgley 53-54). Of this period in New Zealand literary history, writer and critic Ian Wedde says, "It was a time

¹⁸ Janet Frame (1924-2004) was born in Dunedin, New Zealand. She is well known for both her autobiographical and her fictional texts. She is widely considered to be one of New Zealand's most distinguished writers (Wattie and Robinson 186) and in 2003 was recognized as a "Living Icon of New Zealand Art."

¹⁹ Amelia Batistich (1915-2004) was born in Dargaville, New Zealand to Dalmatian immigrants. She is best known for her short stories and novels that examine the experiences of non-British immigrants in New Zealand, particularly Dalmatian immigrants.

²⁰ Interestingly, Grace's comments indicate that she was influenced by many non-Māori writers to become a Māori writer. At the time she began writing fiction in the early 1970s there were very few published Māori authors to be influenced by. J.C. Sturm had published a few short stories in various literary magazines, but as is indicated in the following chapter section, they were written in a very traditional British style and most had no "Māori" or even "New Zealand" specific content. Grace was instead influenced by the first people she saw writing with a "New Zealand voice."

²¹ Grace married Waiariki Grace (Dick), of Ngati Porou descent, when she was twenty years old. The couple has seven children and a constantly growing number of grandchildren.

²² *Te Ao Hou* was a bilingual quarterly journal published from 1952-1976 by the Māori Affairs Department. Articles in *Te Ao Hou* were written in English and te reo Māori, and according to its first issue, the journal's intention was "to provide interesting and informative reading for Māori homes...like a marae on paper, where all questions of interest to the Māori can be discussed" (*Te Ao Hou*, No. 1, Winter 1952, p. 1).

when there were suddenly a whole lot of fresh writers coming onto the scene. Very exciting. And in amongst a lot of the lone voices you heard that of Patricia Grace – except hers wasn't a lone voice, it was the voice of the community” (qtd. in Saker 26).

Grace's early stories eventually came to the attention of Phoebe Meikle,²³ an editor for Longman Paul, who says Grace's stories “interested and excited me because here was a new voice making important statements about old topics...Talking about the Māori way of life and about change that threatened it” (*Ruia Taitea*). As an editor working in the early 1970s, Meikle was “very conscious that there was a gap in the literature of the Pacific and New Zealand” (Kedgley 54), and she was attempting to fill this gap by publishing the *Pacific Paperback* series. After reading some of Grace's early short stories, she contacted the writer to ask if she had enough stories to publish a collection. The result was Grace's first collection of short stories, *Waiariki* (1975).

A pioneering publication, *Waiariki* not only launched Grace's writing career, but as the first short story collection to be published by a Māori woman writer, it was also a landmark in the publication history of Māori fiction. Between 1975 and 2007, Grace published an additional four volumes of short stories: *The Dream Sleepers and Other Stories* (1980), *Electric City and Other Stories* (1987), *The Sky People* (1994) and *Small Holes in the Silence* (2006); five novels: *Mutuwhenua: The Moon Sleeps* (1978), *Potiki* (1986), *Cousins* (1992), *Baby No-Eyes* (1998) *Dogside Story* (2001) and *Tu* (2004); and three children's books: *The Kuia and the Spider* (1981), *Watercress Tuna and the Children of Champion Street* (1984), and *The Trolley* (1993). She also wrote the text to accompany Robyn Kahukiwa's paintings of the women of Māori mythology for the book *Wahine Toa* (1984), co-authored with Waiaraki Grace *Earth, Sea, Sky: Images and Māori*

²³ Phoebe Meikle (1910-1997) was a well known New Zealand teacher, author and publicist. Grace says of Meikle, “Phoebe Meikle is a very far-sighted person and she was convinced that short stories were going to become more widely read than they were at the time. She was also very conscious that there was a gap in the literature of the Pacific and New Zealand so she started her Pacific Paperback series and my first collection of short stories, *Waiariki*, was part of that series” (Kedgley 54).

Proverbs from the Natural World of Aotearoa New Zealand (2003), and wrote several Māori language readers. In addition to these publications, she collaborated on projects such as the publication of *The Silent Migration: Stories of Urban Migration told to Patricia Grace, Irihapeti Ramsden and Jonathan Dennis* (2001), wrote dozens of journal articles, essays and reflections on her own writing, and is currently working on co-writing a screenplay with Māori filmmaker Merata Mita for the film adaptation of her novel *Cousins*, a project she says “has languished for some time but is on the move again” (Pistacchi “Catching Up”).

Grace currently lives with her extended family on her father’s ancestral land near Plimmerton in a marae-based community at Hongoeka. When she is not writing, she spends her time participating in marae activities, working with the “Writers in Schools” programme run by the New Zealand Book Council, and participating in writer’s workshops aimed at encouraging young Māori writers. Grace says, “Once you are a teacher you are always a teacher” (Pistacchi “Catching Up”), and she firmly believes “it is vital that other writers are coming on. Otherwise, if you’ve got only a handful, you aren’t getting the full picture of Māori experience. Māori people come from so many different types of backgrounds and only a few are being explored” (Saker 29). In her public statements, Grace makes it clear that it is as important for her to look forward to the future of Māori literature in New Zealand as it is for her to look back on the historic influences that her own writing grew out of.

Placing Grace: Māori Literature Written in English

It is important at the outset of a discussion about any Māori literature to acknowledge, as Mark Williams does, that “the body of written material by Māori is small by comparison with the body of oral material” (M. Williams “Renaissance”). Māori writing in the short story and novel genres did not begin to emerge publicly until the early

years of the “Māori Renaissance,” a term “generally applied to the remarkable flowering of Māori expression in the arts in the period since 1970” (M. Williams “Renaissance”). While not the first fictional works published by Māori authors in English (this distinction being held by J.C. Sturm whose first story, “The Old Coat,” appeared in *Numbers* in 1954)²⁴ the stories of the early Māori Renaissance were the first to display the distinguishing feature of “a readiness to colonize (or counter-colonize) existing European forms such as the novel and short story and turn them to non-European purposes” (M. Williams “Renaissance”).

While the presence of Māori characters was not a new addition to literature written in New Zealand, the writers of the Māori Renaissance were determined to write in a vein that broke through the stereotypes of Māori people previously offered in the colonial and postcolonial literatures of their country. Pre-1970, the stereotypes offered of the Māori people by Pākehā New Zealand authors were very similar to those offered by European authors writing about Polynesian peoples in general. Critics and writers tended to textualize Pacific peoples “in stereotypical images of savagery and primitivism, setting them in a paradise that was at one and the same time exotic and available, with overtones of fantasy and danger” (Va’ai 210).

The writers of the Māori Renaissance²⁵ therefore found themselves “writing back”²⁶ against these early representations of Polynesians, and more specifically against

²⁴ J.C. Sturm (1927-) first started publishing poetry in student newspapers and the *Review* in the late 1940s. Although her short stories were featured regularly in journals such as *Numbers* and *Te Ao Hou* throughout the 1950s and 1960s, she could not find a publisher for her collected works until 1983 when the women’s collective Spiral printed her stories as *The House of the Talking Cat*, a publication which was subsequently short-listed in the New Zealand Book Awards and reprinted in 1986 by Hodder & Stoughton. A more thorough analysis of the role of Sturm’s work in the history of Māori literature written in English can be found on pp. 245-246 of *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature*, edited by Terry Sturm, and on pp. 517-518 in *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, edited by Nelson Wattie and Roger Robinson.

²⁵ Mark Williams claims, “At least until the success of the film *Once Were Warriors*, it has been in the novel and short story forms that contemporary Māori artists have achieved the broadest impact for their art. Witi Ihimaera, Keri Hulme, Patricia Grace and Alan Duff – these four in different ways defined the modern Māori world in stories that transform the genres in which they are written” (“Renaissance”).

the previously established stereotypes of the Māori people. The texts of Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace in particular were “not interested in describing adventures and high romance, but in investigating the more mundane and serious problems of contemporary life, especially the cultural conflicts between Polynesian and European in an urbanized society” (Hughes 20). An example of this can be seen in Witi Ihimaera’s collection *Pounamu, Pounamu* (1972) which focuses primarily on rural Māori life. Lydia Wevers writes that the stories in Ihimaera’s first collection “stress community, family and tribal networks, and children” and that “cultural and racial difference...is expressed in difference of behaviour, attitude, or convention” (“Short Story” 246). Likewise, Grace’s earliest short stories “stress the importance of the whānau” (Wevers “Short Story” 246). In *Waiariki*, “the fictions which represent the Māori range from stories which affirm traditional Māori social structures and values, and are framed as realist (often oral) narratives to stories...which emphasize relationships with history and landscape, articulating the mythological and elemental context in which Māori cultural identity is confirmed” (Wevers “Short Story” 247-48). Sandra Tawake believes that the many narrative voices found in Grace’s *Waiariki* offer a “seductive proposition that a literature written from the inside (that is, presenting the world through the eyes of Pacific Islanders) provides a construction of reality that can withstand critical scrutiny and can correct the vision of the Pacific imposed by outsiders” (157).

Both *Pounamu, Pounamu* and *Waiariki* were written during a period of social and political upheaval – a time when drastic changes were occurring within the social, political and economic systems of New Zealand, particularly in terms of race relations. Otto Heim says of these early published Māori fictions, “Their reception was largely sympathetic; most reviews were favourable, even if in a patronizing way. Authenticity of feeling, a

²⁶ See Salman Rushdie's reference in “The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance” (*The Times*, July 3, 1982, p. 8).

predominance of aroha and an absence of violence and anger were the most noted impressions” (12). Grace acknowledges these thematic aspects of her early texts, and feels that this kind of literary work was necessary at the time for the rebuilding of what she clearly saw as holes in the national literature. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, “The carver, in Māori understanding, is not an individual so much as an expression of the communal voice...This sense of the artist’s place in the community is especially important after the traditional world of Māori life has been interrupted by European intrusion. After so much cultural loss the carver reconstitutes the community’s knowledge, and this is true of other artists as well. The carver, the weaver, the builder, these make the community whole again” (M. Williams “Renaissance”).

As Grace’s career unfolded, the author seemed to explore increasingly confrontational situations in her short stories and novels. Her early writing in the 1970s is “characterized by a nostalgic affection for a rapidly disappearing rural communalism – as well as an intention to instill in non-Māori readers a greater understanding of Māori cultural concepts” (Keown *Postcolonial Pacific* 14). By the 1980s her works began to engage more directly with specific acts of resistance to Pākehā social, political and economic hegemony as well as more general issues relating to concepts of Māori sovereignty. This move from the pastoral to the political in Grace’s novels paralleled widespread Māori political action movements of the 1970s and 1980s. *Potiki* chronicles the fight by a small Māori community to resist the political, economic, and ultimately violent pressure put upon them by developers to sell their ancestral lands – a fictional narrative that Grace claims is based in part on events that happened in her own community and in part on the highly publicized Bastion Point and Raglan Golf Course land disputes.²⁷

²⁷ In 1977 protesters occupied Bastion Point (located east of the Auckland Central Business District) after the government announced its plans to turn the formerly Ngati Whatua land into a high-priced housing development. After 506 days the protesters/occupiers were forcibly and violently evicted by police in May 1978. The 1981 Raglan Golf Course protest demanded that Māori land taken by the Crown during the Second World War for a military airfield at Raglan (land that had subsequently been turned into a golf

Her subsequent novel, *Cousins* (1992), addresses problems associated with Māori urbanization, criticizes the ban on spoken Māori in schools, and details the 1975 Māori Land March.²⁸ Continuing in this social-protest vein, *Baby No-Eyes* (1998) is an inspired reaction to a case that exposes issues of biopiracy, explores Treaty rights as they apply to the medical field, and pays tribute to the protestors who staged the 1995 Moutoa Gardens land dispute in Wanganui. All of these works show a marked interest in racial politics, cross-cultural (mis)communication, and land disputes – interests that dominated the plotlines of Grace’s works throughout the late 1980s and 1990s.

Grace’s winning of the “New Zealand Icon” award in 2005 positioned her soundly in the minds of the general public and the critical arts academy of Aotearoa/New Zealand as a “New Zealand writer.” According to the Arts Foundation of New Zealand’s website, the Icon Awards are given “to identify those artists who have excelled as contributors to this country’s cultural identity or represented New Zealand on the world stage.” But when asked by Sue Kedgley if she feels like a part of “the New Zealand literary tradition,” Grace answered,

I’m not sure what the New Zealand literary tradition is. I just know that I explore my own background and experience, and have a knowledge and awareness of how I, and the people about me, think and feel and behave. I guess that puts my work outside the “mainstream” of New Zealand work, because Māori people are a colonized minority in New Zealand society. I think “non-mainstream” writing is very important. New Zealand is a multi-cultural society, but you wouldn’t know this from reading our literature, which means that our literature isn’t defining us properly and the overall picture we get is a false one. That’s why Māori literature has such an important place. (Kedgley 63)

course in 1969) be returned to the Tainui Awhiro people. The protest was eventually successful, but only after a long and heated dispute. Both the Bastion Point and the Raglan Golf Course protests are now seen as key symbols in the land protest movements in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

²⁸ From 14 September - 13 October 1975 protestors, led by Dame Whina Cooper, marched from Cape Reinga (the tip of the North Island) to the capital in Wellington (the tip of the South Island) to protest and raise awareness about Crown control of Māori land. Protesters demanded the return, management and retention of Māori land by Māori.

Grace's response clearly indicates a writing identity situated in an indigenous tradition. Her survivance position mandates recognizing the "important place" of Māori literature, and her place within that tradition as a self-defined Māori writer.

Placing Grace: Theoretical Context

When asked by interviewer Paloma Fresno Calleja about how she felt about her work being analyzed theoretically "from a non-Māori point of view," Grace answered,

Well, analyzing and breaking things up into compartments is really not a Māori activity, it doesn't really fit a Māori worldview, I suppose. But at the same time I've always said that I want my work to be read and discussed, and to quote myself 'chopped in the marketplace along with everybody else's'...Anything else that anyone does after that is kind of the other side of the communication process. Whatever people do with it in their own ways is really up to them, and I am pleased enough that my work is distributed out there in whatever way. So if that means it is studied, or talked about, or discussed, or just read I think that it's all positive. It's all part of discussion. (Calleja 113-114)

Being a part of this discussion often means being asked to position herself in theoretical terms, with interviewers frequently asking, "Do you consider yourself a feminist writer?"

Grace's relationship to the feminist label is a personal one; she self-defines as a "pro-child, pro-family feminist" (Kedgley 67) and says that although she does not feel "fully conversant with feminist theory or ideology" (Goslyn 54) she regards herself "as a feminist activist in that I am a *woman* and I have always *acted*" (Calleja 111). When identifying as a "pro-family" feminist she is always quick to distance herself from the nuclear concept of the word and to clarify that by "family" she means "whānau – the extended family – whatever that happens to be made up of" (Kedgley 67). Amongst other things, her works therefore explore inter-cultural familial relationships (*Mutuwhenua*), inter-generational relationships (*Cousins*), homosexual relationships (*Baby No-Eyes*),

incestuous relationships (*Dogside Story*) and ancestral relationships (*Potiki*), all within the context of examining familial affiliations and communications.

Critical attention often focuses on these relationships and on the fact that in all of Grace's works she strives to write about "interactions between people" (Grace in Kedgley 57). This emphasis on interpersonal relationships in her texts, however, has led to little attention being given to Grace's increasing focus on exploring the relationship between the human and natural worlds, and the ways in which these two communities can coexist. Gerald Vizenor believes that native survivance and sovereignty rely on "a reciprocal use of nature, not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty" (*Fugitive Poses* 15). This sense of reciprocity between the human and natural worlds is clearly demonstrated in Grace's late contemporary texts. Her ecological vision is grounded in the fact that she believes "Māori writers write about the land and the environment: the loss of the land, the spiritual nature of the land" (Kedgley 57) and that in particular "women are showing, in their writing, the importance of small dimensions and nurturing environments in our lives – plants and gardens and trees as well as nurturing relationships" (Kedgley 47). According to Ripeka Evans, Māori feminism is "grounded in the identity and creation of this country, grounded in the rivers, lakes, mountains, seas and forests, grounded in the war and peace between tribes and families, grounded in the whakapapa of generations of families, tribes, waka, Gods and Goddesses, and grounded in notions and concepts of time" (58).

Grace's desire to "explore relationships with the land and the environment" (McRae "Interview" 290) has therefore produced texts dense with Māori feminist and eco-feminist undertones – texts that invite an ecocritical reading of these crucial relationships within a Māori-centric framework. For Grace, Māori cultural survivance is based on a fight not only for the health of the people, but for the health of Māori lands.

Reading Patricia Grace's *Dogside Story*

Dogside Story in an Ecocritical Context

Cheryll Glotfelty neatly defines “ecocriticism” as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii) and Richard Kerridge says that ecocriticism “seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis” (“Small Rooms” 5). Until very recently, however, the study of environmental literature and ecocriticism in general has been considered an “Americanist” issue (Slovic 161), one tied to MLA presentations on Emerson and Thoreau and/or U.S. based wilderness narratives, or one tied almost exclusively to a study of Romantic poetry. According to Scott Slovic, the editor of the journal *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, however, “there is no single, dominant world-view guiding ecocritical practice...hence my ceaseless effort...to recruit studies of international environmental literature and to solicit submissions from proposing environmental writers throughout the world” (160-61). Slovic’s claim that both ecocriticism and environmental literature “are large and contain multitudes” (161) is well linked to Greg Garrard’s belief that ecocritical discourse is providing “space to both literary and cultural ecocriticism” (5) that enables it to have crucial political cachet worldwide. Garrard emphatically states that “as ecocritics seek to offer a truly transformative discourse, enabling us to analyze and criticize the world in which we live, attention is increasingly given to the broad range of cultural processes and products in which, and through which, the complex negotiations of nature and culture take place” (4).

These words prove illuminating in light of the negotiations between nature and culture that underlie Grace’s discussions of threats to her whānau’s ancestral land. She writes,

The private land where we live...has for many years been under one threat or another, from housing developers, industrial developers, shipping companies, local council, the

lands and survey and conservation departments, all wanting a slice, or a reserve, or public access. We have always had to be watchful and resistant regarding our land and our privacy, and land issues are very much part of our everyday lives in the place where we live, as they are in the lives of many Māori people throughout Aotearoa. (“Influences on Writing” 69)

Grace says that she uses the landscape of these threatened ancestral lands in Hongoeka Bay “in different ways and at different times in many of my stories and books, even though I haven’t defined this as being the place” (Manchester 38). Grace firmly believes that “good writing must define, expose, and comment on the concerns that people have” (McRae “Interview” 295), and these concerns seem to focus at some level in all of her novels (and in many of her short stories) on issues of ownership, stewardship and protection of the ancestral lands of the Māori people.

Importantly, Grace’s musings in her essay “Influences on Writing” also stress, as many ecofeminist texts do, that environmental problems “are not caused by anthropocentric attitudes alone, but follow from systems of domination and exploitation of humans by other humans” (Garrard 28). This depiction of domination in Māori literature tends to focus on issues of postcoloniality, and it would therefore seem natural to locate an ecocritical reading of Grace’s texts at the intersection of ecocritical and postcolonial studies. Such an approach might be particularly appropriate in examining texts like *Potiki*, *Cousins*, and *Baby No-Eyes*, all of which directly address intersections between racial oppression and the exploitation of nature.

In *Dogside Story*, however, Grace moves away from exploring postcolonial issues of exploitation in terms of Pākehā-Māori relations, instead focusing more intensely on issues of exploitation occurring within the Māori community itself. Grace explains this shift in her political focus by saying that by the end of the twentieth-century, “we [indigenous peoples] knew what the losses had been; we knew what the oppression was, we knew all the things that had happened to [colonized] people...we knew the histories:

now we are saying let's not re-tell those stories" (Bates 76). This desire to not "re-tell" stories of the past is perhaps the reason that in *Dogside Story* Grace's central dramatic conflict "is motivated intra- rather than inter-culturally" (Drichel 5). In this text, Grace narrates the story of a twentieth-century Māori community and its struggle with environmental ethics *in the present*. The novel does not examine how the history of Aotearoa/New Zealand's colonization may or may not be implicated in the actions that led to the ecological degradation of Dogside's landscape; it examines instead the contemporary issues affecting the interface between Māori culture and their current physical environment.

Set on the East Cape of Aotearoa/New Zealand on the eve of the new millennium, *Dogside Story* offers a robust examination of the challenges facing contemporary Māoridom as community members fight for personal, familial, and cultural survival. The novel begins with an ancestral parable about two sisters fighting for ownership of a much-loved brother's canoe, and ends with the contemporary story of two sisters fighting for custody of a much-coveted child in the whānau. In the course of the modern re-telling, the key elements in the ancient myth play themselves out in the modern setting: jealousy, greed, ancestral loyalty and familial in-fighting. The mythical foundation of the novel offers a culturally appropriate structure for the story-telling, allowing Grace to place the challenges faced by the modern community within the context of their ancestral past (Thomas 21), and allows her to remind readers that mythical stories "are both contemporary and ancient and have messages for any age" (Grace in McRae "Interview" 288).

Whenua me te Tangata Whenua - A Health-Based Homology

According to Kelly Ana Morey, in *Dogside Story* "land, or more specifically tūrangawaewae, is depicted as a despoiled garden of Eden as much in need of healing as its people" ("Warm Spuds" 60). This "fall" of Dogside's edenic landscape is traced from

its paradisiacal beginnings – a time in which the land was “densely forested” (117), the waterways “clear” (134) and the garden soil “fertile” (11), to a time when the land was rampaged by the “clearing of trees” (118), the “browning of the waters” (118), and the “erosion” of fertile garden lands (118). Much like Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962)²⁹ (which, according to Greg Garrard is the text which launched “modern environmentalism” (1)) Grace’s story of ecological degradation begins with an idyllic pastoral fairy tale:

In Ngarua’s time, water coming off the hills had combed down through the thick forest, among rootworks and undergrowth that bound the soil, then down into the equally as densely forested valleys and riversides. It delivered into the waterways only what was light and loose in the way of soil, seed, leaves and wood. In her time, whether fishing, swimming, playing or making a crossing, except in extremely deep places, people were able to see the river bottom through clear water. (*Dogside Story* 117)

As in Carson’s text, in *Dogside Story* “the pastoral peace rapidly gives way to catastrophic destruction” (Garrard 1) as the people “witnessed the softening of the land” (*Dogside Story* 12):

Ngarua lived to see the clear felling and burn-offs that bared the hills and revealed their fragility. She saw hills turn brown in dry summers, where grass had been shorn down by the two front teeth of too many sheep until there was only dirt left. She lived to see the browning of the waters, the heaping of logs, the blocking of waterways and the shifting passages of creeks and rivers....In all the time throughout this clearing of trees, the erosion of land and the changing of water routes, the resulting mud was being taken down through the inlet and belched into the ocean. (*Dogside Story* 118)

This use of “the literary genres of pastoral and apocalypse” (Garrard 2) in both Carson’s and Grace’s work enables both texts to allow for the possibility of a supernatural cause to the eco-catastrophes that they narrate (magic in *Silent Spring* and the hand of God in *Dogside Story*). After briefly entertaining these ideas, however, both texts set out to

²⁹ Rachel Carson (1907 - 1964) was an American biologist and nature writer who is best-known for her publication of *Silent Spring* (1962), an environmentalist text which argues that unregulated and uncontrolled pesticide use (especially the use of DDT) leads to the deaths of birds, animals and humans. *Silent Spring* spent several weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list and led to widespread public concern over pesticide use.

prove the apocalyptic environmental disasters they narrate have been in the making for generations, and that the true culprits are the human-based activities of pesticide distribution (Carson) and land development and deforestation (Grace).

The snake in Dogside's garden therefore proves to be technological development. Whereas in Grace's earlier novel, *Potiki*, unwanted land development is perpetrated on the margins of Māori settlement by Pākehā "others," in *Dogside Story* the technological advancements are brought in by, and embraced from within, the Māori community. According to James O'Connor, this adoption of technological development is deeply rooted in a long-standing view that "technology is supposed to both protect us from nature's fury and also enrich us with its bounty" (200). During her lifetime Ngarua "saw roads go through the area, saw bridges, shops and banks built," and she watched as "coaches and eventually motor vehicles arrived" (12) – all colonial and postcolonial technologies and advancements that were supposed to make life easier and to free Dogside from endless hours of toiling in "unnecessary" labour.

Grace, however, openly challenges this idyllic view of technological progress, as do "radical ecologists, feminists, political economists, and others who agree...that capitalist technology has not liberated the human species from the blind forces of nature and the compulsion of hard labour, but has rather degraded nature and made much of humankind's lot meaner, not safer or easier" (O'Connor 200). All of the stripping of the land surrounding Dogside in the name of selling lumber, clearing farmland, and making way for roading "set up conditions over the years, priming the land for the big event" (118). When Cyclone Bola hit Dogside and the Hawke's Bay region in 1988,³⁰ the land was "softer," no longer supported by the roots of trees, and when the storm struck,

The hills came sliding into the valleys and became the rivers.
Not water bearing loads of soil as in previous storms, but

³⁰ Cyclone Bola struck the Hawke's Bay and Gisborne East Cape regions of New Zealand on March 7, 1988 causing widespread landslips and devastating flooding throughout the East Cape and other parts of the North Island.

hills, farms, pastureland, that had become infused with enough water to push them down and along the river pathways, taking with them everything that had already been weakened and loosened by wind – that is, trees, roads, sheds, houses, power, telephone lines, gardens, vehicles and machinery. Throughout the district, crops, vineyards and orchards were flattened and water went through the paddocks taking animals out over the top of fences and floating them away. (*Dogside Story* 118-19)

Cyclone Bola brings to a head an ecological crisis that has long been coming to Dogside – a “crisis” in the sense the word was used “half millennia ago by the Greeks, and is still common in medical practice today, namely, the turning point of an illness at which it is decided whether the patient lives or dies, or whether the disease turns into another (more serious) ailment” (O’Connor 137). After Bola, the land and its people are left literally and figuratively with “mud on their faces,” reminded continuously by the sludge “that is everywhere” (134) that they did not heed the tell-tale symptoms of illness their land had been displaying for decades. Bola is a crisis point, but one which leads not towards healing, but to an even more seriously diseased community.

After the cyclone, “the clean-up lasted for many months,” but it was “never really completed as far as the waterways, gardens and pasturelands were concerned. The sandy banks of the inlet, as well as the beds of creeks and estuaries, were now mud, and every time there was heavy rain, wood and debris had to be cleared to get the waters flowing again” (119). Dogside’s inability to dig itself out from under the mud and silt is symbolically embodied in its inability to reconstruct the whānau’s destroyed wharekai. Even before Bola struck, “people had already spoken of the need to rebuild the wharekai and had planned on having something that was much better than what they’d had previously” (120), but more than eleven years after the cyclone, the community still has not managed to rebuild its kitchen and dining hall, its symbolic centre of nourishment and nurturing. The ominous destruction of the wharekai is followed closely by sibling incest within the whānau, the death of Aunty Blind’s guide dog, and the desertion of the

community by Ani Wainoa – all further signs of the declining health of Dogside and threats to the community’s chances for future survival.

The Four Cornerstones of Māori Health

Morey’s assessment of Dogside as a “despoiled Eden” (“Warm Spuds” 60) is apt in that it clearly links the health of the people in the whānau to the health of their land. According to the Ministry of Māori Development’s report *Hauora o te Tinana me ona Tikanga* (1999), a crucial concept in understanding Māori cultural views on health is “whare tapa wha.” Whare tapa wha represents a “holistic approach in which health and well-being is described in relation to the four walls of a strong house. A person is considered unwell if any one of these foundations is weak, and healthy if all four walls are strong. If the strength of the whānau, for example, is disrupted by insensitive practices, this affects all of the foundations, especially at a time of grief” (“Guide” 11).

The ways in which this concept plays out in *Dogside Story* is best demonstrated by an examination of what the Health and Disability Commissioner’s report *Oranga Tangata, Oranga Whānau* (2000) calls “the four cornerstones to Māori health” (“Oranga” 3).

According to the report, these cornerstones are:

Te Wairua Māori: This is the non-material, spiritual essence of a person. It is the life force that determines who you are, what you are and where you are going to and provides a vital link with the ancestors.

Te Hinengaro: This concept is generally interpreted as referring to mental health (illness and wellness). It recognizes that the mind, thoughts and feelings cannot be separated from the body or soul. Together they determine how people feel about themselves and thus their state of health.

Te Tinana: This is the physical body / the present representation of the ancestors. Māori believe that the mind, body and soul are all closely inter-related and influence physical well-being. Physical health cannot be dealt with in isolation, nor can the individual person be seen as separate from the family.

Te Whānau: Finally, the concept of te whānau deals with the linking of relationship from a common ancestor... Taking into account the needs of Māori means providers must recognize the relationship between individuals and their whānau. The wellbeing of the individual cannot be enhanced without recognition of the importance of whānau wellbeing to that individual. Similarly, whānau wellbeing is enhanced by the individual wellness of its members. (“Oranga” 3)

Because “whānau well-being is enhanced by the individual wellness of its members” (“Oranga” 3), the mental and physical health of everyone in Dogside can be expected to be affected by the enormous stress put on them by the splintering of whānau cohesiveness leading up to and in the wake of the Bola crisis. Ultimately, “if one member of the whānau suffered, all suffered” (Kupenga, Rata and Nepe 307).

This “sickness” tearing the physical landscape of Dogside apart is homologous with the deterioration evidenced in the physical bodies of the residents that inhabit that landscape. As the narrative progresses it becomes increasingly evident that the only successful modes of survivance for the Dogside community will be those forged out of ideas that are mindful of the health of both the human and natural worlds.

The “Despoiling of Eden”

By far the most pronounced symptoms of whānau *un*-wellness in *Dogside Story* can be found in an examination of Rua, a young man disabled physically (through the amputation of his leg), emotionally (through the trauma of losing his same-age cousins) and psychologically (through the guilt of fathering his sister’s child), who acts not only as the novel’s primary narrator, but whose coming-of-age story becomes the plot line from which spiral all of the other stories.

The mere presence of the disabled Rua in *Dogside Story* does not alone signify any particular theoretical perspective on Grace’s part. A quick survey of Western fiction shows that from Gustave Flaubert’s nineteenth century depiction of Hippolyte’s club foot (*Madame Bovary*, 1857), to James Leo Herlihy’s limping Ratso Rizzo (*Midnight Cowboy*,

1965), to Andrew Stanton's twenty-first century depiction of a clown-fish with a stunted fin (*Finding Nemo*, 2003), it is a relatively rare piece of fiction that does not incorporate some character(s) with disabilities into at least the subtext of their narratives (Berube; L. J. Davis; D. T. Mitchell). Because these disabled characters tend to function symbolically or metaphorically in a similar manner to various racial, religious, and sexual figures of "otherness" that support the hegemonic norm in any Western society (Garland-Thomson *Extraordinary Bodies* 11), their perspectives often act as focal points for a novel's moral drama, or as an index of morality by offering normative characters "opportunities to demonstrate whatsoever they might do to the least of their brothers" (Berube 570).

This trope does not hold true, however, in postcolonial fictions in general, and in Patricia Grace's fiction in particular, where disabled characters act not as freakish symbols or monstrous metaphors, but as complex and realistic entities in the narrative (S. D. Fox; Uprety). According to Grace, who incorporates physically or intellectually disabled characters into nearly all of her texts (Toko and Mary in *Potiki*, Mata in *Cousins*, Baby in *Baby No-Eyes*, Rua in *Dogside Story*, Father in *Tu*, numerous characters in the various *Sky-People* stories, etc.), such figures are never symbolic of the "monstrous other" because she believes, "in Māori society the disabled person and/or the intellectually handicapped person are very, very special people who must have special love, special care and special treatment" (Grace "Lecture: Influences on Writing"). A Māori-centric cultural framework therefore allows for disabled characters to move out of the margins where, according to Garland-Thomson, they usually reside (*Extraordinary Bodies* 9), and into the mainstream narrative.

While not all instances of disability in Grace's fictions are directly the consequence of trauma, those that are result in losses that involve deep mourning (both by the individuals affected and their communities) and the manifestation of symptomatic post-traumatic stress. In Rua's case, the trauma of loss is exponentially magnified by the

fact that the same car accident that took his leg also took the lives of Taku and Shania, his same-age cousins.

Because all three boys had been drinking heavily in the hours before the accident, Rua's memories of the fateful night remain shadowy, rendering his recounting of the accident the emotional distance of almost second-hand reportage:

Taku was checking out our car, what it could do. We come to a corner too fast and went flying, is all I remember. In hospital I found out Taku and Shania were dead, my same-age cousins. No shark got my leg. They chopped it off at the hospital. One broken leg I had, and one missing leg that left its ghost behind, giving me hell. (80)

Rua's sense of distance from this traumatic experience is, at a clinical level, prototypical. James Berger's work in trauma studies has shown that when a traumatic event occurs, "one passes through it, or undergoes it; one suffers it. The event is real, is overwhelming, and the psyche (or the culture) is, in some sense, shattered....the traumatic event is defined as being so overwhelming that it cannot consciously be apprehended as it occurs, it can only be reconstructed in retrospect, is always belated, at a distance" (565). In many ways *Dogside Story* therefore becomes the story of how Rua rebuilds his shattered psychic and cultural worlds.

In a reading of Rua's trauma and disability, the culturally significant relationship between Rua and his same-age cousins cannot be over-emphasized, a fact Grace illuminates with a lengthy homage to the importance of cousin relationships within Māori communities:

There are same-age cousins who are too close to you ever to be brothers and sisters. Older brothers and sisters have grown more than what you have, younger ones have grown less, neither have ever grown the same – which means you can never be equal.

But your same-age cousins are joined by the shoulders to you, and have same-age thoughts and understandings. There are strings that loop from head to head of you, heart to heart,

and you realize that it would be possible to fall into their skins and be them.

Between your same-age cousins and you, you have languages. There is one that grows word by word in all of you at once – ah and ga, ma and ta, ha and haa, wha and far, kaa and car. The other is a secret language, which is secret only because others don't know of it. It has no words, or it has ghosts of words, mists of ideas that creep into all of you at the same time. There are same-age eyes seeing from a same level and time, and memories storing on same-age shelves. The same tides run through all. (*Dogside Story* 255-256)

It is because of these “strings that loop from head to head of you, heart to heart” that Rua feels the amputation of his leg as a catastrophic loss that leaves him both corporally and spiritually incomplete, and unable for the majority of the novel to allow his “one-legged self” to come to terms with the loss of “Taku and Shania and the half limb...ghost bits” (255). According to Hewett, after a traumatic event such as Rua's accident, “the world itself, and one's own body, must be relearned” (124). This proves especially true in a Māori cultural framework where the shape of Rua's world has been irrevocably shattered as much by the loss of his cousins as by the loss of his leg. Rua's rendering of the loss of his cousins as the primary loss, and the loss of the leg as secondary and “no big deal” (46), is manifested in his refusal to wear a prosthesis (it is years before he can even say the word aloud, much less wear one (81)). For Rua, what has been lost cannot be replaced; the loss of his cousins means a loss to a major cornerstone of his own, and his community's, health.

The traumatic loss of Taku and Shania becomes an extension of the ripple of loss that has echoed throughout the Dogside community during the second half of the twentieth century. Over the years, community members had “left home to find employment, to go to the war, or to go into tuberculosis wards and sanatoriums. Those who were left behind scratched for a living, took in the orphans, and brought home the sick, the disabled and the traumatized” (138). With the passing of each subsequent generation, a continually

growing number of community members left “to find work or to join gangs” (130), and the people left remaining in Dogside were “thin and dazed and their dogs were even worse” (138). Grace says, “it is significant that several characters are unwell and disabled because statistics show Māori health to be very poor. . .[and] the fact that there are fewer accessible health services for Māori in rural communities means that people have to cope in the best way they can” (Pistacchi “Catching Up”). The loss of Taku and Shania and the disabling of Rua (three young and healthy boys who had chosen to remain and work on their ancestral land) therefore means an even more agonizing loss to a community that is already haemorrhaging members due to urban migration. Rua’s presence, and the lack of presence of his missing leg, therefore becomes a constant and unsettling reminder of what the community is missing – what it is lacking – as it heads into the twenty-first century.

“Discursive Nervousness”

In “Looking Awry: Tropes of Disability in Postcolonial Writing,” Ato Quayson states, “the first thing to note in the literary primal scene of the encounter with the disabled is that the narrative is often marked at such points by signs of what we might term ‘discursive nervousness’” (58).³¹ According to Quayson this “discursive nervousness” is reflected in postcolonial writing in a variety of ways, but primarily manifests through “a change in the texture of the language,” “a general reversion to images of primary sensations,” or a “subliminal unease with questions of identity” (57-58). Rua’s story begins with a blending of all three of these characteristics. Beginning in Chapter 2, immediately after the third-person recounting of the ancestral parable that establishes the history of Dogside, Rua’s narrative literally and figuratively establishes a rapid switch from the indirect and formal discourse that marks the mythical storytelling in Chapter 1 (“This first part of the story is about two sisters...” (7)), to a richly colloquial and

³¹ Quayson clarifies that “contrary to how the term is applied in Freudian usage, ‘primal scene’ is used here not to denote the child’s witnessing of the sexual encounter between parents, but rather with the sense of being basic, primary, and fundamental” (66).

eminently personal discourse in Chapter 2 that is steeped in the rhythms, sounds and idioms of Māori English (“Don’t mean the old fella couldn’t have shoes, e heh”(17)).³² This change in linguistic texture delineates not only a deliberate move on Grace’s part from authorial to figural narration, but also marks an oscillation between the knowable, recountable past and the unknowable, vacillating present.

Rua’s present situation is marked in the novel’s opening scene by a staccato mix of sentence fragments and rambling run-ons, resulting in a formal stylistic that mimics the emotional discomfiture Rua feels as he lies on the sand, “stretched out flat with water now almost reaching the foot with the good shoe on it” (15). The discursive nervousness in this scene is manifested by this quick, erratic, heartbeat-like writing, and by Grace’s ability to tap into primal fear sensations – the innate human fear of drowning (the tide is coming in and we are told Rua is “stuck”) and the primordial fear of being hunted (Rua can feel “eyes on him” and knows someone is “creeping up on him”). In this primal scene, as he lies exposed, examined, and ultimately disabled and disarmed (he cannot reach his crutches), Rua faces the same “subliminal unease” Quayson refers to in regards to his own disabled identity. Rua’s crisis is then elaborated in the experimentalist way he imagines and recounts the various responses to the situation on the beach he feels he could have executed “if he’d been two-legged” (15).³³ These desperate ruminations emphasize the fact that Rua must imagine new and innovative modes of survivance for himself – modes that differ radically from the ones he would have depended on before the loss of his leg.

³² Further discussion of the ways in which Patricia Grace utilizes a Māori-English syntax can be found in Chapter 3: “Māori-English Syntax: Evoking the Rhythms of the Old People” in my MA thesis.

³³ Rua fantasizes, “If he’d been two-legged he’d have waited, let her come close, then he would’ve flipped up, yelled, dropped his tongue, scared the wingnuts out of her and chased her home” (15) or “if he’d been two-legged” (15) he “could do a quick roll, grab one of the crutches, aim, fire” (15). In reality, however, Rua is one-legged, and without his crutches he is stuck lying on the sand watching warily as the tide comes in, hopeless to do anything to scare Kid/Kiri off.

Rua's self-awareness in this scene is complicated by the fact that his perceptions of self are unsettlingly mitigated by Kid/Kiri's³⁴ active gaze upon him as he lies helpless on the beach. He sees himself through her eyes, and experiences the weight of her perception of him as a physical sensation: "Eyes on him he could feel" (15). Discursive nervousness explodes in this assessment of the self-seeing vs. other-seeing, ultimately allowing Kid's gaze to become the vortex of tension and trepidation in the scene. "Two black spiders were her eyes" (15), Rua says, evoking in the reader nightmarish images of Rua, unable to move, while the spiders – the gaze – run over and around his disabled body. By the scene's end, "Kid was close up looking down on him waiting for his eyes or his foot to move," her eyes "spiders knitting their legs" (18). Kid's eyes and those of the spectator-reader overlap in this scene, and this act of gazing, or in this case staring,³⁵ at Rua therefore acts as a reminder that "disabled people have variously been objects of awe, scorn, terror, delight, inspiration, pity, laughter, or fascination – but they have always been stared at" (Garland-Thomson "Politics of Staring" 56).

