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Postcolonial Maori Literature: Culture and Identity
in Witi Ihimaera’s *The Whale Rider* and
Alan Duff’s *Once Were Warriors*

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List of Abbreviations

For the texts that are quoted frequently the following abbreviations are used:

WR = Ihimaera, Witi. *The Whale Rider*. 1987. North Shore: Raupo, 2008.

OWW = Duff, Alan. *Once Were Warriors*. Auckland: Tandem Press, 1990.

1. Introduction

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. (Kerekere 7)

This *waiata*¹ by Wiremu Kingi Kerekere, a Maori² writer and composer, opens *Into The World of Light*, one of the first anthologies of Maori writing. It was published in 1982, at a time when Maori writing slowly started to establish itself in New Zealand. Kerekere's *waiata* calls for Maori writers to make their voices heard, to step out of the darkness and into the world of light.

Making their voices heard has been a challenge for Maori writers to this day. Maori literature in general, and postcolonial Maori literature in particular, has been mainly ignored in the international literary discourse. Part of the reason for this is certainly the relatively late and slow establishment of a body of postcolonial Maori literature. Alice Te Punga Somerville points out that the postcolonial discourse focuses on "hotspots" such as South Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, while the Pacific is scarcely mentioned at all (*Nau Te Rourou* 279). Somerville identifies some key reasons for this.

First of all, the small size and population of New Zealand reduce its international presence (*Nau Te Rourou* 280). As an isolated state in the middle of the Pacific, the closest contact zone (other than the Pacific islands) is Australia. For writers and scholars it can be hard to attend conferences or to find publishing outlets outside of

¹ A *waiata* is a traditional Maori song or chant, which is performed to complement speeches or ceremonies (e.g. funerals). – All translations of Maori words are, if not otherwise indicated, taken from John C. Moorfield's dictionary *maoridictionary.co.nz*.

² Maori are the indigenous people of New Zealand, while Pakeha are the "foreigners", the non-indigenous New Zealanders, or New Zealanders of European descent.

New Zealand (*Nau Te Rourou* 281). As a consequence, New Zealand is isolated from the academic discourse. The country faces what Norman Simms calls “a sheer physical burden” (17) in its attempt to gain international presence.

A further reason for the marginalization of Maori writers is that mainstream publishing houses tend to look for “safe” works, which follow an established (Western) literary tradition (M. Evans 359). This has worked against Maori writers who appropriate established forms such as the novel for their own means.

Another cause of the paucity of Maori literature in the international discourse is that Maori writers and scholars have often challenged the contributions of non-Maori academics to questions concerned with Maori culture, and have doubted their ability to truly understand the culture (Kennedy, “Inside the Text” 63). Furthermore, as soon as Maori texts are translated and discussed abroad, they become part of a system other than the one they were created in (Kennedy, “Inside the Text” 65), which some writers and scholars find problematic. Thus, as Kennedy states, over the last two decades, the “predominant approach of non-Maori academics has been one of non-intervention” (“Inside the Text” 63). However, the decision not to discuss Maori works has silenced their voices.

While spending a year studying in New Zealand, I discovered this “hidden” literature and realized that it provided an interesting addition to the study of the “usual suspects” of postcolonial literature. I only recollect a single occasion that a book by a Maori and/or New Zealand writer was briefly mentioned during my studies in Vienna. Thus, being aware of the lack of discourse on this subject, I aim to bring Maori literature (and New Zealand) into the discussion of postcolonial studies. It might only be a tiny step in its path of gaining a wider presence, as this thesis only presents a small sample of postcolonial Maori literature, but it is a starting point.

Maori literature is a wide field consisting of many forms, including oral literature, carving and Western forms such as the novel. Simms arranges it into three main sections. First, there are the “ceremonial and entertainment performances of the Maori

culture itself”, their current form a result of many years of interplay with Pakeha culture (22). Second, there is literature in English that follows Pakeha genres and preconceptions. The third section is the one that is discussed in this thesis: “[...] the attempt in various ways to deal with and explore Maori experience in the techniques and strategies of the literate mode” (22). It exists in English, in Maori, and in combinations of the languages.

The aim of this thesis is to give an overview of postcolonial Maori literature and – on a more practical level – discuss literary works within a specific framework. It is divided into two main sections. The first one explores the historical and cultural context from which the literature emerged. Furthermore, it gives an overview of the developments of postcolonial Maori literature so far. This first introduction to the subject provides the backdrop for the second part of the thesis, a detailed analysis and comparison of two works: *The Whale Rider* by Witi Ihimaera and *Once Were Warriors* by Alan Duff. This section focuses on a specific question: how are culture and identity presented and discussed in the chosen novels? In order to answer it, several topics will be addressed: the different ways culture is expressed; the role culture plays for creating identities; the ways colonialism and postcolonialism influence culture; and the future that the authors imagine for Maori culture. The novels will be looked at individually first, but the comparison is the underlying approach. A chapter that compares the novels more directly and answers the posed questions concludes the second part of the thesis. The final conclusion will summarize the findings of the thesis, show what relevance postcolonial Maori literature has for the rest of the world, and address the future prospects of this literature.

While the authors that this thesis deals with describe their culture from the inside looking out, I, being a foreigner, approach the subject primarily from the outside looking in. The first main part of the essay, “Postcolonial Maori Literature: A Panorama” is directed at outsiders, that is to say, people who have not studied Maori culture and literature before. However, since I have lived and researched in New Zealand for one and a half years, I have gained some insight into its culture. Thus, I aim to read and write with an understanding of the indigenous perspective, which will allow

me to contribute to the more informed literary discourse in New Zealand. The second part, which deals with Ihimaera's and Duff's novels, is aimed at both an outsider (who after reading the first part will have gained the necessary knowledge to set the works in context) and an insider audience. In the end, this dual approach (and the broad intended readership) will support one of the aims of this thesis: to bring postcolonial Maori literature a little bit further "into the world of light".

2. Postcolonial Maori Literature: A Panorama

To be able to think clearly about the creative expressions of a particular culture, it is essential to understand the culture's historical and social background. Thus, this chapter gives an introduction to New Zealand's history and Maori culture, followed by an overview of postcolonial Maori literature.

It also deals with the relationship of literature and history: How are historical events articulated in literary texts? In the context of Maori literature this question is important as this literature is strongly connected to the historical and social circumstances. Especially when looking at literature from a postcolonial perspective, the history of the country and the culture cannot be overlooked. For this reason, chapter 2.1 gives a brief overview of New Zealand's history. It focuses on those events that seem most important and influential, and that provide the most useful frame for understanding the literature that will be discussed later.³ The next chapter, "Colonialism and Culture", explores the ways colonialism influenced and altered Maori culture. An introduction to traditional Maori culture is followed by discussions of the transformation of culture and of concepts of identity. After the historical and cultural context is established, the focus turns to postcolonial Maori literature. Chapter 2.3 discusses the term "postcolonialism", and explains how postcolonial Maori literature emerged. Furthermore, it gives an overview of influential authors and thematic tendencies. The conclusion summarizes the findings of the previous chapters and considers the question whether one can talk about a specific Maori style.

³ For a complete and detailed history of New Zealand, I recommend the following sources (which were consulted in preparation for this chapter): Brooking, Tom: *The History of New Zealand* (2004); Davidson, Janet M.: *The Prehistory of New Zealand* (1984); Mein Smith, Philippa: *A Concise History of New Zealand* (2005); Mulholland, Malcolm, ed.: *State of the Māori Nation: Twenty-first-century Issues in Aotearoa* (2006); Rice, Geoffrey, ed.: *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (1992).

2.1. Historical Background

Janet M. Davidson subdivides Maori prehistory into three phases: the “Settlement Period”, the period of “Expansion and Rapid Change” and the “Traditional Period”. I will work with her definitions in this chapter.

Aotearoa⁴ New Zealand was the last big landmass (excluding Antarctica) to be settled. The origins of the first settlers and the date of their arrival are still debated. Today, the consensus is that people arrived from the Cook Islands, Society Islands and possibly the Marquesas. While the first Polynesian contact is said to be as early as 750 AD, the settlement of the islands started later. Scholars still argue about the time of the first settlement. While Davidson states that we simply do not know when the first settlers reached New Zealand and marks the end of the settlement period around 1200 AD, other scholars date the arrival of the so-called “great fleet” of canoes, which carried the first settlers, between 1250 and 1350 AD.

After their arrival, the first settlers explored the country and attempted to replicate the Polynesian lifestyle in their new surroundings. Through this process of adaptation, they developed a distinctive culture and society. The population grew rapidly, and humans began to have a considerable impact on the environment (Davidson 224) (e.g. the moa bird was hunted to extinction). During this time, warfare and the origins of the socio-political life (e.g. tribal traditions) were developed. By the Traditional Period (between 1200 and 1500 AD), Maori culture was highly structured and Maori art styles were well developed.

After the first visit of a European explorer, Abel Tasman in 1642 (which had no lasting impact on Maori society), Captain Cook arrived in 1769 at Poverty Bay, near Gisborne. Maori started trading with Cook and subsequently continued trading and negotiating with the sealers and whalers arriving in the late 18th century. Ranginui Walker writes: “[The] visitors were welcomed by the people of the land for the cornucopia of material

⁴ Aotearoa is the Maori name for New Zealand, meaning “(land of) the long white cloud”.

goods they brought with them from the factories of industrial England. Economic welcome, trade and sexual congress were the equalisers in Maori New Zealand for the first forty years of European contact” (*Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 9). The European settlement and colonization of New Zealand had begun.

After having lived in isolation for a thousand years, the contact with traders brought change to Maori society: its economic activity was stimulated (Owens 36) and new tools and techniques were introduced. One infamous novelty was the musket, which changed intertribal warfare and led to the “Musket Wars” of the 1810s, 1820s, and 1830s. This led to social breakdown (as thousands were killed and tribes were decimated) and as a consequence, Maori looked for alternatives to the traditional Maori ways. This gave way to the success of the missionaries, who arrived in 1814. One might think that the conversion of many Maori to Christianity was mainly a result of “the collapse of traditional Maori beliefs and practices”, but Tom Brooking points out that this is a too simplistic explanation. According to him, Maori looked for some cultural advantage in the new religion (36) – which they found (missionaries invented an orthography for *te reo Maori*, the Maori language, and as a result, Maori soon became literate).

Owens summarizes the effects that the initial contact with Europe had on Maori:

Maori society moved from the age of stone to the age of iron; suddenly it was involved, if erratically, in the diverse cultures of the world. New crops [...] made their appearance. The clock and the book arrived [...]. New religious ideas came, offering alternative ideas of social relationship and human purpose. Alcohol was introduced, new ways of war, and new diseases. [...] Over a few decades Maori were participants in a series of developments which other cultures had taken centuries to absorb. (39)

However, Owens also states that these external pressures were limited in their impact because they were unevenly spread, and that Maori tribes could withstand them because their social structure was “equipped to survive stress” (40).

In 1831, thirteen northern chiefs petitioned the king of England to protect them from other foreign powers. One result was the appointment of James Busby as the first official British resident in New Zealand. His task was to provide some control over the

relations between European settlers and Maori. One of his first acts was to encourage Maori chiefs of Northland to select a flag for their country, which they could fly on their trading ships. This flag has become known as the flag of the United Tribes of New Zealand. After the meeting of Busby and the chiefs, the new flag was hoisted beside the Union Jack, “an act signifying recognition of Maori sovereignty over New Zealand” (Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 88).

In 1835, Busby summoned another meeting with 34 northern chiefs (the Confederation of United Tribes) to sign a declaration of independence. The chiefs declared New Zealand “to be an Independent State, under the designation of the United Tribes of New Zealand” (Declaration of Independence. Art. 1). All sovereign power and authority resided with the chiefs in their “collective capacity”, and no “legislative authority separate from themselves” was permitted to exist (Art. 2). The chiefs also agreed to meet once a year for the purpose of the “preservation of peace and good order, and the regulation of trade” (Art. 3).⁵ The Declaration was signed on 28 October 1836, and then was sent to England, where it was formally recognized by the king. The Declaration marked the first formal relationship with England.⁶ Philippa Mein Smith writes: “It is still debated whether this document amounted to a declaration of sovereignty or merely a trans-Tasman assertion of British law. It might have been designed to be both [...]” (41). For the Maori chiefs, the Declaration was an important document regarding their sovereignty and identity, and they believed that it guaranteed their independence (Mein Smith 41).⁷

⁵ However, as Walker (*Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 89) points out, there were some problems with the Declaration of Independence. Only a small number of chiefs attended the meeting and signed the Declaration. At this point, Maori were a tribal society and the notion of a pan-tribal identity or organisation was still alien to them. Thus, chiefs from the rest of the North Island (excluding the northern chiefs) and all of the South Island did not sign the Declaration.

⁶ Article 4 of the Declaration of Independence says: “They [the hereditary chiefs and heads of tribes] agree to send a copy of this Declaration to His Majesty the King of England, to thank him for his acknowledgement of their flag; and in return for the friendship and protection they have shown, and are prepared to show, to such of his subjects as have settled in their country, or resorted to its shores for the purposes of trade, they entreat that he will continue to be the parent of their infant State, and that he will become its Protector from all attempts upon its independence.”

⁷ Interestingly, “reinvented” United Tribes of Aotearoa (based in Northland) claimed their independent sovereignty in the 1990s – arguing that their ancestors had signed the Declaration of Independence (Mein Smith 41).

In 1837, Edward Gibbon Wakefield founded the New Zealand Company⁸ in England, with the aim to promote a systematic colonization of New Zealand. Wakefield's plan was to buy land cheaply from Maori and on-sell it (at a significantly higher price) to prospective British settlers. The Crown concluded that British colonization was inevitable (Orange 27) and decided that government intervention was necessary. New Zealand was annexed on 14 January 1840 as a colony of New South Wales. William Hobson was sent to the islands as a consul, and "his instructions strongly suggested that cession of the whole country would be in the best interests of Maori" ("Land Issues on the Eve of the Treaty of Waitangi"). His mission was:

[...] to obtain the surrender of that sovereignty to the British Crown by the free and intelligent consent of the 'natives'. [...] Once sovereignty was obtained, Hobson was to contract with the chiefs for the sale or cession of lands to the Crown only. Thereafter he was to issue a proclamation that all land titles would emanate from Crown grants. Hobson's first duty as the official protector of the aborigines was to confine his acquisition of land for British settlers to districts the 'natives' could alienate without distress themselves. (Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 90)

As a result of these instructions, the founding document of New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi, was prepared by Hobson and Busby.