This early act of staring is echoed in Rua's first meeting with his future romantic partner, Maina. During their initial encounter, Rua describes Maina as openly "gawping at [his] gone leg as though it was some fascinating baby" (49). Her act of staring angers Rua, and ultimately feels disquietingly inappropriate to the polite reader who has undoubtedly been taught "not to stare." Grace's ability to evoke in her readers both a sense of revulsion with Maina's frank stare, and an illicit desire to follow her look, plays on a long history of

³⁴ The character Kiri in *Dogside Story* is nicknamed "Kid." Other characters in *Dogside Story* use the names Kiri/Kid interchangeably.

³⁵ In her essay "The Politics of Staring: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography," Rosemarie Garland-Thomson differentiates between staring and other forms of looking, stating that staring is "a more intense form of looking than glancing, glimpsing, scanning, surveying, gazing, and other forms of casual or uninterested looking, staring registers the perception of difference and gives meaning to impairment by marking it as aberrant" (56).

fascination with the disabled body.³⁶ Our discomfiture as readers, according to Garland-Thomson, is based on the fact that “the disabled body is at once the to-be-looked-at and not-to-be-looked-at, further dramatizing the staring encounter by making viewers furtive and the viewed defensive” (“Politics of Staring” 57). We are therefore not surprised when Rua answers Maina’s insistent demand, “What happened to your leg?” with the loud and defensive, “A shark got it,” a story Rua invents with the intention to “shut her up” (49).

By their very existence, Rua’s disabled presence and the discursive nervousness surrounding it seem to compel the stare and to demand an explanation. Rua’s missing limb therefore ends up acting as a “narrative prosthesis” (D. T. Mitchell 20), a term David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have coined to describe the dependency of literary narratives on disablement of some kind. Mitchell and Snyder’s theory grows out of a belief that “the very need for a story is called into being when something has gone amiss with the known world, and thus the language of the tale seeks to comprehend that which has stepped out of line” (D. T. Mitchell 20). The need to understand the underlying causes of Rua’s physical, emotional and psychological disabilities is emphasized by Kid’s continuously reiterated request, “Tell me,” and in Maina’s repeated requests to be told “what happened.” Digging into Rua’s wounds therefore means unearthing a host of ulcers in the fabric of the Dogside community, not the least of which is confronting the issue of alcoholism in the community that is the underlying cause of Rua’s amputation.

Taku and Shania lost their lives, and Rua lost his leg, in a drunk-driving accident. Their trauma was self-inflicted, but also self-reflective of a community plagued throughout the text by the effects of drink. Rua’s great-grandfather beat his wife and starved his children because all of his money was “spent on drinking and betting and cards” (114). This tradition was passed down through future generations of Dogside –

³⁶ As becomes clear in the section later in this chapter titled “Communicating: Pulling out the Splinters” (p.86), Maina stares at Rua’s leg not because she views Rua as a “monstrous other,” but because she has a constant desire to get Dogside community members to confront and talk openly about the illnesses and problems that plague them.

Uncle Archie partying himself towards “smoked lungs and a pickled liver” (135), Rua’s own father “getting drunk” (40) every Saturday night, and Rua and his friends doing their best to get “inked up” (22) as often as they can afford to. All of this drinking is depicted as being a “matter of practice” (59) and one that is clearly used to quell the desire in community members to ask of each other “tell me...what happened to us?” (43).

Dogside Story’s story is therefore called into being by the need to out the secrets, both emotional and historical, that Rua’s disability calls into question. Only by trying to ascertain what “has gone amiss” with their “known world” (D. T. Mitchell 20) can the spiritual healing of both the individual characters and the entire community begin to take place.

Surviving the Trauma

Rua’s own journey towards healing begins with what appears to be an evolutionary back-step; after losing his cousins he chooses to rebuild and relearn his world by renouncing his fully-developed human self and reverting to a primal “fish-self.” Referring to the “ghost” (255) section of his amputated leg as a “fish-shaped gap” (255), Rua retreats from the communal living area surrounding the marae to live in a solitary shelter in the bush. There he finds power in evoking his ancestral epistemology, calling himself a “fish among other fish” (52), a title with metonymic echoes of his ancestress Ngarua, from whom Rua’s name is derived. Literally meaning “fish,” (Oettli 90) Rua’s name defines his function within the world he rebuilds in the absence of Taku and Shania. His role as fisherman gives him what he calls “his physical life” (79), a life with no aunties fussing over him and a life that makes him essential to, but leaves him physically separated from, his community.

This separation is symbolically marked by a creek that runs through the whānau’s ancestral land, a creek that becomes a transitional space between Rua’s post-trauma world in the bush and the communal world with the whānau that lies on the other side. Crossing

back and forth across this creek with increasing ease (73) Rua finds himself able to move through this emotional borderland, wishing everyone on the marae side of the creek could understand that “if there was anything wrong with his life now it was nothing to do with his missing leg” (46). For years after the accident Rua believes that if he can “still get himself through the blowhole, get himself into water, that was the big thing, the biggest thing” (46). Living on “his” side of the creek, fishing and providing for the family, Rua tries to rebuild a life for himself that is reminiscent of the life before Taku and Shania’s deaths, a time when the trio proudly provided the kai moana for the whānau. “Who else,” he asks himself, “to get the fish now that Taku and Shania were gone? It had to be him” (79).

Of course, in time Rua realizes that this isolated “physical life” is “bullshit” because “he knew he really had people to turn to any time he wanted, places to stay anytime, TV to watch if he felt like it, Jase to run round after him” (155). The loss of his leg (and the more important loss of Taku and Shania) meant he could “get away with a lot” (151) because “when you were one-legged people always believed you had good reason for leaving meetings, falling asleep in odd places, or going up creek to live by yourself” (151). However, the emotional wound (signified by the borderland-creek) that separates Rua from his whānau runs much deeper than the overtly perceptible issue of coming to terms with a “ghost leg” (255). Living in self-imposed exile in the bush, in the house that was formerly (and quite significantly) inhabited by his “Nanny Blind,” Rua is able to harbour the secret that he and everyone else in his community has been “blind” to for years. Only there can he live in conscious recognition of himself as “the full dog” (104) – the father of his sister’s child. The creek therefore acts as the cut in the landscape that separates “the secret for life that had to be left with the trees” (102) – the secrets surrounding the incest – from the whānau’s unconscious denial of Kiri’s true parentage.

Because Grace makes it clear in *Dogside Story* that cultural survivance in the twenty-first century is dependent on Māori communities outing, understanding, and coming to terms with secrets like Rua's – secrets that eat away at the health of the entire whānau – large portions of *Dogside Story*'s narrative is dedicated to investigating the community's secrets and silences. The following sections therefore investigate how important outing these secrets is to the whānau's process of healing.

Incest in *Dogside Story*

By having sex with his sister and fathering the girl who should have been his niece, Rua violates what is considered by many to be the ultimate cultural taboo. According to Jonathan Turner and Alexandra Maryanski, “in nearly all modern cultures, breaking the incest ban strikes at the core of the family and society, if not the viability of the species” (1) and for this reason, anthropologist Robin Fox believes that “at the very least, the idea [of incest] seems to make us easily uneasy, and at worst, downright hysterical” (5). Grace's use of the incest motif in *Dogside Story* utilizes the “near-universality” (Richardson 553) of the incest taboo to reinforce a discursive nervousness not dissimilar to the one we feel upon first meeting Rua alone and defenceless on the beach; Patricia Grace is once again tapping into what is an innate, universalizing fear – this time a fear of (and revulsion towards) the violation of the incest prohibition and the progeny it produces.

From Aphra Behn's *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684), to Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* (1969), to Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), the incestuous act, especially as it occurs between brother and sister, has been treated as both a frightening and an utterly captivating literary trope. Grace herself has shown a long standing fascination with the violation of the incest

prohibition³⁷ and the ramifications of such transgressions in both her novels and short stories. *Mutuwhenua* (1978) makes reference to one of Ripeka's aunts who "married a second cousin" (92),³⁸ *Cousins* (1992) addresses a widow's need to flee from her whānau's ancestral land out of fear the elders will force her to marry a relation of her husband's who she views as a "brother" (102),³⁹ the short story, "Flower Girls" (1994) depicts the devastating effects of father-daughter incest, and the character Baby, the namesake of *Baby No-Eyes* (1998), is the product of an incestuous relationship between her parents (who are cousins)⁴⁰ and a descendent of Rorikohatu, a great-great uncle guilty of impregnating his niece.⁴¹

These early experiments with the relationship between incest prohibition and narrative foreground Grace's much more exhaustive examination of the subject in *Dogside Story*. The text departs, however, from the anthropological, philosophical and psychoanalytical paradigms of her previous works by positioning the characters of Rua

³⁷ Grace says she first thought "of writing on the theme of incest when I was told a personal story by a victim of incest. It was a very sad story involving her sisters as well....It was on my mind for some time, then I decided to write about it" (Pistacchi "Catching Up").

³⁸ In *Mutuwhenua*, Ripeka's aunt "married a second cousin and didn't even know they were related" (Grace *Mutuwhenua* 92). Ripeka's mother blames this on the old people and says of the process of finding a husband or wife, "They don't understand these old ones...Unless you knew all the old things, then there was no way for you to know...until the old people got their tongues going and told you everything. And sometimes it was too late by then and they blamed you" (Grace *Mutuwhenua* 92).

³⁹ In *Cousins*, after Polly's husband Rere dies in combat, his family makes it clear they expect her to marry her young brother-in-law Aperehama, a boy who tells Polly he thinks of her as his "big sister" (Grace *Cousins* 114). Upon learning of the family's designs on her future, Polly feels she must leave the marae community, stating, "Aperehama was like a brother to me" (Grace *Cousins* 102).

⁴⁰ Shane and Te Paania realize long after courting, falling in love and becoming engaged that they are related by blood. Te Paania says of the situation, "It wasn't until our wedding day that we found out we both came from the same family, that Shane and I had the same great-grandparents. Gran Kura and my laughing grandfather were first cousins" (Grace *Baby No-Eyes* 21). While not incest in a legal sense, Te Paania realizes that "if the old people had found out sooner about our close connections they may not have approved the marriage" (Grace *Baby No-Eyes* 21).

⁴¹ In *Baby No-Eyes*, Kura tells the grim tale of her great-uncle Rorikohatu impregnating his niece Roena, and the subsequent punishments that he suffers for his actions. When the family finds out about Rorikohatu's relationship with Roena, "some of the men went looking for Rorikohatu to kill him. They found him, they didn't quite kill him, but he was always a dead man after that" (Grace *Baby No-Eyes* 183). From that point on, Rorikohatu lives on the edge of the family property, never to be properly recognized, even in death, by his whānau ever again. He becomes to the family the "man-who-was-a-ghost" (Grace *Baby No-Eyes* 13), the man who no one would "see," and thereby becomes a no-thing in their community.

and Ani in a complex and critical position that resists, and ultimately subverts, a conventional Western reading of their incestuous relationship. Like Rua himself, Grace's approach to incest in *Dogside Story* stands at the border, simultaneously inviting and rejecting an essentialist reading of the act, a reading which proves unsettling in its ability to evade moralistic positioning regarding long-standing prohibitions on brother-sister incest.

While incest is generally framed in Western literary fiction in terms of the shame and horror surrounding the act and its aftermath, as a theme in ancient creation myths, the act is often portrayed pragmatically, and even positively (Garry and El-Shamy 432). Incestuous marriages and copulations were “commonplace among the gods of ancient peoples” (Cory and Masters 4), and creation myths from all over the world “resort to incestuous peopling of the earth” for the commonsense reason that “if the first humans were few in number, possibly only two, then their offspring had no choice but to mate with siblings” (Garry and El-Shamy 432-33). Polynesian creation myths are no exception. According to A.W. Reed's version of the Māori creation myth,

Tane had seen the beauty of earth and sky, but he was still dissatisfied. He felt that his work would be ended only when Papa was peopled with men and women. Children had been born to Tane and his brothers but they were celestial, never-dying gods who were not suited to the earth and its ways.

The gods came down to earth and out of the warm red soil they made the image of a woman... The gods purified her and named her Hine-ahu-one, woman-created-from-earth. Tane became her husband and they had several girls as their children.

Tiki, the first man, was made by Tu-matauenga, god of war. He became the father of men and women who peopled the earth and inherited all the wonder and glory that Tane had made for them. (A. W. Reed 20-21)⁴²

⁴² It is interesting to note that in his book *Niuē-fekai (or Savage) Island and its People* (1903), S. Percy Smith states that in Polynesian Niue, “*Tiki* is the term for incest, of which the people had great horror. They deduce this word from their story of Māui, of whom there were three—some say five—Māui-matua, Māui-tama and Māui-tamā-tifine. The two latter, who were brother and sister, married, and the child of this union

In this version of the myth, mortal people of the Māori world are all considered descendents of Hine-ahu-one and Tiki, an incestuous genealogy that is viewed pragmatically, both because its inception pre-dates concepts of incest taboo and prohibition, and because, according to psychologist Karin Meiselman, “as a theme in mythology and literature, sibling incest has been treated more frequently, and with much more sympathy, than parent-child incest” (263).⁴³

Because, in a Māori cultural framework, “all things are connected in time and space in the great spiral of existence” (Gwin 147), Grace is able to weave these ancient legends into *Dogside Story*'s modern incest narrative in a manner that lets her interrogate the taboo. The story of Ngarua and Maraenohonoho's obsessive and possessive love of their brother exists culturally and narratively in reciprocal dimensions, allowing it to simultaneously invoke the ancestors (the pre-history children of Hine-ahu-one and Tiki), inhabit the past (in the recorded history of Dogside), and unfold in the present (in Rua and Ani's story). Rua and Ani's incestuous relationship therefore spirals out of this layering of ancient myth and legend. They are the descendents of two sisters whose love for their husbands “never ever matched the love they held for their brother” (8), and who “would have died rather than let the other have their brother's heart, their brother's love” (10). They come of age in the physical landscape of Dogside, an area colonized and developed out of thwarted incestuous sibling desire and whose very name, according to ethnographer Elsdon Best, evokes long-standing incestuous connotations in te reo Māori:

Incest is termed *irawaru*, *moe tuahine*, and *ngau whiore*, the expression *kai whiore* being a variant form of the latter.

was named Tikitiki, hence the word for incest” (36). Smith goes on to point out the similarities between the stories involving Niue's legendary Tikitiki and the Māori's mythological stories about their first man, Tiki.

⁴³ This also proves true in Māori mythology. While the pragmatic and seemingly necessary incestuous relationships between the children of Hine-ahu-one and Tiki remain free from judgment, the story of Tane's sexual liaison with his daughter Hine-titama is steeped in moral condemnation in nearly every re-telling of the story, including Patricia Grace's rendition of the myth in *Wahine Toa: Women of Māori Myth and Legend* (1984).

Three of these terms are connected with dogs. *Irawaru* is the name of a person in Māori mythology who was turned into a dog by the magic arts of Maui, and who was afterwards looked upon as the origin, or tutelary deity, or parent of dogs. *Ngau whiore* means “tail-biter.” Those who commit incest are compared to a dog which turns and bites its own tail. (31)

Rua and Ani are, therefore, ultimately members of a community whose “tail-biting” foundations put them on the losing side of a number of hegemonic oppositions: Godsiders are “cultured,” Dogsiders are “rough;” Godsiders are “devout,” Dogsiders are “ungodly;” Godsiders are “principled,” Dogsiders are “without morals” (13). As one Godsider says of Rua and his incestuous past, “A dog will do what a dog will do. Sister, mother, grandmother, mother-in-law, it makes no difference to a dog” (272). In spite of all of this, Grace acknowledges her bias for these rough and rebellious Southsiders, admitting in the first chapter that the remainder of her novel is “one sided – it favours Dogside” (14).

By taking these infinite pains to position Ani and Rua’s relationship so firmly in the mythological, historic and linguistic background of Dogside, Grace seems to be preparing her readers to accept that the children’s breaking of the incest taboo is determined from the opening pages of the narrative. From a Godsiders (read: outsiders) perspective, Ani and Rua appear to be from “bad stock;” they are the descendents of “useless hua” and simply cannot be expected to act any better than “mongrel dogs” (13). Seemingly giving credence to this reading, Grace backgrounds the children’s upbringing in classic clinical lines, laying all of the groundwork for what researchers have found to be the common denominators in the settings for brother-sister incest: a lack of parental/adult supervision (Meiselman 263),⁴⁴ a dysfunctional family that exhibits violence (Turner and

⁴⁴ Ani and Rua spend a lot of unsupervised time together, in part because their parents are not physically present during their adolescent years. Their mother died when both children were very young, and both of their fathers left the whānau’s ancestral land to find work in distant cities. Rua was left to be raised by his Aunt Wai, and Ani was left to be raised by her blind great-aunt, Nanny Blind. Many years later, when the truth about Kid’s parentage comes to light, Rua’s uncle laments this lack of supervision admitting, “We didn’t watch out, didn’t look after you good” (172).

Maryanski 71),⁴⁵ the absence of suitable sex partners in the community (Masters 83),⁴⁶ the rebellious desire (by at least one of the siblings) to cross boundaries (J. Mitchell 62)⁴⁷ and the termination of the sibling's relationship as a result of the sister's pregnancy (Wienberg qtd. in Meiselman 273).⁴⁸ In the rendering of each of these characteristics, however, Grace subtly reterritorializes them in Māori terms, demanding that her readers recognize the manner in which the confluence of the events leading up to the incestuous act in *Dogside Story* problematize the models of desire, agency and victimhood provided in traditional Western incest narratives.

While it is true that Rua and Ani spend a large amount of unsupervised time together as children, this time is spent roaming the beaches and bush surrounding their home marae – an area the elders in their community deem safe for independent play. Their childhood adventures often involve the excitement of partaking in tabooed activities (from playing in areas considered tapu by their elders, to daring each other to perform increasingly more dangerous feats of athletic prowess), but these transgressions can, in part, be viewed through the lens of stereotypical adolescent behaviour. Grace takes great pains to eloquently remind her readers that “older kids” often have

something itching, creeping round inside them that was airy
and not quite there most of the time, though at other times
there was a specific vegetable or animal feel about it. It was

⁴⁵ Ani and Rua's dysfunctional family history is outlined in Chapter 16, pp. 113-116. This background illuminates why Ruahine (Ani's grandmother) took Ani at birth to “bring her up as her own” (116), and gives some psychological explanation as to why Lady Sadie (Ani and Rua's great-aunt) “hurt,” “beat,” and “slaved” (287) her children.

⁴⁶ Ani is raised deep in the bush first by her grandmother, and then by her blind great-aunt. The family worries deeply about the child's isolation because they “didn't want Ani Wainoa growing up in the trees, weird” (65). Rua is Ani's only true companion growing up (he visits her regularly both with his mother as a child and then alone as an adolescent). Ani calls Rua, “my true sibling, my utmost companion and friend deep in my heart” (202).

⁴⁷ Throughout their childhoods, Ani Wainoa consistently demonstrates a rebellious streak and it was she, and not Rua, who continuously made plans for a wide range of adventures that “weren't allowed” (70) by their elders.

⁴⁸ Ani hides from Rua and the rest of the family during her pregnancy. Immediately after giving birth to Kiri, she abandons the baby with Rua and then flees (first to Auckland and then to Norway). The two siblings never meet again.

like plantlife putting out sticky clamps and climbing one two, one two, through chest and arms and head, or putting down hairy roots in a way which wiggled down through lower torso and legs. It was as if they were about to sprout green. Or it could have been something animal – leggy insects scuttling about and taking up spaces, could even have been legless and wormy making tunnels and funnels, tickling all over and keeping them all the time on the move, all the time gabbing, giggling, hooting and crashing, all the time awake. (*Dogside Story* 224)

This “adolescent itch” can be seen in the children camping near the whānau’s marae when they go “lover spotting” (224). In Rua and Ani this itch is manifested in terms of daring each other towards increasingly sexual modes of physical contact.

In this sense, Rua and Ani’s incestuous act can be read as the natural culmination of years of physical play coinciding with adolescent hormonal bloom. Their relative isolation leads them to have an unusually intense sibling bond, and the secrets that they share about their tabooed adventures further drive them towards an inner social-circle of two. Freud believed “the more closely the members of a family are attached to one another, the more often do they tend to cut themselves off from others, and the more difficult it is for them to enter into the wider circle of life” (50). Ani’s threat that she will “kill” Rua if he “tells” (88) anyone about their activities further widens the gap between the siblings and those that surround them. It also serves to bind Rua to Ani in ways that are unexplainable to their other family members. When Rua refuses to relocate to Australia with his father after his mother’s death, he “couldn’t think at the time why he didn’t want to leave, only saying to himself that there was treasure lying at the bottom of the boiling deep” (71). This treasure is one of the tapu objects he and Ani have been searching for in their adventures, and the lure of staying and continuing their dangerous childhood game overrode the fact that “he’d felt sorry for his father” (71) when he broke up the immediate family unit by choosing to stay behind with his extended family in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

At this point in the narrative, *Dogside Story* appears to have a great deal in common with classic eighteenth and nineteenth-century British incest narratives⁴⁹ (albeit one that takes place in the sea and bush instead of in the moors and manor). Traditionally these narratives “feature various kinds of sibling (or quasi-sibling) relationships, all tending to follow the same narrative trajectory, from a shared childhood to a tragic end...the siblings or quasi-siblings are reared together, become erotically involved, and are separated by death” (Richardson 555). *Dogside Story* incorporates the mainstays of these classic incest narratives, but ultimately undermines the tradition by subversively refusing to engage with the classic “tragic ending.” In Grace’s tale, there is no victim in the incestuous act and both siblings survive – and eventually thrive.

This challenge to traditional/Western incest narratives manifests most profoundly in the actions of Ani, an avid reader of classic Western “kissy books” (87) who often “steals” (55) her word play from the literary fiction she is constantly devouring. Ani’s conscious pastiche of costumes, actions, words and phrases appropriated from her heavy diet of romance and adventure novels gives the incest narrative surrounding her a meta-literariness that very specifically locates *Dogside Story* in a post-modern and post-colonial relationship with the British Romance tradition. As readers, we know that Ani knows that she is playing a part scripted for her by a long history of incest narratives – narratives found in books she has literally stolen from the outside Pākehā world of “schools and shops and libraries” (128), and taken out to her hut in the bush for digestion and reincorporation into her own “story.” She is able to both utilize and subvert this literary history to script her own drama, one that critically diverts from the traditional incest-narrative trajectory by offering a plenary rejection of the classic “punishment-by-death-for-transgression” ending. Instead of engendering catastrophe, the result of Ani and Rua’s incestuous relationship eventually becomes the means by which their community begins to

⁴⁹ For an excellent discussion of British incest narratives see Ellen Pollak’s *Incest and the English Novel, 1684-1814* (JHU Press, 2003).

heal itself. Their union results in life, not death, and it is through Kid/Kiri, the progeny of this union, that the community is able to confront the secrets that have been pulling the whānau apart for nearly two generations. In order to get to this place of healing, however, Grace has to allow all of the characters to send their stories up “to the rafters” (141)⁵⁰ so the whānau can choose which histories to keep, and which ones need to be burned, if the whānau is going to successfully forge methods of both individual and community survivance in the future.

The Stories Surrounding the Incest

Much of understanding Rua and Ani’s story – and how their story fits into the communal history of Dogside – comes from unpacking the emotional minefields of their childhood backgrounds. Both children grow up feeling rejected by their mother – Ani because her mother, Ramari, gave her away at birth to be raised by her grandmother, and Rua because his mother left him alone when she died. In many ways this means that the bond the siblings share over the years is not sexual, but emotional – a bond forged by grief, not physical passion. The siblings are ultimately bound together by their mourning over the loss of the mother figure, and their incestuous physicality arises out of the sibling’s attempts to restore ties of love and security that they feel have been shattered.

This sense of rejection and loneliness manifests in what Rua calls Ani’s “cruelty” (40). Once rejected (at least in her mind) by her mother at birth, the girl spends the rest of her adolescence vengefully rejecting others. When her grandmother dies and Ramari asks Ani to rejoin them in the family house “out front,” Ani mocks her mother, choosing instead to live with a blind Aunty out in the bush. Her rejection of care is a defence mechanism, one signified by the way she defiantly sorts through the bags of clothing her relatives hand down to her, discarding all of the “red, yellow, green, blue and brown”

⁵⁰ The wharenuī in a Māori community is “the repository of talk, and rafters are its storage place” (*Dogside Story* 141). The stories of Dogside are therefore kept in the piece of tāhuhu, or ancestral backbone, that supports the ceiling of their wharenuī.

garments and throwing all of this colour “into the trees” (40). Left with only white to wear, Ani cloaks her anger in the costume of the ascetic, one who needs no-thing and no-body.

Ani’s white garb also allows her to embody the role of Dogside’s ghost, a phantom/banshee figure haunting the bush surrounding the family marae. Her presence always seems to carry with it the threat of death, and her childhood games consistently include elements of danger (“falling down dead” (53), “walking the plank” (55), swimming with taniwha (70)). When Rua returns from their frightening adventures, his elders ask him, “You seen a ghose, you Rua?” (56), an appropriate question for a boy who might have just narrowly missed a drowning or having his eye put out by one of Ani’s handmade swords. In the best of times, Rua takes these games lightly, telling the reader, “She always was bullshit that Ani Wainoa” (39).

Ani and Rua’s most transgressive activities, however, take place not during the best of times, but in the moments and hours directly following emotionally traumatic events (the morning after their mother’s burial (52), immediately following Rua’s father’s wedding (69), etc.) For Ani, meeting Rua for their secret play in the wake of emotional tragedies gives her an emotional edge. Juliet Mitchell writes, “Siblings, like hysterics, love where they hate” (103), and Ani seems to embody this statement in every one of her actions. She hates Rua for being the one who was not given up by their mother, the one who got to grow up in the warmth of the “family bed.” She also loves him as she loves no other member of her family, leading her to constantly jostle between conflicting desires to love Rua and to destroy him.

When the children’s increasingly sexual play (sword fighting, log rolling, skinny dipping) eventually leads to violating the sexual taboo, this love-hate relationship surfaces. Ani cannot tolerate, at any point in their childhoods, for Rua to have the upper hand in their daring games. It is therefore no surprise that when Rua comes to tell Ani that it is he

(thereby *not* her) who has discovered the key to finding the treasure they have spent their childhoods searching for (the knowledge of how to use the tides to get to the forbidden Cave Rock), Ani raises the bar on what it means in their relationship to possess transgressive knowledge. As Rua tells his sister about the key to unlocking one taboo, Ani Wainoa begins to slowly strip off her clothes, juxtaposing Rua's story of tapu knowledge by navigating tabooed tides of her own. She dares him into the sexual act, telling him, "You wouldn't know and you'd be so afraid" but Rua "knew that she knew he wasn't afraid, had never been afraid of anything they'd ever done together" and so they "did it, did all of it" (88).

While Ani scripts the siblings' incestuous encounter in terms of romantic fiction, Rua scripts it in ecological terms:

People were trees, with trunks and arms and leaves. You could go up against a tree, put your arms around a tree, push up against, up against, a tree...Or trees were people, with bodies and arms and hair that you could climb up and into, where you could find a place, where you could straddle and hold. You could hold the tree. It could hold you. You could rock. It could rock you...Rocking and riding would open the tree's big arms and heads out to glimpses of the sky. (88)

For Rua, Ani is whenua, intricately linked in this sexual fantasy to tangata whenua. This communion, however, is not a healing act at the time, leaving "blood – on him, on her" (88). "That wasn't good," Ani says. "It's not allowed" (88). For once the siblings seem to agree. After climbing off Ani, Rua realizes, "He didn't like it either" (88).

Rua and the Family Bed

It is helpful when examining Rua's relationship with Ani and the other women he interacts with in *Dogside Story* to recall the close-knit relationship Rua had with his mother before her death. All of Rua's Oedipal-like recollections of his maternal relationship are evocatively sensual and richly steeped in vivid descriptions of Ramari's body, her voice, and her smells. His most vivid memories of his mother involve sleeping

in bed beside her and waking up “hot” (41), acutely aware of the comforting sounds of his mother snoring beside him. On cold mornings he would relish his mother returning to bed after getting his father off to work, playfully asking, “You got me a warm place? Come on give me a warm,” before getting “back into bed with him, sweaty, giggling, her milk running and smelly and her straight, black hair coming out of its band” (41).

In these moments of communal love and intimacy, Rua and his mother share an erotic connection that operates as a reassurance for the boy that he is loved, cared for, and safe. Rua thinks of the bed as “a cave” (41), a womb-like space where he can relish being a “good boy” (41) who is literally wrapped in maternal affection. Unfortunately for Rua, however, because these poignant memories of his mother are associated with this “early morning bed” (40), the later juxtaposition of these warm, loving recollections of the two of them wrapped in “smoky blankets” (40) with the memories of his mother lying sick and dying in “that same bed” (44), make his emotional adjustment to her illness that much more traumatic. It is unbelievable to Rua how it took “no years at all” (44) for his mother to be transformed by her illness into a

small white, hairless woman whose arms that she held out to him each afternoon when he came home from school had been just hanging flaps of skin, whose hands picking at his face and scratching in his hair were like the twists of newspaper she used to get a flame from the stove element to light her cigarette with. The powder smell had gone and there was a smell and taste of ditches, a voice that said good boy, you been to school, you come home to Mummy. (44-45)

These frightening crone-like images starkly contrast with the robust earth-goddess images in Rua’s descriptions of his mother pre-illness. Her sickness and subsequent death result in Rua’s final ejection from the bed/womb, and eventually lead to the destruction of Rua’s feelings of familial security entirely. Shortly after his mother’s death, Rua learns that his father had been carrying on an illicit affair that results in the birth of Rua’s half-brother

Tommy John. Within months of Ramari's death, his father marries this mistress, thereby definitively displacing Rua's mother from the family home/bed forever.

According to Kate Soper, "The mother's body as the first ambience experienced by the infant becomes a kind of 'archetypal primary landscape' to which subsequent perceptual configurations of space are related. As such, moreover, it is expressive of a nostalgia for a mother-child unity, this unity itself being a figure of a desired harmony and 'at oneness' of man and nature" (142-43). Not surprisingly, Rua spends his adult life desiring a fantasy figure who will inhabit the void left by the demise/death of the healthy mother figure. While Rua himself might be unsure "why he'd opened his mouth to say I know a place" (74) when Maina (who, at 43, is nearly twice Rua's age)⁵¹ is in need of a refuge from her emotionally abusive husband, it is clear to the reader he offers his home to her because she strongly resembles (both in terms of physique and personality) the healthy/goddess image of his long-absent mother.

This nostalgia for the maternal "primary landscape" runs strong (if unconsciously) in Rua's recountings of his early impressions of Maina. Her "baggy eyes and baggy face" (45) are clearly reminiscent of Rua's "baggy mother" (40), and Maina's "muscly arms" (47) and "big fingers" (75) act as vivid reminders of Ramari's "round face" and "strong hard hands" (40). Rua becomes so lost in these nostalgic interweavings of past and present that the first time he leads Maina down the rough bush trail to his house, the sound of her "breathing hard" (93) behind him startles him enough to wonder if she is "Gasping or laughing?" (93). This detail connects with his reconstructed memories of Ramari pre-illness who would "gasp and huff and laugh and talk to him" (40) as the two walked those same trails in his childhood.

⁵¹ Maina is clearly self-conscious of the age difference between herself and Rua, reminding him at various points in the text that she has "a son about [his] age" (84) and he should find "someone young, someone without...baggage...someone who'll want to have children" (167).

The descriptive parallels between Ramari and Maina continue throughout the remainder of Rua's first-person narrative, as Rua describes both women as constantly talking, singing, and dancing. After having intercourse with Maina for the first time (an experience that moves him to tears because this time he is "grown" and there is "no trouble" (130) with desiring the mother-figure who is not mother)⁵² he even goes so far as to draw parallels between the "dancing dress" (41) his mother used to wear after getting up from the family bed, and Maina's party dress, hanging in his bungalow and "dancing there like a thin one of her" (128). It is therefore through Maina that Rua is able to construct a healthy re-enactment of the mother-child unity of his childhood (which was temporarily reconstituted in the same-age-cousin unity of his early adolescence) as an adult, and it is through this relationship that he is best able to move towards the "desired harmony" and "'at oneness' of man and nature" (Soper 142-43) that he learns comes not from retreating into a devolved "fish-self" but by developing into a fully formed man/lover. Only in this fully-formed state can he assist Maina, Aunty Wai, and the rest of his community to address the problems ailing Dogside and help them develop creative, realistic methods for future whānau survivance.

Maina: Working Towards Whānau Survivance

Maina comes to the story, and to Rua, as the unfortunate wife of Piiki Chiefy (PC), a "relation" of the Dogsiders' who has been a "con man and a rip-off artist from way back" (58). PC is well known in his whānau as the "blow bag" who has "been up and down the country into one rip-off scheme after another" (33). Over the years he has stolen both money and natural resources from his whānau and from Maina. As the story of Maina's emotional abuse at the hands of PC slowly unfolds, the connections between "women's oppression and the ecological crisis" (Eaton and Lorentzen 1) are revealed,

⁵² The Oedipal drama, "whereby the child acquires masculine subjectivity in 'giving up' incestuous desires for the mother in exchanged for the eventual possession of another female" (Soper 143), is clearly played out here.

allowing Grace to infuse the narrative with her personal belief that “What is happening today – the abuse of women, the low status of women – is not something that came from the old society. It’s a modern phenomenon” (Goslyn 55), in much the same way that the destabilising but civilizing construction of roads, farms, and bridges are a modern phenomenon. Like the physical landscape of Dogside, Maina is literally stripped of her roots⁵³ and figuratively covered in mud⁵⁴ by the avaricious ventures of a capitalist Dogsider who “has no aroha” (221).

There is an ominous underlying angst in Grace’s telling of Maina’s story: in modern capitalist cultures “we are faced with a basically anti-ecological social environment. The social environment today favours atomization and money-making. People look after themselves, after their families, after their jobs, after their income, and that pretty much constitutes their concerns” (Murray Bookchin qtd. in Vanek 1). The Māori concept of “aroha” is crucial to understanding the ways in which this anti-ecological environment undermines the cornerstones of Māori health in Dogside because, as Grace says, “Aroha is often translated as ‘love,’ but it has really to do with caring and sharing, having consideration for people, seeing each individual person as important, and recognizing the mana of each person. Sometimes aroha has little to do with fine or tender feelings; sometimes it’s quite a difficult concept to carry out. It has a lot to do with meeting your obligations, which is not always easy” (Sarti 55). Because Māori whānau is viewed as “an organism, sharing a common life” that acts “as a corporate body [with] members performing tasks together to ensure that the wealth and resources are equitably shared by all” (Kupenga, Rata and Nepe 307), when one member of the whānau reneges on these obligations, the entire organism suffers.

⁵³ Shortly after Maina marries Piiki Chiefy, he runs into legal trouble and the two have to “abscond” to a new city, leaving her father, her children, and the rest of her whānau and friends behind (189).

⁵⁴ Maina is figuratively left with “mud on her face” after being abandoned at a Dogside wedding when her husband, Piiki Chiefy, leaves with another woman. She feels it is her reputation, as well as his, that has been ruined, telling Rua “It’s bloody embarrassing being stuck here without a car and everyone having a laugh” (47).

This view of whānau as organism coincides with ecofeminist philosophy which, “in its use of ecology as a model for human behavior, suggests that we act out of a recognition of our interdependency with others, all others: human and nonhuman” (Mack-Canty 169). It is therefore culturally appropriate that within a Māori ecofeminist framework it is Maina who acts as the catalyst towards healing in *Dogside*’s crisis. According to Ripeka Evans, “The critical link between women and tribal sustainability is self-evident and epitomized in the famous whakataukī ‘He Wahine, He Whenua – E era ai te Iwi’ meaning ‘By Women and Land, People are Sustained’” (R. Evans 54). The whakataukī encapsulates the important role of women “as nurturers – at one level as mothers, lovers, daughters, friends, and at another, as kaitiaki, caretakers or guardians of the environment” (Yates-Smith 13).⁵⁵ This concept is further reinforced by the fact that “the Māori word for land – ‘whenua’ – also includes ‘placenta’ among its denotative meanings, documenting an intimate link between body and land which is recorded both in the traditional Māori custom of burying a child’s afterbirth on tribal land, and within Māori mythology, which figures the land as Papatuanuku, the earth-goddess whose body must be nurtured and treated with respect” (Keown *Postcolonial Pacific* 150).

Māori women have also long been considered “central to the maintenance and transmission of Māori culture” (Te Kawehau Hoskins 39), and to be key leaders in Māori protest movements (Te Kawehau Hoskins; R. Evans; Mohanram). Patricia Grace honours this place of women at the centre of Māori political activist movements within the context of *Dogside Story* by placing the ancestresses Ngarua and Maraenohono (and not their

⁵⁵ Aroha Yates-Smith notes that “in this modern world, one might ask if focusing on women’s roles as nurturers might restrict the consideration of women’s wider roles in society” (20). She goes on to say, however, that “in traditional Māori society...the European concept of ‘a woman’s place is in the home’ is foreign to our people...women’s roles are diverse – some women are noted leaders, politicians, strategists in battle, warriors, medical practitioners and composers. Today, Māori women are actively involved in a diversity of occupations, but the value of manaakitanga, which is exemplified through consideration for others and the extension of hospitality to visitors, is a value of Māori society, maintained by women and men alike” (20). A much more detailed analysis of the dangers of trying to analyze Māori culture in Pākehā terms (or Māori feminism in light of Pākehā feminisms) can be found in: Kathie Irwin, “Towards Theories of Māori Feminisms,” *Feminist Voices: Women’s Studies Texts for Aotearoa/New Zealand*, ed. Rosemary Du Plessis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

father, brother, or husbands) at the focal point of the whānau's spiralling lineage. This women-focused heritage is reinforced several times in the course of Rua's narrative, but most poignantly when Grace interrupts his voice in Chapter 16 to omnisciently recount the importance of Dogside's matrilineal genealogy:

A quarter of a century on from when Ngarua crossed the inlet, followed by supporters and everyone's dogs, there were three sisters who were her direct descendants. They were named Ruahine, Tunia and Harinia, who came to be known later in their lives as Nanny Ru, Nanny Blind and Lady Sadie.

There were three brothers too, who despite their patience, their importance to the family and the fact that the youngest lived long enough to have children, don't need to be named.
(113)

Significantly, most men remain unnamed in the historical recounting of Dogside, referred to only as "father," "brother" or "uncle," whereas women and girls are all given proper names. It is also important that Rua, *Dogside Story's* contemporary narrator, takes his name directly from his ancestress Ngarua and his grandmother Ruahine. Dogside's ancestresses therefore become the entire whānau's link to "Papatuanuku, and all grandmothers extending back through the mists of time to Te Kore and Te Po, a time of pure potential, the very essence of which was to produce humankind and all forms of life" (Yates-Smith 13).⁵⁶

Because Grace believes that Māori women "can look back and take strength from these female ancestors" (Goslyn 55), the goddess Papatuanuku – the Earth Mother – often becomes a key figure in her novels and short stories. According to Māori legend, "it is in Papatuanuku that the creative, generative principle resides, and it is because of Papa that her female descendants are imbued with these traits. Papatuanuku, the ultimate source of creativity, along with her female descendants, reflects the nurturing quality of the feminine

⁵⁶ In the Māori creation myth, before Papatuanuku (the earth-mother) and Ranginui (the sky father) there was "Te Po, the Night, that came from Te Kore, the Nothing" (Grace *Wahine Toa* 16).

and the contemporary aspects of the *creator/transformer* figure” (Yates-Smith 13, my emphasis).

In this role as the creator/transformer in *Dogside Story*, Maina manifests her personal mana and becomes a contemporary embodiment of Papatuanuku’s creative, generative force. She is, according to Rua, “a piece of landscape...changing the shape of the creek bank” (76), and thereby in turn changing the shape of his (and his whānau’s) internal and external landscapes. Maina’s ability to change these landscapes by galvanizing Dogsideers into first acknowledging the symptoms of illness and decay in their human and natural worlds, and then acting to treat the causes of these afflictions, makes her, like Grace herself, a “feminist activist” (Calleja 111). Maina is ultimately a “woman who acts.”⁵⁷ Her Māori name literally translates in English to the noun “mine,” a multi-lingual pun that encompasses the connotations of both a land-based explosive device and a rich deposit of resources and knowledge.

Maina begins her re-landscaping of the Dogsideers’ collective relationship to each other and to their land by bringing to the whānau elders all of the information she has about PC’s scheme to illegally sell their beach-front landscape as campsites for millennium tourists “who want to be the first in the world to put their eyeballs on the sun on the first of January 2000” (108). She shows them photos of “their beach at dawn and the waves riding in catching coloured light...their meeting house, the big paddocks beside it, hills and trees behind...Already advertised. Money already coming in” (109).⁵⁸ This news sends the whānau into a frenzy of panicked worries about having “tourists all over their land, lighting fires and being a bloody nuisance, tramping all over the

⁵⁷ See above Page 45.

⁵⁸ It is important to note that this land is owned not only by the fifty or so people living in Dogside at the turn of the twenty-first century, but by all of the people “to whom Dogside was tūrangawaewae” (139). “Shares from land incorporation were owned and dividends due to [those who had moved away] just as much as they were to their on-site relatives, and they claimed descendency from Ngarua in the same way as their home relatives did” (139). This means that PC was stealing from the entire whānau, damaging the entire organism, by this assault on Dogside’s tūrangawaewae.

urupā...robbing fish, paua and crays” (146) as well as the much more deeply rooted postcolonial fears that “once you let strangers on your land you never get them off. They stick there. They start off as campers and end up sticking there” (147). The only thing the community members do not seem surprised about is PC’s treachery, recalling, “we been screwed by our own relations before. Hei aha” (146).

In the end it is the women, Maina and Dogside elder Aunty Wai, who are able to turn the situation around by refusing to let themselves and their land be exploited by a relation’s lack of aroha. Aunty Wai believes that by using the resource of Maina’s knowledge of the tourism and travel industry, and by utilizing the collective skills of the whānau members (144), Dogside can “use the planning already in place to raise all the money they needed in one major effort to build and equip the wharekai” (144), while still protecting the land and natural resources. She and Maina recognize how PC’s attack on their land and their sovereignty can be redirected into a healing experience, one that will allow the whānau to work together in a monumental communal effort to start the healing process of the rebuilding their centre of aroha – the nourishing wharekai of Dogside.

This plan, however, does not manifest without contest. Ripeka Evans claims that “any talk of structural changes [by Māori women] sends some of our Māori men into a tail spin about ‘cultural correctness’ and ‘making waves’” (64), and this certainly proves true in Dogside. Within minutes of Wai laying out her plan, her young nephew Dion is on his feet, yelling,

All this 2000 business. What is it anyway? It’s a Christian celebration, that’s what. So why are we celebrating it. What’s “New Year” to us – nothing to do with our people, our culture. If we want to be celebrating then we should celebrate our own survival in our own Matariki star time... We got to decolonize ourselves, unpick our brains because they been stitched up too long. (146)

Other men agreed, making valid points that all of the commercial hype around Y2K does little to help the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, and reminding Wai, “All that money is being spent, but people are still poor” (147).

Dogside’s hui therefore captures in a few tightly constructed pages a debate that has been raging in Māori communities for decades. According to Clea Te Kawehau Hoskins, members of the Māori community like Dion “who are critical and suspicious of what are viewed as corrupting Pākehā/western values, motives and practices” are justified, “as this is a sensible and logical defence and necessary form of resistance when we consider that colonization is alive and well in Aotearoa today” (26). However, she believes these people must also remember

that culture is dynamic and changing; Māori culture prior to colonization was not static, nor obviously is it today. Our cultural life did not cease around 1769 or 1840, it was forced to negotiate the forces of colonialism and imperialism... Even in a relatively “conscientised” condition, our consciousnesses are irretrievably changed/changing in response to, and engagement with the world/s we now inhabit... This should not be considered a totally “bad” thing; an acknowledgement of it may relax or free-up the parameters of those discourses... creating new and imaginative possibilities for the construction of tikanga/practice and structures consistent with our needs and aspirations today. (Te Kawehau Hoskins 28)

It is this acceptance of the ways in which contemporary Māori can take advantage of “the new and imaginative possibilities” that Te Kawehau Hoskins’s philosophy intersects with Grace’s text.

What the women of Dogside realize during the hui is that “they weren’t celebrating the new year, or new century, or millennium...only taking advantage of it” (148). Wai reminds the whānau, “Year two thousand or year sixty thousand was irrelevant, and she didn’t care if it was a Christian festival, pompom girls or mice poop. Come home Christmas, you won’t be on holiday, you won’t be celebrating, you’ll be here to work” (148). She also reminds Dion (who lives in a far off city) “it’s not the ones living away

who cook in the rain, feed people in tents and who could still be doing that in the twenty-first century” (148). In this speech Wai (using the resources give to her by Maina) is operating in the creative spirit of Papatuanuku, and both women are acting as the creators/transformers who are able, like Grace herself, to realize,

We have...our own interrelationships, our own view of the world, our own spirituality. We have our own ancestors, our own legacy of stories. We have our own particular culture to draw from, but we have our own “world culture” as well. We can take what we want from the colonizing culture too, because we’re a part of it. (Grace qtd. in Hereniko 81)

Grace, like her female characters, does not hold an unrealistic, nostalgic view of the past. Unlike Dion, who wishes everything to stay the same back home – “food cooked in pots over an open fire,” people living in “little houses flat on the ground” (159) – she, Wai and Maina realize “the home people were getting older and fewer most with one sickness or another” (150). They realize the elders cannot be expected to keep working themselves to the bone to preserve a traditional way of life for city-dwellers to visit, exiles who felt “from a distance their tūrangawaewae [sitting] warm inside them like carbohydrates and gravy” (140). Maina and Wai realize they can “take what they want from the colonizing culture” (252), in this case a capitalist venture, but they also realize this “was a oncer” (252) to get the money they needed for the wharekai, not an event to be repeated.

Rebuilding the wharekai, however, is only one stage in Dogside’s healing process, and outing PC’s secret was only the first of many revelations that had to be dug out, like splinters, of Dogside’s emotional wounds in order for healing to spread from the physical space of the Marae proper throughout the entire community. These attempts to clear the secrets, to allow communication to run freely between members of the Dogside community, are symbolically paralleled by Rua’s continuous attempts after the Bola crisis to clear Dogside’s creek so the whānau’s water can run clear and clean. Rua’s relationship with Maina and their careful crossing of the creek – over and back, over and back, always

talking, always communicating – begins the project to stitch together the wounds dividing the whānau. Through Maina's teachings, it becomes clear that the hope for Dogside's survivance lies in outing and dealing with the remainder of the secrets and problems that have long infected the community.

Communicating: Pulling out the Splinters

After convincing Rua to talk about what really happened to his leg (instead of hiding behind his “shark” story), Maina sets her sights on Rua's cousin, Jason, determined to get him and the whānau talking about his illness as well. “Mormon or diabetic?”(108) she asks Jase directly when he refuses her offer of “a can,” naming for the first time the disease that almost kills the boy in the course of the novel (246). Her question outs another symptom of disease in the Māori community, one that is considered by health experts to be of “epidemic proportions” (Torbit 1), with “upwards of half of the older people having diabetes [in places] such as parts of the East Coast” (S. Collins) where the fictional Dogside is located.

Addressing diabetes as a public health problem means addressing issues of diet and land. If the natural landscape is no longer able to provide farmland for fresh fruit and vegetables to grow in (washed away, as it has been, by the rage of Bola) and if the fisheries are no longer able to provide kai moana (threatened, as they are, by over-fishing), the people of Dogside will be forcibly reliant in an ever-increasing fashion on processed foods from outside the community. Māori health officials have struggled with this problem for decades. In October 2000, shortly before *Dogside Story* was published, Associate Minister of Māori Affairs Tariana Turia gave a speech at an international conference on diabetes and indigenous people in Christchurch that directly tied “the health and wellbeing of Māori...to their rivers, mountains, lands, lakes, forests and seas” (“Whānau to Battle Diabetes”). Like many indigenous people, Māori are genetically predisposed to all types of diabetes (S. Collins), so the symptoms become even more

ecologically based. Importantly, ecologists study “life not in isolation but as parts of a system, an economy which sustains them and which they constitute” (Kerridge “Maps for Tourists” 267).

Similarly, Grace examines diabetes as one symptom of a whānau system that is in crisis. Passing references in *Dogside Story* to Nanny Blind’s “swollen feet” (65) and cousin Bones’ “ill health” (235) indicate that this is a disease that has long been eating away the whānau’s health. The solution, as Turia pointed out in her Christchurch speech, must be whānau focused, not individual focused. “It is impossible for a whānau to cope with diabetes if they are not all informed about the disease, its treatment, and the role that they can play” (“Whānau to Battle Diabetes”), Turia emphatically told her conference audience. In *Dogside*, it is Maina who pushes Jase to name his illness, thereby getting him to speak aloud an important disease plaguing their community.

Taking Custody of Land and Sea

Just as she intuits Jason’s problem within minutes of meeting him, Maina seems to sense early on the true nature of Kid/Kiri and Rua’s relationship, insightfully noting at only her second meeting with them, “she wants something, little Kiri, something from you” (151). Talking to Maina, Rua realizes the things he thought “can’t be told” in fact “could” be told (152), and that “it was time to get real. Now he needed what he could’ve had long ago – something to fill the gap below the knee” (155). When his whānau refuses to help wrestle custody of Kiri away from her abusive aunts, it is once again Maina who knows how to catalyse the family towards healing. Ironically, she does this first by wounding them, sending the whānau elders into shock when she comes to remove Rua from *Dogside*. “How can I leave him here if you don’t support him?”, she asks his uncles and aunties. “How can I leave him here if you’re telling him to give up his daughter as if he’s done wrong?” (278). This removal is a part of Māori custom “to remove a loved one from a situation where it was considered they were not being well treated” (283). Her

actions “shamed” (283) Rua’s elders, and drove them to realize something had to be done, a hui had to be held to establish Rua’s right to have custody of Kiri. Something had to be done to reestablish his role, and his responsibility, as a father.

Significantly, as Rua accepts an active role in the caretaking of his daughter, he also accepts the role of custodian of his natural environment. In his “wet pup” (102) days, the days before he accepted his own parental role, Rua turned to the sea as both surrogate mother and lover. He was happiest diving “deep down to where the cavity in the rock was large and open” (24) – and womb-like – down to a place where the sea seductively “sucks” and “licks” him (51). As he ages and becomes “a fish among other fish” (52), however, he starts to equate his survival, and eventually the survival of his whānau, with the health of the sea and its resources. He moves from child of the sea to caretaker of it, and he models this for his daughter, teaching her that it is important not to “rob the nursery” (24) when harvesting the whānau’s kai.

Taking care of both his daughter and the sea means Rua moves from “wet pup” (102) to warrior. He is forced to fight for the custodial rights for his daughter⁵⁹ and for custodial rights over the whānau’s fishing grounds. Both battles are incited by Rua’s witnessing of “dead fish,” first in the examination of Kiri’s severely burnt arm, lying “like a small fish that had been thrown there dead, cooked and cray-coloured” (153), and second in the witnessing of fish trapped in illegal cray pots, “their pale undersides spotting the water” (197). Both of these incidents make Rua, and many of his aunties and uncles, “wild” (234). The elders know that it is the children who are the only hope for whānau and iwi survival. Arch and Wai know that when one of the young people is injured, or when

⁵⁹ Within hours of her birth, Rua gives Kiri to Lady Sadie, who in turn gives the baby to her daughters Amira and Babs to raise. “The Aunties” as Rua calls them, are neglectful (leaving Kiri unattended at night, refusing to take her to a doctor when she burns herself), emotionally abusive (constantly calling her “makimaki, nikanika, rat, cat, witch” (103) and telling her she was “shitted by a seagull” (151)) and verging on physically abusive in the way in which they use Kiri as slave labour to clean both their home and the Post Shop where Amira works.

one of the young people leaves Dogside forever, the entire whānau organism receives an irrevocable blow:

We been done over before, and somehow we get through.
But, our kids leave and they don't come back, well, we don't
get through at all. Kids go, that's it. Had it. Finish. Who to
clean the cobwebs down? Who to paint the pou? Who to get
the house ready for the dead? Who to call the dead home and
who to bury the dead? Who to light the fire, keep the fire
burning? Who to cook the kai and put the hangi down? Right
now, who to build the wharekai? Who to get the fish? Who
to see the mokopuna eat their fish? (284)

Rua echoes this speech about the effects of human loss on the whānau in his rant to Kiri about fishery depletion: “Cray Pots out there. Someone robbing crays. It's people's crays, our aunties' and uncles' crays, your crays getting stolen. Set pots there, catch heaps all at once, then the crays are gone. Gone, that's it. Nothing” (234).

Both incidents return to one of the key underlying diseases that is eating away at the Dogside community – capitalist concerns for control of land and resources. Grace reminds her readers continuously that this is not an issue that positions Pākehā as the devourers of Māori whenua and kai moana. There is no Pākehā “Dollarman”⁶⁰ in Dogside – it is Babs and Amira who are ready to tear the community apart for the rights to “own” the land that their mother has bequeathed to Kiri instead of to them. It is Rua's cousins Jackson, Joeboy, Brad, and Horomona who are willing to steal crays out of the waters (and thereby the mouths) of their own whānau members. Rua tells Kiri this behaviour is grounded in the fact that “people want to get rich” (234) and Grace reminds us it is Māori government leadership that is in part responsible for encouraging this, saying,

While we're on the topic of fish, and rip-offs, have a look at
what our own Rūnanga's⁶¹ doing to us. Never mind what a
few strangers might do. It's selling its cray quota to our own

⁶⁰ “Dollarman” is the nickname given to the swinish Pākehā land developer Mr. Dolman in Grace's novel *Potiki*.

⁶¹ The “Rūnanga” is the local Māori tribal council. In 2008 rūnanga have become the major tribal mediators in negotiations with the Crown for Māori sovereignty over land and waterways.

fishermen for seventeen dollars per kilo and our poor fisherman only getting twenty bucks. That's it, making three dollars a kilo... Yeh, making money for themselves to fly here and there in aeroplanes, sleep in flash hotels, set their kids up as consultants and managers. (*Dogside Story* 147)

“Nothing, Had it, Finished” (284). Rua and his elders were no longer willing to have any of it. “You want her,” Wai tells Babs and Amira as they battle to keep custody of Kiri (and therefore the land that was in her name), “you have to knock down every door to get her. Behind every door you find me, triple bypass and all. You knock me down, you find someone else. I tell you, if anyone has to leave here it won't be the young ones” (284). Similarly, Rua organizes a collective whānau attack on the thieving cousins that have been plundering the local fish stock, chasing them out of Dogside with the message that they should not stop running until they “get to Sydney” (236).

These triumphs in terms of the protection of the human and natural landscapes of Dogside occur when the family is able to reconcile “traditional” values and practices with the contemporary needs and aspirations of whānau members. Dogsiders choose to embrace capitalism when it helps them rebuild their wharekai, but reject it when it robs the whānau of sustainable food sources to fill that kitchen. Dogsiders choose to embrace the Pākehā health system that holds a birth certificate giving Rua parental rights to Kiri, but reject the Pākehā legal system that holds a will bequeathing Lady Sadie's land to Kiri instead of to its rightful owners, her aunts Babs and Amira.

As the community moves towards reconciliation and healing in this creative and transformative manner, Grace ties her imagery of the human members of the whānau to the land and the sea even more succinctly. All members of the whānau seem to realize that returning Kiri to Rua's custody, and her land to her Aunties, is an initial step towards restoring whānau wellness. They thereby appropriately award the right to sing the closing song of the hui (and the novel) to Atawhai, the family doctor/healer, because only he “is old enough to understand the extent of bruising, experienced enough to read the faces and

know the right moment and the right song” (300). Listening to Atawhai’s song, Rua realizes that these people, and this land, have become irrevocably a part of him. He knows, “wherever he is there’ll be a pattern in his mind of stones in shallow waters, an image of the places where the sand shifts, of rocks and dark spaces, of sliding and shunting weed, and of channels where the fish will swarm away from him as he swims to deeper and deeper places. Wherever he goes there’ll be a voice in his heart” (300). When it is time, Rua knows “people will leave [the hui] at intervals and in twos and threes so that exit is not too sudden, so that the house is not left too suddenly alone” (300) just as the tides of Dogside slowly flow out, “uncovering the nubbled boulders as the heavy weed shifts in the remaining water” (300). Their feet are set firmly on the road towards healing, but the entire whānau now needs “recovery time” (300).

Conclusion: Beyond Survival

*“There is pain, anger and struggle in Māori writing, as well
as humour, hope and a strong sense of survival.”
(Grace qtd. in Kedgley 57)*

Dogside Story “is a courageous book that looks at contemporary Māoridom and its problems with an unflinching eye” (Morey “Warm Spuds” 60). The novel is a testament to the ways in which Patricia Grace believes members of the contemporary Māori community can move “beyond survival” (Grace in Bates 76) through imaginative, inventive solutions to these problems – solutions that rely on strengthening all four cornerstones of Māori health simultaneously. When members of the Dogside community begin to recognize, with aroha, the interconnected relationship between the health of the land, the sea, and each other, the community is finally able to move towards healing. In *Dogside Story*, Grace recognizes that the time has come to see the human and natural resources in the community as both providers *to* the whānau, and entities in need of providing *for*.

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku writes, “Improvisation is a vital element of cultural resistance; it determines the survival of a people, enhances the continuity of their spirit, the essence of their art” (qtd. in Allen *Blood Narrative* 1). The ability of the Dogsidiers to improvise a method of community healing that incorporates aspects of contemporary postcolonial New Zealand society while simultaneously reasserting traditional Māori cultural values is what ultimately determines the survival of the whānau. Grace’s own ability to improvise and adapt her narrative strategies to the constantly evolving social and political world of twenty-first century Aotearoa is what makes her “one of New Zealand’s literary treasures and a groundbreaker for all who have followed” (Shiels “Faith in Writing” 1). She is a New Zealand “icon,” but not one that embodies a staid and nostalgic past. Rather, Grace is an “icon” who represents a dynamic and transitive future for the Māori people and their literature.

“Home was the place you lived now, the place you lived then, the place you came from, the place you went to. The place you want to be at the end of the day, when your feet are tired and you want something hot for dinner. The place where you never lived, the place you dreamed about. The place you saw in the movies, more familiar than your own country. The place you remember which doesn’t actually exist.”

*- Paula Morris,
Queen of Beauty (285)*

**Chapter Three:
Paula Morris –
Survivance in Nepantla**

Paula Morris: A Seriously Good Writer

There is one point on which readers and critics of Paula Morris's work nearly unanimously agree, and that is (as Keri Hulme put it) that "this is someone who can write" (qtd. in Sharp 24). Lydia Wevers believes that what makes Morris "a seriously good writer" is the fact that she is "that rare thing among literary novelists – someone who can write with depth and subtlety and also tune up a plot that drives like a...Ferrari" ("Life of the City" 40). Morris's "ear for dialogue" (Bilbrough 7) and "wicked sense of humour" (Hill 53) have earned her some of New Zealand's top literary awards, including the Adam Foundation Prize for Creative Writing (2001), the Schaeffer Fellowship to the Iowa Writers' Workshop (2002), and the NZSA Hubert Church Best First Book Award (2003) for her novel *Queen of Beauty*. In addition to these formal accolades, she has also proven to be a favourite with the New Zealand reading public, making the *Listener's* 2003 list of "The Best New Zealand Novelists Under 40,"⁶² topping the "Going Up" list of trends in *The Sunday Star Times* (2005),⁶³ and packing auditoriums at literary festivals up and down New Zealand's coastlines.⁶⁴ All of this leads long-time New Zealand bookseller Carole Beu to believe that "Paula Morris is a serious long-term author" (qtd. in Braunias 53), one who should be taken seriously by readers and literary critics alike.

Morris's popularity seems grounded in what critics call the "authenticity" of her voice – and her use of the Auckland vernacular in particular (M. N. Reed 20) – as well as the fact that she "has a nose for our times" and seems able to "catch the world we live in,

⁶² In 2003 the *Listener* asked "about 30 people in the literary trade to vote for and comment on who they regarded as the best New Zealand novelists under 40" (Braunias 50). The list of votes, when it came in, featured 22 names, which was then narrowed down to the top ten, one of whom was Paula Morris.

⁶³ Each week the *Sunday Star Times Magazine* publishes a list of trends titled, "Going Up/Going Down." On April 10, 2005 the "Going Up" list included "Paula Morris," saying, "The New Zealander's second novel *Hibiscus Coast* is out now and ought to be in your house. She really can write."

⁶⁴ Morris has participated as an interviewer, panel member, interviewee, and reader at numerous New Zealand literary festivals including The Words on Wheels Writers Tour (2006), The Press Christchurch Writers Festival (2006), Going West Books and Writers Festival (2006, 2007), and The Auckland Writers and Readers Festival (2007, 2008).

with all of its complications and ambiguities” (Wevers “Life of the City” 40). In twenty-first century Aotearoa/New Zealand, many of these complications and ambiguities arise from what Morris calls “our unique Māori-Pākehā heritage” (Morgan 66). For Morris, “this dual heritage is the most important thing that distinguishes New Zealand from the rest of the world” (Morgan 66), and underlies what critic Paola Bilbrough describes as Morris’s preoccupation “with origins and shifting identity” (6).

Although Morris makes it clear when discussing her work that she does not want “her characters to lead with their race” and that she hopes “their race is not the most important thing about them” (Pistacchi “Conversation”), she does say it is a “conscious choice” to incorporate characters of mixed-blood ancestral heritages into her texts as a way to challenge essentialist identity stereotypes. Writing as an expatriate New Zealander of both Ngati Wai and English descent who is currently residing in the United States of America, Morris says she is acutely aware of cross-cultural issues facing New Zealanders both at home and abroad. Morris wants to explore through her texts the unique “cultural clash coming together” (Pistacchi “Conversation”) both in the mixed-race heritage of her homeland and in the mixed-race blood of her characters.

Morris’s literary explorations have therefore resulted in texts haunted by questions of how, in this increasingly diasporic world, indigenous people are able to preserve and celebrate their indigeneity when they are working oceans and continents away from their tribal homelands. Her texts also raise questions about how people of mixed-blood heritages in general (and mixed-blood Māori heritages in particular) are able to relate to and honour all parts of their ancestral histories in the face of modern-day globalization and homogenization. For Morris, advancing indigenous cultural survivance often means fighting for recognition as both a Māori and a New Zealand writer. She constantly has to defend her right to self-define (as is evidenced in the following biographical section of this chapter), and her “real-life” struggle is reflected in the fights many of her fictional

characters engage in to maintain their allegiances to their ancestral roots while at the same time retaining the right to self-identify in ways that challenge essentialist racial stereotypes.

Morris's struggle for cultural survivance is therefore very different from the one depicted in Patricia Grace's *Dogside Story*. Whereas Grace's text addresses issues of Māori cultural survivance as manifested in a marae-based community set on tribal lands within Aotearoa/New Zealand, the vast majority of Morris's short stories and novels are concerned with issues of cultural survivance faced by mixed-blood Māori who are living and working far from their ancestral homes. Like many of her characters, Morris often describes herself as writing in a transnational world, and her fictions demand that her modern readers recognize that issues of indigeneity and cultural identity cannot be defined by national borders or government-mandated bloodline percentages. For Morris, survivance means finding a way to exist in these constantly shifting, borderless, transnational spaces.

The following chapter therefore begins with an examination of the ways in which Paula Morris is ultimately writing from what Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa calls nepantla, or *tierra desconocida* – the borderlanded place. Through extensive interview material and close contextual readings of Morris's novels *Queen of Beauty*, *Hibiscus Coast*, and her often anthologized short story "Rangatira," the chapter carefully considers the effects of writing in and through this borderlanded space as an act of literary cultural survivance. Broken up into four distinct sections, the chapter organizes this reading of Morris's texts by first offering a biographical sketch of the author's life and works in order to "place" her in this borderlanded space before moving on to a study of the anti-essentialist politics and racial ambivalence evidenced in *Queen of Beauty*, an examination of Māori-Chinese identity politics in *Hibiscus Coast*, and finally a reading of the way in which Morris's borderlanded characters in both of these novels, and in "Rangatira,"

identify and challenge (and are at the same time often complicit with) instances of cultural and intellectual property appropriation in their acts of cultural survivance. All three of these works construct active cultural survivance methods for a contemporary generation of mixed-blood and diasporic Māori community members.

Placing Morris: Biographical Context

“When I was in England people relentlessly criticised my New Zealand accent. Then I went home and I was criticised for sounding English. These days, living in the U.S, it’s all down to the choice of words. I’m generally quite good at switching, so I might say ‘elevator’ here and ‘lift’ to a New Zealander, but if I don’t correct myself someone else will. It can be a bit tiring.”

(Paula Morris, qtd. in Morgan 67)

As a writer, Paula Morris is very conscious that she occupies an ambiguous position in transnational linguistic space. A life spent living on three continents (Oceania/Europe/North America) has left her adept at code-switching her colloquial speech. A life spent in three different vocations (academic/publicist/writer) has left her even more adept at code-switching her professional vernacular. This adaptability is a survivance strategy, one that enables her to produce “pitch-perfect” (Potts) dialogue whether her protagonist is a Māori-Pākehā ghost writer in New Orleans (*Queen of Beauty*), a Chinese-Māori painter in Shanghai (*Hibiscus Coast*), or an all-American publicist from King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, USA (*Trendy But Casual*).

However, despite her nomadic background, Morris considers herself “absolutely a New Zealander” (Pistacchi “Conversation”). Born in Auckland in 1965 to a mother of English heritage and a father of Ngati Wai descent, Morris spent her childhood and adolescence in Te Atatu South where she claims “race or ethnicity was never an issue” (Morgan 63). Unlike Patricia Grace’s experience of being raised in predominantly Pākehā neighbourhoods and schools, Morris says, “We had lots of ethnicities and nationalities out

West – Dutch, Croatian, Lebanese, Māori, Polynesian. And many of my classmates had at least one British parent, like me” (Morgan 63). When she was teased at intermediate school (Freyberg Intermediate in Te Atatu South) about her bloodlines it was more for her precociousness than her ethnicity: “I was telling a teacher who had come out from England that my great-grandmother was the daughter of a chief, and an important person in our family, and the teacher, who was quite fond of me, called me her little Māori princess. Some of the kids teased me endlessly about this – not about being Māori, but for daring to be a princess!” (Morgan 63).

Growing up in this multi-cultural community meant that it was only when her British grandmother came to New Zealand for a visit that Morris realised she “came from two completely different families” (Morgan 62). “Because we mainly interacted with my father’s family,” Morris says, “i.e. with the maternal, Māori side of that family – I didn’t have many opportunities to compare and contrast. My mother’s family were all in the northeast of England. As a child, I was conscious that my mother wasn’t like New Zealand mothers [and that] we weren’t going to fit in entirely with either the Māori or Pākehā worlds, in their most stereotypical sense” (Pistacchi “Morris Bio Interview”).

When Morris talks about her Auckland childhood and family memories, however, her stories are full of warm recollections of a “barefoot, open, laid-back lifestyle” and a feeling of being “quite free” from the “anxieties and pressures that many of my friends who were brought up overseas experienced” (Morgan 61). Morris frequently makes nostalgic references to her hometown in the many blogs she authors as an adult,⁶⁵ and she returns to New Zealand as often as possible to partake in the annual Going West Books & Writers Festival and the Auckland Writers and Readers Festival. She also remains fiercely proud of her alma mater, Rutherford High School (now Rutherford College), a public

⁶⁵ Morris blogs on a number of sites including “Trendy But Casual” (http://trendybutcasual.typepad.com/trendy_but_casual/) and “Babies are Fireproof” (<http://www.blogger.com/profile/05128149068124601069>).



school on the Te Atatu Peninsula where she says she had “excellent teachers” (Morgan 62). Although she claims to have “been patronized about [attending Rutherford] many times by Aucklanders abroad, usually people who went to private schools,” she says that when she was growing up “the idea that there was some disadvantage to going to a state school never entered my head” (Morgan 62). Her mother used to tell her “the world is your oyster” (Morgan 62), and Morris grew up believing this was true.

Morris claims that it wasn’t until she began taking classes at the University of Auckland in 1982 that the differences in her two familial worlds (that of her Māori/Pākehā lineages) and in her country’s two socioeconomic spheres (that of public/private schools) became evident to her. She says when she started “hanging out with kids from other schools and neighbourhoods,” she began to think

about being perceived as ‘other’ or about having to define my allegiances. I would hang out with all these kids from expensive, private, largely white schools and they would say things like “There aren’t any full-blooded Māoris any more.” I’d get really annoyed and tell them my grandmother was, even though this, admittedly, wasn’t really true. But that kind of comment – which you still hear from some people today, unfortunately – is really about the fear of the resurgence in Māori culture, as well as profound disrespect. The implication is that Māori are getting above their station and there aren’t any full blooded ones anyway – so why take their claims seriously? I suppose that was the beginning of my political consciousness. (Morgan 64)

Morris’s “annoyance” with having to defend herself and where she comes from resonates throughout her non-fiction critical essays as well as in her responses to interview questions that probe identity issues. It is a rare interviewer who does not begin a conversation with Morris by asking if she sees herself as “a New Zealand writer.” Her answer to this question ranges from emphatic: “I see myself, absolutely, as a New Zealand writer” (Pistacchi “Conversation”), to sarcastic: “I’m a New Zealander, so that makes me a New Zealand writer – right?” (Brown), to disgusted: “Whether I live here [New Orleans] or in

Iowa City or in Shanghai, I'm still a New Zealander. I think that makes me a New Zealand writer, too, but this point is, apparently, controversial" (Morris "Tramps" 32).⁶⁶

She also becomes incensed when interviewers and/or critics question her status as a Māori writer, angrily saying, "Some people question me quite aggressively – 'Did you join the Māori club at school?' or 'Do you speak fluent Māori?' – and then declare whether I'm Māori or not, as though it's something they can pronounce on. I hate other people thinking they can decide this for me. I know who I am" (Morgan 63). She is also emphatic about the fact that just because "my father married somebody from England doesn't mean I can't trace my ancestry back and belong to a marae and be part of a family. As one of my cousins says, being Māori is about kinship, not about the colour of your skin. It's a question of heritage, of inheritance – and I loathe the idea that you can be turfed out of your own heritage. When my father dies my siblings and I will inherit his land, just as he inherited it from his mother who inherited it from her father, and so on, back to Chief Te Kiri" (Morgan 64).

Ultimately Morris knows that much of this aggressive questioning of her New Zealand and Māori identity is rooted in her decision to live and work abroad. She says, "Some academics or critics may want to guard the borders of our national literature...but many New Zealand writers have travelled or spent long stretches of time overseas already – Katherine Mansfield is the most famous example, but by no means the only one – and yet New Zealand literature lives on" (Brown). Morris also feels that critics of her overseas

⁶⁶ Morris finds that this "controversial" nature of her status as a "New Zealand writer" affects her not only at a personal level (in terms of being affronted), but also at a professional level. Creative New Zealand imposes residency requirements on two of its fellowships. Morris says this means "although I am a New Zealand citizen and the author of two novels that are set largely in New Zealand and published in no other country, I am not eligible to apply for either the Meridian Energy Katherine Mansfield Memorial fellowship or the Berlin Writers' Residency" ("Tramps" 33). Morris is always quick to point out the irony in the fact that the Mansfield fellowship demands that a writer "must have lived continuously in New Zealand for ten years prior to making application" because "Mansfield herself moved to the Villa Isola Bella in Menton in 1920, twelve years after she left New Zealand for the last time. Her application wouldn't have been eligible either" ("Tramps" 33).

status must understand that the decision to live in the United States is largely one born out of economic necessity:

Like many migrant workers, deep down I would like to go home sooner or later. But it costs money to ship a household across an ocean, to move and re-establish a life. Around the time I applied for the tenure-track position at Tulane, I also applied for a creative writing job at the University of Auckland. Tulane offered me a job; Auckland did not. This is why I live here, despite the hurricanes, despite the flood, despite the fact that I can't vote. Right now I'm earning a livable wage. I can't afford to leave. ("Tramps" 29)

For all of these reasons, Morris bristles at the "expatriate" label, saying, "Expatriate isn't an entirely neutral word. According to my dictionary, it can mean someone living in a foreign land; it can also mean a withdrawal of allegiance. I prefer to think I'm on an odyssey, 'a long wandering or voyage usually marked by changes of fortune'" ("Tramps" 35).

Morris's odyssey has already carried her to many continents and through various stages of fame and fortune. After completing a BA in English and History at the University of Auckland in 1985, she headed to England where she spent three years at the University of York completing a D.Phil in English/Women's Studies on the literature of the American South.⁶⁷ Upon completing her degree in 1990, Morris decided to take a hiatus from academia and to put her highly tuned (and extremely well educated) pen to work in the fast-paced world of public relations and marketing in London. Working first for BBC Radio 3,⁶⁸ and then as a publicist for both Virgin Records and Polygram Records, she was eventually recruited in 1994 by BMG Entertainment in New York and left

⁶⁷ The title of Morris's D.Phil thesis is *Magnolias and Rattlesnakes: The Southern Lady in American Fiction, 1830 to the Present*.

⁶⁸ Describing her job for BBC Radio, Morris says, "I was a production assistant, mainly for a music news programme called 'Music Weekly.' We had lots of contributors, including many music journalists – useful names to drop in a job interview! This was the old BBC, where every producer had an assistant, and editing was done by cutting tape with a razor blade, and we had to take typing tests on electric typewriters!...After working at Radio 3 for nearly two years, I had terrific contacts in the classical music world. This is why I got the job at Virgin (as a press officer). And once you're in the record business, it's easy to move up and around" (Pistacchi, "Morris Bio Interview").

immediately for the United States “because when someone offers you a job in New York, you don’t really say no” (Morgan 64). At BMG Morris says she “had an office overlooking Times Square and I was earning quite a lot – and spending even more” (Hallinan 1). Her marketing career in New York skyrocketed, and she quickly moved on from BMG to ECM Records, and finally to a position as the Vice President of Marketing at RCA Victor in 1997.

All of the travel to “festivals and conferences all over the US, Canada, Mexico, Spain, France, Germany, etc.; going to the Grammys (and, even better, the after-parties)” and all of the “eating and drinking at a lot of swish places and hearing a lot of music” (Morris qtd. in “Rappin’ with Paula”) wasn’t enough to satisfy Morris’s creative spirit. In 1996, after coming to the realization that fiction writing and marketing “are very similar, though fiction doesn’t pay as well and the clothes aren’t as good” (“Rappin’ with Paula”), she enrolled in an evening workshop at the Writers Voice at the West Side Y in New York City. The group offered her “encouragement, as well as an excuse to leave the office before seven o’clock” (Morris “Burning Questions” 6). When this group eventually dissolved she went on to co-found a workshop group with some of the original West Side Y writers that “met two evenings a month for several years, discussing each other’s stories and novel portions” (Morris “Burning Questions” 6). During her years with the West Side Y group, Morris abandoned her marketing career and “cobbled together a much less lucrative one as a freelancer, trying to make time for writing a novel” (“Burning Questions” 6). She says the transition was not always easy, especially financially, and jokingly refers to herself and her American husband Tom Moody as “the nouveau poor” (Hallinan 1). Although she was publishing short stories both in the United States and in New Zealand during her time with the West Side Y group, she eventually felt like she needed more time and focus to complete a bigger project. In the end she realized that she

“needed time away from the demands and expense of New York to work on a novel”

(Brown) and decided to go back to school full-time.

This decision meant crossing the Pacific once again, returning to New Zealand to attend Victoria University’s creative writing program in 2001. There she wrote the draft of her first novel *Queen of Beauty* in just eight months, an effort which won her the 2001 Adam Foundation Prize for Creative Writing,⁶⁹ a publication contract with Penguin New Zealand, and eventually the 2003 New Zealand Society of Authors Hubert Church Best First Book Award for Fiction.

At the end of her time at Victoria, Morris was also awarded the Schaeffer Fellowship to the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, arguably one of America’s most prestigious MFA programmes. While at Iowa, Morris wrote large sections of her second and third novels, *Hibiscus Coast* and *Trendy But Casual*, as well as her short story “Rangitira.” Over the course of her relatively short writing career, Morris’s short stories have also been broadcast on National Radio and Iowa Public Radio, and have appeared in *Huia Short Stories 4* (2001), *Landfall*, the *New Zealand Listener*, *Metro*, *JAAM*, *Hayden’s Ferry Review* and *Turbine*. She has recently published a collection of short stories, *Forbidden Cities* (2008), and is currently working on a historical novel based on “Rangitira,” editing an anthology of New Zealand fiction for Penguin, contracting with Scholastic to write a young adult novel set in post-Katrina New Orleans, and looking forward to a planned film version of *Hibiscus Coast*. In addition to publishing and editing, Morris also works as a reviewer and feature writer for the *New Zealand Listener*, *The Dominion Post* and *New Zealand Books*.

⁶⁹ According to their website (<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters/about/prizewinners.aspx>), The Adam Foundation Prize in Creative Writing “was established in 1996 through the Victoria University Foundation by Denis and Verna Adam because of their strong wish to support the development of creative writing in New Zealand. In each year the Adam Prize, a sum of \$3000, is awarded to the author of the best page-based portfolio for the MA in creative writing at Victoria University.”

Currently Morris lives in New Orleans and teaches as an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Tulane University. She says she feels at ease as a migrant there because “American university departments are full of a different category of migrant workers: academics. Only one of my colleagues is from New Orleans; only a few are Southerners. Academics move around the country, or to other countries, following jobs” (“Tramps” 27). At the end of her 2006 *Landfall* essay, “Tramps Like Us,” Morris writes,

Home for now is New Orleans, this terrible mess of a place,
populated by the disgruntled and the opportunistic. And
home will always be Auckland, which is an interesting mess
in its own way...At some point this year I'll go
south...Maybe the trip across the border will suggest ideas,
maybe my next book will be set in Mexico. Maybe I'll find
work there and stay. Anything is possible, after all, when
you're a stranger wandering 'the boundless kingdom of the
imagination,' looking for the next story. (35)

This statement seems entirely fitting for an author who not only views herself on an odyssey in “search of new fortunes,” but who also feels she must always be “fighting a rearguard action against the creep of nostalgia, one of the emotional rather than practical perils of writing about home from a distance” (Morris “Tramps” 31).

Placing Morris: Theoretical Context

The pull between wanderlust and nostalgia is one that Salman Rushdie (a writer Morris references frequently in her non-fiction essays) feels migrants can never escape entirely. In his celebrated collection, *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), Rushdie asserts a belief that “exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back...” (10). The following section of this chapter examines the ways in which living in a liminal space between homelands (what Anzaldúa calls “nepantla”) allows Morris the emotional and physical distance necessary to “look back” and “look at” race relations and identity issues both in Aotearoa/New Zealand and in the United States in a way that proposes strategies for indigenous cultural survivance that

allow for developing “an adaptable, dynamic identity that can mediate between conflicting cultures” (Allen “Thesis” 65).

In Morris’s first novel, *Queen of Beauty*, the protagonist’s Scottish immigrant grandmother Margery discusses these ideas of home, nostalgia, and adaptable identities in detail, telling her grandchildren,

Home was the place you lived now, the place you lived then, the place you came from, the place you went to. The place you want to be at the end of the day, when your feet are tired and you want something hot for dinner. The place where you never lived, the place you dreamed about. The place you saw in the movies, more familiar than your own country. The place you remember which doesn’t actually exist. (285)

For Margery, and for members of diasporic communities in general, personal identities in the twenty-first century seem to be perpetually “poised in transition...belonging at one and the same time to several ‘homes’ (and to no particular home)” at all (Hall 310). This means that “in the contemporary global world, rather than being characterized by a singular and stable identity the subject is often ‘suturing’ itself to different articulations between discourse and practice, which process, in turn, leads to different moments of identification” (Van Meijl 4).