The Treaty, which came to be "the most contested document in the history of the land" (Moura-Koçoğlu 22), was drafted over only a few days. As a result, several English versions and one Maori version (translated by missionary Henry Williams and his son Edward), which does not match any of the English ones, exist. Once again, these negotiations took place in the North of New Zealand: The confederation of chiefs that had signed the Declaration of Independence five years earlier was reconvened in Waitangi and the Maori translation was presented to around 500 Maori on 5 February 1840. After much debate, about 40 chiefs signed the Treaty on the next day. Then, it was sent around the country and by the end of the year, more than 500 Maori chiefs and leaders had signed the document. Many problems that would subsequently arise with the interpretation of the Treaty can be traced back to the different versions and the inconsistencies in translation: there were nine copies of the Treaty, and all but one were

⁸ Also known as The New Zealand Association.

in English. All but 39 chiefs had signed the Maori text (known as “te Tiriti o Waitangi”).⁹

As mentioned above, te Tiriti differs from the English version in “subtle yet critical ways” (Mein Smith 49). All versions of the Treaty consist of a preamble and three articles. In the English versions of Article 1, Maori gave up the independence that they had gained 1835: they gave the Queen of England “all the rights and powers of Sovereignty” over New Zealand. In te Tiriti however, Article 1 gives the Crown “te Kawanatanga katoa” – the right to govern and pass laws.¹⁰ As there was no direct translation for the word “sovereignty” in Maori, Williams used *kawanatanga* (governance) instead, which lead Maori to think that they would maintain “their authority to manage their own affairs” (“Differences Between the Texts”).¹¹

Article 2 of te Tiriti guaranteed “te tino rangatiratanga o o ratou wenua o ratou Kainga me o ratou taonga katoa” (chieftainship over their lands, villages and all their treasures) in the Māori version; and “full exclusive and undisturbed possessions of their Lands and Estates Forests Fisheries and other properties which they may collectively or individually possess so long as it is their wish and desire to retain the same in their possession” in the English version.¹² Furthermore, the Treaty also gave the Crown “the exclusive right of Preemption” (an exclusive right to purchase land), while in te Tiriti, Maori give the Crown the right to buy land if they wanted to sell it (Art. 2). It is not

⁹ From now on, I will use “the Treaty” to refer to the English text and “te Tiriti” for the Maori text to distinguish between the versions of the Treaty of Waitangi.

¹⁰ The English translation of the Maori version states: „The Chiefs of the Confederation and all the chiefs who have not joined the Confederation give absolutely to the Queen of England for ever the complete government over their land.”

¹¹ Walker notices that if the translators had used the word *mana* (authority), which was also used in the Declaration of Independence, instead of *kawanatanga*, “no Maori would have had any doubt what was being ceded” (*Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 91).

¹² Scholars deal with the problems of the difficulties arising from the choice of vocabulary at length. Claudia Orange, for instance, writes about Article 2 of the Treaty / te Tiriti: “[...] it was the guarantee of te tino rangatiratanga (chieftainship) that was to lead to confusion, for Maori understood the word to mean far more than ‘possession’, as in the English text. In fact, it was a better approximation to sovereignty than *kawanatanga*. Although both words implied an exercise of power, authority and jurisdiction, *rangatiratanga* was of Maori derivation, with connotations of chiefly power that were familiar to Maori. *Kawanatanga*, on the other hand, derived from *kawana* (governor) and had associations with Pontius Pilate, Roman governor in the Bible, or with governors of New South Wales. It tended to imply authority in an abstract rather than a concrete sense” (41).

certain whether the Maori version “clearly conveyed the implications of exclusive Crown purchase” (“Differences Between the Texts”).

The third Article, which posed no problems in terms of the translation, granted Maori the protection of the Crown and imparted “to them all the Rights and Privileges of British Subjects”.

Given the difficult language and the often non-corresponding translation, there is still a debate about whether Maori knew what they were getting into when they signed the Treaty. Another problem arises out of the fact that even though a great number of chiefs signed, some important leaders did not (e.g. the paramount chiefs Te Wherowhero of the Tainui tribes, Te Heuheu of the Tuwharetoa confederation, and Te Kani-a-Takirau of the East Coast). Even today, the Treaty of Waitangi is still a highly disputed document.

The year 1840 marked the start of a systematic European colonization and by 1890, the settler population outnumbered the Maori population fourteen to one (Sorrenson 141). This brought radical change to Maori society and also led to confrontation between colonizers and colonized. A lot of conflict centred around land, but as Sorrenson points out, there was more to it: it was a contest for *mana* (authority)¹³ (148).

Under the system of preemption, the Crown acquired about two-thirds of the land area of the country (almost the whole South Island and extensive parts of the North Island). It is clear that Maori did not always fully understand the implications of selling their land. The growing pressure on Maori land led to resistance of Maori and to fighting between Maori and Pakeha.¹⁴

¹³ *Mana* refers to “authority, power, control, influence and prestige in relation to *atua* [gods, ancestors], people, land and the environment” (Ka’ai and Higgins 17). *Mana* is inherited at birth, but can also be gained or lost through actions. *Mana* gives leadership power and the authority to make decisions (e.g. on behalf of the tribe).

¹⁴ One example is Hone Heke’s “Flagstaff War“. Heke was the first chief to sign the Treaty of Waitangi, but four years later he was disillusioned by its outcome. As an action of protest against European colonization he cut down the British flagpole (in the settlement Kororareka) several times, which led to a war in March 1845.

The Maori King movement (*Kingitanga*), which was aimed to unite the tribes into an “anti-land-selling confederation” (Sorrenson 153), arose as a strategy to resist colonization and land alienation. In 1858, the first Maori King, Potatau Te Wherowhero (the paramount chief of the Waikato tribes), was crowned. The New Zealand government saw this act as a challenge of their authority. The situation was exacerbated when the Crown accepted a minor chief’s offer of land, which was contested by a more senior chief.¹⁵ In 1860, this led to the outbreak of the Taranaki Wars, which together with the Waikato Wars¹⁶ are known as the Land Wars.¹⁷

Brooking summarizes the main impacts that the Land Wars had upon Maori society: First, they accelerated the loss of Maori land.¹⁸ Second, as a result of land alienation, Maori moved to more remote parts of the country, which led to the third important result of the Land Wars: the physical separation of Maori and Pakeha (58-60).

By the end of the century, Pakeha were the majority and in full control of the country. Pakeha assumed that Maori were a dying race and politician Isaac Featherston said it was the duty of Pakeha to “smooth down their dying pillow” (qtd. in Dow 48). The government was unimpressed by the strength of the protest movements of the late 19th century (such as *kotahitanga*, the Maori parliaments). However, as Ann Parsonson points out, this showed that Maori were “not ready to withdraw into demoralized isolation” (197). Even though their population was at its lowest point since the arrival of Europeans, “they had resisted the first great push of the British to assimilate them” (Parsonson 197).

¹⁵ Te Teira Manuka, a minor Te Ati Awa chief, offered the Crown land at Waitara (in Taranaki). However, paramount Te Ati Awa chief, Wiremu Kingi, did not back this offer and refused to sell and move off the land. Kingi’s customary right to hold the land far outweighed the right of Teira to sell it. However, the Crown chose to ignore the social difficulties that would arise when accepting the offer and instead, decided to bring in troops.

¹⁶ Governor George Grey invaded the Waikato in July 1863.

¹⁷ They are also known as the New Zealand Wars and the Maori Wars. While the Taranaki and Waikato Wars of the 1860s are the most prominent, the term Land Wars refers to all the conflicts between Maori and settlers / Crown that occurred between 1843 and 1872.

¹⁸ The government introduced a range of acts to facilitate the alienation of native land: The Native Land Act of 1865 (the Native Land Court provided for the conversion of communally owned land to that of individual titles, making the land easier to alienate); the New Zealand Settlements Act and the Suppression of Rebellion Act 1863 (both of them allowed the confiscation of land of those in rebellion against the Crown).

Maori participated in the First World War as a pioneer battalion. By the end of the war, around 17,000 New Zealanders (Pakeha and Maori) had died – a significant number for a country with a population of only a million. The war cast a shadow over the 1920s. Race relations worsened when returning Maori soldiers were not included in the rehabilitation programmes that were offered to Pakeha soldiers. The country became concerned with moral degeneration (Brooking 112).

Fearing a Japanese attack, New Zealand turned to the United States of America for support during the Second World War. Thus, an important change in the country's military as well as cultural history began (Brooking 125).¹⁹ Again, New Zealander participated in the war, and the special contribution of the Maori Battalion was recognized throughout the country. During the war, many Maori and Pakeha worked side by side for the first time. As a result, the joint efforts of Maori and Pakeha not only supported the improvement of race relations, but also contributed to a shared notion of national identity.

Maori had mainly lived in rural areas, but in the 1950s, an urban drift started²⁰ – partly as a result of a diminishing land base and partly because Maori, like other New Zealanders, went to the cities in search of work, money and pleasure (Walker, "Maori People Since 1950" 500). The urbanization brought distress and a great social, economic and cultural change for Maori, as their concepts and customs had to be redefined in an urban environment. Moura-Koçoğlu writes: "[...] what followed in terms of territorial alienation, loss of language, and the inexorable fading of traditions seemed to mark a radical cultural disintegration of the indigenous people" (75). Walker describes three challenges that urban Maori were confronted with. First, they had to adapt to the faster pace and more ruthless nature of urban, industrial economy. Second, they had to transplant their culture into a new setting and redefine it in this context. Third, they had to develop political structures and strategies in the cities ("Maori People Since 1950" 502). Maori were over-represented at the lower end of socioeconomic

¹⁹ However, Brooking writes that even though the reorientation to the United States (out of a failure of the British Navy to protect New Zealand) marked an important diplomatic shift, New Zealand was still "hopelessly dependent upon the British market" (133).

²⁰ In 1926, only nine per cent of Maori lived in cities, by 1956 it was 24 per cent (Walker, "Maori People Since 1950" 500).

statistics (such as employment and health). Facing these pressures, Maori had to find ways to deal with them. One result of this was the rise of political activism, which addressed social problems.

The 1970s and 1980s brought a new generation of educated, urban Maori, who engaged in political and protest movements such as the Maori Graduates Association, Nga Tamatoa (The Young Warriors, an activist group founded at Auckland University), and MOOHR (Maori Organisation on Human Rights). Maori protest had started immediately after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and had never ceased, but only now Pakeha seemed to become aware of it (Brooking 147). Political activism centred on land, but there were also protests against the Vietnam War, nuclear testing in the Pacific and racism. These movements shattered the notions of New Zealand as a country of racial harmony, and the government realized that it had to react.

In 1975, the Waitangi Tribunal was established to hear Maori claims of breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi.²¹ It has often been described as a “toothless tiger” as its findings and proposed solutions to claims are not binding. However, despite the disputes surrounding the Tribunal, it has created “a body of judicial findings which have made a major contribution to remedying some of the more unsettling aspects of New Zealand’s colonial legacy” (“Waitangi Tribunal Created”). One example is the Te Reo Maori Claim of 1985,²² which consequently led to the recognition of *te reo* as an official language of New Zealand in 1987. Further results were the establishments of *kohanga reo* (pre-school language nest) and *kura kaupapa* Maori schools (an extension of the Maori language education into primary schooling) (Walker, “Maori People Since 1950” 515).

²¹ However, the Tribunal could only hear claims of breaches that happened after the establishment of the Tribunal. Only in 1985, the Tribunal’s jurisdiction was extended to hear claims dating back to 1840.

²² The claim (WAI 11) described *te reo* as a *taonga* (treasure), which was guaranteed protection under Article 2 of the Treaty of Waitangi. The Tribunal concluded that the Crown had failed to protect the language (it became an endangered language through educational initiatives such as the Native Schools Act, which prohibited the use of Maori in schools, and through encouraging Maori children to speak English in order to succeed in the Pakeha world). Research indicated that the language was dying out (Walker, “Maori People Since 1950” 515), and thus, the Tribunal urged the government to take affirmative action to promote and sustain *te reo*.

After Britain (which still was New Zealand's main export market) entered the European Economic Community in 1973, New Zealand started to de-emphasize its connections to Europe, which "caused the pendulum to swing away from history (Britain and Europe) towards geography (the Pacific) as the major determinant in cultural affairs" (Simpson 572). The last few decades have seen a revitalization of Maori language and culture in a bi-cultural frame, and Maori who have gained more and more confidence (Brooking 161).

However, as Brooking writes in 2004, the disparities between Maori and Pakeha in terms of wealth, health and educational achievement are still wide (178). Even though the position of Maori within New Zealand's society seems to be more confident today, there are still many concerns: closing the social and economic gaps between Maori and Pakeha, the preservation of language and culture, Maori self-determination, the position of Maori in an increasingly multi-cultural and globalized New Zealand. Further, the Treaty of Waitangi continues to be a disputed subject. Many of these issues (to some of which I will come back later) are addressed in postcolonial Maori literature and thus, the past and the contemporary history become key themes.

2.2. Colonialism and Culture

„[...] there is no such thing as History. Rather, there are many histories and, even within the Maori framework, this is acknowledged. Each iwi, each hapu has a different or, rather, tribal, approach to their histories which are more parallel observations having parallel facts and parallel perceptions on the same factual events.“ (Ihimaera, "A Maori Perspective" 53)

The previous chapter provided an overview of New Zealand's history, but I have not yet discussed the impact that European colonization had upon Maori society and culture. Judith Binney writes: "There have been two remembered histories of New Zealand since 1840: that of the colonizers, and that of the colonized" (16). As this thesis deals with literature that emerged from a certain historical context and is concerned with certain themes, I want to give an insight into "the Maori side of the story" and show how colonization has influenced and transformed Maori culture and society.

In order to talk about culture adaptation and transformation, I will first explain what I mean by “culture”, as the concept is “a somewhat unwieldy beast” (Novitz 278). I adopt the definition outlined by Bill Willmott and David Novitz in their essays in *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*. Willmott writes: “[...] culture is not simply art, music and literature; it is the total collection of behaviour patterns, values and beliefs that characterise a particular group of people” (5). Novitz understands the concept as a collective term “to bring together *different* patterns of behaviour, values, belief and knowledge in *different* ways” (281). While the term “culture” retains its meaning no matter what collection (of behaviour patterns, values, et cetera) it refers to, the contents of the collection make a culture distinctive: “[...] cultures exist in the way that collections exist. They are nothing but collections of behaviour patterns, institutions, values, bodies of knowledge and systems of belief. And it is the nature of these ingredients, as well as the way in which they hang together, which determines the character of any particular culture” (Novitz 282). Thus, when I refer to Maori culture, I mean a collection of customs, values, beliefs, ways of talking and living, and different forms of expressing this culture, such as literature and music.

2.2.1. Traditional Maori Culture

The Maori analogue to culture is *Maoritanga* (Walker, “Maori Identity” 35), a concept that is equally difficult to pin down. Walker writes that *Maoritanga* “incorporates racial traits such as skin pigmentation and cultural traits such as language, spiritual beliefs and identification with a particular tribe and geographic locality” (“Maori Identity” 35). He concludes that it “may best be defined broadly as a collection of human phenomena [...], that is, everything that is socially learned by the members of a society” (“Maori Identity” 35). However, as Maori society is based on a tribal structure, it is not clear whether an all-embracing *Maoritanga* can exist.²³

²³ John Te Rangianiwaniwa Rangihau for example states: “It seems to me there is no such thing as Maoritanga because Maoritanga is an all-inclusive term which embraces all Maori. And there are so many different aspects about every tribal person. Each tribe has its own history. And it’s not a history that can be shared among others.” (qtd. in Ka’ai and Higgins 23)

Even though the *iwi* (tribes) have their own specific histories and traditions, there are still some aspects that they share. Maori cultural identity is defined in a sequence of myth, tradition and history (Walker, “Maori Identity” 36). Their definition of history includes myth (Ihimaera, “A Maori Perspective” 53), such as creation stories.²⁴ These stories (about Maori origins and legendary heroes) are situated in a remote time and place, in Hawaiiki, the legendary homeland of Maori (Walker, “Maori Identity” 37). Then, there are the traditions, which are located New Zealand and which tell the tales of real people, of canoe voyagers and settlers (Walker, “Maori Identity” 37). Myths and traditions “are logically arranged and related systems that fulfilled explanatory, integrating, validating, historic and socialisation functions for the people who owned them” (Walker, “The Relevance of Maori Myth and Tradition” 182).