In the contemporary moment, this concept of the “sutured” self might not seem particularly revolutionary, especially in a country like Aotearoa/New Zealand where the “Who am I?/ Who are we?” identity questions seem to loom larger in the national consciousness than they do in the United States or Europe.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, issues of sutured identity are worthy of re-examination in relationship to young indigenous writers of Aotearoa/New Zealand because, as Sarah Dugdale states, “the journey being undertaken by the post-settler population of New Zealand is, for many, an anxiety about

⁷⁰ Morris discusses this preoccupation New Zealanders have with identity (and in particular the preoccupation literary critics have with what constitutes a “New Zealand writer”) in her essay “Tramps Like Us” (*Landfall* 211 (2006) pp. 27-36).

identity. This anxiety remains partially submerged, often obscured by cultural assumptions and attitudes, but is revealed in a number of unexpected ways” (190).

One of the unexpected ways that this anxiety about identity keeps cropping up in the literary world of Aotearoa/New Zealand is in the unconscious essentialist readings of contemporary Māori fictions that seem to pervade our university classrooms and the book review pages of our local news and journal publications.⁷¹ When I contacted Prof. Witi Ihimaera to discuss my concerns about these critical responses to the texts being written by young Māori novelists, he replied by e-mail:

In my opinion it is wrong to even think of reading indigenous work from an essentialist point of view even if some writers (and I am one of them) actually consider that they begin from an essentialist position...I infiltrate that centrality by offering up a referentiality that includes opera, film, Shakespeare and so on. It's a case of continuous border crossings – or in Māori the term would be crossing the paepae from a centralist Māori zone outward into the world but able to go back at will whenever I wish. Of course I use this more than most – and I think this depends a lot on the level of indigeneity that the author is willing to assume in their persona as well as in their work. Paula [Morris], for instance, as with Kelly Ana [Morey] and most of the younger generational writers are not as “centrally” placed within their culture as I am. They have one leg perched very strongly on both sides of the paepae. So do I but, like Patricia Grace, my Māori leg is stronger than theirs.⁷²

Ihimaera's comment inadvertently suggested to me that a large part of the problem in the critical discourse surrounding the works of younger Māori writers like Morris has been our focus on which of those metaphoric legs they are standing on, when we should be focusing on the vast space of land between them.

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin “recognize the position of those poised on the border of two worlds as involving complex mediation” (Blaeser 155). These authors believe “post-colonial culture is inevitably a

⁷¹ See Preface.

⁷² Witi Ihimaera's comments are extracted from an e-mail sent to me on 6/11/2006.

hybridized phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the ‘grafted’ European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 195). In her own analysis of these mediated postcolonial identities Morris goes one step further, incorporating characters of not only mixed Māori-Pākehā descent, but also of mixed Māori-Asian and Māori-Pacific Islander descent. She then further complicates these characters’ relationships to identity and “homeland” by situating them in locations far from their birthplaces in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Her ability to imagine and to write characters who defy racialist and nationalist prescriptions and who examine these contemporary postcolonial “grafted” identities is something that theorists like Vizenor would celebrate. In his own work Vizenor rejects and argues against the notion of “pure” culture at every turn (Blaeser 156), writing,

The postindian warrior of cinematic simulations censures the obvious, interracial marriages, and unmans his own imagination with racialism. “The fox doesn’t make it with the eagle. The doves don’t make it with the pigeons. Scorpions don’t make it with black widows. It’s natural law. It’s common sense,” he says. Nonsense...the warriors who turn simulations into prohibitions, rather than liberation and survivance, are themselves the treacherous taboos of dominance. (*Manifest Manners* 20)

Vizenor ultimately believes “mixed-bloods exist in the place of contact between age-old tribal traditions and contemporary adaptations, as well as in the place of contact between stereotypic definitions of Indian identity and the reality of Indian existence” (Blaeser 155). Similarly, Morris’s characters stand as mediators between essentialist stereotypes and the reality of contemporary mixed-blood Māori New Zealanders, demonstrating ways in which they are able to negotiate means of successful cultural survivance on their own terms in ways that offer bridges between their multi-racial, multi-national identities.

Reading Morris: *Queen of Beauty, Hibiscus Coast* and “Rangitira”

Navigating Nepantla in *Queen of Beauty*

“Bridges,” Gloria Anzaldúa says, “span liminal (threshold) spaces between worlds, spaces I call nepantla, a Nahuatl word meaning tierra entre medio. Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries. Nepantla es tierra desconocida, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement – an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling. Most of us dwell in nepantla so much of the time it’s become a sort of ‘home’” (“(Un)Natural Bridges” 1).

Paula Morris’s characters live in nepantla,⁷³ this constant place of displacement. Their continually shifting sense of “place” and “home” is foundational to both the narrative structure of her novels and to the ways in which she navigates the nepantla space she finds herself writing in and from as an “expatriate” New Zealand writer. As should be clear in the biographical section of this chapter, Morris sees herself “absolutely, as a New Zealand writer” (Pistacchi “Conversation”) and feels clearly linked to her Māori heritage, but she has also wryly confided that she often does not feel a part of the “Māori writers’ club” and that her fear of any kind of essentialist label leaves her unsure that she ever wants to be considered a “full-fledged member” (Pistacchi “Conversation”). Morris therefore seems most comfortable writing from and about nepantla borderlands. This undetermined positional space is echoed in her choice to set her first novel, *Queen of Beauty*, in the ethnic and cultural borderlands of both turn-of-the-twentieth century New Orleans and Auckland, as well as in her choice of characters who are, for the most part,

⁷³ Anzaldúa further glosses nepantla, saying, “I use the word nepantla to theorize liminality and to talk about those who facilitate passages between worlds, whom I’ve named nepantleras. I associate nepantla with states of mind that question old ideas, beliefs, acquire new perspectives, change worldviews, and shift from one world to another” (“(Un)natural bridges, (Un)safe spaces” 1).

“nga tangata awarua” (a phrase coined by Heeni Collins to describe people of mixed Māori and Pākehā descent) (H. Collins 2).⁷⁴

According to Anzaldúa, the inhabitants of nepantla are “the prohibited and the forbidden...*Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the ‘normal’” (*Borderlands* 3). *Las atravesadas* permeate the pages of *Queen of Beauty*. The half-dozen “queens of beauty” mentioned in the text are all forbidden inhabitants in the confining world of the “normal.” Their randomly scattered appearances throughout the novel jostle for attention in the margins of the mainstream narrative, constantly bringing the reader off of the plotted road and back to the shifting grounds of nepantla.

The first of these “queens” to make an appearance in the text is the infamous Lavinia Warren, the dwarf circus performer married in three-ring Barnum & Bailey style to Charles S. Stratton, better known as the legendary Tom Thumb (37-38). The second is “a heavy-set woman in a feather boa, nodding out from her cameo in the centre” (111) of the *Queen of Beauty Waltzes*⁷⁵ album cover. This queen, according to Mary, the kuia of the novel, “didn’t look like she was the queen of anything, except Queen of the Night, maybe, or queen of the tavern and dancehall, queen of the barmaids and chorus girls” (111). Additional “queen of beauty” manifestations come in the form of a children’s book named for a renegade Princess turned kind-and-devoted “Queen of Beauty,”⁷⁶ a British

⁷⁴ Heeni Collins coined the term “nga tangata awarua” in 1994 while working “to produce a book on the broad topic of...being of both Māori and Pākehā descent”(2). In her footnote about the term she says, “The term ‘nga tangata awarua’ came to me while researching this subject, and has been accepted by the people I interviewed. Awarua can mean either the flowing of two rivers, a corridor or passage. Hence it includes meanings of dual heritage, possible discomfort/alienation of being in-between, and the concept of transition” (5).

⁷⁵ The *Queen of Beauty Waltzes* by Otto M. Heinzman was published by E.T. Paull Music Company in 1898.

⁷⁶ *The Queen of Beauty or Adventures of Prince Elfrestan* by Mrs. R.E. Henry was published in London by Chapman & Hall in 1895.

ship that survived cannon shots and near capsized in storms at sea before arriving in Auckland Harbour in 1863, and a minor character in the author Margaret Dean O'Clare's novel, *Queen of Beauty*,⁷⁷ who is described as being “wiry as terrier, a whirly-gig creature nipping and darting along the margins, [snapping] at the air with the boundless frustrated energy of the neglected trickster” (129). Morris completes the motif by gifting the protagonist, Virginia Ngatea Seaton, with a name bestowed by the character's mother in honour of movie star Virginia Mayo, who purportedly was named the “Queen of Beauty” by the Navajo people after donning “native” dress for an entertainment magazine photo shoot (*Queen of Beauty* 241).

A dwarf, a fairy, a dancehall queen, a wayward ship, a trickster, a racial cross-dresser and the novel's protagonist of both Māori and Pākehā descent. Each of these characters proves to be a rogue, a boundary crosser, and a survivor in the course of the text. They are all *las atravesadas*.

The varied nature of these “queens of beauty” indicate Morris's authorial refusal to root her characters – or the title of her novel – in solid ground. Her anti-essentialist stance drives her to constantly disarm any specific bicultural/multicultural politicized position by creating characters who are constantly identity-shifting. It is perhaps this refusal to be either defined or representative that drives both Paula Morris, the writer, and Virginia Seaton, the fictional character, to take refuge in the anonymity of living in the United States.

When you are in New Zealand, Virginia's cousin Errol tells her, “It's a political decision; you have to decide – Māori or Pākehā” (229). This essentialist stance frustrates Virginia who replies, “When I'm at home – I mean, in America...I'm just a foreigner with a strange accent. Nobody knows what a New Zealander is, let alone a Māori or a Pākehā. So I can be whatever I want to be, I guess. I can be both” (229). This nomadic subjectivity

⁷⁷ Margaret Dean O'Clare is a fictional character in Morris's *Queen of Beauty* who is writing a novel called *Queen of Beauty*.

allows Virginia, and therefore the novel's narrative, to edgewalk between stances on identity politics. It also allows her the room to explore complex racial politics in New Zealand from the comfortable distance of the expatriate position she and her main character share. It is this distance that angers both the other characters in the novel (her step-mother Leeander seethes over the fact that "Virginia refused, simply refused, to engage" (144)) as well as reviewers such as Olivia Hill, whose scathing *Listener* review of *Queen of Beauty* claims that "Virginia is aloof and withdrawn throughout, refusing to engage with those around her" (53). Hill's commentary goes on to claim it is the equivalent of reader-torture to "endure the gloomy presence of Virginia" throughout the novel, and ends by calling the character a "wretched girl" (53). While Virginia might appear to be aloof or withdrawn at times, she is certainly not "wretched" at any point in the novel – so why all of this contempt? What interests me in this question is the underlying resentment and anger underlying the reactions to Virginia's character. How dare she not claim a stable and engaged identity? How dare she not relate to specific people, ideals, traditions and beliefs? And, most importantly, how dare she, and by extension the author, appear so ambivalent about the major race relations issues facing Aotearoa/New Zealand?

In fact, this critical distance ultimately saves Morris's novel from "sliding into the sort of cloying over-fondness that can tarnish so many novels of family legends" (Bieder 2). This emotional and physical space also allows Virginia the position of the ironic sceptic when she returns to Auckland after a five year absence and her friend Tania warns her (with her tongue firmly planted in her cheek) that "Asians are the new Polynesians, but worse...at least the Polynesians are sort of like Māoris. Brown and affable and overweight. They like playing cricket and rugby, picnics at the beach, that kind of thing. But Asians – they're completely alien...with poor driving skills, no interest in assimilating, and bags of money. It's the post-colonial nightmare" (179-180).

Morris's position in nepantla gives her license to set her mockery of the all too-prominent New Zealand cultural fiction of the "Asian invasion" against the equally absurd cultural fictions surrounding Māori. She therefore offsets highly charged moments of indignation over negative Māori stereotypes (such as the scene in which Julia's new Pākehā in-laws are made into racist caricatures for being "anxious about the number of Māori names on the [wedding invitation] list" because of a fear they "will all arrive on motorbikes [and] have facial tattoos and hand-carved blue lettering on every knuckle" (162)) with understated attacks on some of the lore surrounding land-claims in New Zealand. To offer this counterbalance Morris introduces Virginia's Māori father, Jim, who tells his daughter,

"People like changing things, and they like making money. Your brother lectures me on this one, tries to explain The Māori Way. Apparently, he's an expert. He's got this rosy view of the past, thinks it was all hoeing kumara side by side on the hill, fishing and planting by the moon, each according to his needs and all that – a sort of Soviet Russia with sunshine and pipis. The way he talks, you'd think the Pākehā were some sort of pillaging Vikings. Or maybe Romans. I don't know, you're the historian."

"A corrupting influence, you mean" [Virginia says].

"Exactly. Introducing the foreign concepts of bloodlust and greed. Well, I have to say, I don't think that bloodlust and greed were entirely unknown in our family. There were some pretty savage battles fought on the beach at Onekawa for control of that land." (267)

Morris claims that she "wanted Jim's voice in the book as a balance" because "it is easy to look at things in too extreme and simplistic a way" (Pistacchi "Conversation"). She says, "I suppose I wanted to cast the family in a different light from the role of victim – which I think a lot of people easily want to slot the Māori experience into. They want to believe that Māori are either villains or victims, when I think the truth is often somewhere in between" (Pistacchi "Conversation"). Within this "in between" nepantla space Morris's novels answer Vizenor's call for acts of literary survivance that are "an active repudiation

of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (*Fugitive Poses* 15). The *Queen of Beauty* characters are actively rejecting extremist stereotypes (villains or victims) and refusing to espouse any absolute and essentialist “truths” relating to cultural identity.

New Orleans: Representative Nepantla Borderland

Morris highlights the tension that this often shifting and in-between “truth” manifests by staging the initial section of the *Queen of Beauty* narrative in twenty-first century New Orleans – a city that encompasses all of the characteristics of a nepantla borderland. According to the novel’s historic recounting, the nineteenth-century port of New Orleans “was the centre of the southern slave trade, with slaves on sale at more than a dozen auction houses” (21-22). It was also “the home of a unique community, *les gens de couleur libre*. These free people of colour, descendants of white colonists and their black mistresses, lived in relative peace and prosperity alongside the dominant Creole and American population – and their black slaves” (*Queen of Beauty* 22-23).

The New Orleans of the twenty-first century is very much a product of this infamous history; its population is still a mix of Creoles, Caucasian-Americans, African-Americans, Spanish-Americans, half-caste descendents of these various groups, and in more recent history, large numbers of Asian and West Indian immigrants. Virginia, a migrant overstay, works in this nepantla environment as an historical researcher for the fictional Margaret Dean O’Clare, a flamboyant New Orleans novelist famous for her quasi-historic Southern-belle bodice-rippers. Virginia’s fascination with her research involving *les gens de couleur libre* for one of Margaret’s books allows Morris the platform to set the mixed blood survivance issues of historic New Orleans in general, and the notorious Quadroon Balls in particular, against the mixed blood survivance issues in Virginia’s own New Zealand family.

According to Floyd D. Cheung, juxtaposing cultural histories in contemporary fictional texts allows for “a dialectical method of reading which places subordinate and

dominant hidden transcripts in imaginary conversation with each other” (7). This imaginary conversation, Cheung claims, “produces a more comprehensive understanding, which decries political valences that would otherwise be inaccessible through a reading of any one text in isolation” (7). For this reason, it becomes highly effective for Morris to posit the controversial and well-known mixed-blood American historical figures examined in *Queen of Beauty* (President Thomas Jefferson (40), naturalist John James Audubon (66), and scientist Norbert Rillieux (70))⁷⁸ in metaphoric conversation with the mixed blood fictional characters based in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Virginia, Lia, Tania).⁷⁹ Through this juxtaposition the novel’s characters, and their family histories, traditions, and stories acquire a trans-generational dimensionality and an international political cache they would not benefit from if read in isolation. This “second-sight” conversation ultimately allows for recognition of an interweaving past and present in which the historic has literal and symbolic influence on shaping contemporary ideology world-wide. The mixed-blood questions facing modern-day Aotearoa/New Zealand can therefore be seen in the novel as a comparative framework for re-examining the race-relations issues facing mulatto, quadroon and octoroon women in historic New Orleans, and vice-versa.

By definition, a New Orleans quadroon “was a woman who was one-quarter black. Probably her father was white and her mother was a mulatto (1/2 black)” (*Queen of Beauty* 40). According to theorist Eve Raimon, “the ‘amalgamated’ mulatto (to use the contemporaneous term) can be viewed...as a precursor to the contemporary motifs of

⁷⁸ On Page 40 of *Queen of Beauty* Morris refers to the (now DNA-validated) American legend that United States President Thomas Jefferson fathered at least one, and possibly as many as five, of his slave Sally Hemmings’s children. On Page 66 Morris recounts the fact that naturalist John James Audubon’s “father was a French naval officer, Lieutenant Jean Audubon, and his mother was a quadroon chambermaid named Jeanne Rabin,” and on Page 70 she states that Norbert Rillieux, the man whose invention of the triple-pan apparatus revolutionized the sugar industry, was parented by artist Edgar Degas’ French great-uncle and a quadroon named Constance Vivant. Morris also refers frequently throughout the narrative to the mixed-blood Māori-Pākehā ancestry of fictional characters Virginia and Tania, and the mixed-blood Chinese-Samoan ancestry of Rob’s girlfriend Lia.

‘hybrid’ and ‘mestizo’ identities” (4), identities in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that have become the subjects of acute interest in both literary and cultural studies.

Nineteenth-century white New Orleans Creoles were usually upper class French-European Louisianans who, according to nineteenth-century historian and novelist George Washington Cable, were people “who send representatives and senators to the Federal Congress, and who vote for the nation’s rulers... They celebrate the Fourth of July; and ten days later, with far greater enthusiasm, they commemorate that great Fourteenth that saw the fall of the Bastille. Other citizens of the United States, but not themselves, they call Americans” (2). Popular history claims that most of the young New Orleans white Creoles had mistresses, afraid if they did not “it would be seen as a reflection upon their virility” (Early 3). Many of these mistresses were free women of colour that the Creoles would meet and court at the infamous Quadroon Balls.

Held several nights a week, the Balls were open only to white men and mixed-blood women, and were advertised “only in the French part of the paper. English speakers weren’t invited” (*Queen of Beauty* 45-46). According to historian Eleanor Early,

The purpose of the balls was to display the youth and beauty of the girls in order to find rich protectors for them...It was a frank and elegant sex mart where Creole bluebloods chose their mistresses....When a definite arrangement was reached, a girl was spoken of as a *placée*. Her status was a sort of honorable betrothal, and her immediate future was secure. It was customary for the man to buy a small house on or near Rue de Rampart and present it to the girl. (4)

The practice of quadroon mothers guiding their daughters into placage was treated, for the most part, with reluctant acceptance in the New Orleans free-black community because some believed “as a consequence, the position of free women of color in some ways improved, since they were able to obtain social status and economic advantage by attaching themselves to American men” (Cheung 6). For many of these quadroon mothers,

making a placage agreements was, in and of itself, an act of survivance in a society that afforded their daughters little or no alternative for upward social mobility.

The practice was treated with a blind-eye by the Creole community because, as historian E. Horace Fitchett stated in 1941,

There are some well established societies in which there do not exist strong sanctions against such intermingling of the races...The most classic and notorious example which America affords on this point may be found in New Orleans, Louisiana, during the first half of the nineteenth-century. That community sanctioned the emergence and existence of an institution which provided not only for the regulation of the sexual behaviour of high caste males with mulatto mistresses but allowed sufficient latitude in the relationships for making obligatory business arrangements between the sexes concerned. According to observers, travelers and writers, the “Quadroon Ball” led a robust and respectable career in New Orleans for nearly one half of a century. (423)

The acceptance of this officially illegal miscegenation meant that “in 1860 the percentage of mixed bloods in New Orleans was 48.9, while it was 11.0 in the rest of the State” (Fitchett 423).

While the New Orleans sections of *Queen of Beauty* are scathing in their criticism of the hypocritical nature of the Quadroon Balls and of the houses on the Rue de Rampart, they stop short of passing final judgment on the participants of the events. The historical sections of the novel therefore refer to both Alexis de Tocqueville’s⁸⁰ famous pronouncement that the Quadroon Balls were “yet another fatal consequence of slavery” (qtd. in Crouthamel 387) and Frances Trollope’s⁸¹ report that while she was “appalled by what she saw as a hypocritical prejudice against the quadroons, who were unable to marry anyone in ‘good’ white society,” she nonetheless recognized that “many of the illicit

⁸⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) was a French historian and political philosopher best known for his publication *Democracy in America* (1835).

⁸¹ Frances Trollope (1780-1863) was a British novelist well known for incorporating social-protest themes in her writing.

unions formed between white men and quadroons were said to be lasting and happy” (qtd. in *Queen of Beauty* 33).

Morris says she wanted to include Trollope’s remarks in the novel to ensure that the Quadroon Ball passages are read, in part, as explorations of “the strange compromises people made to get around laws – because the laws existed” (Pistacchi “Conversation”). Morris is referring to the Louisiana Civil Code of 1808, which, among other things, prohibited mixed-blood free people of colour from marrying either Blacks or Whites (F. J. Davis 36). In her book, *The ‘Tragic Mulatta’ Revisited*, Eve Raimon calls to mind the words of Etienne Balibar who claims laws such as these serve to ensure that the concept of “peoplehood is not merely a construct but one which, in each particular instance, has constantly changing boundaries” (12). Raimon goes on to assert, “A liminal figure like the mulatta, therefore, is well situated to reveal writers’ – and therefore the culture’s – conflicted visions of national and racial exclusion and belonging” (12).

Juxtaposing Tocqueville’s comments with Trollope’s also allows the historic sections of *Queen of Beauty* to loosely mimic the narrative structures set out in early nineteenth-century “tragic mulatto” novels. The Tocqueville vs. Trollope perspectives specifically call to mind issues foregrounded in George Washington Cable’s 1873 short story, “Tite Poulette,” a famous tale about a “tragic mulatto” that Morris draws specific and pointed attention to in Virginia’s research into the history of *les gens de couleur libre* (*Queen of Beauty* 38, 72).

In his carefully considered study, “New South Narratives of Freedom: Rereading George Washington Cable’s “Tite Poulette” and *Madame Delphine*,” critic James Payne observes that “shortly after the opening frame [of “Tite Poulette”], a passage descriptive of an old time ‘quadroon’ ball becomes the site of a virtual ‘battle’ between two semantic intentions writing the narration – one romantic, the other, parodic and disruptive of an idealized retrospective vision” (5). This battle between the romantic and the

parodic/black-tragic interpretations of New Orleans' contentious history is highlighted in *Queen of Beauty* both in the detailed commentary Morris's narrator provides of the historic controversy surrounding the Quadroon Balls, and her adaptation of another classic Cable trope – the use of the “tour guide to old New Orleans” (Payne 6). Morris's *Queen of Beauty* tour guide comes in the form of Virginia's best friend and flatmate Bridget, a Yankee from New York City who parodies essentialist notions of authority by donning a fake southern accent and the pseudonym “Buck Jackson” in her role as a daily tour guide in the historic New Orleans Quarter.

In Morris's mockumentary-style scenes depicting Bridget's locally famous tours, she makes it clear that the young New Yorker had “a way of explaining Southern traditions and making everybody feel like they were getting the real thing, even though their beads were plastic, and their Hurricane cup was plastic, and Bridget's smile was more false than Arthur's mother's new breasts” (19). Her descriptions of historic New Orleans, similar to those given by Cable's “Tite Poulette” narrator, take on a “once upon a time” intonation (Payne 4) giving the tourists an idyllic and uncontroversial version of New Orleans's problematic history. Bridget's explanation that many of the quadroons who entered into the system of placage “ended up with their own home here in the Quarter, with fine clothes and servants and a carriage” (40) is an image presented to support a romantic and sanitized version of history that makes palpable for tourists a system that was essentially an extension of nineteenth-century “white supremacist ideology” (Payne 4).

Morris says she primarily wanted to include the racially charged New Orleans scenes “as a counterpoint to New Zealand history in the sense of accepting the flawed past in order to make a place the place it is today” (Pistacchi “Conversation”). She believes that this flawed past “is an essential part of our [New Zealand] heritage just as it is in New Orleans” and that although in both of these histories “many terrible, ludicrous and



hypocritical things happened” we also need to recognize “that it is somehow a part of who we are. It has to be dealt with and it cannot be rejected entirely...the past is always slightly more complicated and messy and harder to pronounce on than people think it is” (Pistacchi “Conversation”).

In light of this comment it is telling that Morris titles the first section of the novel “At the Quadroon Ball.” The title begs the question: In what ways is Virginia still at the Quadroon Ball? Virginia’s research makes it clear that “the ‘tragic quadroon’ was a stock figure in late nineteenth-century literature and theatre” (73) and that historical commentators describe the quadroons as “an unfortunate race” (33). But to whom does Virginia feel the strongest affiliation? The white Creoles who live in the United States, but do not consider themselves American in any way, or the “unfortunate race” (33) of quadroons who fit into neither white nor black society because of their mixed blood ancestry?

The answer seems to come in those “aloof” and “withdrawn” aspects of the novel that Olivia Hill so detests, because Virginia refuses to step out of nepantla and favour either her Pākehā or her Māori leg. Instead, Virginia actively maintains her hybrid status/identity throughout the text. I suspect this is because Morris, like Patricia Grace, “likes to sneak up on people” (McRae “Complete Communication” 70)⁸² with her political agenda; it is to her advantage to unsettle poignant comparisons between New Zealand and New Orleans cultural stereotypes with an equal number of scenes that depict an unsettling and deliberate ambivalence to racial politics.

“Rob’s girlfriend. She’s Chinese” (135), explains Julia (Virginia’s sister) on their way to meet their brother’s new partner. When Virginia questions the “Chinese” nature of the name “Lia,” Julia answers nonchalantly, “Her mother was a hippie. Or a Samoan – one of the two” (135). This ambivalence is echoed by Virginia’s friend Arthur as he cleans the

⁸² Jane McRae quotes Patricia Grace as saying, “I’ve never been convinced that people listen to outbursts. I suspect it’s better to sneak up on people” (“Complete Communication” 70).

sidewalk outside of his New Orleans rare bookshop and thinks, “There was something new to wash away every day. Today, a splattering of vomit, not as lurid as yesterday’s, but dark brown like cooking chocolate....maybe it was shit. Very nice. Shit or puke, student or tourist, sad-assed local, homeless person, whatever. Everyone’s guts, turned inside out, looked exactly the same” (27).

In the end, nearly all of Morris’s *Queen of Beauty* characters prove able to operate in pluralistic modes and to develop a tolerance for ambiguity, contradictions and instability in their home in nepantla. They assert their right to self-define as they wish, when they wish, and this ability to operate in these pluralistic modes allows them to turn their ambivalence into something else: into a non-judgmental, constantly shifting nepantla space that offers room for a twenty-first century discussion about what “Māori” identity, and what Māori/mixed-blood Māori characters in a “Māori authored novel,” look and sound like.

This challenge to essentialist leanings is driven by Morris’s acute desire for her books and protagonists to “never be seen as representative” (Pistacchi “Conversation”). When she moved on to write her second novel *Hibiscus Coast*, she chose to focus the story around protagonist Emma Taupere, a woman of mixed Chinese and Māori descent. Morris explains:

I suppose giving Emma that weird heritage made it more complicated for her to be representative...It is also an interesting heritage for her given what she is doing – forging Goldies. Because she has two very warring impulses I think, a different relationship with the paintings depending on which heritage she chooses to prioritize at the time. And a different attitude towards art, a different attitude towards the representation of tūpuna, and I like that clash coming together to see how she, as a person deals with it. (Pistacchi “Conversation”)

Emma’s mixed Chinese-Māori bloodlines also allow Morris room to explore more deeply the devastating effects of anti-Asian racism in New Zealand (an issue her *Queen of Beauty*

characters only hint at) and to confront head-on the ways in which the politicized social memories that surround multicultural race relations issues in Aotearoa/New Zealand affect the reading of each and every one of her characters. Emma, like Virginia, finds herself living in nepantla, a borderlanded and constantly shifting identity-space when she is in Aotearoa/New Zealand and also when she is living abroad in Shanghai. She fights for cultural survivance on two fronts as she desperately searches for ways to honour and preserve both her Chinese and her Māori heritages while living in societies that often ask (or demand) that she choose one identity over the other.

Māori-Chinese Identity in *Hibiscus Coast*

It is impossible to read Emma Taupere's enigmatic character in *Hibiscus Coast* without taking into account the politicized social memory her Māori-Chinese ancestry brings to the narrative table. Readers even marginally aware of the racial politics surrounding these two ethnic groups in New Zealand will recognize that "in a colonial context, where everyone in Aotearoa/New Zealand continues to be affected by the multi-dimensional taniwha⁸³ of colonialism, sharing the dual ethnicity of Māori-Chinese [often means] a double dose of the varied layers of racism that people from ethnic minorities are exposed to in Aotearoa/New Zealand" (Lee 95). This "double dose" of racism that Māori-Chinese are exposed to is complicated by the long history that underlies the cross-cultural interactions and relationships between these peoples, and between these people and Pākehā. Historically speaking,

Under the hierarchy of 'race,' Māori were [considered] less physically able, less mentally intelligent, less emotionally sophisticated – less human – than Pākehā. With the arrival of the Chinese in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the racial hierarchy took on a new, local twist. The Chinese were racialised, officially referred to as 'aliens' and relegated to the lowest level of inferiority. In 1880 MP Richard Seddon (later to be Premier) announced "there is the same distinctiveness

⁸³ Lee explains in her footnote, "Taniwha here refers to a monster-type creature" (95).

between a European and Chinaman as that between a Chinaman and monkey.” (Lee 99)

Comments like Premier Richard Seddon’s⁸⁴ substantiate the findings of sociologist Arvind Palat whose research has proven,

Xenophobia and outright racism against Asian migrants has, in fact, been a persistent thread in the history of Aotearoa/New Zealand since its constitution as a British colony. Indeed, as early as 1857, even before a single Chinese person had entered the district, an Anti-Chinese Committee to fight the ‘Mongolian Filth’ had been formed in Nelson. Equally telling, as late as 1992, there was only one mention of Asia in the index to the second edition of the *Oxford History of New Zealand*, and that mention directed readers to ‘See Immigration; Xenophobia.’ (35)

In contrast to these racist and xenophobic attitudes toward Asian migrants in the late nineteenth century, Prime Minister William Ferguson Massey⁸⁵ stated in 1920, “The Māori is a European for our purposes. The Māori is a very good citizen, and has the same rights and privileges as a European, and he is worthy of them” (qtd. in Lee 99). By the 1920s, Māori had begun “to be looked (down) upon as the ‘noble savage,’ and praised for their adaptability to assimilation with Pākehā” (Lee 99). While these attitudes by no means indicated an end to racist treatment of the Māori population, they did allow for a fostering of race theory in New Zealand that placed both Pākehā and Māori considerably higher on the ladder of social hierarchy than Asians. As Manying Ip pointedly states in *Being Māori-Chinese*, “To put it plainly, Māori were regarded as a primitive race under tutelage, ‘noble warriors’ to be protected by the British colonial government as long as they were subservient. But the Chinese were the remnants of an imported labour force, no longer useful, that the colony should be rid of” (2). The manifestation of “Yellow Peril” hysteria was therefore a result of paranoia and racism levied against Asian immigrants by both the Māori and Pākehā populations of early twentieth-century Aotearoa.

⁸⁴ Richard John Seddon (1893-1906) was Premier of New Zealand from 1893-1906.

⁸⁵ William Ferguson Massey (1865-1925) was the Prime Minister of New Zealand from 1912-1925.

In *Recalling Aotearoa: Indigenous Politics of Ethnic Relations in New Zealand*, Augie Fleras and Paul Spoonley recount their own research which shows “Māori have long harboured deep-seated concerns about Asian immigrants. Sir Apirana Ngata⁸⁶ and the Ngata Committee in 1929 drew attention to the perceived moral threat posed by Asian men towards the Māori community at large, and Māori women in particular” (184). At the heart of the Ngata Committee’s concerns was a deeply ingrained cultural aversion to inter-ethnic relationships between Māori and Chinese. In 1938 Ngata went so far as to lament in Parliament that “the indiscriminate intermingling of the lower types of the races – i.e. Māoris, Chinese and Hindus – will cause deterioration not only of the family and national life of the Māori race, but also in the national life of this country by the introduction of a hybrid race” (qtd. in Ip 4).

Ngata’s concerns were echoed throughout the first half of the twentieth century by many politicians and high ranking community figures of both Māori and Pākehā descent who felt that Māori-Chinese children were an affront to the purity of Māori bloodlines. These fears began manifesting as early as 1907 when the *New Zealand Free Lance* reported, “There is a universal feeling in New Zealand that the Chinaman must go...if the Chinaman remains in our country we shall have the infusion of blood between our people and the yellow man, and the further knowledge that wherever that occurs it spells degradation” (“The Dissatisfied Orient” 7). By 1938, early fears gave way to full-fledged paranoia when G.T. Parvin, the secretary of the White New Zealand League, emphatically wrote in the *NZ Truth*, “the Asiatic terror is very real...gradually the Māori race is being mongrelized by their association with Chinese” (“Revelations” 12).

This fear of “mongrelization” was equally terrifying to many Chinese. According to Manying Ip, “The opposition to cross-cultural union was much stronger from the Chinese side [than the Māori]. Fathers would cajole and threaten; mothers would cry and

⁸⁶ Sir Apirana Ngata (1874-1950) was a prominent New Zealand lawyer and politician known for his work in protecting Māori language, culture, and land.

plead, while relatives and friends gossiped and sniggered” (8). She says, “To many Chinese, being mixed blood is just not as good. As Mui Yin puts it, ‘We Chinese are really racist. We call ourselves *ren* [people/humans]. But all others are *gui* [foreign/ghosts]. Mixed-blood people we call them *zazhong* [half-caste bastards]’” (Ip 15-16).

Echoing these fears expressed by Pākehā and Chinese New Zealanders, Lee’s research on the history of Māori/Chinese relations presents a record of a “prominent Māori elder” stating, “The Chinese are all right to have around the district as long as they don’t get married to the Māori. It’s not right to have Māori children around the place who are half Chinese....All this mixing is not right because it is spoiling the Māori blood” (105). This growing panic was widely supported by the popular media in headlines such as the one found in the May 4, 1938 issue of *NZ Truth* which read, “Revelations about Social Menace Māori-Chinese children – over 30 born in Auckland last year” (“Revelations” 12).

According to Fleras and Spoonley, of equal concern to the fear of spoiling the Māori blood was “the fear that Asian immigrants would adversely affect Māori labour market participation” (184). This fear is ultimately what led to decades of paranoid anti-Asian political policies that called for “the imposition of the poll tax of £10 in 1881 (later raised to £100 in 1899) on new arrivals from China, the introduction of English proficiency tests for admission in 1899, and the denial of the right to become naturalized citizens in 1908” (Palat 39). These laws, put in place to ensure “that the Chinese in New Zealand would remain a transient population” (Palat 39), resulted in a “systemic and long-term institutionalised racism” aimed at the Chinese people (Murphy 2).

The “Yellow Peril” fears of the nineteenth and early half of the twentieth centuries “resurfaced in the mid-1990s by way of media-hyped moral panics over a pending Asian ‘invasion,’ together with a host of demeaning stereotypes about triads, wealth, driving habits, educational success, and dietary preferences” (Fleras and Spoonley 157). Although Fleras and Spoonley claim that in the years leading up to the turn of the twenty-first

century “blatant forms of racism have given way to more polite styles that tend to be oblique or coded in disguised terms” (157), in 2002 Hon. Winston Peters, the leader of the nationalist New Zealand First Party and New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2005-2008, gave a speech warning the citizens of Aotearoa/New Zealand about the peril of “Asianisation by stealth” (Peters). In the course of his 2002 campaign, Peters went on to blame the “flood of immigrants” for “fundamentally changing the character of our country in a totally ad hoc way” (Barber), and asked his constituents, “Who asked you whether you wanted to Asianise New Zealand?” (Peters). It is this contemporary new-wave of “polite” racism that the fictional Emma Taupere is born into and raised in.

Emma Taupere: Navigating Identity

With a Chinese-immigrant mother and a Māori father, Emma Taupere is subject to all of the racism one would expect given the history of Māori-Chinese race relations outlined above. She learns at a young age “that her mother’s name and her mother’s voice were foreign, and that her mother’s presence made the family odd in some way” (284). She is also made keenly aware that “her mother’s family in China didn’t consider her a real beauty: her skin was too brown and her lips too full” (16). These realizations culminate in an adult Emma ultimately believing “that both sides of the family thought her a mongrel” (16), a derogatory classification that harkens back to those early twentieth-century headlines about the Māori-Chinese children born in Auckland.

Despite the concern from her Chinese relations that she is too “brown,” Emma is even more marginalized by those who associate her with the Asian side of her genetic heritage. From the start the novel sets up racial binaries, placing Emma’s “Asian-ness” on one side of the continuum and nearly everyone else in New Zealand on the other. This tension plays out in a number of ways: in the actions of a Pākehā character who definitively declares to a room full of people that “the Chinese aren’t like us” (147), in Emma’s Māori aunt choosing to call her “that little Chinese girl” (150) instead of her

niece, and in Siaki, her Samoan ex-boyfriend, refusing to introduce her to his parents because they were “old-fashioned and judgmental” (252), a euphemism for “old-fashioned and too racist” to accept a Māori-Chinese girlfriend into their family fold.

Exceptions to these unwritten racist rules come when Emma’s boyfriends and admirers are attracted to her “foreign” look. Siaki says, “People stared at her – he’d stared at her, he couldn’t help it” (145). He recalls being immediately taken in by her “small heart of a face, her fan-shaped eyes, her high cheekbones” and by the “bold design” of her unusual facial features (145). These sentiments are echoed by another man during Emma’s first term at university who “told her she was exotic, and was disappointed to find she’d been born and brought up in Auckland; she soon discovered that she lacked the sufficiently alien costumes or religious beliefs required to feed his fantasy” (213). Even Luke, Emma’s quasi-romantic love interest in the novel, engages in fantasies about Emma’s exoticism before the two have sex for the first time. Early descriptions of Luke characterize him as imagining Emma naked, on his bed, “her flawless, coffee-coloured skin a dark tattoo on the clean white sheets...[her] aureoles a velvety black” (176). In these fantasies, “she’d stir in her sleep and roll to one side...each pose as simple and artful and enigmatic as a Chinese character” (176).

Towards the end of the novel Morris pointedly juxtaposes these unrealised fantasies of the eroticized Māori-Chinese Emma with the very real, concrete “dusky maiden”⁸⁷ images prevalent on the walls of Luke’s uncle’s bach⁸⁸ in Waiwera. These velvet images are Emma’s only company while she is staying in the bach, and she is both horrified and drawn to the pictures of the “topless girls, their pointed breasts shaped like stunted bananas, each in a brilliant bikini bottom or skimpy sarong. The girl in the picture

⁸⁷ According to Lisa Taouma, the term “dusky maiden” was “coined in the very kitsch era of the 1950s when it was popular to do prints and velvet paintings of naked breasted Polynesian women” (36).

⁸⁸ In Aotearoa/New Zealand a “bach” is a small holiday home and is pronounced “batch.”

closest to the door waded in a pool, a pink hibiscus tucked into her blonde beehive hairdo” (287). Emma despises the two-dimensionality of these female depictions, but is at the same time fascinated by the (false) paradise the stylized images promise.

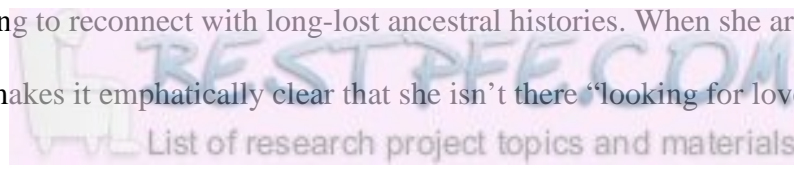
According to Lisa Taouma, the image of the dusky maiden, “more than any other image of the Pacific, has lasted the test of time in the popular media. A painting from the earliest travels to Polynesia can be held up next to a nineteenth-century photograph and a contemporary tourist postcard and the image of the ‘dusky maiden’ remains the same, unchanged over time, dress, and pose, with brown eyes that beckon” (36). The images in the aging gallery of the old bach uphold this long standing fascination with the dusky maiden stereotype, but, Emma thinks, “the black velvet girls were a little weird, each posing in a different but equally provocative way, like a chorus line at a cabaret or some kind of slutty island beauty contest” (297). She later muses, after spending hours with the images, “It mustn’t be a bad life, splashing around in a pool at the base of a stylized waterfall, wearing the skimpiest of bikini bottoms and some fresh floral decoration. The girls were smiling but distant, preoccupied with their pose. It was so much easier to be looked at than to be the one doing the looking. Perhaps, Emma thought, she should have become a K-girl after all” (301).

Emma’s off-hand comment suggests something disturbing in the context of the politicized racial memory discussed here. In Shanghai Emma is often taken for a “K-girl,” which is, according to Morris, a young, brassy, hustling, hard-edged Shanghai girl “lobbying to become a *jinsiniao*, a kept woman” (217) by an older white foreign man. While K-girls do their own hustling (instead of their mothers doing it for them), Morris’s descriptions of K-girls nonetheless harken back in a disturbing way to her descriptions of quadroon mistresses in *Queen of Beauty*. In both cases, readers are presented with an unsettling imbalance of power that leaves non-Caucasian women dependent on rich, Caucasian men for upward social mobility.

All of this backgrounding gives historic and cultural weight to the scene in which Emma, while living in Shanghai, meets a rich, powerful, older New Zealander who leaves his wife and children behind while he lives and works in China for large portions of the year. When Emma becomes his Shanghai mistress, she “thought of her relationship with Greg as one of equals: they were two New Zealanders drawn together in a foreign place” (216). As she sits in a fancy restaurant one night, however, she realizes that “at Lan Na Thai or any of the restaurants she and Greg went to together, most of them too expensive for all but a few Shanghainese, she was just another Chinese girl with an older, richer, ex-pat lover” (217). This sudden out-of-body, self-sighting experience in the restaurant upsets Emma, making her wonder if Greg views her as “the kind of trophy so many of his colleagues acquired in Shanghai: a cute local girlfriend who was sexy, willing and easily bought” (217). Emma’s new self-awareness becomes all the more poignant when read in light of her later sad reflection that “it was so much easier to be looked at than to be the one doing the looking” (301).

Emma’s confession that she finds it alluring to be a static object watched and examined instead of an active watcher seeking and interpreting, both complements and contradicts the development of her constantly vacillating character. Her willingness to play the role of desirable object is perhaps the clearest indicator that Emma is a character not at home in herself, and therefore not at home in any of the locations we find her in during the course of the narrative. She consciously rejects the ready-made racial identities of the “dusky maiden” and the “K-girl,” and then spends the rest of the novel attempting to negotiate an identity for herself that goes beyond copying – both personally (in terms of self-identity) and professionally (in terms of her job as a painter).

Early in the novel Emma openly scorns people who embark on quests for self-identity by trying to reconnect with long-lost ancestral histories. When she arrives in Shanghai she makes it emphatically clear that she isn’t there “looking for love or romance,



and she wasn't there in search of her mother's history. She certainly didn't go there to ruminate over what it meant to be an Asian and a New Zealander at the same time. She'd always scoffed at these kinds of quests, rolling her eyes at the New Zealanders she met in London off to track down ancestral homes" (127). Nonetheless, Emma cannot help herself from spending a great deal of time in Shanghai ruminating over just what it means to be "an Asian and a New Zealander at the same time" (127). In her early days in the city she finds herself constantly listening for New Zealand accents in cafes and bars, looking for people she can connect to from "the home team" (158). She eventually gives up this quest, disillusioned because "there was a kind of conspiracy among ex-pats, a brotherhood of exhilaration and impatience with the city, but [she] always felt outside it" (136). It upsets Emma that other New Zealand ex-pats in Shanghai never recognized "she belonged on their side – the side that would always be resolutely outside – unless she opened her mouth. Nobody expected her to be a New Zealander because New Zealanders looked European, or they looked Māori, or they looked Polynesian; New Zealanders didn't look Chinese" (136).

Unable to connect with other New Zealanders except as Greg's "mingfen...a woman going out with a married man, and therefore a third person with no official status" (239), Emma is surprised to find herself making attempts to reconnect with memories of her long-dead mother, Ling. The most meaningful part of this connection comes from making contact with her Chinese relatives. As a child, "she'd never thought of her mother having uncles or cousins or family of any kind: all the family she knew belonged to her father" (122). Becoming acquainted with these "new" relations opened a window onto her mother's world, a world that Emma grew up feeling shut out of. After Ling's death from cancer when Emma was only ten, the girl's

Māori aunts swept through the house, sorting and sniffing...and then the small pieces of their life that were Chinese – the rice cooker in the bottom of the pantry; the red-

bean porridge waiting when Emma arrived home from school
on winter afternoons; bleached chopsticks in the cutlery
drawer; thin-skinned books of impenetrable architectural
letters piled on the lower shelf of her mother's bedside table
– disappeared. (119).

Having lost her mother over twenty years earlier, both literally and figuratively, Emma is surprised to find herself “during her last six months in Shanghai...remembering more of her mother” (121). She says, “In Shanghai they circled each other, the mother she remembered and the mother who grew up here, the girl her mother raised, the young woman Emma had become” (122).

In trying to come to terms with the “young woman she had become,” Emma's story becomes a fascinating exploration of the ways in which her New Zealand Māori-Chinese heritage, long-standing ex-pat lifestyle, and role as a painter capable of elaborate copies intersect. Throughout the novel, Emma's relationship to these four identities (Māori/ Chinese/ex-pat/painter) leaves her feeling trapped by the demands she believes they levy on her. Her identity crisis also leaves her feeling isolated from people living in the world around her, and she is therefore defined repeatedly as being “alone,” “isolated,” and “in retreat.” She admits that she has never had very many close friends, and her cousin Ani describes her as “cold and imperious” (150). Even when she tries to communicate with Luke, “their conversations remained brutal and stammering, as though they were adolescents with nothing sensible to say” (149). This isolated and aloof characterization is emphasized by descriptions likening Emma to a cat; she “curls into the bend in the sofa” (58), “paws at her eyes” (38), and shuns physical contact, “ducking away” to avoid her ex-boyfriend Siaki's touch (181).

Motifs of isolation and entrapment are imbued throughout the text and Emma feels confined even in the midst of large cities like Auckland and Shanghai. She is perpetually depicted in the confines of her cramped studio in Shanghai, in the circumscribed existence she lives while residing in an Auckland Princess Wharf apartment, in her visit to Luke's

dark and claustrophobic house in Kumeu, and in her hideout in the tiny, ramshackle bach in Waiwera. These movements from one confined physical space to another reflect Emma's tightly controlled emotional and psychological world, and for much of the story she seems content to remain isolated in this "cell-like serenity" (135).

By the end of the novel, however, Emma begins to actively resist the attempts of other characters to portray her as cold and withdrawn. She recognizes that the key to her own personal version of cultural survivance entails taking control of the way others define her. As she moves through Auckland, Shanghai, and Waiwera, she becomes increasingly self-confident about her ability to define and claim her own cultural identity. Finally she recognizes that the thing she "longed for the most was a real Auckland life, one in which she made friends, went places, did things" (317). She begins to imagine new possibilities for herself – alternative futures - and this opens up in the novel the possibility of debate between the concepts of foreshadowing and what theorist Gary Saul Morson calls "sideshadowing" (48).

At first the foreshadowing in the novel reiterates the atmosphere of confinement and entrapment that Morris says she purposefully evokes in the novel. According to Morson, foreshadowing is in and of itself a confining concept – the very term "indicates a backward causality," it draws our attention to the fact that in a novel "the future is already there" (Morson 48-49). In *Hibiscus Coast*, foreshadowing operates in this way – it "directs our attention not to the experience of the character but to the design of the author, whose structure is entirely responsible for foreshadowing" (Morson 50). Morris emphatically states, "I am a firm believer that everything in a book is a conscious choice made by me...I don't belong to the romantic school of thought that 'voices come into my head and flow through me onto the page.' No – everything is my choice" (Pistacchi "Conversation"). The reader therefore finds her consciously embedding pointed foreshadowing in the descriptions of Emma's dreams:

She'd been dreaming again, for the second night in a row, of the Gauguin painting. In yesterday's dream, the door of the back room swung open over and over. Sometimes it revealed the painting hanging on the wall, but other times the wall was bare, and Siaki was on his knees in the wardrobe rifling through cardboard boxes of rubbish – old Christmas decorations and chewed toys – shouting at her to help look for the missing painting. (63)

This scene is replayed later in the novel when the Gauguin is stolen and Siaki rifles through the paper and boxes in the studio fruitlessly searching for the missing paintings. The foreshadowing points to a path of sure self-destruction for Emma and Siaki if they continue down their current narrative path.

Morris's authorial foreshadowing is overwritten, however, by her more prominent use of "sideshadowing." According to Morson, "In sideshadowing, two or more alternative presents, the actual and the possible, are made simultaneously visible. This is a simultaneity not in time but of times: we do not see contradictory actualities, but one possibility that was actualized and, at the same moment, another that could have been but was not. In this way, time itself acquires a double and often many doubles. A haze of possibilities surrounds each actuality" (118). The possibility of sideshadowing is emphasized in *Hibiscus Coast* by Emma's dream about a dissolving life/painting – a dream that seems to trump the foreshadowing dream about the stolen paintings both in terms of imagery and depth of description. In this dream,

Emma saw herself at a great distance, galloping on a horse across the sandy folds of a beach. She was hurrying to arrive somewhere before the rain began. But the clouds above her head formed into a garish cartoon of the painting, the girl's face and hair fragmenting and re-forming into vast swathes of Technicolor sky; the rain threatened to form drips of paint, about to splash Emma and turn her – and the horse, the beach, the sea – into blotches and splatters and rivulets, a lacy tangle of excess colour like the dirty floor beneath an easel. (63)

In a novel about aesthetics, heavily laden with questions about the nature and importance of art, Emma's dream takes on special significance. If Emma can be dissolved,

she can be repainted. Her future is not immutable. The concept of sideshadowing, of looking at alternate possibilities, allows for a juxtaposition between Emma’s past actions and current life, and her multivariate futures. It also emphasizes the rippling, spiralling effect that Emma’s actions will have on the world around her. This is most clearly illuminated in the philosophic doctrine iterated in the Chinese proverb Morris prefaces the book with: “*Tao li man tian xia* – The fruits of one’s teaching cover the earth.”⁸⁹ Morris sums up the vast possibility enveloped in this proverb, and in Emma’s character, through an examination of Emma’s relationship with her teacher, Yi, who taught her how to paint perfect copies while she was in Shanghai:

Yi’s tremendous ability as a painter has brought out Emma’s gift and created this person who is a monster, in a way. She has tremendous talent, and now a tremendous technique, and as we all know when you have tremendous talent and tremendous technique you can become a great artist or someone who uses it for terrible purposes. Or, of course, you can be someone who just throws it all away and does nothing at all. The proverb refers to this idea – how one person can somehow have this enormous effect. He’s sort of like the invisible mastermind behind the book. It is in thinking over how he would react to what she is doing that finally persuades Emma to change her course. (Pistacchi “Conversation”)

Emma can choose not to be a monster. The fact that Morris gifts her with a range of life-choices (she can continue to copy, she can be a great artist, she can identify as Māori, Chinese, or Māori-Chinese – or she can be someone who does nothing at all and refuses all identity labels) emphasizes how every choice a character makes, every choice an author makes, “is strategic, in the sense that every utterance has an epistemological agenda, a way of seeing the world that is favored via that choice and not others” (Johnstone 45). Morris’s choice to preface her novel with these teachings and to focus the novel on a

⁸⁹ “*Tao li man tian xia* – The fruits of one’s teaching cover the earth (Chinese proverb)” is the *Hibiscus Coast* epigraph quote and translation provided by Morris. While I work with Morris’s translation in this thesis, I recognize that the more conventional translation refers to the idea that teachers “should be rewarded by their students’ achievement who are the ‘fruits of their labour’ – *tao li man tian xia* – students are teachers’ peaches and plums growing all over the world” (Hui 27).

character imbued with a rich multicultural racial background demonstrates an epistemological agenda that envisions a world beyond the postcolonial binaries which have hitherto dominated discussions of racial politics in the established literary canon of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The plural possibilities of Emma's responses and the possibility of multiple-endings to the novel also mirror the possibility of multiple futures for the people of Aotearoa/New Zealand – especially people of Māori-Chinese descent. As Chinese poet, fiction writer and activist Tze Ming Mok said in her award winning article "Race You There," "The day will come when I won't be a minority in this country. No one will be. This will be a shock to some people, to find that something can rise from the ashes of majorities and minorities. They're called pluralities" (18). By filling the gaps in the literary social history of Aotearoa/New Zealand with characters not representative of one race, but who are drawn from the rich blend of this country's politicized social history, Morris invites us to look into the sideshadows for the plurality of stories still left to be lived and shared. "A politicized memory," Jenny Bol Jun Lee writes in *Eating Pork Bones and Puha with Chopsticks*, "guards against popular notions that seek to homogenize ethnic minority groups and position us in static binary oppositions" (110). *Hibiscus Coast* offers to its readers, and to the still emerging New Zealand literary canon, a new piece of politicized memory – a piece that recognizes mixed blood Māori community members as critical components of this country's social history and its future.

Story-Blood and the Politics of Cultural Appropriation in *Hibiscus Coast*, *Queen of Beauty*, and "Rangitira"

It is constructive at this point in a reading of Morris's texts to return to the author's self-stated fascination with examining how her mixed-blood characters respond to various situations "depending on which heritage [they] choose to prioritize at the time" (Pistacchi "Conversation"). This is particularly interesting given how her characters respond to acts

of cultural appropriation in the various novels and short stories, a topic Morris is preoccupied with almost as much as she is with identity politics.

Few topics are more hotly debated within the field of postcolonial studies than those surrounding the globalized fight by indigenous peoples to assert their rights over cultural and intellectual property. For authors such as Morris, and theorists such as Vizenor, this fight is particularly important when it comes to the protection of indigenous stories. Vizenor has emphatically stated, “You can’t understand the world without telling a story. There isn’t any centre to the world but story” (qtd. in Coltelli 156), and he therefore believes that survivance comes primarily “through the vehicles of story” (Blaeser 63). For this reason it is critical for the cultural survivance of any people that they are able to protect and control the distribution of their native stories.

Because the issue of indigenous story appropriation is such an important contemporary topic, it comes as no surprise that an author as well versed in political and literary theory as Morris spends an extraordinary amount of her fictional subtext exploring these topical minefields. The remainder of this chapter therefore focuses on uncovering the ways in which Morris’s multi-racial fictional characters identify and challenge, and at the same time are often complicit with, instances of cultural and intellectual property appropriation. The chapter concludes with a discussion of why so many of Morris’s characters, nearly all of whom reside in shifting nepantla spaces, seem deeply torn between viewing appropriative acts as necessary to ensuring cultural survivance and viewing them as the ultimate threat to it.

The Latin word *appropriare*, “to make one’s own,” lies at the root of our contemporary use of the word “appropriation.” In a narrow sense, the term can be defined as “the direct duplication, copying or incorporation” of an artefact, image or story by another artist or author “who represents it in a different context, thus completely altering its meaning and questioning notions of originality and authenticity” (Stangos qtd. in

Schneider *Appropriation as Practice* 21). Cultural appropriation, according to Jonathan Hart, goes one step further and occurs “when a member of one culture takes a cultural practice or theory of a member of another culture as if it were his or her own right or as if the right of possession should not be questioned or contested” (138). While Schneider and Hart offer useful working definitions for examining instances of Pākehā appropriation of Māori culture in Morris’s fictional texts, the term “appropriation,” no matter how precisely defined, simmers with ambiguity. Instances of cultural appropriation can be “figurative or literal” (Hart 138), “tangible or intangible” (Schneider “On Appropriation” 217), and they are often difficult to pinpoint and classify. Paula Morris highlights this uncertainty about the term, and the act itself, when she declares, “Appropriation is a hard topic on which to have a firm opinion” (Pistacchi “Online Interview”).

It is perhaps because it is such a “hard topic” that Morris keeps mulling the issue over, utilizing acts of cultural appropriation as the catalysing incidents in nearly all of her major plots.⁹⁰ These acts range, in Morris’s various novels and short stories, from instances of oral-story appropriation to full-blown accounts of land “theft” and art forgery. At a superficial level, many of these appropriative acts appear easy to identify because they cross clear legal copyright boundaries. According to Bruce Ziff and Pratima Rao, the editors of *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation*, “At the most mundane level, the breach of an author’s copyright or the theft of an artist’s canvas [can be identified as] an appropriative act. Here we seem to be able to define the relevant actors with ease” (3). It is this kind of “straightforward” appropriative act that seems, at first glance, to be the type of appropriation we find in *Hibiscus Coast*.

⁹⁰ Appropriative acts are so foundational to Morris’s texts that the entire prologue of *Queen of Beauty* centres on Margaret’s act of “stealing” Virginia’s stories, Chapter 1 of *Hibiscus Coast* contains a detailed and scathing account of the way in which paintings of Māori elders and cultural artefacts from the Pacific are traded by wealthy overseas collectors who have a nose for “the exotic and arcane,” but no sense of respect for what they are collecting (*Hibiscus Coast* 15), and the short story “Rangatira” opens with the lines, “The girl wants to know everything. She follows me around, a notebook poking from the pocket of her skirt” (“Rangatira” 91) in order to record her elders’ stories for a Pākehā historian’s use.

In *Hibiscus Coast* Emma willingly embarks on a mission to create elaborate forgeries of Pākehā painter Charles Frederick Goldie's⁹¹ paintings for illegal sale in New Zealand and abroad. Here, the legislative boundaries of the case are evident – it is clearly illegal to paint and sell artistic forgeries as originals. Theorists such as Ziff and Rao, however, ultimately challenge the simplicity of even this “straightforward” and “mundane” case by saying that an ethical (rather than a legal) reading of the situation is complicated by “the fact that we would be making a statement about the rights of individuals based on views about authorship or creation that give credit to a given person. In other words, our definition of the actors...is value-laden and is therefore contentious” (3). In the case of Emma's appropriative act in *Hibiscus Coast*, the “value-laden” and “contentious” nature of this seemingly clear-cut act of forgery becomes part of a conversation about postcolonial politics. In *Hibiscus Coast*, Emma is a woman of Māori-Chinese heritage copying a Pākehā man's artistic representations of Māori elders. It is culturally significant that it is Goldie's paintings that she is copying because,

Although Goldie may have set out to record for posterity the last survivors of what was then believed by many to be a doomed race, he also saw in the Māori, in their poignant situation at the turn of the century and in their perceived “exoticism” in the eyes of Europeans, a rich source of material for pictorial story telling. His portraits promote a fixed and narrow perception of Māori as the “noble relics of a noble race,” and some critics have condemned his work as perpetuating a “comforting fiction” from a patronizing European perspective. (“The Much Debated Portraiture of C.F. Goldie”)

Most contemporary critics agree there is something disturbing about the way Goldie “appropriated” cultural wealth by creating Westernised images of Māori for commodification. It is this wide-spread discomfiture surrounding Goldie's appropriating acts that lead to a sense throughout *Hibiscus Coast's* narrative that Emma Taupere is not

⁹¹ The Pākehā painter Charles Frederick Goldie (1870-1947) is best known for his meticulously realistic portraits of Māori. There have been numerous well-publicized attempts to forge his work.

so much “stealing” Goldie’s paintings as she is “taking back” the images of Māori ancestors. This idea is reinforced by Emma’s art school lecturer, Dr. Smelling, who emphatically tells his students that Goldie’s paintings need to be “reclaimed and reinterpreted by subsequent generations” if they are to maintain “cultural value” (93).

Emma clearly takes this part of Smelling’s lecture to heart. For her, it is important that the man whose image she is copying is a Māori ancestor and that his name, Patara Te Tuhi, is remembered by everyone who encounters his portrait. She believes copying his image is unproblematic because he “would have appreciated the homage” (147), and says she has no interest in the money she is offered for completing the forgery (180). Her only concern in the entire process of creating the copy of Patara Te Tuhi’s portrait is a nagging fear that his image might be taken overseas and put in a private gallery where it could not be “reclaimed” by the viewing of his descendents (147). It can therefore be argued that Emma’s act of forgery is not equivalent to that of Pākehā forger Karl Sim who painted and sold dozens (and possibly hundreds) of copies of Goldie’s paintings in the mid twentieth-century purely for profit.⁹² Emma copies Goldie’s paintings because copying is her art, and because she enjoys spending time with Patara Te Tuhi’s image.

The justification for offering different ethical assessments of Emma and Karl Sim’s appropriative acts is based on the belief that to adopt a symmetrical approach in the treatment of these two cases would assume away, or at least downplay, an important part of the cultural appropriation debate. When a European/colonial writer or artist appropriates images of an indigenous/colonized people an event has occurred, as Ziff and Rao claim, “that teaches us about power relationships” (5). Morris examines such power relationships even more extensively in her exploration of cultural appropriation in *Queen of Beauty*.

⁹² On the bookjacket of his autobiography *Good as Goldie* (Hodder Moa Beckett, 2003), Karl F. Sim refers to himself as “New Zealand’s most famous art forger.”

As a historical “researcher” for the fictional author/character Margaret Dean O’Clare, it is Virginia’s job to be a “hunter and gatherer” who passes on “dates, maps, photographs” (19), and increasingly stories from her own family history, for Margaret to digest into her best-selling narratives. Unlike the seemingly “clear-cut” nature of the appropriation taking place in *Hibiscus Coast*, the appropriation underlying the *Queen of Beauty* narrative manifests itself in a much more subtle manner. Prior to Virginia’s entrance into her employ, Margaret’s “imagination [was] strip-mined, her books repeating like a heavy lunch” (20). Because she is a cunning business woman who is, in Virginia’s words, “not stupid” (20), Margaret knows she needs to find a way to garner new “sound bites” to give her future novels shelf-life (20). She therefore informs Virginia that “everything [is] fodder” and that “she [is] to be on the lookout at all times for stories to steal” (69). This carte-blanche directive, however, carries “rules, largely unspoken” (21) about the stories she is to steal. “Margaret,” Morris says, “wants stories without strings” (Pistacchi “Online Interview”). Margaret therefore makes it unmistakably clear to Virginia that “the stories must be public domain, falling freely and without consequences from Virginia’s family history or those of her friends” and that the “stories were to be offered up as raw ingredients...Margaret would then mix them with chef-like precision, as needed, into her trademark roux” (21).

Margaret’s cavalier equating of the “public domain” (21) with Virginia’s family stories is troubling. “Public domain” commonly denotes “property rights that belong to the community at large, are unprotected by copyright or patent, and are subject to appropriation by anyone” (*Merriam-Webster OnlineDictionary*). In a narrative context, this boils down to using stories that are not copyright protected. When Margaret discusses using Virginia’s stories “without consequence” (21), she means without *legal* consequence. At no point in her discussion with Virginia does she take into account the very real emotional consequences this story appropriation has on her employee, or on the

people whose stories are being used as fodder for Margaret’s “roux.” Over the course of the novel Virginia feels increasingly guilty, anxious, and ashamed about turning her family stories over to Margaret. In his book *Mana Tuturu: Māori Treasures & Intellectual Property Rights*, Barry Barclay describes these kinds of emotional consequences for Māori as “no simple pain,” saying, “It is a profound sorrow, a profound hurt, and it has to do with much more than any particular injury that can be tagged in black and white as a breach of copyright or an inadvertent moment of cultural insensitivity” (149).

Virginia’s role in terms of the story appropriation debate in *Queen of Beauty* is therefore personally and culturally (if not legally) complex. According to indigenous rights legal expert Lenora Ledwon,

The Copyright Act defines “work made for hire” in one of two ways - either as (1) a work prepared by an employee within the scope of his or her employment, or (2) a work specifically ordered or commissioned for use... Typically, under work for hire arrangements the writer receives a flat fee but does not share in the copyright or royalties. The writer in this case is considered to be an employee or an independent contractor. (582)

Margaret’s “unspoken rules” therefore revolve around points of law, and aim to make the hire-agreement explicit and undeniable: Virginia is Margaret’s employee, and she is paid to deliver stories.

It is significant that the descriptions of Margaret and Virginia’s employer/employee relationship take on a political and emotional charge absent in other sections of the novel. While Morris’s descriptions make it emphatically clear that Virginia’s “contractor” work falls well within the legal boundaries of the copyright law outlined above, “a legal positivist would be committed to the position that laws and morals are distinct. The moral content of ‘theft’ is not exhausted by its legal definition, and one cannot dismiss the moral claim of theft as wrongful by appealing to the legal definition” (Coleman 21). Margaret’s acts of story appropriation in *Queen of Beauty*, while lawful, are

therefore described by the narrator in such a continually pernicious manner that it ultimately becomes impossible to exonerate her, in ethical terms, for the “theft” of Virginia’s stories simply because she has paid for her right to take and use them.

This ethical discomfiture is largely grounded in the way the narrator describes Margaret’s “legal” appropriative actions. In each instance of appropriation, after paying the young New Zealander to recite her family stories, Margaret “mixes” them up, retaining all of the key plot structures, emotional capstones, narrative climaxes and resulting denouements, but rejecting the key Aotearoa/New Zealand and specifically Māori cultural aspects of the tales. According to Ledwon, this is often the fundamental problem with the appropriation of native life-stories by non-native authors. Referencing the works of Emmanuel Levinas, she says, “the great failure of Western thinking is to forget and negate the Other, to want to possess the Other so that it becomes the same as ‘me.’ Western philosophy is ‘allergic’ to the Other that remains Other, and constantly works to transmute the Other into the same... That kind of writing turns the Other into a theme, destroys Otherness, and cancels the Other’s autonomy” (587).

This is essentially what happens when Margaret listens to Virginia’s stories and then informs her she will use her employee’s family legends as “springboards” that she will “subvert” (13) into best-selling American novels. She lets Virginia know in no uncertain terms that she has no use for the “names,” “the date” or what she calls “the local colour” (11). With a few strokes of her pen Margaret appropriates Virginia’s family taonga – their stories – and then erases the family from the published (and therefore public) recounting of their history. They have, as a people, been erased from the printed record. “This is how a people vanish by stealth,” Barry Barclay writes. “We become closed out of our own history because the words and the gestures and the places and the songs are made hollow through thoughtless or over-earnest or malicious appropriation” (166).

In the context of postmodern literary creations it might easily be argued that there is nothing necessarily thoughtless or malicious in Margaret's acts of appropriation. As Elizabeth Burns Coleman writes, "appropriation and reinterpretation are common, if not fundamental to Western art practice. An artist like Picasso, for example, not only regularly repainted other people's paintings, but once suggested that the only paintings one shouldn't copy were one's own" (7). Nonetheless, while it is certainly true that "appropriation and copying are well-established practices throughout the history of art" (Schneider "On Appropriation" 217), there is still something decidedly unsettling about how Margaret's use of Virginia's stories is represented. As Coleman writes, "taking in the sense of 'stealing an idea' does not deny the person whose idea it was the use of the idea (or story) but it denies them the sole use of that idea, and sometimes the honour... associated with creating it" (17). As a behind-the-scenes researcher, Virginia, and subsequently her family, do not share in the honour of the public telling of their stories. In *Mana Tuturu* Barclay emphasizes the importance of this loss in a Māori context by explaining that if a story "is lost in some way, if it is perverted or squandered, then it may lose its force for the people of the future, and thus the hapu is depleted to that extent.... They would no longer have that story in their own tribal storehouse for use when it was especially appropriate, because now it was everybody's" (169).

In *Queen of Beauty* this sense of loss is accentuated by Margaret's overwhelming sense of entitlement to take Virginia's family stories. When Margaret hires Virginia she is hiring a Māori New Zealander of mixed descent who is an illegal U.S. immigrant – a young woman with no political or social power, no legal recourse should she find the hire-agreement unsatisfactory, and virtually no support network in the United States. Margaret, by comparison, is from an old and well-established white Delta family. She is rich and famous, and seems to know everyone in New Orleans. The power in the relationship lies entirely on her side – both economically and socially. Even when she is eventually

convinced to help Virginia obtain a work-visa that will enable her to remain legally in the United States, she admits she is doing it only to enable Virginia to “stay and work for me, just me” (36). As a result, there is a dangerous sense throughout the “At the Quadroon Ball” section of the novel that Margaret’s attitude towards and relationship with Virginia metaphorically represents a parallel to the topic Virginia is researching for Margaret: the placage agreements between powerful nineteenth-century white Creole plantation owners and their dependent quadroon mistresses.

Virginia’s behind-the-scenes “dependence” on Margaret is emphasized, with a heavy dose of cynicism, by the fairy-tale allusions scattered throughout the text. At one point Morris evokes the story of “Rumpelstiltskin,” with Virginia claiming she “spun stories for a living, though Margaret would describe it in a different way, she supposed, with Margaret as the spinner, turning straw into gold, and Virginia as the farmhand, pitching it onto the wagon [and] hauling it into the barn” (157). At another point Virginia’s stepmother refers to Virginia as “Cinderella” (158), an association that evokes sympathy on the part of Virginia’s eight-year-old half-sister, who is desperately worried that her big sister “didn’t have a boyfriend or a baby or even anywhere to live” (158). These fairy-tale allusions not only draw attention to the fictionality of Virginia’s own story, but also to a long history of tales about characters who start out as exploited back-room workers. With a wink to these Western cultural mythologies (and an acknowledgement that she too is appropriating when leaning on the connotative literary histories implicit in these references),⁹³ Morris chooses to end the novel, if not with a “happily-ever-after” conclusion, at least with the hope for one. Virginia returns to the

⁹³ Morris recognizes, “Writers are always appropriating stories (see W. Shakespeare); filmmakers do this too, re-making films and adapting novels; poets and visual artists do this all the time. You take something that exists and look at it again, or re-invent it, or re-vision it (as Adrienne Rich said)...I’m often under the sway of other writers and books” (Pistacchi “Online Interview”). These references to Western cultural mythologies in *Queen of Beauty* therefore remind us that Morris places herself firmly within – and not judgmentally outside of – the conversation about what is and is not appropriate story appropriation.

United States, resigns from her job with Margaret, and sets off on a cross-country journey with her best friend – a man her friend Kim has dubbed “King Arthur” (160).

Long before the reader reaches this “happy ending,” however, the disturbing images of dependence and co-dependence in the novel are pointedly elaborated by a poignant mix of culinary (and almost cannibalistic) descriptions of Virginia and Margaret’s relationship throughout the novel. Virginia’s job is described as “bread and butter work” (21), a cliché which suggests that the work both provides survival money for Virginia and a narrative meal for Margaret to feast upon. The novelist uses Virginia’s stories to flavour and “flesh out the plots” (168) of her bestsellers, creating texts Morris describes as “roux” (21).

Descriptions of Margaret continue in this culinary vein. She is characterized as “lemony” and “doughy” (73) with “over-floured cheeks that reminded Virginia of a brioche” (20). This culinary trope traces an ongoing food-chain of story appropriation and consumption throughout the novel. Margaret gets her “bread and butter” from Virginia – the digestion of which makes her dough-like. She in turn churns out “roux” for her readers – texts described by critics as “Gumbo Lite” (20) – that are “consumed” by mainstream American reading audiences.

This theme is complicated by Morris’s recurring description of Virginia’s “bread and butter work” in pointedly archaeological terms. Readers are continually reminded that it is her job to “unearth” (19), “uncover” (20), and “exhume” (41) stories. This archaeological vocabulary is purposefully discomfiting, connoting issues of biopiracy when viewed in an indigenous-rights context. These roundabout references to bioprospecting are especially poignant in Aotearoa/New Zealand where, according to University of Auckland environmental scientist Kirsty Hall, “Bio-prospecting – and

arguably ‘biopiracy’ – is already occurring” (qtd. in Napp 2).⁹⁴ Hall’s research has shown that “foreign and New Zealand companies have used Māori traditional knowledge without consultation...and with no benefits to New Zealanders” (Napp 2), a real-world situation underscoring the topicality of Morris’s fictional text. All of this is particularly troubling in a Māori context, one in which the disturbing of bodies, bones and blood takes on a deeply rooted cultural significance because such acts break “sacred tapus and breach Māori cultural sensitivity” (Pahl 144). This factor is resolutely foregrounded in *Queen of Beauty* when Virginia’s great-uncle Gus tells the young ones who have found a piece of a human skull in an old burial ground, “Human bones should stay where they lay...Leave the poor bugger to rest in peace” (113). Uncle Gus’s request, combined with the narrator’s numerous references to the “unearthing” of buried stories, provide dark and haunting undertones to the scene in which Virginia tells her friend Arthur, “Miss Margaret is stuck. She needs fresh blood. Story-blood, not history blood” (43).

In *Queen of Beauty* it is clear that Morris’s version of “story-blood” belongs to a particular person or to particular people, while “history blood” belongs to the public. Margaret’s vampiric request for “story-blood” once again brings to a head the fact that when Virginia’s stories are out, they will be consumed. This notion offers a faint echo of Keeshig-Tobias’s recollection that a tribal elder once cautioned her to be careful when and where she shared family legends because “blackflies, mosquitoes and other creatures like stories” (584). In *Queen of Beauty*, Margaret becomes one of these blackflies or mosquitoes, sucking story-blood from Virginia – a fact which Virginia eventually becomes acutely and uncomfortably aware of.

After years of working for Margaret, an exhausted Virginia eventually comes to realize that she is “just tired of talking and telling. Some days it felt like she’d given everything away” (158). The catalyst for Virginia’s epiphany is the trans-Pacific distance

⁹⁴ Patricia Grace evidences a similar interest in the devastating affects of bio-prospecting in her novel *Baby No-Eyes*.

and perspective she gets on her work while she is away from it. When she finds herself describing her job as Margaret’s “researcher” to her Māori family members during a visit to Auckland, the young historian realizes “there was something about it that made her feel a little ashamed” (230), and she decides by the end of the novel, “I’m not giving her any more...[I] needn’t give Margaret another story, another thought, another idea, another reference” (268). After making this decision Virginia realizes, “What I’ve been doing is running after things and then sort of struggling them to the ground. Then watching Margaret step in for the kill...I need to put it all behind me. I don’t want to be her accomplice any more” (302).

Virginia’s pronouncement that her job as story blood-letter made her an accomplice to some sort of appropriative “crime” highlights the appropriation question posed in the novel. She ultimately decides she will no longer give away their family history to a foreign author. She is fiercely proud of this decision, and is therefore deeply surprised by the reaction of Jim, her Māori father, who says,

I don’t think you’ll be getting any lawsuits [Jim said]... nothing to worry about...For every hundred stories I tell you, there are thousands more. Things I haven’t told you yet, things I may never tell you. Things I’ve forgotten or never knew. Things people hid from me or forgot to mention, or wanted to say but never got around to. You could give – what’s her name? Margaret? You could give her a story a day and still not begin to use them up. (268)

Jim’s nonchalant attitude towards the use (and possible abuse) of the family stories surprises Virginia, as does his attitude that “reminiscing he enjoyed [but] there wasn’t any point to digging up” the past (93). Jim is clearly uncomfortable about the digging up of family skeletons, stories and secrets that the ancestors might not have wanted to pass on to future generations, but at the same time he is also extremely concerned that there might be stories that are meant to be told, but that “people forget to tell...Maybe they [the elders] think there’s nobody to tell, nobody interested enough to listen” (267). It is in this

ambivalent attitude that the appropriation debate in *Queen of Beauty* is finally housed. Virginia's concern about their family stories being "digested" by Margaret is balanced against Jim's belief that some stories, like bones, should remain in the grave, and Virginia's Uncle Tahu's conviction that stories must be told if a people's history is not going to slip into obscurity – even if these histories must occasionally be told and/or published by less-than-ideal story tellers.

This belief of Uncle Tahu's drives him to take Virginia up on her offer to pass on to Margaret any "stories you want broadcast to the world" (168). The story he wants preserved concerns what he considers the "murder" of his grandmother – a death that took place when his Scottish grandfather stumbled home drunk and knocked over a lamp, causing a fire that resulted in the death of his Māori wife. Uncle Tahu says to Virginia, "You can have that story. Take it" (239)... "Get that writer friend of yours to put it in a book" (237). Part of Tahu's motivation for "giving" Virginia this story, and asking her to "put in a book," is to rectify the fact that the truth about this incident, the truth about how his grandmother had died, had been hidden for years. Because the story was about a Māori woman being killed as a result of a Pākehā man's actions, the community kept the details of the story secret for an entire generation. Only late in Uncle Tahu's life did his niece Tiri do some research and find evidence in the coroner's report that made it clear his grandmother had been killed by his grandfather's actions. Tahu does not want the true story to be forgotten again, and believes the best way to ensure its retelling is for Virginia to ensure it gets "put in a book."

Rachel Blau DuPlessis discusses the important role of these kinds of story "retellings" when she says, "To compose a work is to negotiate with these questions: What stories can be told? How can plots be resolved? What is felt to be narratable by both literary and social conventions? Indeed, these are issues very acute to certain feminist critics and women writers, with their senses of the untold story, the other side of a well-

known tale, the elements of women’s existence that have never been revealed” (3).

DuPlessis’s feminist point is equally relevant to cultural survivance theory: indigenous writers and storytellers must make decisions about which parts of the untold story they should share, and which parts they should “keep for the grave.” These are the questions that Virginia (and by extension Morris) continually ask and the boundaries they push against as they attempt to negotiate the complexities of story-appropriation.

Telling Stories From “The Inside”

In her search for the answer to these questions, Virginia expresses an increasingly urgent desire to tell stories from the “insider” or indigenous perspective – a desire frequently echoed in the writings of many Polynesian authors. When interviewing Pacific writers, literary critic Sina Va’ai says she was continually “struck by the persistence of the post-colonial struggle by Pacific writers to represent their realities from ‘the inside’” (210). She writes, “This process of turning the inside out, creatively speaking, leads to a process that brings healing, as the Other is allowed to see the inside view, the emotional terrain of the writer and his or her experiences and to enter imaginatively into the writer’s cultural space and story” (Va’ai 208). This is precisely what does not happen when Virginia hands her stories over to Margaret to be appropriated into clichéd American South “historical” narratives. When Virginia tells her own stories, and when Morris publishes her own fictions, these “insider” tales become a recognizable place where indigenous story tellers can find themselves and their culture within the pages of published/public stories. Telling these stories and producing these texts therefore becomes a literal, tangible act of literary cultural survivance for both character and author.

This is perhaps why Virginia seems obsessively concerned with concepts of story “truth” throughout the novel. As Morris says of her protagonist, “Virginia didn’t have to hand over ‘true’ stories [to Margaret] but she’s a historian, in thrall to the ‘truth’” (Pistacchi “Online Interview”). Her grandmother Mary remembers that even as a child

Virginia would reiterate again and again, “Tell me a story, or rather, tell me *that* story. Tell me *that* story again. She liked hearing the same ones over and over from the same people, with nothing added or forgotten or changed. It was worse than making something up from scratch, Mary thought: the tyranny of the story that’s never allowed to change” (109-110, emphasis added). Virginia’s paranoia about stories being adulterated carries over into a sort of narrative despotism, a position her Māori grandmother is disquieted by and that is echoed in Morris’s reflections on her own writing process. The author, unlike Virginia, is not entirely “in thrall to the “truth” saying, “I feel strongly that writers of fiction must have the freedom to roam imaginatively. A novel is not a sociological report; it does not have to be thorough, fair, balanced, well-researched or fact-checked” (Pistacchi “Online Interview”).