Traditional (pre-European) Maori society is built around *whakapapa* (genealogy), kinship ties and social regulators. The social structure is based on different groupings: from the basic unit of *whanau* (family), to *hapu* (sub-tribe, kinship group), to *iwi* (tribe),²⁵ to *waka* (canoe).²⁶

Whakapapa defines one’s place in the society. The traditionally male chiefs²⁷ usually descend from the *tuakana* (senior) birth lines. Chiefs, especially the *ariki*, are respected for certain qualities (such as *tapu*²⁸ and *mana*) which they inherit from their ancestors (Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 65). These qualities can also be decreased or increased by their actions and behaviour (e.g. by prowess in war). Beside chiefs, there are the *tutua* (commoners)²⁹ and the *taurekareka* (slaves). Finally, there is a class of specialists, the *tohunga* – experts in the “various fields of human endeavour” (Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 66).³⁰

²⁴ See for example: Walker: “The Relevance of Maori Myth and Tradition”; Walker: *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou*.

²⁵ For a detailed discussion of the concepts of *whanau*, *hapu* and *iwi*, see Walker: *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 63-65.

²⁶ *Waka* means the canoe on which the ancestor of a person or tribe arrived in New Zealand.

²⁷ The chief of a *hapu* is called *rangatira*, while the (paramount) chief of an *iwi* is called *ariki*.

²⁸ *Tapu* means “sacred”, “prohibited”, “set apart” or “under the protection of *atua*” (god, or ancestor with continuing influence). Persons, places or things can be *tapu* and thus, they cannot be put to common use.

²⁹ The commoner class can still have links to the founding ancestor, but they are of junior descent lines (Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 66).

³⁰ A *tohunga* can be canoe-builder, house-builder, tattooist, carver, priest, et cetera (Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 66).

Besides the authority of the chiefs and the elders,³¹ there are other structures that control human behaviour. Different kinds of customary concepts act as social regulators within Maori society, such as *tapu*, *mana*, *utu*,³² and *rahui*.³³ These regulators, among others, make up a kind of law, and if they are breached, there are consequences.

Another element of importance for the social system, and for Maori culture and identity in general, is the connection to the land. As Hirini Moko Mead points out, for people all over the world, “the traditional notion of a homeland is an important basis for national identity” (269). For Maori, their deep connection to land has its roots in mythology and tradition, as well as in the history of tribal wars (Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 70). The earth is perceived as Papatuanuku (the earth mother),³⁴ and thus, it is loved as a mother (Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 70). Ancestral discovery and settlement traditions deepen the attachment to the land, as does the continual occupation of dwelling places over generations (Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 70). Furthermore, the connection to land is expressed through the importance of burial sites and the *whare whakairo* (carved meeting house), which also prove continuous land occupation (Mead 271). Mead summarizes:

A combination of many elements assist members of a culture to come to terms with the land they live on. Many of these elements are institutionalised and become normal practice. Cultural practices or *tikanga* associated with birth and death emphasise links to the land and include burial of the placenta, concealment of the dried-up remains of the umbilical cord and burial of the remains of the dead in caves or in the ground. There is also a high value given to the grid of place names, the network of *wahi tapu* [sacred sites] [...], and special features such as mountains, lakes, rivers, islands and coastal sites. (271)

³¹ Elders are respected for their connection to the past and as culture-bearers. They “serve as critical link to the past in the present context to ensure cultural practices and tribal knowledge remain intact for future generations” (Ka’ai and Higgins 23).

³² *Utu* is often described as revenge, but this is just one aspect of the concept. It can better be described as retribution or restoring a balance. It can simply mean that in the case of receiving a gift, one should return a gift of a similar (or higher) value. However, at “a more serious level, *utu* meant compensation for some injury” (Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 69), which often resulted in war between tribes.

³³ *Rahui* describes a restriction, ban or prohibition. It can be placed on an area as a conservation measurement or for social and political control, the most common forms being “those relating to pollution and conservation” (Ka’ai and Higgins 18).

³⁴ The story of Papatuanuku, the earth mother, and Ranginui, the sky father, is one of the Maori creation myths – see for example: Walker: “The Relevance of Maori Myth and Tradition”.

The people that are linked to the land through such connections are called *tangata whenua* (people of the land). The importance of land is also symbolised in sayings and figures of speech, which are expressed on the *marae* (meeting house). Some examples are the aphorisms of an orator who is paying tribute to a host tribe:

Ko Tongariro te maunga, ko Taupo te moana, ko Te Heuheu te tangata.
Tongariro is the mountain, Taupo is the sea, and Te Heuheu is the man.

Ko Hikurangi te maunga, ko Waiapu te awa, ko Porourangi te tangata.
Hikurangi is the mountain, Waiapu is the river and Porourangi is the man.

Waikato taniwha rau, he piko, he taniwha.
Waikato of a hundred monsters, on every bend is a monster.
(Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* 71)

2.2.2. Cultural Transformation

Having briefly introduced Maori culture,³⁵ I will now show how European colonization influenced and altered many of its aspects.

Culture is not a fixed concept, but rather it constantly evolves. What we call Maori culture today is not the same as it was in pre-European times. European colonization certainly has been one of the factors that influenced and transformed Maori culture.

Nicholas B. Dirks writes about the complex relationship of culture and colonialism:

Colonialism not only has had cultural effects [...], it was itself a cultural project of control. Colonial knowledge both enabled colonial conquest and was produced by it; in certain important ways, culture was what colonialism was all about. Cultural forms in newly classified “traditional” societies were reconstructed and transformed by and through colonial technologies of conquest and rule, which created new categories and oppositions between colonizers and colonized, European and Asian, modern and traditional, West and East, even male and female. (3)

The impact of British colonization on Maori is summarized by Murray S. Martin: “In the course of a mere sixty years, native societies that had been evolving for a thousand years were shaken and, in most cases, irretrievably changed. Their complex social,

³⁵ As with the chapter about the historical background, this was by no means a complete account of Maori social and cultural practices. I do hope, however, that the aspects I have explained in this chapter provide for an understanding of the literature discussed in this thesis.

political, and religious life was disrupted, and their ceremonies, so critical for an oral culture, were discredited and almost forgotten” (53).

The rapid colonization of New Zealand had a great impact on the indigenous people and on their capability to maintain Maori culture (Rewi 56). As Pakeha became the majority, Maori found themselves fighting assimilation. Inter-marriage fostered the notion of individualism and weakened tribal and communal ties, which were basic aspects of Maori culture (Rewi 56). Rewi continues:

[...] inter-marriage, religion, education, urbanisation and legislation all played a part in undermining cultural transmission and maintenance of cultural practices. Pakeha assimilatory policies and strategies took many forms: cultural accommodation, adaption, variation, adjustment, development, flexibility, evolution, progress and finally, ‘cultural compromise’ with its more negative connotation. (56)

Walker gives some insight into what happened at the cultural battleground during colonization (“Maori Identity” 39): Missionaries, and the religious concepts they introduced, attacked cultural symbols (e.g. through disfiguring ancestral carvings) and thus, not only undermined the value of the artistic works, but also of Maori society as a whole. The authority of the chiefs was weakened as polygamy and slavery were abolished. Customs that the missionaries thought out-dated (e.g. tribal warfare, sorcery, exhumation, cannibalism, tattooing of men) were abandoned.

More fundamental culture change took place when more and more Maori land was alienated. As explained earlier, Maori culture and identity is related directly to the land, and thus, the alienation of around 94% of their land (Walker, “Maori Identity” 41) had a major impact upon their society. Walker writes that after World War II, the landless Maori society shifted from its rural origins to urban centres. Furthermore, for 70% of urban Maori, the connection to the land had been “virtually severed”. Many of them lost connection to their *whanau* and *whenua*. This “deep sense of loss” led to actions such as the Land March of 1975, in which 30,000 people went to the capital, calling for “not one more acre of Maori land” to be alienated (“Maori Identity” 41). As a response to government strategies of land alienation, Maori nationalism emerged and over time, various individuals and organisations protested against land loss.

One strategy to assimilate Maori was through education and language suppression. Although some of the first settlers did learn to speak Maori, the colonizers soon introduced a policy of promoting English. Timoti Karetu writes:

At initial contact the colonist and the missionary became fluent speakers of Maori very rapidly. Cynics such as I would say that both those groups were strongly motivated to become fluent – the colonists wanted the land and the missionaries wanted souls. Once both groups had acquired what each sought, they no longer saw a need to speak Maori or to ensure that the language survived. In fact, strict measures began to be taken to ensure the language's demise. (224)

In 1867, native schools were established and English was made the language of instruction (Walker, "Maori Identity" 42). After 1900, *te reo* was banned from schools and often, Maori parents encouraged their children to speak English in order to succeed in the Pakeha world. As a result, the number of Maori speaking children dropped from 90% to 26% over sixty years (Walker, "Maori Identity" 42). School was "an area of cultural conflict" for Maori children and lead to a "statistical blackout" in higher education (Walker, "Maori Identity" 42). The politics of language suppression has endangered Maori language and has left many Maori with little or no knowledge of their language (Karetu 224).

Language is a crucial part of creating identity and culture. To a certain extent, knowledge of *te reo* is necessary to access the Maori world, as many cultural aspects and social structures cannot be fully explained in other languages – simply because these languages do not have the same vocabulary. In 1985, Sir James Henare spoke before the Waitangi Tribunal (in relation to the Maori Language Claim): "The language is the core of our Maori culture and mana. [...] If the language dies, as some predict, what do we have left to us? Then, I ask our own people who are we?" (qtd. in "Waitangi Tribunal Claim"). The importance that some Maori place upon their language explains why its gradual loss put pressure upon the whole culture. To this day, *te reo* has had to fight for its survival:

Needless to say, the language has been maligned unjustly by the dominant culture. Despite those onslaughts, however, it has survived and still survives the attacks on it by the ignorant. Its status in the eyes of the majority culture is obvious from the mispronunciation of Maori place-names and personal names, the nonsensical lyrics of haka performed by rugby teams and other teams, and

the furore that is always caused by Maori being used on public occasions. (Karetu 227)

The importance that *te reo* has for Maori culture and identity and the on-going struggle to preserve it, is discussed by many Maori writers, and thus, will be revisited in the following chapters.

Land alienation, language suppression and the consequences of these practices are just some of the many examples of the way Maori culture was subject to transformation through colonialism. Some other changes are the transformation of gender roles,³⁶ the undermining of traditional knowledge and practices by Pakeha,³⁷ and the modification of cultural expressions, such as the speeches on the *marae*.³⁸

2.2.3. Identity

Identity is closely linked to culture. Rewi highlights this connection: “A struggle with identity is directly linked to a culture in struggle” (72). As a result of the “continual negotiation” (Rewi 55) with Pakeha, the sense of Maori identity has undergone significant change as well.

Willmott points out that looking for an identity is not a search for “some hidden national or racial essence” (11). Instead, identities emerge in a specific social and political context (11). Looking at the emergence of Maori identity, this is certainly true. Before European contact, the word “Maori” was not used in New Zealand. There was no notion of a pan-tribal Maori identity. Instead, the indigenous people referred to

³⁶ Rika-Heke writes: “Within traditional Maori society, the roles of men and women were seen as complementary rather than as being inferior or superior to the other. European contact presented a different role for men, a role in which men were superior, “their” women subservient. Many Maori men were seduced by this new notion, embracing it with a passion, and proceeded to relegate Maori women to a position of lesser significance” (158).

³⁷ One example is the Tohunga Suppression Act of 1907, which was aimed to stop traditional Maori healing practices, and replace the *tohunga* with modern medicine.

³⁸ Rewi illustrates this in detail on the example of the *whaikorero* (greetings or speeches on the *marae*), “one of Maoridom’s most intricate and culturally loaded art forms” (59). Over time (and also through the influence of colonialism and politics), this medium has undergone change regarding gender roles (women want a voice in the male-dominated area), in relation to the elders (the right to speak usually rests with the senior relatives, but junior orators want the opportunity to speak as well), regarding the length of the *whaikorero* (here, the influence of the “time-bound, linear and result-focused” Western society becomes obvious, as some Maori “feel compelled to imitate the host culture and blend in”) and regarding the language question (whether English should be allowed in a traditional Maori art form) (Rewi 58–68).

themselves as members of a certain *iwi* (or *whanau*, *hapu* or *waka*). In the 1820s, after the first European settlers had arrived, the indigenous people started referring to them as “Pakeha” (foreigner) and distinguished themselves as “Maori” (ordinary, normal) (Moura-Koçoğlu 25). While the signing of the Declaration of Independence expressed a collective identity for the first time, it was the Treaty of Waitangi and the subsequent colonization that gave rise to a broadly accepted Maori identity (Durie 53).

The culture of the Europeans contrasted strongly with the one of the indigenous people, and “provided them with a reason for emphasising their common features, rather than their tribal differences” (Durie 53). Thus, a Pakeha identity was fundamental for the creation of a pan-tribal Maori identity. Maori and Pakeha identities are binary oppositions, and thus, neither can exist without the other one (Willmott 10). Meanwhile, Pakeha also created their own visions of Maori identity, created new myths and “brought Maori history and culture into a regimented framework so that it could readily be understood and controlled by the colonisers” (Durie 54). In the 19th century, political, religious and cultural movements also influenced the way Maori identity was negotiated (Moura-Koçoğlu 25), and unity was promoted through organisations such as the Maori King movement. Many of these movements had the aim to foster and secure a collective Maori identity.

The urbanisation starting after the Second World War called for new definitions of identity. As Maori lost their tribal connections the notion of a pan-tribal identity appealed to many of them. Even so, identification across tribal groupings was still questioned, and many Maori continued to emphasize their tribal identity over a universal one (and still do so today). Rika-Heke, for example, writes in her essay “Margin or Center?”:

We, as the tangata whenua [...] have been redefined, by a post-contact generic term, as Maori. I am not Maori. I belong to a group of people which comprises *iwi* or tribes, each tribe an independent sovereign nation. I am Ngati Hine – that is my *iwi*. Our founding ancestor is Hineamaru, a strong and noble woman. Her blood flows in my veins and the veins of my *iwi* – we are one. I, and my people, are only Maori to outsiders or to ourselves when we can’t be bothered explaining. (151)

As indicated in this quotation, the term “Maori” is problematic, as many *tangata whenua* oppose its implication of a collective, nationalistic identity (Hokowhitu 213).³⁹ Over time, the term had obtained many different meanings and connotations, which often went beyond the notion of tribal identity, but at the same time, did not negate it (Durie 57).

Just like Maori culture, Maori identity has undergone major transformations and adaptations since the beginning of colonization. The loss of land, the Pakeha education system and urbanisation put stress upon Maori identity (Willmott 12). Furthermore, continuous negative public definition of Maori by Pakeha compromised notions of Maori identity (Walker, “Maori Identity” 49). However, even though Maori identity was significantly altered in the negotiation with Pakeha, it has managed to accommodate to these changes and to remain distinctive. In the 19th century, Te Whiti (a Maori leader and prophet) said: “Though the whites exterminate the trunk they cannot pull out the roots” (qtd. in Scott 31). About a hundred years later, in 1989, Walker writes confidently about Maori identity:

[Maori] have rejected Pakeha formulae for assimilation and integration and asserted their own distinct identity as *tangata whenua* in relation to the dominant Pakeha group. It is this positive embracing of identity which is the driving force of the current regeneration of Maori culture on a wide front in the Maori population. (“Maori Identity” 50)

As this chapter has shown, both culture and identity have been transformed through colonization and through the continuous negotiation of Maori and Pakeha culture. To this day, the coexistence of the different cultures and identities remain problematic (Rewi 55). Many postcolonial writers address these issues. They often point out that some of the transformations that Maori culture and identity had to undergo were undesirable, but they also acknowledge that this does not mean, that change *per se* is a bad thing. This is recognized by Ihimaera, who writes in one of his novels:

Some Maori believe that with the coming of the Pakeha [the rope of man] became frayed and almost snapped during the New Zealand Wars. [...] It renewed itself, thickened, matted with strong twisting fibres and was as strong

³⁹ Rika-Heke continues: “For convenience, I will, however, use the generic term “Maori” when referring to our writings” (151) – this approach is applied in this thesis too.

as it had been originally. But it was a *different* rope. It was different because the Pakeha became added to the rope, the strands of Pakeha culture entwining with ours, the blood of the Pakeha joining ours and going into the rope with our blood. Some people might think that diminished our strength. I like to think the opposite. The Pakeha has become included with us in singing not our songs but *our* songs [...]. (“The Return” 191)

As mentioned earlier, culture (as well as identity) is a non-static concept that will continue to change over time and with the encounter of different cultures. Today Maori culture is not only in negotiation with Europeans, but also with the cultures of Asians and Pacific Islanders, who immigrated to New Zealand. As Keri Hulme puts it: “[...] our songs will change as we come into contact with different people, different ways of living” (“Mauri” 308).

2.3. Postcolonial Maori Literature

Discussing Maori literature in a postcolonial context inevitably raises questions about definitions. What does “postcolonial”⁴⁰ mean? And what constitutes postcolonial literature? These terms are heavily discussed and often problematic. Thus, I will explain the way they are understood in this thesis.

First and foremost, “postcolonial” is used as an umbrella term; a “way of bracketing together the literatures written in those countries which were once colonies of Britain” (Boehmer 4).⁴¹ In the simplest interpretation of the term, “postcolonial” means “after colonisation” (Walder 2), that is to say, after the country gained independence. This, obviously, is problematic, as it is often unclear when nations actually became independent and when the period of postcolonialism began. Furthermore, in this context, all writing that emerged in this period can be considered postcolonial, even if the works engage in topics that have nothing to do with (post)colonial questions.

⁴⁰ There is an on-going debate in postcolonial studies whether the term should be spelled with or without a hyphen. Keown explains that the term “post-colonial” has often been “considered more appropriate for discussions of colonialism and independence as historical events”, while “postcolonial” has become “more widely applicable to the cultural effects of colonialism as explored and mediated through literature and other forms of representation” (23). Throughout this thesis, the second term will be applied. However, not all authors cited distinguish between those two terms.

⁴¹ Needless to say, the term also refers to colonies of other countries and is also used for discussing issues other than literature.

However, there are other ways the term is understood. In this thesis, the term “postcolonial” is used less as a historical category, but more as a conceptual one, to highlight the impact of colonization on culture and society. As Walder puts it:

More recently, ‘post-colonial’ has come to be thought appropriate, because of the implication that the colonial experience persists despite the withdrawal of political control, as a result of the continuing strategic and economic power of the former colonizers, the new global dispositions which keep groups of poorer states in thrall; and because [...] however minimal the impact of empire upon a particular people in the long perspective, it has always left its imprint. (3)

Thus, the debate shifts from a rather “straightforward notion of the post-colonial as a linear historical development”, towards a much wider and more diverse sense of the term as “a marker of historical and cultural change” (Walder 3).

While some critics consider all writing that has emerged since colonization began as postcolonial,⁴² this thesis assumes postcolonial literature to be set in a postcolonial context (in a historic sense, i.e. after the end of official colonization). However, this is not enough: to consider literature as postcolonial it must address (post)colonialism, and, in some way, write back to and challenge the centre. Elleke Boehmer writes:

It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonial perspectives. As well as a change in power, decolonization demanded – and still demands – symbolic overhaul, a reshaping of dominant meanings. [...] Postcolonial writing [...] is deeply marked by experiences of cultural exclusion and division under empire. Especially in its early stages it is also often a nationalist writing. Building on this, *postcoloniality* can be defined as that condition in which colonized peoples seek to take their place, forcibly or otherwise, as historical agents in an increasingly globalized world. (3)

Thus, the literatures that this thesis understands as postcolonial all share the experience of colonialism, as well as an awareness of the consequences of colonization and an interest in the postcolonial condition (Crane 21).

⁴² The authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, for example, write: “We use the term ‘post-colonial’ [...] to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2).

2.3.1. A Postcolonial Society?

There are two cultural maps of our country, the Maori and the Pakeha. The Pakeha map is dominant, its contours so firmly established that all New Zealanders including Maoris [sic] are shaped by it. The Maori map has eroded and, although its emotional landscape is still to all intents and purposes intact, has been unable to shape all New Zealanders, including Pakeha. (Ihimaera, "The Maori in Literature" 84)

In this passage, Ihimaera uses the map as a metaphor for his country's postcolonial history (Keown, "Ihimaera's Maori Map" 69). It suggests that there are still some issues regarding New Zealand's (post)colonial past and present to be discussed and solved.

New Zealand is generally accepted to be a postcolonial country. However, critics like Somerville point out that the suffix "post" blinds the on-going experiences of colonization up to the present day (*Nau Te Rourou* 271). Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes: "[...] post-colonial can only mean one thing: the colonizers have left. There is rather compelling evidence that in fact this has not occurred" (98). Indeed, considering the fact that Queen Elizabeth II is still the country's official head of state and that the colonizing power has not left or „in any real fashion relinquished the power acquired by invasion“ (Crane 25), it is hard to talk about a *postcolonial* society. Moana Jackson asserts: "we are not in a post-colonial or neo-colonial period. Instead we are in a new version of the same old song of the dispossession and denial of rights of the indigenous peoples" (71). There are also some critics who describe settler colonies (such as New Zealand and Australia) as simultaneously colonial and postcolonial, as the European settlers have attained political autonomy from Britain, but continue to "exercise political and cultural hegemony" over the indigenous people (Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing* 24).

Smith states "that there is unfinished business [for Maori], that [they] are still being colonized (and know it), and that [they] are still searching for justice" (34). This "unfinished business" is addressed by many Maori authors. They not only write about the colonization of the past, but also about the present-day colonization and the struggles involved.

The term “postcolonial” has to be treated with care. It is often rather difficult to put labels such as colonial or postcolonial onto literature, culture or society.⁴³ However, I still chose to use these terms in this thesis. I discuss literature in a postcolonial frame because it raises many interesting and significant questions. Walder supports such an approach:

[The term “postcolonial”] carries with it the implication that what we are talking about has to do with large-scale historical phenomena, phenomena involving shifting power relationships between different parts of the world, as well as between people within particular territories. It demands a kind of double awareness: of the colonial inheritance as it continues to operate within a specific culture, community or country; and of the changing relations between these cultures, communities and countries in the modern world. (2)

Even though the framework of postcolonial theory brings some difficulties with it, it is still a useful and productive tool to examine Maori writing. Needless to say, it is just *one* among many frames that shape the discourse of this literature. This thesis employs it in order to excavate some parts of the eroded Maori map that Ihimaera writes about.

2.3.2. The Emergence of Maori Literature

Defining Maori literature can be challenging. The most obvious definition would be to say Maori literature is literature written by Maori. But how Maori does someone have to be? Does he/she simply need Maori *whakapapa*, does he/she need to have an upbringing in a Maori community, does he/she have to speak *te reo*? These questions are discussed by many critics and often lead to conflict and to authors being accused of not speaking as a “real”, authentic Maori.⁴⁴ I will not engage in this debate, but I define Maori literature to be works written by Maori⁴⁵ (not, as some say, works by non-Maori *about* Maori), regardless of content, language or other features.

⁴³ And after all, the question remains whether labelling is indeed desirable, as it often tends to force things into specific frameworks.

⁴⁴ One example is C. K. Stead’s infamous essay “Keri Hulme’s ‘The Bone People,’ and the Pegasus Award for Maori Literature”, in which he accused Hulme of being “a Pakeha which has won an award intended for a Maori” (104). Other critics soon engaged in the debate, came to Hulme’s defence and argued that she *does* write as a Maori – e.g. Margery Fee in her article “Why C. K. Stead didn’t like Keri Hulme’s *the bone people*: Who can write as Other?”

⁴⁵ As Maori I understand a person who has Maori *whakapapa*, who has knowledge about Maori culture and society, and who identifies himself/herself as Maori.

Maori culture does not have an early body of written literature, but instead, it does possess other forms of literature, such as carvings and a rich oral tradition:

The ancient Maori were surrounded by writing in their daily life: the carvings on posts and houses, the marks on cloaks, the very architecture of the great meeting houses. The fact that texts [...] were memorized, not written down, does not mean that the ancient Maori inhabited a world from which writing was absent. It was a world in which a variety of forms, written and oral, gave vivid and complex expression to a culture. (Melbourne 132)

This kind of literature was produced in the Maori language. Thus, literature in *te reo* does have a long tradition. Maori literature in English, however, does not have such a past. It “has had to struggle for acceptance in the face of both European literary and cultural values, and the lack of tradition of such Maori literature until the 1950s” (Prentice, “Nga Tuhituhinga Reo Pakeha” 214). Maori writing in English began in magazines and literary journals, in which writers such as J. C. Sturm⁴⁶ published poems and stories. One important publication was *Te Ao Hou* (from 1952 onwards), the quarterly of the Department of Maori Affairs. Its aim was to be a magazine for Maori, like a “marae on paper”, and thematically, it was focused on the tensions and problems that arise when adapting to new circumstances (Prentice, “Nga Tuhituhinga Reo Pakeha” 215). The material that was written in the 1950s and 1960s was experimental in expressing what it means to be Maori in the present (Della Valle 95). Many well-known writers, such as Hone Tuwhare and Patricia Grace, started their career publishing in *Te Ao Hou* (Della Valle 95).

The most influential period of Maori writing in English were the 1970s, which featured the publication of the “Maori Firsts” – the first published books by Maori writers. Hone Tuwhare’s *No Ordinary Sun*, a collection of poetry, had already been published in 1964, but in the 1970s Maori writers definitively put their names on the literary map. Witi Ihimaera was the first Maori to publish a collection of short stories (*Pounamu Pounamu* in 1972) and a novel (*Tangi* in 1973). Patricia Grace was the first Maori woman to publish a collection of short stories (*Waiariki and Other Stories* in 1975) and a novel

⁴⁶ Sturm was the first published Maori writer in English – her stories “The Old Coat” and “For All the Saints” were printed in *Numbers 1* in 1954 and *Te Ao Hou* in 1955 (Della Valle 95).

(*Mutuwhenua* in 1978).⁴⁷ These works had a major influence on New Zealand's literary landscape and initiated changes not only in the literary, but also the social sphere. Della Valle writes about the importance of these first publications:

They opposed any monocentric view on reality and showed the potential of alternative values. They rewrote history, challenging the dominant version, and counter-colonised the genres of the Western canon and the English language. They redefined the position of Maori in relation to Pakeha and, by doing so, forced Pakeha to do the same, underpinning the importance of literary texts as ideological discourses. [...] The voice of Maori, silenced for over a century, has prompted a redefinition of New Zealand as Aotearoa/New Zealand, from neo-colony to post-colony. (96–97)

The writers that emerged in these years are part of the so-called Maori Renaissance, a period of revival for Maori culture – both artistically and socially.⁴⁸ It was born out of the growing awareness of Maori rights and struggles, the political movements of the 1970s and 1980s, and the experience of urbanization. The writings of the Maori Renaissance are tightly connected to this historical and social background. The literature of this period did not only emerge in the context of growing Maori self-determination and political activism, but it also engaged in and contributed to this discourse. Ihimaera, Grace, and their fellow writers deal with postcolonial issues and themes, such as language, history, land loss, culture, identity and social problems. They pointed out things that were going wrong in New Zealand, and problems that needed to be addressed and thus, they contributed to the cultural revival.

However, as this writing only started to emerge in the 1960s and became more prominent in the 1970s, the postcolonial literature of Maori is relatively young. Della Valle points out that it is a hybrid form of literature (93). It uses Western genres and the English of the colonizers, but it also incorporates Maori oral traditions, elements and structures of *te reo*, and a unique Maori perspective (93). Thus, it creates new and unique forms. Furthermore, it is also “a vehicle to pose the political stances of a

⁴⁷ Other „Maori Firsts“ are the first historical novels by a Maori man (Heretaunga Pat Baker: *Behind the Tattooed Face*, 1975) and by a Maori woman (June Mitchell: *Amokura*, 1978).

⁴⁸ The cultural renaissance became noticeable with the increasing confidence and the visibility of Maori art (Prentice, “What Was the Maori Renaissance?” 88). In terms of literature, the renaissance is identified with an increase in publication and readership. New publication outlets were created, and the emergence of novels and short story collections “signified a new confidence in both the writers and in the market for these works” (Prentice, “What Was the Maori Renaissance?” 88).

marginalised group, an act of resistance to hegemonic discourse” (93). Postcolonial Maori literature continuously writes back to the centre and challenges mainstream literature. At the same time, it is also a strong defence of Maori culture and identity.

2.3.3. Authors and Themes

Peter Beatson divides the literature of the Maori Renaissance into two phases: the pastoral or traditional phase and the disillusioned, political, modern phase (12). The first phase is full of nostalgia for traditional Maori culture (Beatson 18) and the tone of the writing is hopeful. Many characters in the fiction feel the need to remember traditional values and customs, and the traditional communal life style is usually depicted as an intact world (Moura-Koçoğlu 77). Instead of being very political, the writing is reminiscent and focuses on values and traditions that were disappearing as a consequence of urbanisation (Keown, “Ihimaera’s Maori Map” 74). The aim of the authors was to document a way of life that was vanishing, and to break down Maori stereotypes that were established by Pakeha (Keown, “Ihimaera’s Maori Map” 74). Della Valle describes the contents of the first phase of Maori writing:

They depict the spirit of Maoritanga, exemplified in the traditional concepts of whanaungatanga (kinship and family responsibilities) and manaakitanga (reciprocal assistance to one another), in the bond with the land and the belief in its spiritual nature, in the respect of ancestors, and in the basic concept of aroha [love, sympathy]. They place in the foreground what is at risk, or has been lost, as a consequence of urbanisation and deculturation. (101)

Thus, these works express identity, and present “the full dignity of a culture from the inside, insisting on its rational organisation and the coherence of its world view” (Bardolph 132). This early fiction usually has a rural setting, emphasizes the harmonious bond that people have with their land and waters (Bardolph 132), and depicts the rediscovery of cultural traditions. Ihimaera and Grace are the most influential writers of this phase. In their early works⁴⁹ several common themes can be found, which continue to “resonate as a background echo across all their writing”: a spiritual reality where humans interact with nature as well as with inanimate objects; the

⁴⁹ These include Ihimaera’s *Pounamu Pounamu* (1972), *Tangi* (1973), *Whanau* (1974), *The New Net Goes Fishing* (1977); and Grace’s *Waiariki and Other Stories* (1975), *Mutuwhenua* (1978) and *The Dream Sleepers* (1980).

importance (and endangerment) of community and family; the bond with and respect for nature; a treatment of time that also reflects the time of myth; a living between two worlds (hybrid identities); primary oppositions (rural/urban, past/present, Maori/Pakeha, et cetera); and a transitional nature in the structure of stories (Della Valle 108).