Nonetheless, Morris states she does feel an obligation to “do justice to the emotional truth of a story” (Pistacchi “Online Interview”), something her fictional protagonist seems equally concerned about. Virginia is only able to come to terms with herself as a storyteller when she feels she is “doing them justice,” and when she believes there is some “truth” in the ways in which they are retold. This is why, when she reflects on her years spent working for Margaret, she says, “I haven’t done anything particularly real for a long time” (299). Virginia intuitively feels this begin to change when she is in New Zealand and embarks on a research project to uncover a well-hidden family story about the death of her grandfather’s first wife, Alice. By investigating the cause of Alice’s death, sharing her story with friends and family, and ordering a stone to mark Alice’s long-abandoned grave, Virginia believes she is telling a family story in her own terms that will not be adulterated by Margaret or anyone else. This is her road towards survivance.

The transitional journey from working as Margaret’s researcher to becoming her own family’s historian is also a journey that allows Virginia to make peace with the difficult truth that there are some stories she will never be able to know, and therefore

never be able to tell, in their entirety. This realization, according to Morris, is a huge turning point in Virginia's life journey because she has come to realize she "doesn't own the stories. They're bigger than [her] and Margaret...they exist even when the land is sold and the family is dispersed and Virginia is away in New Orleans" (Pistacchi "Online Interview"). If there is a "moral" to Virginia's not-so fairy-tale-like life, it is that she, and by proxy the readers of her story, have learned, "Stories are slippery; they're too strong and form-changing to be contained by any one person" (Pistacchi "Online Interview").

In many ways *Queen of Beauty* is as much about the stories we do not tell, or cannot tell, as it is about the stories we do tell and that get retold, or re-visioned, or even (mis)appropriated in other people's work. There are many stories in *Queen of Beauty* – June's secret pregnancy (107), John's first wife's death from an illegal abortion (200), and Arthur's secret affair with Carol (47) – that are story-secrets, the full extent of which will never be publicly known. Some are kept secret for cultural reasons, some because they are too tragic for family members to share, and some simply because they are viewed as too scandalous to repeat. Morris's belief that we do not need to know all of these stories is reinforced when Mary tells her granddaughter Virginia the mythical story of Tane and says, "Tane was a god; he knew what he was doing. Maybe he dropped that fourth basket of knowledge, or hid it somewhere. That was it. Tane had hidden it. No need to know everything" (93).⁹⁵ This juxtaposition between the desire to seek stories out and the realization that there is no need to know everything is a theme Morris carries through into her more recent project, "Rangatira."

⁹⁵ According to the version of Māori legend referenced in *Queen of Beauty*, Tane, the god of the forest, journeyed to the heavens and returned to earth with three baskets of knowledge. Virginia's grandmother believes that "There was a fourth basket. One that Tane left behind. One still sitting up there in the faraway twelfth heaven, out of reach for ever" (305).

Doing the Stories Justice

In the final section of *Queen of Beauty*, Jim says to Virginia, “You ask me if I miss it – miss the beach, the old life – and I can say quite truthfully that I don’t. But one thing I do miss is all the stories. I wish I’d paid more attention....I wish I’d taken more in. Because it’s too late now. They’re all gone, all the older generation, and everything they knew and remembered and heard is gone with them” (267). These words from Morris’s first novel haunt the narrative of her current project, “Rangatira.”

First published as a short story in *Landfall* in 2004, and republished in the collections *The Best New Zealand Fiction – Volume 2* (2005), *Get on the Waka* (2007) and Morris’s own short story collection, *Forbidden Cities* (2008), “Rangatira” is the story of the 1895 forced evacuation of indigenous peoples from Hauturu (better known by the Crown name “Little Barrier Island”) in order for the government to use the land as “a reserve for the preservation of native fauna” (Morris “Rangatira” 96). The story is narrated by a century-old rangatira who has lived through countless battles fought on behalf of the Ngati Wai people, has witnessed the arrival of European missionaries and government agents to Aotearoa, and has represented Māori people on a nineteenth-century journey to England to meet the Queen.

The appropriation issues in “Rangatira” are multi-layered. The most obvious layer, in a postcolonial sense, explores the bizarre irony of the British/New Zealand government’s appropriation of indigenous lands in order to create a sanctuary for endangered birds. The irony of the Crown’s decision to evacuate the people of Hauturu is accentuated by the fact that the decision was made during a time when politicians and historians believed the Māori themselves were a “dying race” (Simon, Smith and Cram 224).

In a second layer of appropriation exploration in “Rangatira,” Morris returns to the question of “which stories we can tell” that she originally explores in *Queen of Beauty*. In

“Rangatira,” the narrator’s great grand-niece follows him around with “a notebook poking from the pocket of her skirt” because she “wants to know everything” (91). A Pākehā historian has given her the notebook, told her that the rangatira is “the last of the warriors,” and has asked her to “write down, every word” of what he tells her (92). The girl tells the rangatira the historian “wants to know about [the rangatira’s] exploits and adventures, about military campaigns” (92).

While sceptical about being used by the historian in this way, the rangatira says,

I’ll tell her the stories, I suppose, because I like to talk, and at least when she’s listening she’s not rustling around behind me. But she’s heard most of the stories already, and can read the rest in my face. The Pākehā’s waiting for this notebook full of words, but he could walk down Queen Street to the Bohemian painter’s [Lindauer’s] room and look at my picture hanging on the wall. He’ll see everything he needs to know. (92)

Ultimately, the rangatira, like Jim in *Queen of Beauty*, knows that no matter how many stories he gives to the girl to “shut in her book” (93), there will always be many more stories that he doesn’t tell. Reflecting on these untold stories, the rangatira thinks, “That’s good enough for the Pākehā historian. He doesn’t have to be told everything” (95).

While writing “Rangatira,” which is the story of her own Ngati Wai ancestors, Morris had to think carefully about which aspects of family history to share and which to hold back. She says, “I don’t always think about ‘which stories we can tell’ in terms of seeking permission or gaining qualifications...[but] my cousin raised the issue of permission for telling this story, because while Paratene Te Manu is my tūpuna, I’m from a different (lower) branch of the family, with a different marae” (Pistacchi “Online Interview”). While taking into account the issues that her cousin raised, Morris ultimately decided,

It’s better that the story of his life be made public through a work of fiction, however partial and subjective and “untrue” elements of that story would be, inevitably, rather than held in ever-decreasing fragments of passed-down history at his

home marae. The man [Paratene Te Manu] who goes to England (against the wishes of his relatives), who chose to sit for Lindauer, who chose to tell his life story at the request of a Pākehā [James Cowan] is not someone who wanted to live in secret. Seeing his portrait last week in the Auckland City Art Gallery storage facility made me even more resolved to engage with his story....If we deny permission to our own, then a “real” outsider – some big-name foreign author, say, who’s oblivious to protocol and issues of ownership – will swoop in at some point and tell our stories for us. This has already happened, to some extent, in previous eras, with stories of the savages and cannibals of the South Seas. (Pistacchi “Online Interview”)

Obviously, by choosing to tell Paratene Te Manu’s story, Morris is treading on controversial ground. Does she, as only a distant relation, have the right to tell his story? Is the storytelling she is doing in “Rangitira” fundamentally different from the appropriative storytelling Margaret does in *Queen of Beauty*? Is it better for her to tell this story than for a foreign author to tell it?

Like Uncle Tahu in *Queen of Beauty*, Morris ultimately feels that it is critical that this family story – Paratene Te Manu’s story – be saved from extinction, even if some people might question her right to be the recorder of this particular aspect of her family’s history. Therefore, with a strong conviction that she is doing the “right” thing in “engaging’ with his story,” Morris is currently doing more “research and thinking and planning” in order to “do justice to a novel-length version of ‘Rangatira’” (Pistacchi “Online Interview”).

Conclusion: “Hard Topics”

In *Mana Tuturu* Barry Barclay emphasizes that if an indigenous story “is lost in some way, if it is perverted or squandered, then it may lose its force for the people of the future” (169). This mantle of responsibility is one that sits heavily on the shoulders of indigenous storytellers as they make decisions “about something precious – what to do with a taonga...a family history” (Morris in Pistacchi “Online Interview”). It is also a

responsibility that both Morris and her characters struggle with as they ask themselves: Is it the responsibility of contemporary Māori to “take-back” the images and stories of their ancestors as Emma does in *Hibiscus Coast*? Is it necessary, as Uncle Tahu and the rangatira decide to do, to share indigenous stories with non-indigenous story tellers in order to save family histories from slipping into obscurity? Is it better to decide, as Virginia does, to only share her family stories and histories with immediate family and community members? At stake in answering these questions is cultural survivance, and as the late Matiu Mareikura once said, “We’ve got to be able to tell our stories, or else we’ll vanish. We aren’t anything without our stories” (qtd. in Barclay 169).

What Paula Morris ultimately queries in *Hibiscus Coast*, *Queen of Beauty* and “Rangatira” is how best to tell these stories, and how the telling of these stories varies based on the experiences and ancestral heritages of the storytellers. She also investigates how the story-telling changes for those members, like herself, of a mixed-blood Māori community who find themselves telling their tales in countries far away from their tribal homelands. As the characters in these texts journey towards self-awareness, shedding essentialist assumptions and societal expectations as they go, they create a new place – a nepantla, borderlanded place – from which to tell their stories. There, they are able to forge methods of cultural survivance that Vizenor affirms are vital for a twenty-first century world, one that allows for “an adaptable, dynamic identity that can mediate between conflicting cultures” (Allen “Thesis” 65). Paula Morris and her characters are all “poised in transition...belonging at one and the same time to several ‘homes’ (and to no particular home)” at all (Hall 310). In this borderlanded space, they choose to survive – and thrive.

“I never look back. I’m no Lot’s wife. I don’t look over my shoulder; I keep going forward. That obviously comes through in my fiction. You look at the way that people survive and that’s how they survive. They keep going forward.”

*– Kelly Ana Morey
(Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”)*

**Chapter Four:
Kelly Ana Morey –
Postmodern Survivance**

Kelly Ana Morey: “A Good Little Māori Girl”

When Kelly Ana Morey told me during our first interview in 2005, “I’m a good little Māori girl,” she did so with a wink – and in that wink lay all of the sardonic, saucy wit I had seen in her short stories and novels and would come to know better in the woman herself over the next several years of our acquaintance. She is well-known for this sharp sense of humour, with critics almost unfailingly commenting on her “wonderful...quirky one-liners” (Fraser) and her “sharp-tongued wit” (Eggleton 46). She is equally known, however, for her cleverness (“her observations are keen-eyed and keen-eared” (Eggleton 46)), her eloquent prose (“the writing is fluent, powerful, confident” (O’Brien)), her vivid imagination (“she is gloriously free-thinking” (Shiels “Quirky and Credible” 13)), and her spot-on dialogue (“She has a sharp ear for speech, and her command of ensemble scenes is masterful” (Gracewood 60)). All of this praise has earned her a wide range of literary awards including the Todd New Writers Bursary (2003), the NZSA Hubert Church First Book Prize at the Montana Book Awards for *Bloom* (2004), the inaugural Janet Frame Literary Award for Imaginative Fiction (2005), and a place for *Grace is Gone* on the finalist short-list for the Kiriama Pacific Rim Fiction Prize (2005).

As with the work of most other young, “new wave”⁹⁶ (Eggleton 46) Māori writers, however, all of this praise and prize money has not yet led to Morey’s work being critically examined by the literary academy. Perhaps because she is better known for that “wonderful combination of quirky one-liners” than her “atmospheric prose” (Fraser), there has been virtually no critical work done on the Morey’s short stories or novels outside of popular-press book reviews. In today’s literary climate in Australasia, “sharply funny” (Eggleton 46) often does not get critical attention, something celebrated Australian author

⁹⁶ David Eggleton defines these “new wave” Māori novelists as those “whose role models are the fabulist styles of Witi Ihimaera, Keri Hulme and Patricia Grace,” three authors Eggleton sees as “asserting the indigenous” (“Hidden Valley” 46).

Kate Grenville wryly pointed out during the 2007 Auckland Writers and Readers Festival when she said, “critics and editors don’t think funny books can be ‘good’ books, or at least good ‘literary books.’ It is very, very hard to get people to take ‘funny’ seriously” (“An Hour with Kate Grenville”).

This chapter’s reading of Morey’s first novel, *Bloom* (2003), takes the author’s work very seriously and examines the ways in which “humor and irony are deployed as subversive and transformative devices aimed at revolution and not just revolt” (Tannen 8). David Eggleton has observed, “There’s always a subversive and sardonic thread running through Morey’s works” (47), and these threads are what position Morey’s methods of literary survivance as perhaps the most subversive among the authors I am considering in this doctoral study. Her texts always offer far “more than endurance or mere response” (Vizenor *Fugitive Poses* 15) to Aotearoa/New Zealand’s colonial history, making her an author who truly looks forward – into the world of light – instead of one who looks backwards, in a reactionary fashion, to the colonial past of her country and her people.

Beginning with a biography that explores the roots of Morey’s personal and communal strength, this chapter then moves on to interrogate the increasingly complex ways in which Morey positions *Bloom*’s narrative as an active mode of contemporary Māori cultural and literary survivance. Analysis includes an exploration of why Witi Ihimaera calls *Bloom* “a quintessential example of a contemporary Māori novel,”⁹⁷ what it means to be a “postmodern female trickster,” and how Morey utilizes intertextuality and revised Māori histories as critical cultural survivance strategies. The chapter also includes a detailed reading of the complex Māori cultural concepts underlying the novel’s narrative because, as Gerald Vizenor notes, it is critical “to know who the implied audience is if one is to make any sense of [native] stories” (qtd. in Tannen 124).

⁹⁷ Ihimaera made this comment to his English MA students on 12 September 2005 as an introduction to a class discussion on the works of Kelly Ana Morey.

Placing Morey: Biographical Context

“I’ve never really been a joiner. I’ve always known exactly who I am...hard to miss when all your Kaitaia relations are brown as, but I’ve always been the pain in the ass who wanted to row her own waka in her own way.”
– Kelly Ana Morey (*Pistacchi* “Bio Interview”)

Morey’s invocation of the waka in her autobiographical musing summarises the rich sense of hybridity evidenced in both the author’s fictional texts and in her eclectic descriptions of her own life experiences. Like Jackie Sturm’s modern classic “E WAKA!,”⁹⁸ Morey’s symbolic referencing of the Māori canoe “implicitly acknowledges the waka of te ao tawhito, the ancient world and legend...[and] recognizes the founding presence of the waka in the whakapapa of all Māori” (Battista 127).⁹⁹ Her decision to row that waka “in her own way,” however, places her in a quintessentially postmodern relationship to the ancient histories, legends, and traditions the image evokes. The yoking together of ancient Māori history/mythology (the waka), contemporary vernacular (“brown as,” “pain in the ass”), and a classic Gen Xer’s¹⁰⁰ sense of independence/alienation (“I’ve never really been a joiner”) allows the author to “coalesce historical reality with present being” (Battista 134) in a way that recognizes a dynamic, spiralling relationship between past and present in her self-concept.

Morey’s self-description also works “to secure a series of meta-physical kinship relations” (DeLoughrey 181) within a quintessentially Māori-centred framework by referencing her connection to her “brown” (read: “Māori”) relations, her tie to homeland

⁹⁸ Jacqueline Sturm, “E WAKA! for 1990” in *Dedications* (Wellington: Steele Roberts, 1996).

⁹⁹ The Māori word “waka” translates in English to “canoe.” The Māori “trace their descent to the arrival of the first canoes from Eastern Polynesia” (Te Awēkotuku *People and Culture* 30). Waka therefore becomes the most “broadly defined social grouping...*Waka* further divided into *iwi*, or tribes, descended from individual crew members...*iwi* segmented into *hapu*, subtribes” (Te Awēkotuku *People and Culture* 30).

¹⁰⁰ I use the term “Gen X” or “Generation X” to refer to “the generation of people born between the early 1960s and the mid 1970s...the first generation to be raised on television, hi-tech computer technology, a dominant American counter-culture and an increasingly commercialised economy” (Pirie 66).

and place (Kaitaia) and her genealogical grounding (waka/whakapapa). Formulating her personal foundations in this way allows her to express both her personal and fictional narratives in a manner that moves seamlessly “back into history and then...out again. Back from personal into political and then [back] out again” (Ihimaera in Jussawalla and Desenbrock 242). This ability to move between the historic and the present, the personal and the political, is epitomized in Morey’s claim that, “I was always going to plough (Parihaka inference intended)¹⁰¹ my own land to a certain extent, although I am very conscious that because of writers like Witi [Ihimaera] and Pat [Grace] and Hone Tuwhare I don’t have to explain who I am in my own country” (“Book-Club Conversation”). This kind of frequently reiterated recognition of, and homage to, her personal and publishing whakapapa, combined with a constantly reiterated mantra of “rowing her own waka” and “ploughing her own fields” establishes Morey firmly in the position of what Elizabeth DeLoughrey calls a “diasporic subject” (181). Morey can well “articulate the discourse of ontological belonging in terms of land and family” (DeLoughrey 181) while still recognizing the ways in which she has spiralled out from, through, and beyond the personal, cultural, and literary whakapapa that proceeds her. She is a woman operating very much in the spiritual legacy of Parihaka – a revolutionary writer who refuses to be colonized by any particular school of thought, literary canon, or set of genre conventions. Morey firmly believes that she has “always felt free to write whatever I want” because she doesn’t “feel any sense of responsibility to explain my culture.... You’re either there or you’re not,” she says, “I can’t sell it to anybody” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”).

¹⁰¹ Parihaka is a community located in central Taranaki that became famous in New Zealand history for its acts of passive resistance to European colonists and soldiers during the 1880s. Parihaka is remembered both for the region’s painful legacy of “the suffering caused by the confiscation of tribal lands, the 1881 invasion, and the imprisonment of Parihaka men” as well as for its spiritual legacy “which is one of living in harmony with the land and humanity...of nonviolent resistance and a belief in the peaceful and respectful co-existence of Māori and Pākehā” (Bornholdt).

In *Bloom*, the narrator/protagonist Connie plays a game with her flatmates in which each must share three interesting things about themselves. When pushed in an interview to play this game herself, Morey answered:

I was a second year sixth.
I'm a shit hot waitress.
I spent my childhood in Papua New Guinea.
(“Book-Club Conversation”)

In many ways this response is iconic of the self-deprecating author who, in spite of winning numerous literary awards, is still often at pains to paint herself as “the least likely girl from New Plymouth Girls’ High” ever to be a successful author (Pistacchi “Bio Interview”). “I’m still writing practice novels,” Morey said in 2005. “It doesn’t matter that they’re not perfect. They are merely preparation for the good writer both [my editor] and I fervently hope I will evolve into....For some people – and I’m one – becoming a good writer takes some time” (Morey *How to Read* 73). If this is so, the very modest Morey has been “practicing” telling stories now for a very long time – and that practice has produced extremely well-received short-stories and novels that have earned her a reputation as “a powerful new voice in the current crop of young New Zealand writers” (“New Zealand Writers: Kelly Ana Morey”).

Born in Kaitaia in 1968 to a French/German “bright young thing” (Pistacchi “Bio Interview”) of a mother from Rotorua, and a Jewish/Māori¹⁰² ex-New Zealand Navy father from the Far North, Morey says, “stories have always been big in my life” (Pistacchi “Bio Interview”). She describes her parents as “voracious readers” (Morey *How to Read* 28) and “incessant story tellers” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”) who “have a gift for encapsulating the essence of someone’s character” (Pistacchi “Bio Interview”) – a gift they have passed on to their daughter. “It’s customary for novelists to thank their parents if their book succeeds, or put it down to childhood deprivation if it doesn’t” (*How to Read*

¹⁰² Morey says, “The Jewish connection is from Samuel Yates who came to Paerengarenga in the Far North at the height of the gum digging trade and set up the general store there with his Māori bride, Kaeterina, who was Ngati Kuri”(Pistacchi “Bio Interview”).

28), Morey cheekily comments in her autobiographical text, *How To Read A Book* (2005). “In my case the blessings were mixed” (28). Morey captures this genetic predisposition to story telling by punning her dedication to *How To Read a Book* to: “My mother, in appreciation for the novel DNA.”

This “novel” DNA is a story in and of itself, with Morey’s family history being chequered with lively characters, not the least interesting of whom are Morey’s parents themselves. Morey’s mother, a chart corrector “with the most magnificent beehive...had a pretty ramshackled upbringing, her dad was a butcher and her mum a wanderer” (Pistacchi “Bio Interview”). Her father spent more than fifteen years in the New Zealand Navy before meeting Morey’s mother “at The Esplanade as people in the Navy tend to” (Pistacchi “Bio Interview”). By the time Morey was born in 1968, the family was living on Paponga Block, a Lands & Survey farm in the Hokianga where her father was working as a shepherd.

Always on the move, the family radically relocated in 1971 to Papua New Guinea “because there was money to be made there” (Pistacchi “Bio Interview”). Morey’s father worked a variety of jobs – mostly as a surveyor - first for the Australian, then for the Papua New Guinean governments. It was a nomadic lifestyle for the young family, with Morey attending many different schools “because my parents moved every two years” (Winder 4). The constant movement and general isolation in their various PNG farms and homesteads suited an intensely imaginative young Morey. She describes her childhood as “incredible” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”), “magnificent” (*How to Read* 28), and “ridiculously magical” (“Penguin Author Biography: Kelly Ana Morey”). “I had the most fabulous childhood,” she says. “It was quite solitary and in many ways I think a perfect training ground for being a novelist because it taught me to be really happy with only my imagination to keep company with” (Pistacchi “Bio Interview”).

This imagination was fuelled by a constant stream of books that her parents and community members procured for her even though books were “in short supply...in Papua New Guinea, where libraries and shops were rare” (Morey *How to Read* 28). Looking back on these efforts to feed her literary appetite, Morey says, “I don’t suppose any of them thought I was going to be a writer: I was given books simply because I liked to read. And in a funny kind of way, being a ‘book-worm’ was an easy way for my family to explain my (even then) pronounced singularity. I was not a ‘friends’ kind of child” (Morey *How to Read* 30). Choosing to spend time with her books and her animals, Morey revelled in PNG life where her family had “dogs and horses and best of all, a couple of stony-bottomed creeks which begged to be messed around in. There is nothing more conducive to the creation of stories than the sound, taste, sight and feel of a clean cool ribbon of water” (Morey *How to Read* 64).

Looking back on the gifts that this “magical” childhood gave her, Morey reflects, “How lucky I am to know things about the land and the weather, how the wind picks up in the afternoons...and all of that stuff that you really can’t research. Knowing how the land works and things like that – it just becomes a part of you” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”). Whenever Morey’s mother tries to apologize to her daughter for her nomadic, solitary childhood, Morey reminds her of these gifts. She also remembers “very clearly, [my mother] telling me constantly just how good my stories were – stories which I always wanted to write down, right from the beginning. And I always knew that she meant it” (Pistacchi “Bio Interview”).

Part of encouraging the writer and storyteller in her daughter meant sending her back to New Zealand for a formal education. Arriving as a boarder at New Plymouth Girls’ High in 1981 “having just turned 12...and dressed by [her] mother for the last time” (Morey “Hard Knocks”), Morey found New Zealand life to be “a bit of a culture shock” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”). Filled with memories of “beaches and coconut trees

and my brother building a giant submarine under the house and my dad playing hopscotch with me and my mum telling me about sea creatures” (Pistacchi “Bio Interview”), Morey found the winds and rains of New Plymouth “bloody cold” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”) and the buildings and instructors at Girls’ High “pretty foreboding” (Morey “Hard Knocks” 17). “People have the assumption that I was always good at school, always good at university,” Morey says, “but that is so not true...I pottered around New Plymouth Girls’ High for about five years doing nothing very much in particular” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”). Nothing in particular, that is, except spending a great deal of time in the Te Henui Cemetery “making things up” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”), imaginings that turned into her early attempts at writing poetry and short stories.

Reflecting on these high school years, Morey says, “Ennui, superciliousness, nicotine and trashy novels had threatened to dominate my teenage years” (*How to Read* 7). During her adolescence she “wrote, of course. Poetry, mainly. Terribly bad teenage poetry. With lots of relentlessly gothic overtones” (Morey *How to Read* 9). She also wrote stories and essays, however, which her English teachers recognized were “quite good” (Morey *How to Read* 9) and that won her an invitation to an exclusive creative writing workshop for gifted young writers organized by author David Hill.¹⁰³ Morey says the workshop “definitely planted a seed” (Pistacchi “Bio Interview”), not only in her, but in many girls involved in the course. Morey reports that more than twenty years later, “One of the other girls in the class is a very busy freelance journalist and another is/was the editor of UK *Marie Claire* and another was Anna Reeves who made the lovely indie film *Oyster Farmer*, and I believe Katie Wolfe was in there too” (Pistacchi “Bio Interview”).

¹⁰³ David Hill (1942-) is a well-known New Zealand journalist, fiction author, reviewer and children’s writer. He works for the New Zealand Book Council’s “Writers in Schools” programme, running writing workshops for intermediate and secondary school students throughout New Zealand.

Declining to do seventh form (after being a second-year sixth), Morey finished her secondary education in 1985, going on to an illustrious career as a “shit hot waitress” (“Book-Club Conversation”). Over the course of the next decade she worked odd jobs and pursued (off and on, mostly part-time) a degree in English and Art History at the University of Auckland which she began in 1986. In 1997 she made the decision to go back to university full-time, saying,

I knew I had to finish my BA. I had been doing it off and on for over ten years and it was time to call it a day. And there was a further enticement: on the strength of two nice pieces of prose and three god-awful poems, I had been accepted into the university’s creative writing course, run by writers Witi Ihimaera and Albert Wendt. That same week I had my first short story, “Māori Bread,” accepted for publication in *100 New Zealand Short Short Stories*, published by Tandem Press. (Morey *How to Read* 16)

During what she calls “My Year of Creative Writing,” the author says she “committed to paper about 30 dreadful poems and approximately 30,000 words of the worst novel ever written” (Morey *How to Read* 19). Her time in the creative writing program left her feeling like she “never wanted to write another word,” a reaction to the fact that “Witi [Ihimaera] never minced words about how much work it was for such an incredibly tiny return” (Kember 8). Morey says she “stopped producing fiction the moment my end-of-year portfolio was handed in,” turning her attention instead to an MA thesis on *ngā poropiti* (Māori prophets) and their relationship to Māori art – a topic she “fell unconditionally in love with” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”).

By 2001 she had completed the MA in Art History,¹⁰⁴ and “rediscovered fiction” (Morey *How to Read* 2). “A few weeks [after turning in the thesis] I wrote my first piece of fiction in what seemed like forever” (*How to Read* 25), and within a few months of finishing her degree she had “told enough people I was ‘writing a novel’ to rubbish myself into doing it” (“Book-Club Conversation”). She says,

¹⁰⁴ Morey’s MA thesis is titled *Piki Te Ora: The Location of Nga Poropiti in Contemporary Māori Fiction* (University of Auckland, 2001).

I had no money but I did have time, and words were free. So I made a deal with myself: I would write fiction until I found a job. The plan somehow made being an over-educated, unemployable woman in her early thirties, with no car or money, and living with her parents in the middle of nowhere, kind of ok.... Just as well I was comfortable with my situation for this would be my life for the next 18 months.
(Morey *How to Read* 35)

Her post-MA writing project eventually became the bloated first draft of *Bloom*, an unsolicited manuscript Morey mailed off to Penguin, N.Z. that eventually came back to her with a note from editor Geoff Walker saying, “Close sister, but no cigar, ditch 100 pages” (“Book-Club Conversation”). Morey did the edit in a week, and shortly thereafter *Bloom* was published to critical acclaim that eventually led to the winning of the NZSA Hubert Church First Book Prize at the Montana Book Awards.

At the time Morey says she didn’t realize that it is virtually unheard of for an unsolicited manuscript to be “picked up out of the slush pile” (Kember 8) and targeted for publication. “I really did think that I would try [to write a novel],” Morey says, “and that it would be rubbish and I’d get on with my life” (“Book-Club Conversation”). Instead, she found *Bloom* to be “so much better than I thought I was capable of” (“Book-Club Conversation”), an accomplishment she credits to all of that “practice” she had working on short stories leading up to and during her “Year of Creative Writing”:

I had always been a bit embarrassed by [my early short story] “Māori Bread.” It was so desperately uniliterary and old-fashioned and, well, *brown*. But I am an idiot. Because in those 500 words I discovered me, the way I saw and wrote the world. The flatness and literary-ness that had infected my writing vanished overnight. I also stopped reading lyrical, wordy novels and began hunting for books I genuinely enjoyed, rather than ones I thought I *should* enjoy. (*How to Read* 35)

These days Morey credits everyone from Patricia Grace, Fiona Kidman and Keri Hulme, to David Sedaris, Jilly Cooper and Judith Krantz with influencing her work. She reads up to a half a dozen books a week (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”) and says that she

cannot help but take something from each of these books back with her when she returns to her keyboard. “One of the reasons writers read so avidly is because we’re looking for solutions to our own writerly problems,” Morey writes. “I’m not above pinching off other writers. Theft? Plagiarism? *Au contraire*: these days we call it post-modernism. It’s not only perfectly acceptable, but frankly *de rigueur*” (*How to Read* 5). Her comment ironically underlies her “theft” and subsequent revision of Ruth Park’s 1951 character Uncle Pihopa in *Bloom*, a topic discussed at length later in this chapter.

Morey currently lives in Kaipara, north of Auckland, “on a dairy farm with two dogs and three horses” (Winder 4) working as a fiction writer and as an oral historian for the Royal New Zealand Navy Museum. Surrounded by the beauty of Northland, the author says not much has changed since her early story-telling days in Papua New Guinea. “I no longer have a stony, shady creek to build dams in,” she says, “but my best story-creating still happens outdoors” (*How to Read* 64).

Inspired by the landscape she writes in, Morey says, “I love writing New Zealand. We have the best land, the most amazing weather and the craziest refugee camp of people” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”). She admits to feeling “a responsibility to my country” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”), and a “desire to tell distinctly New Zealand stories” (Morey qtd. in “Debut Author Blooms”), but she also recognizes, “A lot of New Zealand fiction seems to have almost a preoccupation with death and the dark and bleak landscape and I’ve always rejected that. I think that we are a people with a huge sense of humour and a fantastic way of looking at the world and we should celebrate that” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”). This seems to encapsulate Morey’s work to date: her works celebrate “a fantastic way of looking at the world” – and a fantastic way of looking at fiction that is not afraid to challenge preconceptions of what a Māori novel looks and sounds like.

Like the works of Patricia Grace and Paula Morris, Morey's work evidences a "strong New Zealand flavour in culture, setting, theme and atmosphere" (O'Brien) and a complex reflection on the complicated social and racial issues facing contemporary citizens of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Beneath the surface of her humour she continuously intimates "that things are not exactly black or white in Aotearoa" (Gracewood 60), and Morey says she is well aware of "the sadness that lurks at the edges of my many jokes" (*How to Read* 39). Ultimately, Morey believes, "Māori writing is in exactly the same place as Pākehā writing in New Zealand – finding itself. We've got a long way to go yet, but it's the journey [that matters] they tell me" ("Book-Club Conversation"). This concept of journey runs throughout Morey's texts both internally (in terms of individual plot narratives) and externally (in terms of examining the development of her craft over the course of her literary career). "I'm a good little Māori girl like that," Morey says, "all is journey. That idea of travelling forward is very much a part of my writing...I never look back. I'm no Lot's wife. I don't look over my shoulder, I keep going forward. That obviously comes through in my fiction. You look at the way that people survive and that's how they survive. They keep going forward" (Pistacchi "Morey in Conversation"). Here, Morey embodies the trickster's role as survivor and transformer. As "perpetual wanderers," tricksters "possess a boundless ability to survive" (J. R. Smith 8), a trait manifested in both Kelly Ana Morey, the author, and in the characters who crowd the pages of her novels.

Placing Morey: Theoretical Context

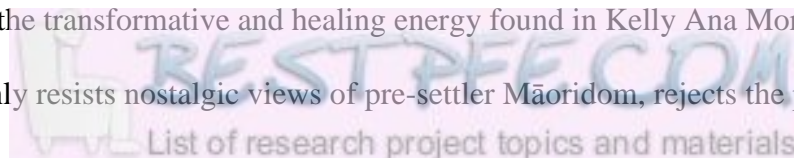
A female Trickster is among us. She stands, visible, at the crossroads of feminism, humor, depth psychology and postmodernism, ready for us to unpack her bag of multiple meanings. This postmodern female Trickster possesses the characteristics which define all Tricksters. She manifests the capacity to transform both an individual life and the collective consciousness of the culture she becomes visible to. She appears at the crossroads in a culture's psychic development, always cloaked in the appropriate drag. As with all Tricksters, she is not recognized as the transformative shape-shifter of the unconscious she is. Like all Tricksters, she makes us laugh."

– Ricki Stefanie Tannen,

The Female Trickster: The Mask That Reveals 3

Long familiar in folklore, the trickster figure has had a resurgence in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, particularly “in the fiction and criticism of women writers of color” which Smith believes “suggests that the age-old trickster has not lost relevance in the modern world; rather the trickster has become a key figure for personal and cultural survival” (2). Gerald Vizenor recognizes the importance of these trickster figures, especially in contemporary indigenous fiction, stating, “the trickster is chance and freedom in a comic sign; comic freedom is a ‘doing,’ not an essence, not a museum being, or an aesthetic presence” (“Trickster Discourse” 285). In his own writing, Vizenor is primarily concerned with “deconstructing the most destructive stereotypes of Native Americans created by the Euramerican imagination, those ‘terminal beliefs’ that have prevented and still prevent Native Americans from imagining themselves as contemporary, living human beings” (Pulitano 146). He believes that as acts of imagination, “trickster stories have always aimed at liberating people’s minds, forcing them into self-recognition and knowledge, and keeping them alert to their own power to heal” (Pulitano 147).

This is the transformative and healing energy found in Kelly Ana Morey’s *Bloom*. Her novel openly resists nostalgic views of pre-settler Māoridom, rejects the primacy of



Pākehā written histories of Aotearoa/New Zealand, and emphatically celebrates Māori culture in a contemporary context. Her Māori are not “museum beings,” nor are they stereotypes. Instead Morey chooses to write cultural identity by giving voice to a wide range of individuals in both Māori and Pākehā communities. Her stories and novels, like a village, are populated with characters from all walks of New Zealand life. As Smith writes, “the trickster is a master of...injecting multiple perspectives to challenge all that is stultifying, stratified, bland, or prescriptive. Tricksters embody the complexity, diversity, and paradoxes of literary studies today, which demand the recognition of competing voices” (xiii). By recognising these many voices and embracing postmodern techniques and characteristics (pastiche/intertextuality/metafictional strategies), Morey illustrates her version of twenty-first century Māori cultural survivance strategies.

Reading Kelly Ana Morey’s *Bloom*

The female trickster holds a unique position in the contemporary literary canon.

Ricki Stefanie Tannen believes that the most significant difference between the postmodern female trickster and the traditional trickster

can be seen in the postmodern embodiment of the archetypal Trickster energy in a female body with psychological authority, physical agency, and bodily autonomy... Another important aspect of the postmodern female Trickster is how her cultural and psychological revolution is accomplished through social work which takes place concomitantly with the construction of an identity which refuses to be a victim. These differences in characteristics...are directly attributable to the imagination of women imagining and sharing with other women images of women with authority, agency and autonomy. (8)

In *Bloom*, as in all of her novels, Morey celebrates the physical agency and bodily autonomy of her female characters. The “women Spry” (the multigenerational female characters whose stories form the backbone of *Bloom*) imagine for themselves lives where they have absolute authority, agency and autonomy over their own bodies and life

journeys. This gift for imagining – and then living – lives not dependent on the socially prescriptive roles of wife, mother, mistress or employee is passed down in *Bloom* from grandmother to daughter to granddaughters. Lori Landay believes, “By transgressing the cultural delimiters of ‘woman’s sphere,’ domesticity, sentimentalism, repression of the body, and suppression of the mind, female tricksters violate the boundaries between men’s and women’s spheres and enter into the ‘new country’ of the public sphere” (26). What is unusual in Morey’s work is her refusal to accept the fact that this “public sphere” must be found in the sphere of Aotearoa/New Zealand’s major cities or urban environments. Her female characters refute the idea that freedom from “domesticity and sentimentalism” requires a move from rural communities to urban ones, or that they must leave the family land and home. This is an unusual narrative strategy for a young, post-Māori Renaissance writer to take in today’s urban-centred political climate.

In his essay “Reconstructing New Zealand Literature: NeXt Wave Writing in Aotearoa-New Zealand,” Mark Pirie documents a general trend in late 1990s Māori writing “towards a social realism...[that] can be seen as representative of a movement away from the pastoral narratives and holistic tales of Māoridom which were a feature of Keri Hulme’s *The Bone People* or the earlier work of Patricia Grace” and towards a reflection on “the harsher realities of urban Māori life” (46). His observations are echoed by a vast range of critics who recognize in these “NeXt Wave” Māori publications an emphasis on violence and abuse (see examples in Heim 13-14), “the disagreeableness of being poor”(Wevers “Short Fiction” 28), “the move from rural to urban environment, from home to hostile territory,” (K. P. Sinclair 287) and “radicalism and *tino rangitiratanga* (autonomy/sovereignty)” (Pirie 47). These trends, however, have been noted primarily in the works of young *urban* Māori authors, and as this chapter’s biography section has shown, Kelly Ana Morey is anything but an urban dweller. While aspects of her narratives include recognition of violence, poverty, dislocation, and Māori activism, her novels have

a decidedly *non-urban* spirit. Choosing to live in a remote area of Northland with her horses and her dogs as her primary company, Morey seems to have resisted both the call of Aotearoa's major cities, and the allure of a classic Kiwi "overseas experience." While she claims to want "that international thing" (Pistacchi "Morey in Conversation"), thus far her novels "seem to be challenging internationalisms by maintaining a strong regional flavour" (Pirie 55).

Much of this "regional flavour" in Morey's novels is really "rural flavour." "The thing that really breaks my heart," she says, "is the disintegration of rural communities – the big urban shift and the way in which rural communities have suffered because of it. This is why I write rural communities. I want to say, 'it doesn't matter that you don't have a job, it doesn't matter that your house doesn't have a DVD player, or you don't have a SUV. Sometimes its just about having the whole family just sit down and get on with each other'" (Pistacchi "Morey in Conversation"). These personal axioms are what most likely sit behind the fact that in Morey's novels, protagonists move physically from urban to rural locations, monetarily from disenfranchising market economy jobs to more personally fulfilling roles as rural community storytellers/story keepers, and spiritually from an existence grounded almost solely in the present, material world to one that exists in harmony with both past and present as well as with the material and dematerialized worlds.

These acts of "counterurbanisation" (Halfacree 70) might appear to set the stage for acts of romanticized "rural idolization (idyll-isation)" (Halfacree 84) in Morey's works, but in the end her depictions of these urban-to-rural shifts refuse this. Like the more recent works of Patricia Grace, Morey's novels are fundamentally grounded in examining the issues facing contemporary Māoridom today. In the process the author's "rural" settings reject both a sentimentalized (European) version of country life as some sort of child-like synthesis of innocence, wildness, communion with nature and enjoyment

of spatial freedom (O. Jones 162), and an indigenous marae-based pastoral idyll – one in which native peoples live in peace and harmony with their land and their ancestors’ spirits. Recognizing this, Patrick Evans writes that “if we look at Morey’s novel [*Bloom*] closely...we can see not a vapid, modish spiritualizing, but a push towards its opposite, a rematerialisation that locates the protagonist in her own history” (20).

In other words, Morey’s novel *Bloom* represents rural communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand as they exist in *the contemporary moment* – a depiction that can only be contextualized in a Māori framework through a spiralling examination of the past. “From a Māori point of view,” Miriama Evans writes, “what is contemporary can be judged from a cultural perception of time and the indivisibility of past, present and future into discrete segments. Thus a holistic recognition of ‘contemporary’ is not just confined to the ‘here and now’ but is enmeshed with the traditional and futuristic” (19-20).

To understand how Morey incorporates traditional aspects of Māori culture into both her depictions of the present and her prefiguring of the future, it is necessary to recall the cultural context in which *Bloom*’s narrative takes place. This cultural context will act as the framework for examining Morey’s narrative survivance strategies in *Bloom* because as Jeanne Reesman says, “what a trickster story ‘means’ must first address its specific, local context and only then move into the broader context” (xii). The rest of this chapter will examine the cultural and narrative features that make *Bloom* a Māori novel and a cultural-survivance trickster tale best understood within a Māori-centric framework.