One example of this first, pastoral phase is Ihimaera's *Pounamu Pounamu*. It not only laid the basis for all his later works (as he started exploring most of the themes that he would develop later on), but it was also the first book "offering an unmediated Maori world view" (Della Valle 116). The short stories highlight the values of traditional Maori life, and the tone of them changes from a nostalgic to a darker and more pessimistic view. Throughout the stories, the themes that Della Valle identified in both Ihimaera's and Grace's writing can be found. One of them, "The Whale",⁵⁰ is written in a rather hopeless tone: a *kaumatua* (elder) visits his *marae* one last time and reflects on the decay of traditional Maori ways. Parts of the story do indeed read as if they were aimed to record and explain traditions that are in the process of being forgotten, such as the description of the meeting house:

[...] this is not only a meeting house; it is also the body of a tipuna, an ancestor. The head is at the top of the meeting house, above the entrance. That is called the koruru. His arms are the maihi, the boards sloping down from the koruru to form the roof. See the tahuhu, ridgepole? That long beam running down from the front to the back along the roof? That is the backbone. The rafters, the heke, they are the ribs. And where we are standing, this is the heart of the house. Can you hear it beating? (Ihimaera, *Pounamu Pounamu* 116)

The *kaumatua* is in despair about his decaying world, about the loss of language and the disappearing respect for Maori customs and *tapu*. In this story, Ihimaera describes aspects of Maori culture through the nostalgic eyes of an elder looking back to the past. The *kaumatua* simultaneously criticises the change that Maori society went through and the position that it holds in the present:

⁵⁰ The short story "The Whale" also preludes the novel *The Whale Rider*: Both stories feature an elder who tries to come to terms with a changing culture and society, and in both of them, stranding whales act as a symbol of the decay of culture. The closing scene of "The Whale" seems to be reworked in the novel: "And as the old one approaches, he sees that it is a whale, stranded in the breakwater, threshing in the sand, already stripped of flesh by the falling gulls. The water is washed with red, the foam flecked with blood. He cries out then, this kaumatua. [...] – No wai te he... Where lies the blame... the blame. Where lies the blame, the blame.... And the whale lifts a fluke of its giant tail to beat the air with its dying agony" (Ihimaera, *Pounamu Pounamu* 122). The similarity will become obvious in chapter 3.1, in which *The Whale Rider* is discussed.

This old one, he has seen too many of his people come as strangers. The Maori of this time is different from the Maori of his own time. The whanau, the family, and the aroha which binds them together as one heart, is breaking, slowly loosening. The children of the whanau seek different ways to walk in this world. Before, there was a sharing of aroha with one another. No matter how far away some of the children went there was still the aroha which bound them closely to this meeting house and village. But the links are breaking. The young grow apart from each other. They look with shame at their meeting house and this village because it is decaying. They walk away and do not come back. That is why the Manawa [heart] beats so loud with agony, that is why this meeting house is dying. When Maori aroha dies, when the Maori walks away into another life, the meeting house weeps.... (*Pounamu Pounamu* 119)

While Ihimaera critically highlights the decay of Maori culture in texts such as “The Whale”, he does it in a nostalgic way. In later texts however, he becomes more political, more aggressive, and increasingly writes back to the Pakeha centre.

Critics tend to focus on the nostalgic tone of this early writing, but Rika-Heke points out that even then the writings were “more often than not, subtle but powerful critiques of the effects of colonization and the colonizing culture, as well as a defense of the indigenous one” (153). These critiques were reinforced in the second, modern phase, which is tightly connected to the political movements of the mid-1970s. Beatson sets 1975, the year of the great Maori Land March, as the symbolic date for the transition to this period of writing (12). The growing self-confidence of Maori and the political protests fuelled literature to become more political and critical too. The writing now critically questioned the relationship between Maori and Pakeha within the postcolonial realities of New Zealand (Moura-Koçoğlu xvii). The crisis of culture and identity had already been addressed in the traditional phase, but now, the outcries were louder and the protest further reaching. Rika-Heke puts it this way: “The uncompromising and often bitter writing, fed by the growing awareness of double standards in New Zealand, in which, unofficially at least, there were [sic] one set of rules for Pakeha and another set for Maori, as well as the pain and anger of injustices resulting from colonization, was begin to appear alongside the nostalgic, ‘safe’ writing of ‘paradise lost’” (153).

Political discourses and events, such as the Land March, the occupation of Bastion Point, and the protests surrounding the Raglan Golf Course, were elaborated critically in literature.⁵¹ Thus, they became part of this new kind of literary expression and of a new sense of self-determination (Rika-Heke 154). One example is Grace's *Potiki*, which describes the fight of a Maori community to hold on to their land and clearly has echoes of the real-life protest movements. Rika-Heke writes: "What the text[s] spoke about was the 'here and now,' and the anger that came from violations felt and seen. They thus closed the gap between writing and reality, between past and present" (154).

Maori writers used the Western form of the short story and the novel, but they adjusted it for their own means, to accommodate their own view and their own version of history, and to bring Maori values and perspectives into literature (Rika-Heke 154). Most of all, they used the novel to address issues such as race relations and the injustices of colonization. Della Valle identifies three major "evils" that the writers denounced: faults in the Eurocentric education system; the conscious repression of *te reo*; and the alienation of tribal land (145).⁵²

While Ihimaera and Grace dominated the earlier phase of Maori literature, new voices began to emerge beside them: Keri Hulme first brought "global visibility" to New Zealand (Birns 334) when she won the 1985 Booker Prize with her novel *The Bone People*. The book describes the impacts of domestic violence in Maori society, but also the possibility of an eventual "redemption and reconciliation" through reconnection with Maori heritage (Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing* 144). It was, as Prentice points out, "a landmark moment in Maori literature in English, [...] and perhaps doing more

⁵¹ The Land March of 1975 was a protest march, where activists walked from the far North down to Wellington to protest the alienation of Maori land. A petition, which called for "not one more acre" of Maori land to be taken, signed by 60,000 people, was presented to the Prime Minister.

In 1977, a group of activists occupied Bastion Point to protest against plans to sell land that Maori had given to the government earlier for purposes of defence. When it was no longer needed for that purpose, it was not returned to the Maori tribe. After the government announced housing development plans, the occupation began. In the end, the government followed the recommendations of the Waitangi Tribunal and returned most of the land to the Maori tribe.

The Raglan Golf Course Occupation of 1978 was a similar protest. During World War II, Maori land was taken to build an airstrip. After the war, it was not returned, but turned into a golf course. Thus, Maori started the occupation. Eventually, the land was also restored to the local *iwi*.

⁵² Della Valle writes about the texts of Ihimaera and Grace, but these "evils" can be found in the works of other postcolonial writers as well.

than any previous work to draw out a literary and cultural awareness of Aotearoa/New Zealand literature as the literature of a bicultural nation” (“Nga Tuhituhinga Reo Pakeha” 20). In 1990, Alan Duff’s novel *Once Were Warriors* was published. It had an immense impact on New Zealand’s literary scene and caused great controversy throughout the country. Patrick Evans writes about Hulme’s and Duff’s works: “That kind of writing, uncompromising and often bitter, is part of the militancy that grew in the period as economic recession hit the urbanised Maori and gave their new cultural radicalism something to bite on” (220). Thus, as social pressure grew, their fiction increasingly highlighted the struggles of Maori in a modern society (Moura-Koçoğlu 109). The fiction of the 1990s is concerned with new Maori, who have knowledge about their heritage and are bound to their people, but who challenge customary practices and hierarchies (Della Valle 193). In order to create their identities, they borrow elements from both the traditional Maori world and the modern, Western world to face the challenges of a changing present (Della Valle 193).

Ihimaera, Grace, Hulme, and Duff (and the poet Hone Tuwhare) remain the best-known Maori writers (Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing* 145). However, there are other important, less prominent authors, such as June Mitchell, Apirana Taylor, Rowley Habib and Heretaunga Pat Baker. There is also a new, younger generation of writers, who still deal with postcolonial issues. One example is *Whetu Moana*, an anthology of Polynesian poetry of 2003. Some of the featured writers deal with issues that emerged from the Maori Renaissance: the occupation of Bastion Point and other protests, the alienation of land, Maori self-determination, the lives of urban Maori, and the translation of traditional cultural concepts into a modern context (Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing* 145). Thus, postcolonial themes are still being addressed today. Reina Whaitiri writes:

Contemporary Maori writers show that many of the struggles faced by Maori yesterday are the same today: loss of land, high crime rate, poverty and injustice. But today, Maori are dealing with the problems differently. [...] We now have an educated, talented, energetic, worldly wise population able to bring new energy and solutions to the problems of our people in the twenty-first century. Today, we use the courts, parliament, schools and universities, and literature. Maori are still writing about periods in our recent history when it was hard to be Maori, harder for Maori women, but we move on. (89)

Summing up the development of Maori literature, it can be said that the 1970s focus on recording and asserting Maori traditions, as well as on fostering a Maori identity. The 1980s are influenced by politics and activism, and critically reflect on social problems and self-determination. After the establishment of a secure identity, the writing from the 1990s onwards reflects on new challenges, which Maori face in the present.

After this overview of the main developments in (postcolonial) Maori literature, I will now further discuss some key themes that I have identified in many postcolonial works. In exploring them, the focus will mainly lie on novels from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, as the works that appeared during that period are the most notable, and also because the novels discussed in chapter 3 emerged in this context and timeframe.

History and Historiography

One important aspect of postcolonial Maori literature is the rewriting of the established history. Many Maori writers criticise the fact that in New Zealand, history is often written from a Pakeha point of view, and does not accommodate the Maori side of the story. Ihimaera writes:

Until recently, most published histories about Maori were written by Pakeha scholars. The view of Maori history is therefore not that of the participant but the observer, from the outside not the inside. [...] I believe that Maori people have every reason to be suspicious of the history that we are taught and which, to a certain extent, still determines the shape of our lives. Our duty is to confront history with our own. ("A Maori Perspective" 53)

In their literature, postcolonial Maori writers reinterpret history and rewrite the stories that have been told by Pakeha. They contest the authority of an official (Pakeha) history and often address their Pakeha-audience directly, as can be seen in Ihimaera's *The Matriarch*: "For most assuredly *you*, Pakeha, began taking the land from us as you were signing your worthless Treaty. *You*, Pakeha, began taking away our culture" (73–74).

The Matriarch is probably the most prominent work in terms of the rewriting of history. For Suzanne Romaine, it serves as a "counternarrative to conventional histories written from a European point of view" (36). In the novel, Ihimaera continuously challenges the conventional history, for example in this passage:

All New Zealand schoolchildren are taught about Captain James Cook's discovery of New Zealand and his historic landfall at Poverty Bay in the *Endeavour* in October 1769. They are told that the event was quite glorious – that a lad at the masthead shouted 'Land Ahoy!' at 2 p.m. on 7 October 1769 [...]. They are asked to imagine the sight as the *Endeavour* anchored off the mouth of the Turanganui River. They are told, to some amusement, that the reaction of the Maori people on shore was one of awe for the huge white bird, the floating island, and the multicoloured gods who had come on the bird. Ah yes, the stuff of romance indeed!

But what the schoolchildren are not told is that Cook's first landing was marked by the killing of a Maori called Te Maro, shot through the heart by a musket bullet, Monday 9 October, 1769. Then on the morning of Tuesday 10 October 1769, another Maori called Te Rakau was shot and killed, and three others were wounded. During the afternoon of that same day a further four Maoris [sic] were murdered in the bay merely because they had showed fight when molested, and three of their companions were taken captive.

Captain James Cook claimed New Zealand for Britain. The *Endeavour* finally left Poverty Bay on Thursday 12 October, 1769. The glorious birth of the nation has the taste of bitter almonds when one remembers that six Maoris [sic] died so that a flag could be raised and that the *Endeavour* had lain in Poverty Bay for only two days and fourteen hours. (*The Matriarch* 36–37)

Throughout the novel, Ihimaera revisits and reinterprets key events of New Zealand's history (e.g. the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi), first stating the established historical facts and then describing them from a Maori perspective (Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing* 54). Ihimaera also quotes Pakeha historians. However, these quotations have actually been edited by the author to emphasize injustices against Maori (Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing* 55). This led to criticism and accusations of plagiarism, but Ihimaera responded: "[...] I have engaged in a dialogue with the 'received' historical facts and perceptions. I hope that I have kept faith with facts, that is, dates, places, personalities and events. But because written histories consulted were primarily non-Maori or 'outsider' perceptions I have exercised my right to reflect and put on the table the views of the Maori involved in events" ("A Maori Perspective" 53). The strategies that Ihimaera employs when writing about history not only draw attention to the fact that historical interpretation can be quite subjective, but also to the potential of literature "as a means by which to call into question the univocal authority of European 'master narratives'" (Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing* 59).

New Zealand's history is not only reassessed in historiographical novels (e.g. *The Matriarch* or C. K. Stead's *The Singing Whakapapa*), but also in historical studies such

as James Belich's *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (1986) and Claudia Orange's *The Treaty of Waitangi* (1987) (Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing* 51). This further highlights the Maori perspective and shows that the recovery of the silenced indigenous history is a major concern of postcolonial Maori writing and of the cultural revival in general.

Mythology and Traditional Narratives

The Matriarch not only deals with factual historical events (and their interpretation), but also with myths, as the Maori definition of history includes myth. Postcolonial novels often feature a sequence about traditional myths. Both *The Matriarch* and *The Whale Rider* (as will be explained in chapter 3.1.2) open with a narration of a Maori creation myth, and thus, Ihimaera connects the story to a mythical past (Della Valle 164). *The Matriarch* and its sequel, *The Dream Swimmer*, both interweave several stories, "moving back and forth from past to present, from fictional to historical characters, from myth to real events" (Della Valle 165). The mythological narratives are not necessarily the centres of the stories, but they are often intertwined with the main narrative.

Grace's *Potiki* for example keeps coming back to the Maui narratives. The great trickster hero and demi-god Maui was the *potiki* (youngest child) in his family. He was an "aborted child cast away on the ocean by his mother" and rescued from the sea by his ancestors (Walker, "The Relevance of Maori Myth and Tradition" 172). One of the myths surrounding him tells that Maui fished up a giant fish from the sea – New Zealand's North Island, which today is called Te Ika-a-Maui (the fish of Maui).⁵³ He died when he attempted to pass through the body of Hine-nui-te-po on his quest for immortality. Hine-nui-te-po, the personification of death, crushed him between her thighs. The life of Tokowaru-i-te-Marama, the young protagonist of Grace's *Potiki*, closely follows Maui's experiences, as Keown points out: his birth (he is deformed like Maui, and found by the sea), the episode when he catches a big fish, and the way he dies when he walks through the doorway of a burning meeting house (Keown identifies

⁵³ The South Island is called Te Waka-a-Maui (the canoe of Maui) and Stewart Island is Te Punga-a-Maui (the canoe's anchor).

this as “a clear reference to Hine-Nui-Te-Po’s *vagina dentata*”) (*Pacific Islands Writing* 179). Furthermore, Grace also includes the traditional creation myths, such as the story of the separation of Ranginui (the sky father) and Papatuanuku (the earth mother) in *Potiki*.

Keown points out that the incorporation of Pacific mythology in contemporary literature is an important aspect of the interplay of oral and written traditions, and that it is “invoked as a means by which to assert land and other cultural rights” (*Pacific Islands Writing* 182–183). Myths and traditional narratives thus build a cultural backdrop, which sets the novels and their characters in a specific Maori context. This theme will be revisited in the analysis of *The Whale Rider*, which not only features creation stories, but also the mythological narrative of Paikea, the whale rider.