***Bloom*: Morey’s “Māori” Novel**

It is in large part the intertwining of traditional, contemporary, and futuristic indigenous concerns that make *Bloom* what Witi Ihimaera calls “a quintessential example of a contemporary Māori novel.” Ihimaera’s labelling of *Bloom* as a “Māori novel” recognizes what Jon Battista discovered in her comprehensive doctoral study – that it is

“possible to recognize elements constitutive of a Māori aesthetic” (Battista 61) in Māori fiction. According to Battista, these elements include:¹⁰⁵

- 1) the cultural location of self in place and time
- 2) imagery which is unequivocally Māori
- 3) the centrality of myth in the literature
- 4) the importance of the oral dimension
- 5) a distinct Māori use of language
- 6) a narrative structure that tends to be circular
- 7) a thematic preoccupation with the capacity of the past to influence and inform the present and future. (Battista 59-60)

Bloom, like many of Patricia Grace’s novels, incorporates nearly all of these tenets while rarely being self-referential as Māori. Characters are identified as Māori not by ethnic or racial labels, but by their use of te reo (“Kia Ora Cookie!” (12)), their involvement with Māori cultural activities (tangi (108), hui (86), hangi (87)), their wearing of the moko (15), or their situation of self in terms of whānau and tīpuna (145). David Eggleton has written that Morey “asserts the indigenous” (47), and one of the ways she does this is by asserting that in Aotearoa/New Zealand, indigenous people need no racial labels to be identified, indigenous cultural practices need no explanation, and indigenous language needs no translating.

Set in turn-of-the-twenty-first century Aotearoa/New Zealand, *Bloom* is an ironic epic that traces “the convoluted pathways trodden by narrator Constant Spry and her female forebears” (Shiels “Quirky and Credible” 13). Tracing three generations of “the women Spry” – Algebra, the enigmatic morphine-addicted matriarch of the family; Rose, Algebra’s daughter who has a reputation for being “a bit vague” (73); and Hebe and

¹⁰⁵ Battista makes it clear that although she has identified these key tenets in Māori literature in general, “it would be a mistake to devalue [Māori] writing by judging who qualifies or not with a checklist of indigenous features” (61).

Connie, Rose’s daughters who have been gifted (respectively) with the knowledge of foresight and the ability to collect knowledges of the past – *Bloom* carefully illuminates each woman’s search for what New Zealand writer Robin Hyde called “a home in this world.”¹⁰⁶ The majority of the novel’s narrative takes place in and around the Goshen Hotel, “a pub on a crossroads in the middle of nowhere” (67), that sits between the ocean and a great mountain which Morey says is “definitely Taranaki” (“Book-Club Conversation”). While characters move from and to Auckland, Wellington, and beyond, in the end the bits of storytelling all spiral out from and back to this place at the crossroads.

In this “quintessential Māori novel,” Morey incorporates many key concepts of Māori culture – tūrangawaewae, whakamā, whakapapa, and ahi kā, and explores the important roles of the kehua, kuia, and kaumatua in Māori communities. She does all of this, however, with a decidedly modern twist. Rendering each of these Māori concepts and roles, Morey maintains the key traditional aspects of each term, while exploring how these cultural concepts play out in contemporary Māori society, or, as Dame Joan Metge says, how there has been “new growth from old” in terms of Māori cultural traditions (*New Growth* 16).

Tūrangawaewae

“Bloom is a journey – a journey towards home.”
– Kelly Ana Morey, (*Pistacchi* “Morey in Conversation”)

Feminist geographer Linda McDowell suggests, “the term ‘the home’ must be one of the most loaded words in the English language” (71), and the way in which Morey uses the term in the quotation above is a quintessential example of this. The concept of “home” in *Bloom* is multifaceted: it is a term that refers to both physical and emotional spaces, and

¹⁰⁶ In her autobiographical fragment *A Home In This World*, Robin Hyde wrote, “I know now what I am looking for. It is a home in this world. I don't mean four walls and a roof on top...As often as not...four walls and a roof get in the way, are the very point where one is fatally side-tracked from ever having a home in this world. I want a sort of natural order and containment, a centre of equipoise, an idea – not a cell into which one can retreat, but a place from which one can advance...” (14).

one that recognizes, as Theano Terkenli does, that “Home is a multidimensional and profoundly symbolic term that cannot be mapped as an exclusively spatial concept, but can be depicted as one aspect of human emotional territory” (327). The individual and collective journeys the “women Spry” make towards “home” become a “collage of overlapping and ever-transforming personal and collective geographies” (Terkenli 324), which, once layered upon each other, become an intense commentary on the loaded nature of the term “home.” According to Terkenli, “Home has been defined first and foremost as a spatial context and the basis of one of the most fundamental geographical dichotomies: home versus nonhome” (325). Because Morey conceptualizes *Bloom* as a “journey towards home,” that journey manifests in a move physically from nonhome to home, and symbolically from a sense of homelessness to a sense of feeling “homed.” In terms of physical space, this means a move for Algebra, Rose, Hebe and Connie from outside of the physical geographical space of the Goshen Hotel, then back to it, and in terms of psychological space it means a move for all four women from a feeling of rootlessness to a feeling of rootedness. Terkenli writes,

Rootedness is [an] inherently geographical concept and is central to the notion of home. Rootedness has acquired temporal, cultural, and psychological connotations in its everyday use. The word describes a state of mind or being in which a person’s whole life and pursuits are centered around a broadly defined home. The core meaning of rootedness is found in the sense of literally belonging somewhere. (329)

This concept of “rootedness” within a Māori context is best understood as the need for “tūrangawaewae” which “literally means “a place to stand” and a communal place to return to for ceremonial occasions” (Kearns 419). Witi Ihimaera says the concept of tūrangawaewae

acknowledges that we [Māori] have a pito, an umbilical, that, whether we like it or not, or whether we want it or not, replenishes us. It informs our works and makes it Māori. After all, that is what people say about the pito. Wherever it is planted, it always reminds you that wherever one goes in

the world or whatever happens to you, you have a people and a place to return to; a life to which you belong, whether you know it or want it. (17)

This pito that ties the women Spry to the Goshen Hotel and to the land it sits upon is an emotional connection, traced through a complicated genealogy/whakapapa of both blood and destiny.

Understanding this concept of the pito and the concepts of home and homelessness from the Māori perspective also means recognizing that

having a dwelling and being homeless are not mutually exclusive categories...someone who is inadequately housed and merely has shelter may, conceivably, feel at home in that residence. Conversely, someone who, by objective criteria, is well-housed but is, at the same time, fearful or distant from friends and family may not feel at home. This observation invokes *metaphorical* homelessness, the application of the homelessness concept to a state of being to which it is imaginatively, but not literally, applicable. Someone metaphorically homeless might be adequately housed but spatially removed from their acutely felt sense of home. (Kearns 420)

In all these senses of the word, then, Algebra (Mrs. Spry) spends a great deal of her life “homeless.” As a three-year-old child she renders herself (literally) homeless when she accidentally torches her family home while playing with matches, and (figuratively) homeless when this same accident incinerates her sleeping parents, leaving her without any known family to care for her. When she arrives on the doorstep of Jeremiah Spry’s Jerusalem Street house fifteen years later to begin her illustrious career as both a nude model for his pornography business and a common-law wife for his bed, Algebra “saw deprivation gathering people just like her to its breast. She had no intention of joining them” (47). For Algebra, whose mantra is “All I have to do is survive” (49), Jeremiah Spry is little more than “a means to an end” (47) - a man to provide shelter, sustenance, and protection from the deprivation lurking in the post-World War I economic depression taking place outside his studio doors.

The house in which they lived on Jerusalem Street was a “place they called home” (46), but it had no relationship to “tūrangawaewae” – no pito tying its inhabitants to the dwelling itself or the land beneath it. For years, the Jerusalem Street house had provided shelter, acting as “a sanctuary, a place of safety” (62), but eventually Algebra, Jeremiah, and later their friend Han had “filled it to the brim with their histories. No more could possibly be contained within its thick protective walls” (62). By the time Jeremiah Spry died from drunkenness and exposure, Algebra had nearly ruined herself through opium addiction, and Han (who had won the Jerusalem house from Jeremiah in a high-stakes game of mah jong) was at his wits’ end trying to raise Algebra’s child Rose, it was time for the house on Jerusalem Street to change hands with a “minimum of drama” (62). When Han lost the deed to the Jerusalem Street house in a gambling bet, and won the Goshen Hotel and Bar in yet another, it was clearly “time to leave” (62). Algebra was ready, begging Han to “take me away, take me away from here” (61). She was no longer in need of only a house; she was desperately in need of a home.

Whakamā

The depth of Algebra’s sense of homelessness in the years previous to her move to Goshen can best be understood in light of the Māori concept of whakamā. According to Dame Joan Metge, there is no one English word that adequately translates whakamā, but the concept is most commonly associated with the adjectives “embarrassed” and “ashamed” (*In and Out* 30) and it “is bound up with the lack or loss of mana in relation to others” (*In and Out* 32). While there are many causes of whakamā, the most important in relation to Algebra’s situation is “recognition of fault” (*In and Out* 46). Metge claims people “become whakamaa when and because they recognize or are told that they have done something ‘wrong,’ whether their fault entails a breach of social conventions, the

community’s moral code, the law, or simply their own standards” (*In and Out* 47).¹⁰⁷

Algebra grows up feeling “guilt had replaced her soul” (53) because she believes, in spite of her young age at the time of the accident, she is responsible for her parents’ deaths. She carries this guilt both emotionally (she feels “haunted” (54) by the accident) and physically (she is horrifically scarred because “they took me away and burnt my arms with hot matches so I wouldn’t light any more fires” (54)).

In *In and Out of Touch: Whakamaa in Cross Cultural Context*, Metge emphasizes that while it is possible for people like Algebra to feel whakamā “even when other people do not know or notice...the presence of witnesses nearly always increases the intensity of whakamaa experienced” (*In and Out* 33). In Algebra’s case there was an entire community who witnessed her fault, blamed her, and then severely punished her for the act. Her scarred arms are a continual reminder to her of that fault and of the community which bore witness to it. According to John Tairua, “whakamaa occurs when your feeling of self-worth is totally shattered” (qtd. in Metge *In and Out* 61), and it is in this shattered state that Algebra grows up. When Han reflects on the horror of Algebra living her entire life under the weight of this shame and guilt – and the resulting state of whakamā - he feels, “his own hardships...paled into insignificance beside her acceptance of what had been done to her and what she had committed” (54). He recognizes that Algebra is a very sick young woman “intent on destroying [her]self” (50), and who must be given help and support if she is going to cure the whakamā that ails her.

Metge believes whakamā “is an affliction – a sickness which ‘strikes’ people” (*In and Out* 94). The most common consequence of this kind of sickness is

The disruption, whether partial or complete, of social interaction. In all but the mildest cases those who become whakamaa withdraw from both physical contact and the social round. They drop out of circulation and put up an invisible wall around themselves. Literally and figuratively,

¹⁰⁷ In *In and Out of Touch*, Metge spells whakamā “whakamaa” instead of using a macron.

the whakamaa are out of touch. They are “out on their own”, cut off from social support just when they need it most. As Kepa Toko said: “If you are whakamaa, you are not prepared to face anyone.” (Metge *In and Out* 108)

After the house fire Algebra is literally cut off from and out of her community – spending the fifteen years between the accident and when she meets Jeremiah in a series of foster homes. She therefore arrives at the house on Jerusalem Street without any ties to family or friends and wishing “more than life itself” (50) that she could “leave herself behind” (50). Believing she had “given her soul away a long time ago” (50), Algebra turns to prostitution, pornography, and finally the oblivion of opium addiction to try to drown out the “the demons...the nightmares, riding in on the tails of sleep, skeletal warhorses, chanting ‘murderess’ louder and louder and louder” (48). Even the birth of her daughter, Rose, cannot induce Algebra to leave her drug-induced stupor, and according to Han, “as his darling Rose grew, fast and strong, so too did the emptiness inside Algebra” (59). After Rose’s birth, Algebra stopped leaving the Jerusalem Street house at all, refused everyone’s company except for Han’s, and slowly became “more and more remote, a still-life in the gilded frame...increasingly oblivious to her daughter” (60) – all classic symptoms of a woman feeling the severe effects of whakamā.

Interestingly, Algebra’s whakamā seems to be passed down to her daughter Rose. As a child, Rose is rarely acknowledged or even recognized by her mother. Han insisted that she “attended school regularly, but her participation was so minimal that she almost fancied sometimes that she did not exist at all” (63). This sensation of non-existence manifests in Rose throughout her life, leading her to continually make choices that isolate her from her family and community members. During her childhood years in Goshen, Rose “found herself a stranger adrift among buildings and people she didn’t recognize from one minute to the next” (73). When she moves to the city to go to art school, she chooses not to live in the student dormitories, but in a small apartment above the Earthly

Paradise Shop owned by Han's friends Mr. and Mrs. Chin. Once pregnant with Hebe, Rose stops going to classes altogether and "spent her last days before motherhood daydreaming and looking out the window at the endless stream of traffic that poured by her little sanctuary above the Earthly Paradise" (202). During those university and pregnancy years Rose "chose not to keep in touch with Han and Mrs. Spry [Algebra]" (213), and when she and her partner Elias move to a commune she "never did write" (239) to the Chins. Once at the commune, Rose does not connect with any of her fellow community members, and her relationship with Elias deteriorates quickly. Their disastrous partnership ends in a fatal car crash when Elias "back-handed [Rose], smashing her nose and top lip" and Rose began hitting him "blindly, furiously" (234). The scuffle leads to Elias losing control of the car, causing an accident that instantly kills him and leaves Rose unconscious and suffering from severe memory loss.

While Rose tries to tell herself "what had really killed Elias was the badness in his heart" (236), the accident nonetheless leaves her feeling *whakamā* akin to that felt by her mother before her. She refuses to see or touch her children, or to talk to anyone who comes to visit her in the hospital. She says her life "feels over" (243), and her "grief at the loss of herself...had become etched into the granite of her face like a haunting" (243). After the accident Rose completely withdraws, narrating the story of her life and the accident "with no sense of her own connection to and with these circumstances" (243). She is so far removed from her loved ones that it takes her two and a half years to even remember her daughter Connie's name, opting instead to refer to her as simply "Baby Spry." If it was not for the continuous love and support of her beloved childhood friend Eli Wairangiwhenua, who fetched her from the hospital, stopped her from giving away her children, and brought her back to Goshen, Rose's *whakamā* would have resulted in the permanent loss of her family.

Unfortunately, the move back to Goshen did not stop this legacy of whakamā from being passed on to Rose's eldest daughter, Hebe. Like her mother before her, Hebe gets involved with a man who physically abuses her. Carrying on her mother's lesson of self-imposed isolation, she refuses for a long time to share her pain or grief with any of her family members. When pushed by Connie to explain her many visible lesions and bruises, Hebe tells the family that she has become "increasingly clumsy" (182) and blames a series of accidents for her black eyes, her broken collarbone, and for the belly full of glass she gets from "falling" through a French door. Like her grandmother Algebra, Hebe is left covered in "a cobweb of scars" (102), and like her mother she is "saved" by Eli Wairangiwhenua who comes to Hebe's husband's farm one night (after hearing rumour of a particularly brutal beating) and "kills the fuckin' bastard" (183). Having done what he saw as his duty, Eli brought the now-widowed Hebe back to her home at the Goshen Hotel, leaving it to her kinswomen to start to treat her for the whakamā that had descended upon her.

According to Len Wallace, "Try as you may, if you are whakamaa, there is nothing you can do about it, unless someone else does it for you" (qtd. in Metge *In and Out* 94). The treatment of whakamā therefore requires community, family – whānau. While suffering from whakamā, "the sufferer's associates keep a watchful eye on her, providing support by their presence" (*In and Out* 100), a role filled in *Bloom* by the women Spry when they are not suffering from whakamā themselves, by the ever-dedicated Han who brought Algebra to Goshen so "the [memories and the nightmares] can't find you" (61), and by Eli who becomes almost synonymous with the healing nature of Goshen itself. It is in the fostering of these two as the helpmates and healers of the women Spry that Morey challenges traditional definitions of whānau and whakapapa. It is these men – who are not "blood" kin – who bring the women time and time again back to Goshen "the land of light

and plenty” – the only place the women Spry ever feel “homed” enough to battle their struggle with whakamā.

Whakapapa

There is an overwhelming sense of fate and destiny embedded in Han’s decision to move the Spry family to Goshen. When Han wins the Goshen Hotel and Bar,¹⁰⁸ which is, according to Morey, named for the Biblical land of Goshen – “the land of light and plenty in the Old Testament” – it seems “like the perfect place for hope to be located” (“Book-Club Conversation”). It also seems like an overt fulfilment of Algebra’s reoccurring nocturnal dreams of living in “a land filled with light and abundance” (50). According to Keri Hulme, “Dreams, are messengers, messages – we as a people, the Māori people, set great store by our dreams” (26). Algebra’s dreams therefore make the move to the Goshen Hotel and Bar appear more of a returning than an arrival. This sense of returning is accentuated both by an astrologer cryptically telling Han shortly before the move, “Leaving by journeying back is as good a beginning as any” (63), and by the fact that Algebra’s daughter Rose “remembered everything” when she “felt the land [at Goshen] beneath her feet” (73). What exactly Rose “remembers” is unclear, but her connection to the land at Goshen is immediate and seemingly deeply rooted. It is only standing on the land at Goshen that Rose feels grounded and able to fight the whakamā she feels when she does not have the ground directly beneath her feet.

All of this begs the question: Is Goshen the women Spry’s “home”? Algebra claims to “not remember” (54) the details of her upbringing. Her childhood memories are something she cannot seem to “pluck from the ether of the past” (48), and when asked about her parents she says they are only “a man and a woman whose faces she couldn’t

¹⁰⁸ Goshen is first mentioned in the Old Testament in Genesis 45:10 when it is promised by Joseph to Jacob as land for he and his people to settle. At the time it was promised it was “the best of the land” (Genesis 47:6, 11) and this is where Jacob’s family lived until the Exodus.

recall” (48). While there is no direct sense in which readers are led to believe that Goshen is the place that Algebra lived as a child (she has no literal recognition of the place when she arrives with Han and there seems to be no collective memory in the town of a child burning down a home with her parents inside), there is a metaphoric sense that she “belongs” in Goshen, a sense that is reinforced by the way in which she enters the hotel for the first time:

Algebra squared her shoulders and marched up the front stairs and through the open door into her new home. Open-mouthed with amazement, Rose and Han followed. Inside, men were hard at work. The foreman supervising the transfer of the bedroom furniture to the upper floor paused as Algebra strode into the hallway. A pair of swallows flitted above their heads towards the open door, twittering agitatedly. In the dusty, cobwebbed gloom of the hall with the light behind her, it was impossible for the foreman to discern her features. Later he would confide to his German shepherd that it was as if the light shone from, not merely around, her in a golden halo. (68)

Within a Māori context,

A newly built house, ornamented and fresh, would be considered *tapu* – unsafe, prohibited, raw with spirit and inaccessible to the common touch of people. Making the place *noa* [safe] – ‘blessing’ it in current terms – would involve ritual, and the crossing of the threshold, usually by a high-born woman. Her special form of *tapu* would counter the energies within the house, and thus render it *noa*, and safe for general entry. Such ritual continues to be observed today. (Te Awekotuku 27)

While the Goshen Hotel and Bar is far from new, Algebra’s crossing of the threshold is nonetheless dramatic, and infused with a sense of ritual and sanctity. She has come to inhabit this space and to make it her home – a home and a connection that it is possible she has acquired through carrying and giving birth to her daughter Rose.

Although Algebra herself “has no idea who Rose’s father was” (57), Nanny Smack thinks Rose is probably “a Māori” (250), and Connie comments that Hebe’s baby is “such a little Māori with those big brown eyes” (168) – even though neither Hebe nor her

husband Hugh have “known” Māori heritage. Couple these comments with the fact that Rose “remembers” when she is touching the land at Goshen (Karen Sinclair believes that “Māori spirituality is perhaps nowhere more evident than in their attachment to the land” (294)), and Morey seems to be liberally allowing for the possibility that Rose’s father had indigenous connections to the land and people of the Taranaki/Goshen region.

The fact that Morey intimates all of this background knowledge without ever “telling” her readers the “truth” about Rose’s ancestral heritage is a tribute both to the author’s contemporary understanding of the concept of whakapapa, and a nod to the very real fact that many “detrribalized” Māori are not able to trace their direct line of ancestral descent (DeLoughrey 166). As Tipene O’Regan points out in his essay “Who Owns the Past?,” in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand “not many Māori people carry much more than a sense of their culture’s history; there are few who can really be said to be steeped in the tribal past. This absence of knowledge is destabilizing...It fosters the sense of dispossession and dislocation that is so much a part of modern Māori existence” (339). Morey’s refusal to root Rose and her daughters in a specific *written* genealogical history re-enacts this sense of destabilization for her readers – we are denied knowledge that the characters themselves may or may not have access to. In the end, however, Morey leads us to understand that this kind of Western knowledge of a family tree is irrelevant in the context of *Bloom*, and irrelevant to each character’s sense of personal and cultural survival. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey points out in her discussion of whakapapa in her book *Routes and Routes*,

Unlike the noun “genealogy,” which signifies an originary moment or ancestor, whakapapa, an intransitive verb and noun, suggests a performative rendering of meta-physical history rather than a static or essentialist lineage system. Its connotations of layering and movement suggest Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomorphous system of relation, based upon lateral and multiple ruptures that incorporate connections between all life forms and inanimate matter. (164)

DeLoughrey's comment about the connection between "all life forms and inanimate matter" helps illuminate the Spry women's connection to the land at Goshen, and "suggests a dynamic alternative to anthropological tracings of genealogy by cognatic or blood descent to a larger and more complicated methodology of political alliance, migration, and settlement" (168). In *Bloom*, Morey seems to be adopting this broader conception of whakapapa.

Conceptualizing the role of whakapapa in *Bloom* also necessitates understanding, as DeLoughrey does, that while there are many similarities between Western/Pākehā notions of genealogy and Māori whakapapa,

the two systems of historical reckoning differ in their translations of space and place. Whakapapa are produced in both arboreal and rhizomatic forms; defined as a layering of ancestry and orally transmitted, they have been historically produced in far more complicated ways than the vertical descent modalities that were introduced with written technology to Aotearoa. In fact the English words "descent" and "ascent" suggest, like written genealogical trees, a corporeal history that is rendered from top to bottom, signifying a linear human trajectory from past to present. (DeLoughrey 163)

This dynamic system therefore allows for whakapapa to "be challenged or revised" and to "incorporate new honorary members" (DeLoughrey 164), a conceptualization of whakapapa that seems at the heart of Morey's continuous drive to raise the blood-ties issue in *Bloom*.

This challenge to Western notions of genealogy and kinship asserts itself most prominently in Morey's refusal to place the ghost/spirit character Nanny Smack in any arboreal fashion into her pointedly ambiguous recounting of the women Spry's whakapapa. When Nanny unexpectedly appears, floating high in the rafters of the Spry family kitchen in Goshen, there is no recognition of her as a "ghost of Spry's past," nor any indication that she has a direct ancestral/tribal connection to the family. In this sense she immediately becomes both everyone's "Nanny," and no one's – a character who is

contemporary and historic, common and mythic, and one who offers a test to the boundaries of Western notions of genealogy, kinship, and ancestry. In this way, Nanny becomes a classic trickster figure because, as Gail Jones says, “trickster challenges our boundaries” and therefore “remains a popular figure for those negotiating ethnocentric barriers, including linguistic ones” (110).

Morey’s boundary-crossing Nanny is therefore best understood within conceptualizations of whakapapa that move far beyond “the recitation of the (literal) making of layers of descent” (Te Awekotuku 31), and into a realm where whakapapa encompasses “a network of kin and ancestry that extends far beyond the human world” (DeLoughrey 180-81). If we take into account, as Ngahuia Te Awekotuku does, that the naming of whakapapa goes beyond the naming of the original Eastern Polynesian ancestors and back to “the gods and goddesses themselves” (31), Nanny’s connection to Connie’s whakapapa becomes one of metaphysical time, space and place. According to DeLoughrey, “to assert that Papatuanuku is an ancestor of all Māori is to broaden the descriptors of indigenous kinship and naturalize settlement. In this sense it has been argued that all Māori are genealogically connected” (181). It is in this sense that Nanny Smack becomes a very real member of Connie’s whakapapa, and a symbol of the way in which whakapapa carries with it “both the past and the present” and is “the vehicle of our future” (O’Regan 338).

Nanny Smack: Kehua and Kaumatua

To fully appreciate Nanny’s pivotal role in *Bloom* it is necessary to understand the nature of kehua, or ghosts. Keri Hulme believes “to understand kehua, you need an idea of how we [Māori] thought – and think – of the human body and soul” (26). In her essay, “Myth, Omen, Ghost and Dream,” Hulme explains,

You are made up of several bodies. There is your body of flesh. This is rendered alive by the impersonal vital force –

hau – which is mostly translated as “breath” or essence... you have a personal power or property called mana, which is partly inherited, partly decreased or increased by your own actions... Then you have a wairua – an unseen double, a soul-shadow, your own spirit... If your wairua, through natural death or a too-sudden waking, becomes detached from your body, it can then be thought of as a kehua, a ghost. (26-27)

Although Nanny makes only sporadic appearances as a kehua in the novel, her spirit is central to the entire narrative, a fact reinforced by Morey’s claim that “Nanny was with me every day as I wrote and thought and storylined” (*How to Read* 34). In fact, it was with Nanny’s character that *Bloom* was born. According to Morey, while she was pottering around her kitchen one day waiting for writerly inspiration to strike, “My father’s oldest sister – Auntie Biddy – our Melbourne kuia – pop-pop-popped into the kitchen one evening while I was cooking dinner and said, ‘Kia ora Cookie, need a hand,’ and I’m fairly sure the rest of Nanny Smack showed up the next day” (“Book-Club Conversation”).

Two days later Morey had completed what would become Chapter 18 of *Bloom*, the chapter in which Nanny Smack arrives for her first visit with the women Spry:

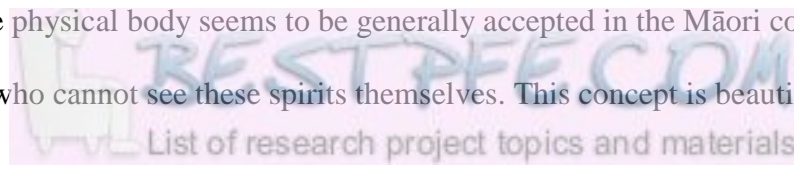
Nanny Smack moved in with us some time after her tangi... The ghost commandeered a corner of the kitchen, hovering willfully through our sleep-soaked yawns and the clanking of silver on china, as Hebe ploughed her way with stoic determination through breakfast... Twice Hebe started to speak. She would get as far as ‘Mum, why...’ only to be silenced by the crash of the porridge pot in the sink... Obviously Rose was not to be drawn on the subject of why there was a ghost situated halfway up the wall between the refrigerator and the hot-water cupboard. (110)

When Mrs. Spry enters the kitchen a few minutes later, her mouth “puckered momentarily in a charade of constructing a coherent and logical explanation for a slightly tatty spectre inhabiting the kitchen on a Monday morning. Mrs. Spry struggled with the visage of the crocheting ghost, abandoned logic and settled on being polite... ‘Tea anyone?’” After this first appearance Nanny comes and goes from the Spry household, rarely garnering notice

from anyone but Connie who is quite happy to carry on long conversations with her “new friend” (113). As a *kehua*, Nanny provides a means for Morey “to cultivate a larger sense of the real, a sense that transcends the magical realist label; the intermingling of mythic and mundane becomes another expression of a multifaceted world view” (J. R. Smith 17).

Other *kehua* in the novel manifest in the form of Nanny’s randy relation, Uncle Pihopa (who even in his ghostly state is still “one for the girls” (154)), Han (who frequently comes back to visit with Mrs. Spry long after his death), Circus, the family dog (whose spirit stands guard “on the threshold of the Goshen Hotel” (31)), and the many ghosts who “mumbled away to each other peaceably” (116) in neighbour Nanny Wai’s house. All of these *kehua* are accepted without question into the everyday lives of the non-spirit characters. For the Spry and Wai families the *kehua* are a real and natural part of their lives, and Morey refuses to intimate that there might be any other reasonable response to their presence (such as disbelief, fright, or revulsion).

This acceptance of spirit presences in and amongst the lives of the living is not unique to the Spry *whānau*, nor is it a strictly ancient belief. The acceptance of encounters between spirits and living people is rooted in Māori religious beliefs about the afterlife of the human spirit, and honouring these beliefs is very much a part of modern Māori cultural survivance. According to Dr. R.A. Barker in the introduction to the book *The Undiscovered Country: Customs of the Cultural and Ethnic Groups of New Zealand Concerning Death and Dying*, “In Māori culture, people believe that everyone has a *Te Taha Wairua*. This is the life force of a person. It is the non-material spiritual part, or the ‘vital essence.’ To Māori, the *Te Taha Wairua* determines who you are, and where you come from. Also, it determines where you are going and it gives you a vital link to the ancestors” (3). The belief that this non-material spirit of a person continues to exist after the death of the physical body seems to be generally accepted in the Māori community, even by those who cannot see these spirits themselves. This concept is beautifully



illustrated in the following passage from Māori storyteller Tahu Potiki's essay, "People Who See."

I am a Māori...I can't see what some of the others can...
There are people I know who have experiences that many of us, Māori and Pākehā, would find hard to live with. These people see those who have gone before. They don't see them as visions or ghosts – those semi-transparent figures of popular mythology. No, their ghosts are as solid as you or me.

It all seems so normal, so ordinary to people with the ability to see. Those with the vision might be out walking and be joined by a ghost, or a Jimmy, as we call them. They might be driving and see a dead relative or friend standing at the side of the road. They will stop and pick them up, take them where they want to go, enjoy a kōrero (talk) with them.
(Shanks and Potiki 62)

Connie, Rose, Mrs. Spry and the Wais "see" *kehua* in the sense that Tahu Potiki describes in this passage. Although Connie calls Nanny Smack "my ghost" (13), the ghosts in *Bloom* are much more than spooky, frightening spectres. Nanny's presence as a "solid" spirit – one who interacts with her family and who seems to get older and more faded each year (14) – subverts the Western notion of the word "ghost." Nanny is not haunting the Spry family, she is living with them.

As an accepted member of the family, Nanny also takes on the natural role of the Goshen Hotel *kaumatua*. According to Cleve Barlow,

Today, the word *kaumatua* refers to male tribal leaders who act as spokesmen on the *marae*, and who are the keepers of the knowledge and traditions of the family, sub-tribe, or tribe. In days of old, the term had a more specialized meaning. A *kaumatua* was the reincarnation of a person who had acquired a supernatural or godly status after death, and who had become the protector of the family. The reincarnated spirits of illustrious ancestors acquired supernatural powers and through these powers were able to return to earth to direct and influence the affairs of the family they had left behind. (40-41)

In the creation of Nanny Smack, Morey modernizes (and feminizes) the definition of a *kaumatua*, while at the same time busies her character with responsibilities associated with

the role “in days of old.” Nanny is “able to return to earth and to direct and influence the affairs” of the Spry family frequently and seemingly at will. She is constantly giving Connie advice, “Why don’t you tell a real story instead of these whodunits?” (7), keeps herself busy “sorting out some disaffected Māori boys on the East Coast” (6) and says her job as a Hauhau is to “talk to the angels for Titoko” (134). Nanny Smack is “the keeper of the knowledge and traditions” of the land that Goshen sits upon. Because The Goshen Hotel is a women’s world (none of the women Spry, while living at the Hotel, have husbands or sons), it comes as no surprise that the Spry’s kaumatua comes in the form of an older woman, and not in the form of a male tribal leader. As it is in Grace’s *Dogside Story*, it is the women in *Bloom* who have the transformative vision to ensure the family’s hope for survivance.

Connie also affectionately calls Nanny Smack “kuia” (12), a Māori word most often translated as “old lady,” but that encompasses a wide range of complex cultural undercurrents. Ngahuia Te Awekotuku says,

Kuia (old women) were deeply involved in child-rearing; they looked after and taught the young, often from birth, a situation which continues today in rural communities. They never actually retired from working, though as age may have slowed them down, the engagement of one or many mokopuna (grandchildren) as helpers or apprentices ensured the jobs were done and the skills passed on. In this relationship, direct links of descent were not absolute; children and old people were drawn to each other, and just as different children were breast-fed by different mothers, so a child could be more emotionally attached to an aunt or a grandmother, than to her or his biological mother. Responsibility for the nurturing and raising of children was shared, both between age-peers and across generations.” (33)

Throughout the course of *Bloom*’s narration, Nanny takes on this traditional care-taker role. She first meets Connie when the young girl is still in a high chair and instantly fills the maternal void left in the wake of Rose’s neglect.¹⁰⁹ Although no direct line of blood

¹⁰⁹ From the moment the baby is born Rose has little interest in Connie, forgetting to register her birth (110) and then subsequently taking two and a half years before she remembers what she named the child. (112).

descent is ever drawn between Nanny and Connie, their connection is immediate and powerful. Connie is clearly the mokopuna who is chosen as an apprentice to “ensure the jobs were done and the skills passed on” (Te Awekotuku 33). In return, an adult Connie looks after the increasingly frail Nanny Smack because, according to Mason Durie, “the positive role of older Māori represents a reciprocated arrangement whereby younger people use the skills of older relatives and in turn provide care and support” (85).

The most important aspects of Nanny and Connie’s reciprocal relationship of care, however, go far beyond issues of the physical. Nanny recognizes from her first meeting with Connie that the young girl is a “little ahi kā” (117) – a designation that carries a multitude of meanings and responsibilities in a Māori context. Ahi kā is literally defined as “burning fire” (Mead 359) and relates to the “ongoing occupation of [tribal] land” (Attwood and Magonwan 164). According to Hirini Moko Mead, the principle of ahi kā encompasses the idea “of keeping one’s claims warm by being seen (the principle of kanohi kitea, a face seen) and by maintaining contact with the extended family and the hapu” (41). Historically speaking,

Māori oral tradition tells that Māori tribes and subtribes held land by occupation and use. The traditional relationship between Māori and land was thus usufructuary rather than proprietary in the English sense. There is no suggestion of tenure and estates as legal notions prior to the colonial period. Land could be acquired in a number of ways: by ancestral claim (*take tūpuna*), by occupation (*take ahi kā*), by gift (*take tuku*), or by conquest (*take raupatu*). Once established, claimed land could be held by either actual occupation or by nominal occupation signified by maintenance of fires (*ahi*: fire; *ka*: lighting or burning) as selected sites within the claimed area while members of the tribe were off hunting, on war parties, or traveling. (Kotaka, Chen and Callies 231)

In *Bloom*’s contemporary context, it is Connie, the “ahi kā” who “burns bright and true” (174), and who is charged with “keeping the home fires burning in the land of light and abundance” (88). It is her responsibility to be the keeper not so much of the family land,

but of the Spry family’s stories and history. “That’s your job, Connie. To remember” (14), Nanny says to her honorary mokopuna, “It’s your job...to keep the home fires burning” (14). Because of this, in the months leading up to her death, “Mrs. Spry spent the long afternoons of her final winter in Goshen transferring the things that she no longer wished to remember, to [Connie]” (37) who “spent many hours sitting with Mrs. Spry, in the garden, in her room, but mostly in the familiarity of the kitchen in those last months: collecting her words” (82).

Connie’s role as the family’s ahi kā is established in the first few pages of the novel when she asks Nanny Smack, “Where are you going to put all this information when you run out of room in your head?” (7) and,

Nanny pats her kete with one hand and looks long and hard at me with her kauri-gum eyes. Stupid question. Where indeed would she put the stuff she has in her head, the knowledges that are as much a part of her as breathing?

‘Think of it as downloading to hard copy,’ she suggests playfully. Eternally abreast of the times.

Lucky old me. (7)

Connie spends the majority of *Bloom*’s narrative fluctuating between viewing her role as the family ahi kā as a gift – and viewing it as a burden. In the end she heeds Nanny’s directive to “do her job,” returning to Goshen after a hiatus in Auckland to tend the family fires of memory and history.

The Lit Fire of History and Remembering

“We know that there’s no such thing really as an objective fact. Newspapers don’t argue that way though. They pretend as if there is an objective truth and they’ve just discovered it.

But...you know how simplistic[ally] experiences are presented [in news stories].”

– Gerald Vizenor (qtd. in Blaeser 78)

Morey says she “loved that idea of [Connie] being the lit fire of history and remembering” (“Book-Club Conversation”) because she believes, “without history all is

lost” (“Book-Club Conversation”). It is a wry view of history that is presented in *Bloom*, however, one that constantly draws attention to just how subjective and malleable personal, community, and national histories can be. The novel is foregrounded by the epigraph:

We create history out of memory and fiction as much as from fact. Portraits and the family album are the residue from which we reconstruct famous identities, loved ones and even ourselves.

Clare Williamson, *Artlink* (*Bloom*, epigraph)

The quote draws pointed attention to the postmodern idea that both history and fiction can be “seen to derive their force more from verisimilitude than from any objective truth; they are both identified as linguistic constructs, highly conventionalised in their narrative forms” (Hutcheon 105). Morey illustrates this point most literally in the heated debates the women Spry have over the origins of a picture in the family photo collection that Connie spends most of her life believing is Han. When Rose casually reveals to her one day that “it isn’t a photograph of Han...it was just a picture that I cut out of a history book” (137), Connie is shocked and horrified that she has been “tricked” all these years by her mother. She had constructed her entire visual image of Han from this picture because “Han had already taken to his bed by the time [Connie’s] baby eyes changed colour and learned to focus, and he died before [she] crawled or spoke” (99). This leaves Connie feeling she doesn’t “remember Han in any real sense...her memories of him are entirely fabricated, fictions tailored by three reluctant narrators and a framed sepia photograph in the hallway of the Goshen” (99).

This sepia portrait is the residue from which the women Spry “reconstructed a famous identity” (Williamson in *Bloom*’s epigraph) – Han’s identity – an identity that is ironically forged out of an old photograph of either Ho Chi Minh or Chairman Mao (105). The fact the women Spry can never even agree on whether or not the photo is of Ho Chi

Minh, Mao, or some other nameless man, further reinforces the fact that “[w]e create history out of memory and fiction as much as from fact” (Williamson in *Bloom’s* epigraph). Looking at the old photograph Connie wonders aloud, “Do you think if you believe in something enough you can make it happen?” (137). Rose responds by saying she wants the photograph to be of Han, and that “maybe that’s enough for me” (137). The bottom line for the women Spry is that the “true” origin of the picture doesn’t matter because, as Rose says, “You’d be surprised what people can believe if they want to” (105). This ambivalent view towards “truth” and “history” in many ways puts *Bloom* firmly in a postmodernist camp.

Literary theorist Linda Hutcheon believes “postmodern fiction does not ‘aspire to tell the truth’ as much as to question *whose* truth gets told. It does not so much associate ‘this truth with claims to empirical validation’ as contest the ground of any claim to such validation” (123). While it might appear that Morey is making light of this point in the humorous and playful way she interrogates the importance of unearthing the “truth” about the origins of the family portrait of “Han,” *Bloom*, like the works of Albert Wendt, interweaves “postmodern ‘play’ with ‘serious’ politico-cultural critique” (Keown *Pacific Islands* 201).¹¹⁰ The mouthpiece for this serious political critique in the novel is Nanny Smack, who, as the family kuia/kaumatua, is charged with passing on the stories and history of the Taranaki/Goshen region to Connie, the “little ahi kā” – stories she feels cannot be found in the girl’s high school textbooks. “Oh yes. I’m familiar with *this* version of events” (175, emphasis added), the kuia says as she looks at the Land Wars section of Connie’s history text, heavy-handedly reminding Connie that schoolbooks contain only one version – and in Nanny’s mind often a Pākehā version – of New Zealand’s complicated history. As a trickster figure, Nanny suggests an impulse “towards

¹¹⁰ The celebrated Samoan author Albert Wendt (1939-) was one of Morey’s creative writing teachers at the University of Auckland. For a detailed account of postmodernist experimentation in Wendt’s work see the concluding chapter, “Reinscribing the Polynesian Body,” to Michelle Keown’s *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Oceania* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

challenging the possibility of a unified perspective” and instead busies herself “disrupting perceived histories of oppression, and creating new narrative forms” (J. R. Smith 7). In order to drive this point home Morey cleverly positions Nanny’s character as a “Hauhau” (134), making her a metaphoric embodiment of the postmodern debate about “whose truth gets told” (Hutcheon 123).