Language

Another main concern in postcolonial Maori literature is the question of language. Chapter 2.2.2 has already explained some aspects regarding language, such as the strategy of language suppression that the Crown employed. The Maori writers who this thesis deals with chose English as their writing language. There are a number of obvious reasons for this choice: English is by far the dominant language in New Zealand, and if the authors wanted to reach a broader public, sell more than just a few books, and reach an overseas market, writing in Maori would not have been a viable option. Hulme writes: “[...] a combination of ignorance of the language, and lack of publishing resources, has brought about this current school of Maori writers in English” (“Maori” 296). However, writing in English does not mean that these authors simply employ the English of the colonizers. Sandra Tawake points out that recent literary works of Maori have expressed a postcolonial identity by using a variant form of English, which “itself symbolizes the postcolonial stance of resisting the imposition of a prescribed usage by any authority or center of power” (162).

Maori authors use different language strategies in order to transmit their writing in a particular way. They include Maori words and phrases in their text, as well as elements of oral literature. Thus, the reader is forced to engage with the culture if he/she wants to

decode the meaning of these terms (Rika-Heke 155). The strategy of code switching, the use of foreign words, phrases or whole sentences, “expresses cultural conflicts through linguistic tensions” (Rika-Heke 155). The three types of literary code switching that are employed are: extrinsic (words are merely used to supply local colour), organic (the words are explained in order to not alienate the reader), and political (words are used without explanation to discomfort the reader) (Della Valle 173–174). Postcolonial Maori writers apply organic and political code switching to highlight the fact that they do not write English books with a few Maori words as “decoration” (Della Valle 174) – but rather, they write Maori books in English.

Another language strategy concerns the use of grammar: While some writers adjust English to Maori grammar only on a few occasions, others adapt English in an experimental and distinctive way. Grace, for example, transfers Maori grammatical patterns across to the English of her Maori characters (Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing* 166–167). This can be seen in the “rendering of mass and count nouns”, which are not differentiated in *te reo* (Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing* 167). In *Potiki*, Granny Tamihana says: “Butter you *a* bread [...] And I’ll pour us *a* tea” (Grace 20, my italics). Elsewhere, Maori grammar is applied in English through the treatment of verbs, and a certain use of tenses and word order (Della Valle 177–179).

These distinctive language usages act as “strategies of counter-colonisation of the dominant language and an assertion of the indigenous point of view” (Della Valle 173). They not only helped the “filtering” of *te reo* into New Zealand’s previously monolingual society, but they also “exemplify processes of language abrogation and appropriation that characterise postcolonial literatures” (Della Valle 181-182). Thus, Maori writers have not simply chosen to write in the colonizer’s language, but they have changed it for their own purposes.

The Land

As explained in chapter 1.3.1 and 1.3.2, land plays a crucial role for Maori and the loss of most of their land has often been described as a traumatic experience. This is also expressed in literature. The land is not simply a setting for the stories, but it defines the

characters. In Ihimaera's *The Matriarch*, Tamatea Mahana's close relationship with the land is expressed in this scene:

Walk the proud land. It was my custom, whenever I was home in Gisborne, and no matter whether I had the time or not, to go out to Waituhi. This was the one ritual that could never be broken [...] I would walk the boundaries of the land, or crisscross it at least once a year for, *oh, how we walked this land*, the matriarch and I, and how fearful I was that I might forget some small yet significant detail of what had been told to me as a child. [...] These boundaries, and the stories attached to their making, would be memorised. In this way, the entire land was like a living geography text and history book in one. The minutiae of life, ah yes, all imprinted and still living, inscribed on the land. And to ensure the continuity of the tribal memory, the people would traverse the land from time to time and from generation to generation. (102–103)

Like Tamatea in *The Matriarch*, the Maori characters in Grace's *Potiki* have a tight connection to the land: "[The people] knew that they belonged to the land, had known all along that there had to be a foothold otherwise you were dust blowing here there and everywhere – you were lost, gone" (61). The community that is portrayed in *Potiki* fight for their land and try to withstand the threats of the "Dollarmen", who want to acquire it. A similar storyline is developed in *The Matriarch*, when Tamatea goes on a mission to save his family's land. Thus, the aim to keep Maori land becomes one of the driving forces of both novels.

As well as illustrating the importance of land to Maori, and documenting efforts to resist land alienation, postcolonial novels also address the consequences of land loss. Ihimaera puts these words into Whina Cooper's (leader of the 1975 Land March) mouth: "For not only do we lose everything if we lose our land. We also become nothing" (*The Matriarch* 236). Earlier in the novel, Tamatea reflects: "I thought to myself that there must be many of us, in many houses like this, who feel the desolation of being landless and colonised in our own land. Yes, it is true – the land has been taken and where there is no land the people must leave and find new livelihood in the cities to the north and to the south. Gone, gone, they have gone, the iwi from the land" (50). For many Maori, losing their land is synonymous with losing their culture, and their connection to their past and ancestors. Thus, losing the land implies much more than losing the financial value of that land. Additionally, the loss of land has other consequences for Maori, such as increasing urbanisation.

Urbanisation and Social Problems

Urbanisation and the social problems that arise in the city are other common themes in postcolonial Maori literature. The urban environment is often portrayed in opposition to a rural life, which is usually focused on family, community and tribal relations (this can be seen in Ihimaera's early novels) (Prentice, "Nga Tuhituhinga Reo Pakeha" 217). Within this context, the journey from an urban to a rural setting (or the reverse) is another element frequently applied, for example in Ihimaera's *Tangi*, in which the protagonist travels from the city to the country (for a funeral). Later works of Ihimaera and other writers have become more urban and look critically at the conditions of living in the city. This theme will be further discussed in the analysis of *Once Were Warriors* in chapter 3.2.3, and the contrast, the rural environment, in chapter 3.1.2.

Culture and Identity

Maori culture and identity can be regarded as the superordinate topics, to which all the mentioned themes are connected. The preservation of culture plays a crucial role in the literature of the pastoral phase, which was mainly concerned with the recording of traditional Maori ways and values. This can be regarded, as Moura-Koçoğlu writes, as "an implicit facing-down of Pakeha cultural dominance through their redefinition and reinvestment with meaning of the idea of indigenous identity" (93). The early works of Tuwhare, Grace, Ihimaera and others focus on their expressions of identity and were understood "as being unique because the different *identities* of the writers differed from the 'usual suspects' canon of writers" (Somerville, "My Poetry Is a Fire" 41). While the political phase of the 1970s and 1980s was focused on protest and activism, the maintenance and revival of Maori culture was still an important goal in this literature. Culture and identity are expressed through the discussion of the themes mentioned earlier, as well as others: community, the role of elders and ancestors, inter-generational conflicts, gender roles, current and/or international concerns, the future of Maori culture, the conversation with the dominant culture (Maori/Pakeha oppositions, race-relations), et cetera.

One aspect that all postcolonial works by Maori have in common is that they question established ways of representing Maori culture, society and identity – be it in a subtle or

in an obvious way. In this context one must not forget the colonial framework. Leonie Pihama explains how Maori representations by Pakeha derive from colonial portrayals of Maori. They are expressed in three concepts: the native/inferior Other, the deficient/depraved/negative Other, and the activist/radical/excessive Other (191). Such historically constructed identities and power relations can change the way people think about themselves (Thompson 116), and they have certainly influenced the concept of Maori identity. Similarly, Martens describes how contemporary Maori culture is a colonial construct, meaning that “the values, beliefs, practices, and discourses in society are shaped and determined by the process of colonialism” (114). According to him, the development of Maori from the pre-colonial era until today is the product of the interaction between Maori and Pakeha and involved processes such as “destruction, oppression, integration, assimilation, adaption, conversion, collaboration, rejection, self-determination, alienation, resistance, and exclusion” (115).

This shows that the creation of culture and identity is – to a certain extent – dependent on “external” factors, such as the ways a race or a culture is perceived, constructed and reorganised by other cultures, the media, and/or colonial powers. With this in mind, the depiction of indigenous people and their culture must be carefully examined to get a sense of how it has been shaped by the process of colonization. The literature that is concerned with such questions plays an important role in how culture and identity are shaped as well: “A text, literary, filmic, or otherwise, can contribute fully, even centrally, to how a community defines itself and understand its future, especially after situations of trauma and war” (Boehmer 257–258). This confirms that culture and identity are flexible and negotiable concepts, which change over time. The literary works that are discussed in chapter 3 show different ways they can be expressed and thus, they will underline the flexibility of the concepts.

2.4. Conclusions

It is questionable whether there is a style that can be described as distinctively Maori, as their writing shows great diversity. Nevertheless, there definitely are some elements that are frequently used by postcolonial Maori writers. One of them is the use of a unique language, as explained earlier. Furthermore, written texts often stay in close proximity to oral literature, as writers intermingle multiple storylines (e.g. in *The Whale Rider*) or make use of multiple narrators (e.g. in *Once Were Warriors*). This technique approximates the Maori practice of *whaikorero* (speechmaking), “in which different orators take turns to offer individual perspectives on a topic of discussion” (Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing* 172). Other forms that are commonly applied to structure texts are the circle and the *koru* (spiral). The spiral is used in *The Matriarch* as well as in many of Grace’s novels. The image of the spiral, “a space embracing not one centre but a multitude of centres, moving toward and away from the point of entry and departure, without beginning or end, denoting eternity”, is sometimes criticised as a “lack of centre” when applied as a textual structure (Della Valle 167). However, it has become a typical form of Maori writing, which challenges European formal traditions.

While it would be inaccurate to suggest that there is one specific Maori style, postcolonial Maori writers have succeeded in establishing a distinctly Maori voice (Moura-Koçoğlu 147). They write about Maori themes and concerns, and use a distinctive language and form. They take established forms (such as the novel and the short story) and the English language, and appropriate them for their own use. In doing so, they have found an independent voice and created their own kind of literature. Their experiments with language and form can be regarded as acts of resistance to the dominant canon (Della Valle 150). Their writings are also declarations of identity and sovereignty.

Postcolonial Maori writers have been writing back to the centre since the 1950s. Instead of letting themselves be defined by outsiders any longer, they took pen and paper and started to define themselves and to show who they really are. They have not only

recorded traditional Maori ways of doing things, but they have also emphasized that Maori culture and language are alive.

However, the struggles that Maori culture has been through cannot be overlooked either. The history of colonization has left its mark, and addressing these imprints is one of the main concerns of postcolonial literature. Thus, history is closely connected to the texts of postcolonial writers. The literature emerged out of the historical and social conditions of (post)colonialism. In turn, these conditions are then discussed in the literature. They are examined from a Maori point of view, which challenges the established Pakeha narrations. Della Valle writes:

By using literature to present a specifically Maori view of the world and of New Zealand history, Grace and Ihimaera [and other postcolonial Maori writers] challenged the established narratives of the colonisers. They claimed their right to include myth in history and to use a traditionally realistic genre in order to express it. They underlined the existence of different point of view, that is, of many histories which were also stories and necessarily subject to fictionalisation. (168)

Postcolonial Maori writing, having only fully come alive in the 1970s, is a relatively young literature. The authors did not have an easy task to fulfil, as Della Valle explains: „If Pakeha writers had to find their way by shaking off British models, the burden on Maori was double: shaking off both British and Pakeha. Living in an ‘outer periphery’, Maori had a longer way to go to find their own centre in writing” (99).

However, they eventually did find it. Today, their literature stands as a powerful statement of postcolonialism. Rika-Heke writes: “What characterizes this kind of writing is not simply the introducing of the history of colonial oppression, but the struggle for control of the word.” The following chapter deals with two authors who have actively participated in this struggle for control of the word and who have succeeded in gaining control and in making their voices heard.

3. Culture and Identity in Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* and Alan Duff's *Once Were Warriors*

The aim of this chapter is to show how Maori culture and identity are expressed and discussed in two specific works. In order to do this, I will analyse and compare *The Whale Rider* by Witi Ihimaera and *Once Were Warriors* by Alan Duff. I have chosen these novels for several reasons.

First of all, they were published around the same time (*The Whale Rider* 1987 and *Once Were Warriors* 1990), which means that they were written in the same historical and cultural context. They deal with similar topics – the struggle of Maori culture in a postcolonial world, questions of identity – but they do it in different ways. While Ihimaera focuses on the rural life and depicts the culture in a mainly positive way, Duff's novel is a harsh and brutal portrayal of Maori as the urban dispossessed.

Furthermore, both novels can be regarded as paradigmatic of Maori literature, as they represent particular issues and developments of postcolonial Maori literature. *The Whale Rider* belongs to the pastoral tradition, while *Once Were Warriors* represents the second, more aggressive phase of Maori literature in English.

A final important reason for choosing these two books is that both of them gained national and international attention when they were adapted into films, which were widely distributed.⁵⁴ As a consequence, the novels received more attention as well. Today they are two of the most prominent texts by Maori authors internationally. As these books have travelled further around the world than most other Maori books, they play an important role in influencing how foreigners perceive Maori culture.

This chapter is divided into two main sections, which discuss the two novels, and a summarizing comparison and conclusion. Both sections start with a brief introduction to the writers' life and work to give context to the novels. Then, they analyse the ways

⁵⁴ *Once Were Warriors*, directed by Lee Tamahori was released in 1994, and *Whale Rider* by Niki Caro in 2002. The films will not be discussed here, because they are not set in the same historical realities that the novels are (e.g. they blend out the postcolonial context). Besides, the adaptation from book to film or a comparison of them would offer enough material for another thesis.

Maori culture is portrayed and identities are created. In the chapter about *The Whale Rider*, the assertion of traditional Maori culture within the novel is discussed first. After this, the context of Maori culture within the postcolonial world is explored.

In analysing *Once Were Warriors*, I will first look at how Maori identity is created in negotiation with or opposition to Pakeha identity. Then, the place of Maori in a postcolonial world is discussed. In the closing section, a comparison summarizes the findings of the chapter. It also looks at the function of the novels as mediators of culture and the role they play for identity-making.

3.1. *The Whale Rider*

3.1.1. Ihimaera and *The Whale Rider*

Witi Ihimaera was born in Gisborne in 1944. He has Maori ancestry and close affiliations to several tribes. However, he grew up in an ambivalent environment. Corballis and Garrett explain:

On the one hand the community of which he was part was predominantly a Maori one, and many traditional customs were still a day-to-day part of Maori life. On the other hand the ‘official’ view of Maoritanga in the schools and, to a certain extent, among the Maori people themselves, was that such traditional customs, and especially the use of the Maori language, were to be discouraged because they were no longer appropriate or useful in the modern world. There was thus considerable tension in growing up as a Maori not only for Witi but for all of his generation – a feeling of being pulled in two different directions. (8)

This tension is apparent in his writing.

Ihimaera completed an English degree at Victoria University of Wellington, which he considered as a “training” that later enabled him to work as an editor and an anthologist, and “to create a sense of a tradition, to demarcate different kinds of literature” (Ihimaera and Calleja 202). However, he began his writing career before he started editing Maori related texts. After he read an essay that pointed out the fact that there were no Maori novelist, he “decided cold-bloodedly that [he] was probably the best positioned and

equipped to do this novel” (Ihimaera and Calleja 200), and thus, he started writing in 1969.