Nanny and the Hauhaus

The Hauhaus were followers of Pai Marire – literally translated as the “good and peaceful” religion – a movement founded in 1862 by Te Ua Haumene, a Christian convert from Taranaki. Followers of Pai Marire believed that “the Angel Gabriel inspired Te Ua with a solution for the difficulties besetting Māori. Gabriel revealed a new religion...to replace the teachings of the missionaries, especially those that granted favour to the Pākehā” (K. Sinclair 22). Te Ua’s revelation occurred during a time of heightened fighting in Taranaki between Māoris and European settlers over land rights (Clark), and early Pākehā historian S. Barton Babbage believes that this hostile political climate was “prominent in accounting for the spread of the new religion” because “tribes, embittered by losses in men and property, were in a mood to welcome a new battle cry. It was a struggle to preserve their national existence” (9). Followers of Pai Marire believed in “God’s promise of the land to the Māori, just as He had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham” (Rosenfeld 150) and members of the religion and its offshoots, the Ringatu and Wairua Tapu movements therefore “looked to angels to redeem Aotearoa from the Pākehā” (Rosenfeld 147).

For obvious reasons, these beliefs frightened Pākehā settlers and government informants like Wanganui’s Native Resident Magistrate John White who reported to the Colonial Secretary and Native Minister Sir William Fox that Pai Marire followers believed that “people who adopt this religion will shortly drive the whole European population out of New Zealand” and that “legions of angels await the bidding of the priests to aid the

Māoris in exterminating the Europeans” (qtd. in Clark 13-14).¹¹¹ White’s descriptions were fuelled by reports of Pai Marire rituals which consisted of

Te Ua and his followers standing around a set of railings painted red, inside which stood the niu (ceremonial mast), right hands held up facing inwards as if in salute, singing the hymns of the new religion. During the rites, the angels of the wind would visit the faithful, making them invulnerable to the bullets of white men. When in battle, the soldiers of Pai Marire were instructed to raise their right hands, palm outwards, and utter the words “Pai Marire Hau Hau” (hence the appellation, “Hauhau”). (K. Sinclair 23)

Magistrate White asserted in his reports that “Te Ua was forming a Māori uprising and that his mission was to turn the people away from Christianity to a barbaric creed” (Rosenfeld 154). Pākehā fear and hatred of the Hauhau was perpetuated by exaggerated stories about the death of Carl Sylvius Volkner, “a missionary murdered at his church, decapitated, his eyes swallowed at his pulpit, his blood drunk from his chalice” (Clark vii) – a crime said to be perpetrated by the Hauhaus in 1865. In the eyes of the Colonial Secretary of the Native Department and other civil authorities, followers of Te Ua were a terrifying threat, leading to “the persecution of Pai Marire followers” (Rosenfeld 154) that resulted in the “burning of crops, pursuing villagers, and killing [of] Pai Marire leaders” (Rosenfeld 163).

While there is no detailed history of the Pai Marire/Hauhau movement included within the pages of *Bloom*, according to historian Paul Clark,

Almost every New Zealander knows something of the Hauhaus. The most common element in this knowledge is the assertion that the Hauhaus thought they could stop bullets with their hands, and that they killed the innocent missionary [Carl Sylvius Volkner]. These attitudes are fostered in the education of New Zealanders, and in popular and scholarly

¹¹¹ Neither of these statements was strictly true as converts did not believe they would drive the Pākehā out of New Zealand themselves, but instead that “the banishment was to be carried out by divine, not human agents” (Rosenfeld 150).

writing. Words like fanaticism, reversion, and barbarism abound. It is a wholly negative view, and is false. (vii)

These popular and scholarly writings often quote Sir William Fox describing Hauhauism as “one of the most terrible and disgusting superstitions that ever found lodgement in diseased brain or perverted heart” (Babbage 22), and/or the words of historian J. Cowan, who reported, “when the white fire of a fanatic religion fused the people in a federation of hate against the Pākehā, all problems merged into one – that of race mastery...it spread like a fire in dry fern; and we find tribes who had no grievance against the white man united in casting off semi-civilisation, and throwing themselves into the battle for Māori independence” (qtd. in Babbage 21).

Looking at these historical accounts, it is easy to see that

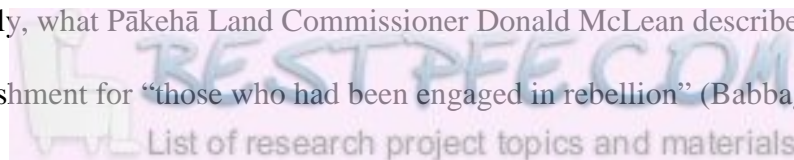
from an indigenous perspective, the destructive forces of colonialism may quite meaningfully be seen as a “textual experience” because after the sounds of solid weaponry had been heard at the frontiers, the pen took over the task of keeping the indigenous populations in the relegated position on the margins, or at the fringe. From there they could be systematically incarcerated and controlled as hostages of the written word. (Knudsen 37)

These early Pākehā settlers, government officials, and historians branded the Hauhau as uncivilized, heretic fanatics, a sentiment that is echoed even today in Robbie Whitmore’s extensive *New Zealand in History* website in which she states, “The Hauhau warriors were fanatically convinced that the cry of ‘Paimarire, hau hau’ in battle would ensure them protection from European bullets. This led to many reckless, daring and fearful feats during battle. Hauhau fighting was reputed to be the most fierce, intense, fanatic and feared during the New Zealand wars. Decapitating and cannibalism revived during this time” (“Hauhau”). Although Whitmore admits, “I am not a professional in the history field” (“About Me” *New Zealand in History*), she still feels confident asserting that the Hauhau were “fierce, intense, fanatic and feared” (“Hauhau” *New Zealand in History*) and that they perpetrated beheadings and cannibalistic acts – all claims that Paul Clark

disputes in his meticulously researched academic history of the Hauhau movement, *Hauhau: The Pai Marire Search for Māori Identity* (1975). Clark's academic historical text, like Morey's fictional work, *Bloom*, endeavours to deconstruct these negative Pākehā accounts and stereotypes of the Pai Marire/Hauhau movement and to replace them with stories that take into account indigenous perspectives on the religious movement. In this effort, Morey's work resembles many of Witi Ihimaera's short stories and novels in which "there is movement toward increasing control of knowledge, which in both traditions, Pākehā and Māori, means power" (K. P. Sinclair 304).

As Vizenor writes and Jeanne Campbell Reesman confirms, "tricksters do the work of rearticulation in society" (xii). In *Bloom*, Morey takes on this role, increasing Māori control of knowledge by presenting "the other side" of the land-war stories told in traditional Pākehā-authored New Zealand history books. While the *Encyclopaedia of New Zealand* remembers Pākehā military commander Gustavus Ferdinand von Tempsky for his "courage and daring" and as a man who "died at the zenith of his career" when he was "shot and mortally wounded by a concealed Hauhau marksman" ("Tempsky"), Nanny Smack remembers him as a man whose troops shot at women and children while taking over and burning her home, "the pa of the curved beak" (106). Native Resident Magistrate John White describes the Hauhau practice of speaking in tongues as "perfectly unintelligible jargon both to themselves and others" (Babbage 33) and Lieutenant Gudgeon of the Colonial Forces reports that "many veracious cannibals have assured me that it is a fact. The word Hau! is pronounced very abruptly, so as to sound like the bark of a dog" (Babbage 35), while Connie describes this ritual speak as an important means of spiritual communication and matter-of-factly tells her school teacher that Nanny "talks to angels for Titoko. That's her job" (134).

Similarly, what Pākehā Land Commissioner Donald McLean described as necessary punishment for "those who had been engaged in rebellion" (Babbage 28) – the



indefinite imprisonment of over 300 Māori, many Hauhau faithful, on the Chatham Islands – Nanny Smack describes as “those years us Hauhau were separated from our homelands on that god-forsaken island” (30). While Pākehā history books remember the Māori leader Te Kooti¹¹² as a “well known character” who “various traders knew as being somewhat light-fingered, and generally as a troublesome fellow” (F. W. Williams 236-37), Connie reverently calls him a prophet, and the land his home marae sits upon the “fertile land of kings and prophets” (29). In other words, as they were in Grace’s *Dogside Story*, in *Bloom* “Māori ways of doing things and of seeing are treated as normal, while Pākehā ways are often confusing, unaccountably complex, and unfriendly” (Whaitiri 555). Ultimately this discourse in *Bloom* frees Morey’s Māori characters from the primacy of written Pākehā histories. Nanny’s “rearticulations” of history underlie the fact that she “survived in spite of and alongside the invention” – the manufactured settler invention of the “history” of the Hauhaus (Pulitano 162).

This does not mean, however, that Morey implies that asserting indigenous stories into “mainstream” New Zealand history is a simple or painless task. Nanny tells Connie that a Pākehā historian (much like the historian depicted in Morris’s “Rangitira”) once came to her, saying “he wanted my side of the story. He said that I was the last of my people, that we were dying out. So I told him about the land and about the hardships and he called me a witch anyway” (197). Nanny also reminds Connie that the nineteenth-century Hauhau battles are not only the battles of history, telling her honorary mokopuna, “Your books tell you that the Land Wars finished in 1870 or 1909 or whatever trendy new date the current crop of revisionists are putting their life savings on. But you know they’re wrong. Same war, still going, but a different way of fighting now. We’re all still Hauhau at heart, Connie. That never goes away” (14).

¹¹² Te Kooti Rikirangi (1830-1893) was a Māori military leader and founder of the Ringatu religion.

At times, this seemingly endless battle to recapture Māori land from the Crown (disputes fought today with lawyers and paperwork in the Māori Land Court instead of with warriors and weapons on the pa), depresses Connie who recalls “how much as a child I enjoyed [stories about] the Hauhau and their fight for their land. Now the knowledge fills me with sadness, hard and hot in the middle of my chest and I can hardly breathe” (107). Nanny concurs with this overwhelming sentiment, sadly telling Connie she fears she has been “fighting a losing war...and getting tired, you know. It’s getting harder and harder to believe that it will be okay, that we’ll get there in the end” (130).

The beauty of *Bloom*’s narrative (and perhaps its most subversive element) is that it does “get there in the end” (130). “It’s still about the land” (“Book-Club Conversation”), Morey says when she talks about issues of history, remembering and ahi kā roa in the Taranaki region, and this is perhaps why she allows her Māori characters to triumph in many small ways in the battle for land ownership and control in and around Goshen. In *Bloom*, it is the Māori characters who have control of the best land in the area. It is the “beautiful red-and-black flag that flew from the flagpole at the marae” (128) – the Māori flag – that can be seen far and wide in the Goshen region. The Pākehā school teacher, Alistair, is welcomed into the community, but symbolically “rents one of the houses that sit on marae land” (132), a privilege pointedly gifted to him by the indigenous people of the region. Even the farm that Hebe’s abusive and racist Pākehā husband claimed as his own turns out to be owned by the local iwi (182). All of these revelations are presented in the text by Connie and Nanny, and each is presented like a “trick” in the text. As readers, we are led by stereotype and assumption to believe that it is the Pākehā characters in the book who hold title for the land. The joke ends up being on the assuming reader when Connie reveals, “It was late autumn when the discovery was made that the Williams farm was only leasehold, and what’s more, the lease had only two years left to run in its

hundred-year tenure. The biggest kicker, though, was that it was Eli and Sissy’s crew who owned the lease” (182).

Intertextuality in *Bloom*: Park and Morey’s “Uncle Pihopas”

Morey and her trickster characters not only reclaim the Hauhau history of the Taranaki region, and the land beneath the characters’ feet, they also reclaim and revision the way Māori have been portrayed in the fiction of the Central North Island region. With her tongue firmly planted in her cheek, Morey adds ironic intertextual commentary of the “frightening” stereotypes of the Hauhau described in the previous section through the introduction of Nanny’s frequent kehua companion – “offsider” (151) Uncle Pihopa – a character Morey admits she “utterly stole...from the pages of Ruth Park’s novel *The Witch’s Thorn* (1951)” (“Book-Club Conversation”). Although he’s been “refurbished a bit” in *Bloom* (“Book-Club Conversation”), Uncle Pihopa is easily recognizable to readers familiar with Park’s earlier text. In both novels he is depicted as a grand “old Rangatira” (Park 84), who is constantly showing off his moko and other tattoos, and is continually getting into trouble with women. In *The Witch’s Thorn*, “Uncle Pihopa had gone on having new loves until he was eighty, and they had all been young women” (Park 77), a theme Morey picks up in her introduction to Uncle Pihopa in *Bloom* when Nanny Smack tells Connie, “We’ve had a bit of trouble with Uncle Pihopa recently, something to do with a district nurse in Picton. Women! Huh! He flashes them his scrawny tattooed buttocks and they come over all stupid like sheep...He was always a dirty little bugger” (13-14). Both Park and Morey’s uncles also display fiercely “querulous” dispositions (Park’s Uncle Pihopa picks fights in bars (18) and Morey’s Uncle Pihopa picks fights with Nanny over gambling bets (151)), suffer from life-threatening emphysema (Park’s Uncle Pihopa’s cough is always “banging explosively against his ribs” (59) and Morey’s Uncle Pihopa is constantly “breaking off into a fit of coughs that threatened to tear his chest

open” (152)), and finally, both are depicted – somewhat unsettlingly – as gleefully voracious cannibals.

This choice to incorporate Pākehā author Ruth Park’s character into *Bloom* is hardly a revolutionary narrative tactic on Morey’s part. As Janet Wilson writes in “Intertextual Strategies: Reinventing the Myths of Aotearoa in Contemporary New Zealand Fiction” (1998), Māori authors have long “engaged in a two-way cultural exchange – assimilating European texts and genres to their stories and recovering earlier legends and myths of the pre-European past – as both political act and self-empowering process” (272). This tactic of placing *Bloom* in conversation with an earlier Pākehā novel is also not unusual because, as Gerald Vizenor says, “Trickster tales are discussion in the best sense of the word. It’s engagement...It’s imaginative...It’s a discourse...It’s liberation...It’s life, it’s juice, it’s energy...But it’s not a theory, it’s not a monologue” (qtd. in Blaeser 162). Morey believes working with canonical/Western texts, and then challenging, corrupting, and/or revisioning them, gives her stories and novels a political power they would lack without such a sound meta-literary background. “I load everything,” Morey says, “some of its very contrived and I think about it and work it, but a lot of it just arrives inadvertently – instinctively. It’s this insidious little voice that just has to take the piss that always sneaks its way in to my work” (Pistacchi “Morey in Conversation”).

What is unusual, however, about the way Morey chooses to “take the piss” out of Ruth Park is what *The Witch’s Thorn* in general – and Uncle Pihopa specifically – represent in a historiographic sense. According to Wilson, “It is now commonly expected that the counter-discourses of the post-colonial novel aim to dismantle the imposed authority and assumptions of colonialism and to interrogate European textual containment” (271), but this “common aim” is complicated in *Bloom* by Morey’s seemingly ambivalent engagement with the highly politicized topic of Māori cannibalism.

An understanding of the highly subversive nature of this twist of intertextuality is therefore dependent on readers having some background knowledge of *The Witch's Thorn's* narrative, publication, and public reception as well as on the history of the Māori cannibalism debate in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The Witch's Thorn was authored by Ruth Park, a Pākehā New Zealander born in Auckland in 1917 and raised in Te Kuiti, a small town deep in the King Country (where, incidentally, Connie and Nanny Smack stop for fish and chips on their road trip back to Goshen in *Bloom*). In her survey of Park's life and works, fellow author Joy Hooton writes, "Familiarity with the two powerful, diverse cultures of Te Kuiti – Māori and European settler – was highly significant for Park's subsequent work" ("Ruth Park's Life and Works"), but this familiarity remained stuck in time due to Park's relocation to Sydney in 1942 where she remained for the majority of her adult life. Her expatriate status led to some heavy criticism in New Zealand including a review by "G.W." in the *Auckland Star*, 11 January 1950 "which suggested that she had found more colourful characters in Sydney slums than would be possible in New Zealand" and which "challenged her to write equally vividly about the country of her birth" ("Ruth Park" 429). Park attempted to meet this challenge with the vividly written *The Witch's Thorn*, set in Te Kano, a small King Country New Zealand town. In many ways Park had met G.W.'s challenge – *The Witch's Thorn* contains "full-bodied New Zealand flavour" (Gadd 141), but "seems more credible to foreign readers than to local ones. In part it reads as if it were directed at the tourist market" ("Ruth Park" 429). As Frank Gadd wrote in his *Landfall* review of the novel, "To the uncritical reader, particularly the overseas reader, to whom no doubt, it was primarily addressed, the whole story is acceptable" (141), and the novel therefore became "one of [Park's] 'best selling books outside of New Zealand'" ("Ruth Park" 429). For local reviewers like Gadd, however, *The Witch's Thorn* feels

“superficial...Unlike Frank Sargeson’s King Country, which is an experience, Ruth Park’s is a concoction” (141-42).

In a novel that is primarily concerned with the keeping and concocting of history, Uncle Pihopa’s role in *Bloom* is therefore a revisionist one. Ruth Park’s Uncle Pihopa is written for “the tourist market” (“Ruth Park” 429), one potentially hungry for stories full of stereotypical “native savages.” “As far as cannibals went,” Ruth Park writes in *The Witch’s Thorn*, “Uncle Pihopa was strictly big-time. Other elderly Māoris could boast of having had a fillet or two of minister or deacon in their time, but Uncle Pihopa had eaten a bishop” (15). Park’s reference to the alleged Hauhau killing of missionary Carl Sylvius Volkner (a story Paul Clark claims almost “every New Zealander” (vii) would have known something about) brings to the narrative table all of the questions raised in the previous section about the written (Pākehā) history of the Hauhau movement. It also brings into question issues surrounding the validity and accuracy of historical accounts of Māori cannibalism.

While it is not in the scope of this thesis to argue whether or not Māori practiced cannibalism in reality (this work having been done already by archaeologists and anthropologists such as William Arens, Gannanath Obeyesekere, Ian Barber and Paul Moon), it is within the scope of this argument to examine how cannibalism as cultural practice exists imaginatively in the New Zealand consciousness. Popular media suggests that there is widespread belief amongst Māori and Pākehā alike that the Māori did practice cannibalism – a belief largely perpetuated by histories such as Michael King’s best-selling *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (2003) which matter-of-factly states that Māori cooked and ate their enemies as “a ritual means of absorbing the mana of a vanquished foe” (97),¹¹³ and Ranginui Walker’s history, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou/Struggle Without*

¹¹³ The idea that Māori practiced cannibalism in order to consume a dead enemy’s mana is frequently challenged, most recently by AUT History Professor Paul Moon who claims in *This Horrid Practice* (Penguin, 2008) that Māori cannibalism was driven by “post battle rage.”

End (1990), which states, “Eating an enemy was more than a symbolic ingestion of mana. It was the ultimate debasement to be passed through the alimentary canal and emerge as excrement” (72).

These contemporary populist beliefs would have been fed by earlier histories, such as Edward Tregear’s 1904 publication, *The Māori Race*, which claims in a chapter titled “War, War Omens and Murder,” “After battle comes the terrible and revolting episode of the cannibal feast. It is unfortunately impossible to pass it over without notice, for Māori history is too full of allusion and incident connected with the practice for us to avoid mention of description of some of its horrors” (356). These horrors were described in detail in Garry Hogg’s 1958 book, *Cannibalism and Human Sacrifice*, in the following passage:

All the bodies were cooked on shore in the primitive Māori fashion of the day. They dig a hole in the earth two feet deep, in which they make a quantity of round stones red-hot with dry wood, after which they take out all the stones except a few at the bottom, over which they lay several alternate tiers of leaves and flesh, until there is as much above the ground as below. They then throw about two or three quarts of water over all, and confine the steam with old mats and earth so completely that in 20 minutes the flesh is cooked; it is in this way that they cook and cure all their provisions. (197)

In his essay, “‘British Cannibals’: Contemplation of an Event in the Death and Resurrection of James Cook, Explorer,” Gananath Obeyesekere says this kind of “discourse on cannibalism tells us more about the British preoccupation with cannibalism than about Māori cannibalism. The British discourse has to be understood in terms of a larger pervasive fantasy of cannibalism resulting from European socialization of the period” (641).

In a similar manner, Ruth Park’s descriptions of Uncle Pihopa’s cannibalistic gloatings: “By keriki, I eat them knuckles one by one. You never taste such knuckles. And when I come to the ring, by gory, I eat that too!” (15), and “By keriki, you think I stop to

ask his bloody name? I only know he taste like pigs' feet all over" (15), can be understood in light of a "larger pervasive fantasy of cannibalism" (Obeyesekere 641) written from the perspective of a Pākehā New Zealander schooled in a rural town in the 1920s who would have been closer to Tregear's published version of history than Obeyesekere's. Park's Uncle Pihopa is a two-dimensional stereotype depicted in a language of colonial representation who, "at the very thought of that succulent meal...had to suck fast to keep back the water" (Park 15). He is inserted into Park's text to provide comic relief in a book mired in grossly stereotypical Māori characters who are "bashful" (79), "ignorant" (79), "don't understand white people's ways" (175), think "nothing of taking in a few orphan children, husbandless women, stray aunts, and aged relatives" (67), have "greasy noses" (78) used to "nose-rub newcomers" (79), and many of whom are described as having "stomachs rolling like harmoniums" (78).

In response, Morey's adaptation of Park's caricature Uncle Pihopa is in part, pure black-comedic parody:

'See this, girlie,' [Uncle Pihopa said to Connie], tapping the slender stem of the pipe, sitting in a groove in his bottom lip. 'Made from a thigh-bone of a Pākehā baby.'

'Did you eat the baby first?' [Connie] asked....

Uncle Pihopa cackled appreciatively. 'Ai,' he said, 'and it was delicious.' (152)

Uncle Pihopa's comments are meant to be both shocking and humorous, leaving the scene to operate on two key levels. In part the exchanges in both *Bloom* and *The Witch's Thorn* are meant to horrify us at a profound, primal level – Park's cannibal eats clergy and Morey's cannibal eats Pākehā babies. Both authors play on their reader's expected sense of horror at the thought of these savage Uncle Pihopas ruthlessly killing and eating key symbols of innocence in Western societies. Within Morey's text, however, the characters refuse to take the bait. Connie, upon hearing Uncle Pihopa's story about eating the Pākehā

baby, turns away, saying she is “quite immune to the horrors of cannibalism thanks to Nanny and her endless stories” (152). She leaves Uncle Pihopa and, fittingly, goes into the kitchen where the rest of her family “were in various stages of breakfast” (152).

The conversation between Connie and Uncle Pihopa about eating Pākehā babies also importantly echoes an earlier scene in which Nanny tells a hysterical young Connie (who thinks she has just killed her Pākehā neighbour Stephen Bailey by clubbing him in the head), “Stop that bloody carrying on. Only a white boy, plenty more where he came from” (125). The reoccurring motif of the dispensability of Pākehā people is meant, in part, to be funny (there is, as discussed earlier, plenty of Pākehā blood in the Spry family tree). “The joke interweaves the different aspects (innocent, satirical, and sinister) of trickster fun – it makes these volatile, interchangeable...satire mingles with brutality and brutality flows into ‘just plain fun’” (Bercovitch 56).

As readers we might ask if we *should* be laughing at Nanny’s joke, leaving us to question “what and who we are laughing at (or with)” (Bercovitch 53). Tannen says, “The humor of the postmodern female Trickster is not the sarcastic biting humor meant to hurt, which is the shadow of humor. The humor...is revitalizing because it is playful, ironic, leaves one laughing at oneself and allows role playing and thus experimentation with alternative identities” (176). We laugh at ourselves because Nanny has tricked us into laughing when we think, perhaps, we should not be.

Uncle Pihopa and Nanny’s comments about the killing of Pākehā also reflect dark undercurrents in New Zealand history, however, a history in which settlers would have viewed Māori as the dispensable members of society and a hindrance to colonial expansion. In this sense, Morey’s text is therefore reminiscent of novels written by her creative writing teacher, Albert Wendt, texts in which “the postmodernist ‘playfulness’ of the narrative is [often] accompanied by a ‘serious’ and historicized engagement with race-relations politics” (Keown *Postcolonial Pacific* 32). As Jeanne Smith says, “the chief

value of parody is in exposing any one perspective, or any one language, as necessarily limited” (12), and this is precisely what Morey’s parody of Park’s Uncle Pihopa does. He is mocking Park’s depiction of Māori and of Māori cannibalism, and she is mocking what she feels will be her readers’ fascination with the cannibalism taboo.

In the mid-1990s there was a surge of academic interest in discussions surrounding issues of cannibalism, a trend critic Maggie Kilgour reflects on extensively in her essay, “Cannibals and Critics: An Exploration of James de Mille’s *Strange Manuscript*” (1997):

I recently participated in a “Symposium” at the University of Essex, on “Consuming Others: Cannibalism in the 1990s,” which featured presentations by a number of critics who have been exploring the implications of what William Arens first controversially called the “man-eating myth,” including Arens, Gananath Obeyesekere, Peter Hulme, Francis Barker, and Marina Warner. The fact that there exists such an interdisciplinary group concerned with this unsavory subject is significant. It is indicative of a current critical concern with our cannibal past – by which I mean not our savage prehistory, but rather the history of Western imperialism and its subsumption of so-called “cannibal societies” through “colonial discourse” which defines the “other” as primitive and barbaric. (20)

Ruth Park’s narrative does just this: it subsumes “so-called cannibal societies,” in this case, Māori society, “through ‘colonial discourse’ which defines the ‘other’ as primitive and barbaric.” In return, Morey cannibalizes Park’s text, revisioning Uncle Pihopa in her own novel – a metaphoric act which, if we believe Michael King, is “a ritual means of absorbing the mana of a vanquished foe” (King 97). In many ways Morey’s 2003 novel absorbs and redefines Uncle Pihopa’s presence in the New Zealand literary canon. For her, as it is for literary theorists such as Julia Kristeva, “intertextuality is a far cry from being taxonomic. In her eyes it is *a politically transformative practice*. In the last resort, hers is a political concept which aims at empowering the reader/critic to oppose the literary and social tradition at large” (Mai 41).



Finally, Uncle Pihopa's intertextual presence in *Bloom* is important because, as Kilgour states, "The cannibal is the perfect demon for a culture based on geographic and scientific expansion and progress, which yet fears its own consuming appetites and so displaces them onto others" (20). Ruth Park's version of Te Kano depicts a Pākehā society obsessed with pride, purity, and consumption of everything from alcohol, to consumer goods, to religious doctrines. The real "cannibals" in Park's story are the Pākehā characters who steadily consume the energy and life-blood of Bethell, the orphaned protagonist in the novel who is threatened, abused, and enslaved by nearly every Pākehā family that takes her in. Morey's Uncle Pihopa takes nothing from the people around him in *Bloom*, instead bringing stories, and – symbolically – gambling advice to Connie and Mrs. Spry.

Uncle Pihopa loves to gamble, especially at the horse races, "thoughtfully reading the form guide" (151) and offering betting advice to Nanny, Connie and Mrs. Spry. As a cannibal gambler, Morey's Uncle Pihopa offers an ironic twist to Nanny's earlier comment "that the Land Wars finished in 1870 or 1909 or whatever trendy new date the current crop of revisionists are putting their life savings on. But you know they're wrong" (14). Nanny's comment reminds us that historians are gambling – "putting their life savings" – on theories, including many theories proposed in the last twenty years about the "reality" of Māori cannibalism. Uncle Pihopa's character therefore becomes yet another way for Morey to drive home her themes of the constantly vacillating and unknowable nature of H/history. Like all tricksters, Morey's "multivalence and elusiveness suggest that because no one point of view is all-encompassing, all points of view, including those of the author, the narrator, the characters, and the reader or listener, together create the meaning of a story" (J. R. Smith 23). She, like Gerald Vizenor, writes texts which argue that "Native stories, totemic creations, and other forms of mental mapping are...the virtual cartography of Native survivance and sovereignty" (Pulitano 184).

Conclusion: Writing “Canons of Survivance”

Trinh T. Minh-ha has said storytelling is “the oldest form of building historical consciousness in community” (148). This kind of historical storytelling is particularly relevant for indigenous communities whose histories may have been lost or distorted in colonial and postcolonial accounts of the past. Gerald Vizenor objects to many colonial/Western accounts of history because of what he sees as,

the deliberate or inadvertent slanting of the accounts as a result of political, religious, or cultural agendas; the limited vision of conventional history reflected both in its failure to admit certain kinds of evidence or ways of knowing and in its linear monologic form of presentation; and the various ways in which history becomes a tool of containment and domination. (Blaeser 83)

By constantly revisioning and rearticulating the historic and fictional renderings of Māori by Pākehā authors of the past, Morey moves towards building a new “historical consciousness” for her community. Her work expertly deploys humour and irony, deploying them as “strategic subversive and transformative devices” (Tannen 4) that provide a contemporary mind-map for re-examining key aspects of Māori culture in a contemporary context. Vizenor states that “Native survivance is a sense of presence, but the true self is visionary” (*Fugitive Poses* 20). Like Vizenor’s texts, Morey’s *Bloom* constantly seeks “to convey, through dialogue, through humor, through stories, stories that become once again ‘the canons of survivance’” (Pulitano 23).

“Aldous Huxley, more than fifty years ago, ‘wondered whether tragedy as a form of art, might not be doomed.’ ... [He] argues in ‘Tragedy and the Whole Truth’ that tragedies are more than ‘mere verisimilitude’ and empirical evidence, more than facts; tragedies are not the ‘whole truth.’”

– Gerald Vizenor in “Trickster Discourse”

**Chapter 5:
This is not a Māori –
Truth Beyond Tragedy**

This Is Not a Māori

Gerald Vizenor says, “To try to come up with a single idealistic definition of tradition in tribal culture is terminal. Cultures are not static, human behavior is not static. We are not what anthropologists say we are and we must not live up to a definition.... We are very complex human beings, all of us, everywhere” (Coltelli 172). Vizenor’s sentiments are echoed in the words of Paula Morris when she says, “I wanted to cast [Virginia’s] family in a different light from the role of victim – which I think a lot of people easily want to slot the Māori experience into. They want to believe that Māori are either villains or victims, when I think the truth is often somewhere in between” (Pistacchi “Conversation”). Vizenor’s words also resonate with the thoughts of Patricia Grace who says,

One of the things that I’ve seen written by critics about some of my work is that they think that all of my Māori characters are too nice and they’re all good. I write from my own background and my own experience. I write about the people I know and who I have been associated with. I think that there are enough negative images given by the media and the writing of the past. Sometimes not deliberately negative, but stereotypical and I like to move away from the stereotype whenever I get the chance to and to write about some of the other people who haven’t been written about. (*Ruia Taitea*)

In these statements, Morris and Grace actively reject a cultural milieu that would “slot the Māori experience” (Morris in Pistacchi “Conversation”) into the kinds of static cultural stereotypes and essentialist assumptions that Vizenor feels are “terminal” to indigenous cultures.

Contemporary simulations of the stereotyped “Indian,” Vizenor argues, “celebrate the absence of the people, not their presence, fixing Natives, making them static museum specimens, denying them authentic existence in the present” (Pulitano 168). The same could be said for contemporary simulations of stereotyped Māori. In *Manifest Manners*, Vizenor metaphorically explores this concept through the artwork of Rene Magritte:

Rene Magritte inscribed “*Ceci n’est pas une pipe*, This is not a pipe,” across his painting of an obvious pipe. This ambiguous critique “exemplifies the penetration of discourse into the form of things; it reveals discourse’s ambiguous power to deny and to redouble,” wrote Michel Foucault in *This Is Not a Pipe*.

Magritte said, “Sometimes the name of an object takes the place of an image. A word can take the place of an object in reality. An image can take the place of a word in a proposition.” (57)

Vizenor confronts this idea of the “invented Indian” both in the text of *Manifest Manners*, as well as on its cover, which features one of Andy Warhol’s American Indian series portraits of Russell Means, labelled “This is not an Indian.” Vizenor claims Warhol’s work “is a simulation in three dimensions, the absence, presence, and portrait of the militant leader of the American Indian Movement. This portrait is not an Indian... This is not an Indian” (*Manifest Manners* 1986).

This thesis has argued that the fictional works of Patricia Grace, Paula Morris and Kelly Ana Morey deny essentialist simulations of Māori identity, and deny the idea that there is a singular way forward for Māori cultural survivance. We could stamp across Grace’s depiction of Te Rua and Maina, Morris’s depictions of Virginia, Emma and Paratene Te Manu, and Morey’s depictions of Nanny Smack and Connie the labels “This is not a Māori” as easily as we could stamp across them “This is a Māori.” All are and are not representations of contemporary Māori community members, and it is only through the publishing of their stories and through the fictional exploration of a wide range of contemporary Māori issues that a rich, complex view of Māori and Māori cultural survivance can emerge. As Patricia Grace says, she hopes to “contribute towards a greater understanding of who we [Māori] are so that others may come to realize that we do have a legitimate and structured way of life, and a real seriousness and a deep spirituality. But that within all this we are various” (McRae, “Interview” 102).

Give Me Room

In her compelling work, *Sucking Salt: Caribbean Women Writers, Migration, and Survival*, Meredith M. Gadsby discusses the notion of “making room” or “clearing new theoretical space” for contemporary women writers of colour. She quotes critic Carole Boyce Davies, who describes the process of women writers “taking space” and “making room” in mainstream literary canons as one of “constant negotiation”:

Taking space...means moving into areas not allowed ...
These areas include...the basic sentence of Carnival
parading that one sees versions of in New Orleans, Trinidad
and Brazil, in which the dancer negotiates the road, creating
space, as in the Trinidad verbalized “give me room”...In this
particular context, the dancer is able to negotiate, among a
variety of other dancers, his/her own particular dance space.
Another example is limbo in which the space metaphor is
graphically expressed in terms of a before and after with
either side of the limbo bar or pole a space of physical
freedom....(Davis qtd. in Gadsby 14)

This performative, *active* notion of demanding/taking space – or “room” – describes precisely what Grace, Morris and Morey are doing when they write critical fictions like *Dogside Story*, *Queen of Beauty*, *Hibiscus Coast*, and *Bloom* – all texts that propose “a means of cultural survival that comes with denying authoritative representations” of indigenous peoples (Allen “Thesis” 65).

Interview material provided in the biographical sections of the previous chapters shows that these three authors are well aware of the particular literary contexts in which they are writing. They know who the other dancers are in the literary publishing world of Aotearoa/New Zealand, they have acknowledged the influences of other authors on their own work, and they have discussed the varying degrees to which they do or do not relate to the labels of “Māori writer,” “women writer,” or “New Zealand writer.” Aware of these labels, as well as the literary, social, and political contexts in which they write, all three aim to carve out their “own particular dance space” (Gadsby 14) within the literary canon of their country.

Vizenor believes, “Native identities must be an actuation of stories, the commune of survivance and sovereignty” (*Fugitive Poses* 37). This commune of survivance *and* sovereignty is what this thesis has shown is the key to Māori cultural survivance in the twenty-first century. This is why, instead of focusing on what the authors in this study have in common, the focus has been on demonstrating the rich and varied differences in the ways in which Patricia Grace, Paula Morris, and Kelly Ana Morey depict cultural survivance. I have argued that survivance looks different for members of the marae-based community in Grace’s *Dogside Story* than it does for Morris’s mixed-blood and expatriate Māori in *Queen of Beauty*, and that both of these modes of cultural survivance look different than those forged by the characters in *Bloom* who have grown up isolated from knowledge of their cultural heritages and whakapapa.

In each of these works, Grace, Morris and Morey are able, as Maxine Hong Kingston writes, “to imagine the world healthy” (200) and demand that readers learn “not to worship tragedy as the highest art anymore” (Kingston 204). Grace’s characters are forging a healthy future for *Dogside*, one that deals with contemporary problems creatively and in “specifically culturally appropriate ways” (Grace in Pistacchi “Catching Up”). Morris envisions a road forward for the cultural survivance of mixed-blood Māori community members, one which will allow them to self-identify and self-moderate their relationships with their varied ancestries. Morey relishes in expanding and expounding upon traditional Māori concepts in a contemporary and cross-cultural context.

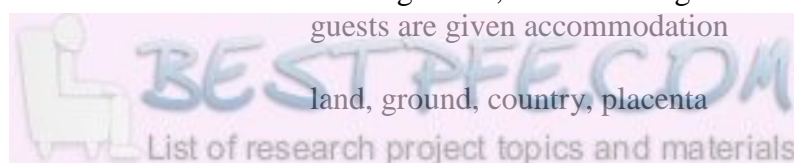
Author and critic Sina Va’ai believes that the creative writer in contemporary Polynesia “is often like a signpost, pointing the way beyond to a future – personal, national, regional, and global – imaginatively shaped and sketched” (215). For the people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, Patricia Grace, Paula Morris, and Kelly Ana Morey are three of these critical signposts for the ongoing survival – and survivance – of Māori culture in the twenty-first century.

Glossary / Ngā Kupu

ahi kā	burning fire
ahi kā roa	long burning fires of occupation; title to land through occupation.
aroaha	love, sympathise
hapu	sub-tribe
hangi	an earth-oven in which food is cooked by the steam created by hot stones
hei aha	nothing changes
hua	mongrel
hui	meeting, gathering
iwi	tribe
kai	food, meal
kai moana	seafood, shellfish
kaitiaki	custodian, guardian
kanohi kitea	face-to-face, in person
kaumatua	old man, elder, adult
kaupapa	purpose, proposal, agenda, main business
kehua	ghost
keriki	crikey!
kete	basket, bag (usually woven)
kia ora	hello, thanks, “be well/healthy”
kōrero	speech, conversation, narrative, story
kuia	old lady, matron

makimaki	monkey
mana	prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma
manaakitanga	hospitality, kindness
Māoritanga	Māori culture, Māori perspective
marae	meeting area and its buildings and courtyard
Matariki	Pleiades, The Seven Sisters – an open cluster of many stars in the constellation Taurus. The first appearance of Matariki in the north-eastern sky indicates the beginning of the Māori year.
moko	Māori tattooing on the face or body
mokopuna	grandchild, descendent
ngā hainamana me ngā Māori	the Chinese and the Māori
ngā poropiti	Māori prophets
ngā tangata awarua	the person of two rivers, two bloodlines
nikanika	nigger
niu	sticks used for divination – also the name used by the Hauhau religious sect for the pole set up by them for their ceremonies.
noa	safe, free from tapu
pa	fortified village
paepae	threshold
Pākehā	non-Māori
Papatuanuku	in Māori mythology, the earth-goddess/earth-mother
paua	abalone
piki te ora	uplifting, the raising of life
pito	navel, umbilical
pou	post, pillar, support

rūnanga	local Māori tribal council
tangata whenua	local people, aborigines, natives; people of the land tanicry, weep, mourn
taonga	treasure
tāhuhu	ridgepole
taniwha	water spirit, monster
tapu	sacred, forbidden, tapu
te ao mārama	the world of light
te ao tawhito	the past, the time gone by
te reo Māori	the Māori language
te taha wairua	the Māori perspective of spirituality
Tihe Mauriora	the breath of life
tino rangitiratanga	self-determination
tīpuna	ancestor, grandparent
tūpuna	ancestor, grandparent
tūrangawaewae	home, homeland, home turf
urupā	burial ground, cemetery
wairua	spirit, soul
waka	canoe
whakamā	embarrassed, ashamed, loss of mana
whakapapa	genealogy
whakataukī	proverb, aphorism
whānau	family
wharekai	dining hall
wharenui	meeting house, main building of a marae where guests are given accommodation
whenua	land, ground, country, placenta



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