His writing can be grouped into two phases, which mirror the general development of Maori literature in English. Ihimaera’s early literature⁵⁵ is reminiscent, non-confrontational and concerned with exploring and preserving Maori values and traditions. However, in 1975, he felt that his fiction had failed to keep up with the political and social reality, and that he was trapped “within a national context of Pakeha-Maori relations which privileged Pakeha discourse” (Ihimaera and Calleja 200). Thus, he stopped writing for ten years. Ihimaera comments on this gap:

I could not, in all conscience, allow people ever to consider my work was the definitive portrayal of the world of the Maori. In my attempts to help, I considered I had created a stereotype. Of warm caring relationships. Of a people who lived in rural communities. But what *was* the reality? The reality in 1975 was a hardening of attitudes of both sides. Of inflexibility. Of infighting. By 1975 I felt my vision was out of date and, tragically, so encompassing and so established that it wasn’t leaving room enough for the new reality to punch through. (“Maori Life and Literature” 53)

The second phase of his writing started with the explosive novel *The Matriarch*, in which Ihimaera discusses postcolonial topics in more detail and more forcefully than in other works. The novel marks the beginning of Ihimaera openly, and sometimes provokingly, challenging the Pakeha centre. Behind *The Matriarch* and its formal organisation lies “Ihimaera’s need to show how the wholeness, connection, and meaning he finds at the heart of traditional Maori life were subsumed under the brokenness, alienation, and loss that have permeated and shaped Maori life since colonisation [...]” (Williams 119).

The Whale Rider was written after *The Matriarch*. However, it is not as overtly political and critical as its predecessor. The novel tells the story of a small Maori community. Koro, the old chief, searches for a successor but does not want to accept his granddaughter Kahu for this role. The community struggles on its path to modernity.

⁵⁵ The first phase of Ihimaera’s writing includes the novels *Tangi* (1973) and *Whanau* (1974), and the short story collections *Pounamu Pounamu* (1972), while *The New Net Goes Fishing* (1977) already foreshadows the shift that his literature would take.

This is reflected in a second narrative, which tells about the journey and subsequent stranding of a pod of whales. The focus on a rural community and the sometimes nostalgic way it is described can lead to the temptation of placing *The Whale Rider* within Ihimaera's earlier phase of writing. However, postcolonial issues are still addressed and some critique can be found too, even if it all happens in a more subtle way.

3.1.2. An Assertion of Traditional Maori Culture

Della Valle writes about Ihimaera's first book-length publication: "*Pounamu, Pounamu* celebrates the traditional values of Maori rural life and also the forces threatening them" (109). This statement also perfectly describes the content of *The Whale Rider*. The novel makes its main contribution to postcolonial Maori literature through its positive assertion of Maori culture. Ihimaera describes the life in a small, rural Maori village, and emphasizes traditional values, such as community, tribal ties, the connection to land and nature and the importance of the past. Through all these elements, a certain image of culture and identity is created.

Rural Life and Community

Although the community that is depicted in the novel is entirely fictional, it is based on Ihimaera's home village. The small Maori settlement of Whangara, on the East Coast of New Zealand, is the setting for the story. Whitireia, the local meeting house, is mentioned in the novel as well. Atop the meeting house rides Paikea, the whale rider, who is an important ancestor of the Ngati Porou *iwi* (which is located at the East Coast of the North Island). Although the characters are located in a specific setting and have specific traditions (e.g. the Paikea myth), they also express values and identities that they share with other Maori. The novel celebrates Maori community, as Ihimaera has done in earlier works (e.g. in *Pounamu Pounamu*). Kahu's *whanau* is a close-knit community; they take care of each other and help each other out in times of need. They stick together despite all their disputes. Thus, Nanny Flowers, Kahu's grandmother, never divorces her husband, even though she constantly threatens him to do so. The connection to the *whanau* remains of great importance to the family members, even if they move overseas: Rawiri, Kahu's uncle and the narrator of the story, lives in

Australia and Papua New Guinea and doesn't see his family for years, but he always feels the connection. When he receives a letter from his brother, he reflects: "The letter had the effect of making me realise how much time had passed since I had been in the company of my whanau, and I felt a sudden keenness, like pincers squeezing my heart, to hold them all in my arms. *Hoki mai, hoki mai. Come home*" (WR 82).

This close relationship between family members is best shown in Kahu's relationships. The girl has a strong connection to her (great) grandmother, Nanny Flowers. Kahu is also deeply in love with her (great) grandfather Koro: "she's hungry for *him*, the old paka [bugger]. Hungry for his love" (WR 44). She always tries to bond with him, even though he continues to reject her. The difficult relationship of Kahu and Koro expresses an inter-generational conflict: Koro is determined "that the mantle of mana should fall from the eldest son to the eldest son, in accordance with Maori custom" (Fox 160). This leads him to reject Kahu, his first-born grandchild, as she is a girl. However, in the end, the girl finally gains acceptance of her grandfather.

Such strong bonds between children and their grandparents are frequent motives in Ihimaera's (as well as other Maori writers') stories. Della Valle writes: "The structure of extended families favoured close ties between different generations, and whangai was a relatively common practice whereby the young were sometimes raised as the children of grandparents or other relatives" (113). Even though Kahu is not raised by her grandparents, the novel is focused on their relationship.

The Whale Rider is mainly concerned with the rural life of Whangara. For Nanny Flowers, Whangara is a self-contained unity, which offers everything one could need. Thus, she keeps questioning Rawiri's motives for moving to the city: "What's wrong with Whangara?" she said. 'You got the whole world right here. Nothing you can get anywhere else that you can't get here' (WR 69).

The urban environment on the other hand, is only mentioned in a few brief comments. When Rawiri moves to Sydney, he is fascinated by the big city: "I was like a kid in a great toyshop, wanting to touch everything. Whangara wasn't as big as *this*, with its teeming city streets, glass skyscrapers, glitter and glitz" (WR 70). In this passage, the

city is portrayed as some kind of wonderland – a depiction quite different from the urban environment of *Once Were Warriors*, as will be discussed in chapter 3.2.3. However, Ihimaera suggests that leaving one's home and moving to the city does not always turn out well: "In the search for fame, fortune, power and success, some of my cousins had opted for the base metal and not the gold" (*WR* 71).

The urban environment seems far away most of the time, and since the life in the city is hardly portrayed at all, it does not act as proper opposition to rural life within the novel. However, every absence from Whangara and from the tribe seems to cause distress for the characters and they always feel the need to come back. This not only reflects the ties to their *whanau*, *hapu* and *iwi*, but also the deep connection to the land and the sea.

The Connection to Land and Sea

The "spiritual belief-system linking ancestry to location" (Prentice, "Riding the Whale?" 260) is depicted through the characters' close relationship to land and nature. The land is linked to the *iwi* through mythology and history. In the novel, the most prominent myth is the one of Paikea, also known as Kahutia Te Rangi. He arrived and lived at a certain location, and thus, he is forever connected to this particular area of land and to the people who have been living on it. In *The Whale Rider*, Ihimaera writes:

Kahutia Te Rangi landed at Ahuahu, just outside our village, in the early hours of the morning. [...] At the time of landfall the star Poututerangi was just rising above our sacred mountain, Hikurangi. The landscape reminded Paikea of his birthplace back in Hawaiki so he named his new home Whangara Mai Tawhiti, which we call Whangara for short. All the other places around here are also named after similar headlands and mountains and rivers in Hawaiki – Tawhiti Point, the Waiapu River, and Tihirau Mai Tawhiti. (*WR* 41)

This shows that the landscape is part of the tribe's history. This can also be seen in another version of the myth, which says that "the island you see close by the beach at Whangara, Te Ana a Paikea, is the whale itself, transformed into a rock" (Author notes. *WR* 173). The myths are located in the land and sea, and thus, the people who these myths belong to, also belong to the land and become *tangata whenua*, people of the land. "The land is more than the setting for stories", Prentice writes, as for Maori, "this relationship [to the land] defines who they are at least as much as their presence defines the land itself" ("Nga Tuhituhinga Reo Pakeha" 224).

The person who has the strongest connection to the land, the sea, the nature and the tribe's history and mythology is Kahu, even though her grandfather tries to withhold some of the tribe's knowledge from her. After her birth, Koro does not want to have anything to do with her, but Nanny Flowers steps in. She buries Kahu's placenta in front of the meeting house, and thus, she ties the girl to the land and the tribe. The Maori word for "land" is *whenua*, which also means "placenta".⁵⁶ According to Maori custom, people are bonded to the land through the traditional burial of the *whenua* (placenta) in the *whenua* (land). Mead writes: "Whenua, as placenta, sustains life and the connection between the foetus and the placenta is through the umbilical cord. This fact of life is a metaphor for whenua, as land, and is the basis for the high value placed on land" (269). This connection cannot be undone, even if the person leaves the land. Thus, when Kahu leaves Whangara as a baby to live with her mother's family, Nanny Flowers knows: "Never mind, girl,' she said to baby Kahu. Your birth cord is here. No matter where you may go, you will always return. You will never be lost to us" (*WR* 39–40).

After this first link between Kahu and the land is established, it becomes stronger and stronger. She develops a spiritual connection to the land and to the creatures and animals inhabiting it. Most notably, Kahu is depicted as having a close bond to whales. When she, as a little girl, eavesdrops on Koro telling some male members of the tribe about the butchering of whales, she is devastated and cannot stop crying for hours (*WR* 61). From an early age, she seems to be able to communicate with whales. At the age of two, (after her uncle Rawiri watches a movie about a whale hunt to which he brings Kahu), she is shown to make her first attempts of calling out to them: "It had been uncanny, really, seeing those killer whales slicing stealthily through the sea, uncanny and disturbing as a dream. Even more strange, though, was that Kahu had begun to make eerie sounds in her throat. I swear that those long lamenting sighs of hers were exactly the same as [the whale sounds] I had heard in the movie theatre. It sounded as if she was warning them" (*WR* 54).

⁵⁶ Other meanings are "ground", "country" and "state" (Mead 269).

It is not only Kahu, who feels this special connection to the whales, but other members of the tribe as well. In *The Whale Rider*, two big whale strandings are described. The first one happens at Wainui Beach, close to Whangara, and is based on a real incident: On March 18, 1970, 59 sperm whales stranded and died at Wainui beach. The Website of Wainui Beach says:

The SPCA [Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals] had received numerous calls from outraged Wainui locals who had observed people hacking at the whale carcasses. Men were seen knocking out whale teeth and others cutting chunks of flesh from them while they were still alive. [...] Another witness said: "It was a scene of pure horror down amongst the huge creatures, and I was unfortunate enough to witness the attempted removal of a jawbone by someone with a chainsaw. [...]" (Clapham)

Even though there are 200 instead of 59 whales in Ihimaera's stranding, the scenes he describes sound familiar: "The chainsaw has just completed cutting through the whale's lower jaw. The men are laughing as they wrench the jaw from the butchered whale. There is a huge spout of blood as the jaw suddenly snaps free. The blood drenches the men in a dark gouting stream. Blood, laughing, pain, victory, blood" (*WR* 112). However, Ihimaera does not only rework a historical event, but he also describes the feelings of the community, and how Maori interpret this incident:

It was that sequence of human butchery, more than any other, which triggered feelings of sorrow and anger among the people on the Coast. Some would have argued that in Maori terms a stranded whale was traditionally a gift from the Gods and that the actions could therefore be condoned. But others felt more primal feelings of love for the beasts which had once been our companions from the Kingdom of the Lord Tangaroa [god of the sea]. (*WR* 113)

In their effort to save the whales, the people discover that there is a connection between humans and animals: "One of the old men was talking to his whale and said in response to his neighbour, 'Well, *you* talk to your plants!' At that point the whale lifted its head and, staring at the two men, gave what appeared to be a giggle. 'Why, the whale understands,' the old man said. So the word went down the line of helpers. *Talk to the whales. They understand. They understand.*" (*WR* 116). The volunteers, who try to rescue the animals, give them names, let them become part of their families and are devastated when they die: "As each death occurred the people who were looking after the whale would weep and clasp one another" (*WR* 117). This illustrates the respect that Maori have for the whales, and in a broader sense, for nature.

Joan Metge writes:

Classical Maori beliefs included belief in a link between particular human descent-lines and particular animal species. Maori who grew up in traditional Maori communities were taught that their hapu and whanau are linked in a special way with one or more non-human species, not with the whole species but with an unusual, readily recognisable member of it, such as a white ruru (morepork owl) or an eel with tattoo-like markings [...]. This animal acts as a guardian (kai-tiaki) to members of the whanau or hapu to which it is attached, warning against danger and death, and punishing those whose actions threaten the group [...]. (84)

The “unusual, readily recognisable member”, which Metge describes, first appears as a cloud formation spotted by Rawiri: “The clouds looked like a surging sea and through them from far away a dark shape was approaching, slowly plunging. As it came closer and closer I saw that it was a giant whale. On its head was a sacred sign, a gleaming moko” (*WR* 84–85). He sees this formation when he is in Papua New Guinea and interprets it as a sign that he should return home. The real whale arrives in Whangara with the second whale stranding:

A dark shadow began to ascend from the deep. Then there were other shadows rising, ever rising. Suddenly, the first shadow breached the surface and I saw it was a whale. Leviathan. Climbing through the skin of sea. And as it came, the air was filled with streaked lightning and awesome singing. Koro Apirana gave a tragic cry, for this was no ordinary beast, no ordinary whale. This whale came from the past. (*WR* 124–125)

The whale is identified as a whale of special significance because he is wearing a *moko*, a traditional Maori tattoo: “On the head of the whale was the sacred sign. A swirling tattoo, flashing its power across the darkening sky” (*WR* 125). Just as Metge explains, the whale acts as a guardian, who guides the tribe in a time of need. The old whale reminds the reader of Koro, as he is very nostalgic about the past, struggles with the present, and is also quite stubborn: “After all, the bull whale was the boss, the chief, and they knew how crotchety he became if they did not respect his words” (*WR* 152). This statement could describe Koro as well. The character of Nanny Flowers is reflected in the old mother whale, the only one who dares to question the bull whale’s decisions. Both female characters are smart and slightly cheeky when they challenge the chief’s authority. When Kahu wakes up in hospital after her own whale ride (as explained in the next section, “Mythology”), her grandparents are quarrelling and she says: “You two sounded just like the old mother whale and the bull whale arguing” (*WR* 166). By

inscribing traits of the human characters in their cetacean “counterparts”, Ihimaera creates a curious connection between the species.

However, there is more to this connection. The fate of the whale herd mirrors the fate of the humans: “The whales feel doomed like Maori culture itself” (Bardolph 133). Kahu’s tribe struggles in a modern world, in which values and traditions undergo change. In order to find a place to stand in the new world, Koro has to accept that change is inevitable and not bad *per se*. However, Koro is described as “an old whale stranded in an alien present” (*WR* 81). This clearly links the tribe’s struggles to the stranding of the herd of whales, which are literally stranded in an alien environment. Koro recognizes this connection and realizes:

The whale is a sign [...]. It has stranded itself here. If we are able to return it to the sea, then that will be proof that the oneness [of natural and supernatural, of past and present] is still with us. If we are not able to return it, then this is because we have become weak. If it lives, we live. If it dies, we die. Not only its salvation but ours is waiting out there. (*WR* 129)

Ihimaera gives the whales their own narrative, which he interweaves with the narrative strand of Kahu’s tribe. The author applies this technique in several of his works. At some point, he usually “unveil[s] a surprisingly close relationship between the different strands” (Corballis and Garrett 64). At first, the narrative of the whales is only loosely connected to Kahu’s tribe, but it is always set within a Maori context. Jean-Pierre Durix writes: “As the narration develops, it becomes more and more obvious that the wanderings and fate of the whale heard echo the mythic history of the Polynesian people. As they travel through the different corners of the Pacific ocean, the narrator pinpoints archetypal locations and evokes their significance for his own culture” (20). The narratives are brought together when the whales strand on the beach of Whangara. Humans and whales begin to interact, and thus, the narratives intersect as well. Furthermore, Durix notices:

This parallel between human and cetacean destiny is made more obvious in the epilogue when the whales themselves start talking instead of having their wanderings merely reported by the narrator. This obviously brings the reader closer to their world. But they express themselves mostly in the formalized language of ceremonial occasions. They seem perfect embodiments of the old Maori dignity which many human beings have now lost. (20)

The tribe also sees the whale as a symbol of unity of the real and unreal. Maori mythology is full of supernatural elements and, as explained earlier, their understanding of history includes the supernatural. At some point, however, humans divided this unity and “started to drive a wedge through the original oneness of the world” (*WR* 128). Koro explains:

In the passing of Time he divided the world into that half he could believe in and that half he could not believe in. The real and the unreal. The natural and supernatural. The present and the past. The scientific and the fantastic. He put a barrier between both worlds and everything on his side was called rational and everything on the other side was called irrational. Belief in our *Maori* Gods [...] has often been considered irrational. (*WR* 128–129)

Koro says that the stranded whale is “a reminder of the oneness which the world once had. It is the birth cord joining past and present, reality and fantasy. [...] and if we have forgotten the communion then we have ceased to be Maori” (*WR* 129). Thus, the symbol of the whale affirms the value of the traditional Maori system of belief, which includes supernatural and fantastic elements. The whole novel emphasizes that mythology is a crucial part of Maori history and tradition, and “that Maori oneness with nature, now lost, must be regained” (Jones 209).

Mythology

In the old days, in the years that have gone before us, the land and sea felt a great emptiness, a yearning. The mountains were like a stairway to heaven, and the lush green rainforest was a rippling cloak of many colours. The sky was iridescent, swirling with the patterns of wind and clouds; sometimes it reflected the prisms of rainbow or southern aurora. The sea was ever-changing, shimmering and seamless to the sky. This was the well at the bottom of the world and when you looked into it you felt you could see to the end forever. (*WR* 13)

The Whale Rider begins with these words, which describe New Zealand before it was discovered by humans. Then, the first chapter tells about the arrival of the first Polynesian explorers and about the coming of Paikea and his whale:

The dark shape rising, rising again. A whale, gigantic. A sea monster. Just as it burst through the sea, a flying fish leaping high in its ecstasy saw water and air streaming like thunderous foam from that noble beast and knew, ah yes, that the time had come. For the sacred sign was on the monster, a swirling moko pattern imprinted on the forehead. Then the flying fish saw that astride the

head, as it broke skyward, was a man. He was wondrous to look upon, the whale rider. [...] With great gladness and thanksgiving he, the man, cried out to the land. *Karanga mai, karanga mai, karanga mai.* (WR 15–16)

The first few pages of the novel tell the myth of Paikea. His life and achievements are remembered in many different stories (e.g. Simmons 126–133; Tremewan 63–72), which are well known throughout Polynesia. The following version of the story, as told by Ihimaera and by other writers such as Robyn Kahukiwa, is based on the traditional narrative of the Ngati Porou tribe. According to this version, Kahutia Te Rangi (Paikea) had a brother, who, out of jealousy, plotted to kill him. He planned to take him and other prominent sons of the village in a *waka* out to sea and drown them. Far out at sea, he scuttled the canoe and everybody except Kahutia Te Rangi drowned (Author notes. WR 170). Stranded out at sea, Kahutia Te Rangi called his ancestors and the gods for help and in response to his *karakia* (prayer chant; today known as the “Paikea Chant”) a huge whale (or a *taniwha*, a water monster, in the form of a whale) came to save him. Other versions of the story state that Paikea could transform himself into a whale (Author notes. WR 172).

Instead of taking Kahutia Te Rangi back to Hawaiki, the whale carried him to New Zealand: “[...] early one morning as the star Poututerangi (Altair) appeared over a far distant mountain arising from the sea [...], he realised that the whale had brought him to a land only rumoured about in Hawaiki; a fabled, bounteous country of great beauty and richness called Aoteaora [...]” (Author notes. WR 170-171). After he landed at Ahuahu (Mercury Island), he finally settled in Whangara. From Paikea, a line of great chiefs, including Porourangi, descended. Thus, Paikea is an important ancestor of the Ngati Porou *iwi* as well as of the Ngai Tahu tribe of the South Island. Ihimaera writes: “He is what we call the tahuhu, the ridgepole, of Te Tairawhiti, the migrant voyager and originating ancestor of the tribe of the Eastern Tides, also binding other tribes of the East Coast, Hawke’s Bay and the South Island together by blood ancestry” (Author notes. WR 171).

As Ihimaera begins his novel with an account of a traditional Maori narrative, he locates the story that follows within a specific framework. Prentice writes: “Novels which begin with creation, cosmological or whakapapa recitations situate the narratives that

follow within a Maori world and a Maori world-view” (“Nga Tuhituhinga Reo Pakeha” 223). The whale rider myth is interweaved into the whole novel. However, Ihimaera not only retells the Paikea narrative, but he also creates a new whale rider story. The big bull whale that strands in Whangara is said to be the ancient whale that brought Paikea to New Zealand. This is shown in the narrative of the whales, in which the whale remembers his master, Kahutia Te Rangi. As he is getting older, he reminisces more than ever about Paikea, and is drawn back to the waters of New Zealand: “[The other whales] began to mourn, for they knew that their journey to the dangerous islands was now a reality. Their leader was totally ensnared in the rhapsody of his dreams of the golden rider. So long part of their own whakapapa and legend, the golden rider could not be dislodged from their leader’s thought” (*WR* 110).

The journey to New Zealand ends with the whales being stranded in Whangara. The old bull whale seems to be preparing to die, while the community of Whangara tries their best to get him back out to sea. However, only Kahu can save him: without anyone noticing, she slips away and swims out to the whale. She greets him in Maori, and explains who she is: “Oh sacred ancestor, [...] I am coming to you. I am Kahu. Ko Kahutia Te Rangi ahau” (*WR* 139). The fact that she has the same name as the original whale rider catches the bull whale’s attention. The girl climbs upon its back and encourages him to swim into the open sea. The whale, thinking that he is carrying his old master, gathers his strength and manages to leave the beach – with Kahu on his back:

In the deepening ocean the fury of the storm was abating. The whale’s motions were stronger. As it rose from the sea, its spout was a silver jet in the night sky. Then it dived a third time, and the pressure on her eardrums indicated to the young girl that this was a longer dive than the first two had been. And she knew that the next time would be forever. (*WR* 146)

Thus, the girl becomes the new whale rider: “She was Kahuita Te Rangi. She was Paikea. She was the whale rider” (*WR* 147). However, with the help of the old mother whale, the bull whale realizes that the person on its back is not the original Paikea, but one of his descendants, a human girl who is about to drown. He lets go of her because he knows that the girl must be returned “to the land” (*WR* 156).

Then, the whale reflects:

Surely, in the tidal waves of Fate, there must have been a reason for his living so long. It could not have been coincidence that he should return to Whangara and be ridden by a descendant of his beloved golden master. Perhaps his fate and that of the rider on top of him were inextricably intertwined? Ah yes, for nothing would have been left to chance. (*WR* 156)

Thus, not only the humans but also the whales recognise the tied fates of the community of Whangara and of the whale herd, and of Kahu and the bull whale.

Another interesting point is that Kahu can communicate with the whale. Again, this is a connection to Paikea, who was able to talk to whales. According to Maori mythology, in the early days after the creation (after sky father and earth mother were separated), humans had the power to speak to whales. However, “as the world aged and man grew away from his godliness, he began to lose the power of speech with whales [...]” (*WR* 50). Then, only a few were given this power, Paikea among them. Metge writes: “[...] Maori believe that their ancestors (tupuna) live on in the spiritual realm and continue to take an interest in their descendants. They are believed to pass on their own special talents to chosen descendants, to provide protection and support in spiritual crises, and to punish those who offend them or do wrong” (84).

As Kahu is a descendant of Paikea, Metge’s observation can be applied: her ancestor Paikea can be assumed to have passed on his special talent to her, which allows her to communicate with whales. Thus, Kahu’s personification of the whale rider gains even more depth.

The retelling of the Paikea myth and its reworking in a new context “clearly illustrates the idea that traditional mythologies maintain a relevance to contemporary life, that they do not primitivize the people who relate to them, and that they, too, are subject to change according to the needs of differing social situations” (Message 88). It shows that the past and the way past is remembered constitute an important element of Maori culture. While the Paikea narration is without doubt the most prominent, there are several other myths mentioned or retold in the novel: the myth about Muriwai, a woman who stepped into a role of leadership to save some members of her tribe; the creation

myth about sky father and earth mother; and the origins of gods, such as Tangaroa, the god of the sea.⁵⁷

All these mythological accounts raise the question of how these supernatural elements within the novel should be read. Mark Williams writes:

We are expected to enter into the world view of another culture – heroic, tribal, organically connected to the cosmos and the nature. This requires of us as readers not so much that willing suspension of disbelief by which we enter into supernatural tales as a capacity to look behind the prose correlatives of oral cultural forms to the world view that sustained them. The reader is not meant to respond to this material as a mere escapism, as fantasy in the *Chronicles of Narnia* sense. What Ihimaera offers is closer to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, in which old forms are consciously mimicked and reproduced [...]. Ihimaera offers a representation in a modern novel of what the myths of an oral culture might look like. (122–123)

Even though Williams writes about *The Matriarch* in this passage, the answer on how to read Ihimaera's accounts of mythology also perfectly suits *The Whale Rider*.

3.1.3. "Our songs will change": Maori Culture in a Postcolonial World

The aspects discussed so far all assert the idea of a culture that clings to traditional values and a traditional Maori way of living and doing things. This is demonstrated through the importance placed on family and tribal relations, community, land and nature, as well as on an ever-present mythological past. Thus, the recording of a distinctive Maori culture and identity is clearly one of the main achievements of *The Whale Rider*. However, this does not mean that the depicted community is a self-contained unity, cut off from the rest of the world. *The Whale Rider* not only describes a traditional Maori culture in order to preserve it, but it also addresses colonialism, postcolonialism and related aspects, such as racism, land alienation, and protest movements. It might not be as prominent as in some other Maori novels, but the postcolonial context is clearly there.

⁵⁷ Another interesting point of Ihimaera's use of mythology is that his work shows "various references to other mythologies, notably those of the Judeo-Christian and Western literary tradition" (Heffelfinger and Wright 88). This can be traced back to Ihimaera's education and study of literature at university, where he was exposed to different kinds of literary forms.

Colonialism

The colonial past and postcolonial present of New Zealand are hardly mentioned in the novel. However, Ihimaera discusses these issues on the example of another country. When Rawiri spends some time in Papua New Guinea, he experiences and reflects on “colonialism, racism and sovereignty struggles there and in New Zealand” (Prentice, “What Was the Maori Renaissance?” 102). Rawiri travels to Papua New Guinea with his friend Jeff, whose family runs a coffee plantation. There, he finds himself in a place of “continued colonial exploitation” and in a “racist colonial context” (Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 129). Jeff’s mother does not want to engage with “the natives”, and Rawiri’s skin is too dark for him to be considered appropriate company for her. At a reception, to which Jeff brings Rawiri, his mother says to another guest: “He’s a friend of Jeff’s. You know our Jeff, always bringing home dogs and strays. But at least he’s not a native” (WR 82). In regard to this, Somerville writes: “Jeff’s mother’s racism relies on collapsing all indigenous/ colonised people into a singular ‘type’ (“natives”), and this formulation creates a clear link between the situation in PNG and colonial racism globally, including the specific case of Aotearoa, in which Rawiri, of course, is a “native” ” (*Nau Te Rourou* 130).

However, not all people in Papua New Guinea who play the role of the colonizer have racist attitudes: Jeff and his father Tom accept Rawiri as he is. Still, they do not engage very much with the indigenous people of Papua New Guinea, and there are several incidents that lead to the impression that “the coloniser is an ambiguous figure” (Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 133).⁵⁸ Eventually, the racism that Rawiri faces leads him to identify with the indigenous people of Papua New Guinea, and this prompts him to “reorient his own allegiances and identifications, away from his friendship with a white

⁵⁸ An interesting twist to the discussion of racism in the novel is given by the racist comments of Rawiri’s family. When he explains that he is about to move to Papua New Guinea, Nanny Flowers “calls up a set of racist stereotypes that rival Jeff’s mother’s” (Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 131). She says: “You’ll get eaten up by all them cannibals” (WR 75). After his return to New Zealand, Kahu repeats this: “Did you like Papua New Guinea? Nanny Flowers thought you’d end up in a pot over a fire. She’s a hardcase, isn’t she!” (WR 93). While those comments seem to be meant as jokes, they are still problematical. Somerville explains the roots of such thinking: “For Maori to think of themselves as Oceanic, then, they/ we first need to rethink years of racism directed towards indigenous people from around the Pacific that the colonial system has told them/ us [...] in order to support a mythology of harmonious relations between Maori and Pakeha” (*Nau Te Rourou* 131).

(coloniser) Australian and towards a renewed sense of his own location within Oceania and also within the enduring colonial system” (Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 131). Through the experiences in Papua New Guinea (and in Australia before that), he grows “into an understanding of [himself] as a Maori” (*WR* 79).

Rawiri also realizes how the colonial situation in Papua New Guinea mirrors the one in New Zealand. At the beginning, he still looks at Papua New Guinea as an outsider: “[...] I used to marvel at the nationalism sweeping Papua New Guinea and the attempts by the Government to transplant national identity and customs on the colonial face of the land” (*WR* 78). Over time, he gains a deeper understanding of the situation, and he also recognizes the difficulties that this “transplantation” of cultural identity raised:

[...] first, Papua New Guinea was fractionalised into hundreds of tribal groups and their language was spoken in a thousand different tongues; second, there were so many outside influences on Papua New Guinea’s inheritance, including their neighbours across the border in Irian Jaya; and, third, the new technology demanded that the people literally had to live ‘one thousand years in one lifetime’, from loincloth to the three-piece suit and computer knowledge in a simple step. (*WR* 79)

Then, Rawiri makes the connection to his own culture:

In many respects the parallels with the Maori in New Zealand were very close, except that we didn’t have to advance as many years in one lifetime. However, our journey was possibly more difficult because it had to be undertaken within European terms of acceptability. We were a minority and much of our progress was dependent on European goodwill. And there was no doubt that in New Zealand, just as in Papua New Guinea, our nationalism was also galvanising the people to become one Maori nation. (*WR* 79)

In this passage, Rawiri compares the situation in Papua New Guinea with the one in New Zealand, and recognizes similarities as well as differences. These disparities provide a contrast to Rawiri’s home country, and thus, he gains a new awareness of the situation in New Zealand (Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 136).

In Papua New Guinea, Rawiri occupies a position of in-between-ness. He mixes with the “colonizers” (Jeff’s family) as well as with the “colonized” (the indigenous people), but he does not completely belong to any of the groups. This disrupts the social structure, as it poses a risk to the colonial order (Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 137). Eventually, he realizes that he cannot continue to occupy a middle space within the

binary colonial hierarchy of Papua New Guinea (Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 139). This becomes obvious when Jeff accidentally runs over an indigenous man. The scene evolves like this:

Clara [Jeff's mother] screamed. Tom [Jeff's father] said, 'Oh my God.'
I went to get out. Clara screamed again, 'Oh no. No. His tribe could be on us any second. Payback, it could be payback for us. It's only a native.'
I pushed her away. Tom yelled, 'For God's sake, Rawiri, try to understand. You've heard the stories –'
I couldn't comprehend their fear. I looked at Jeff but he was just sitting there, stunned, staring at that broken body moving fitfully in the headlights. Then, suddenly Jeff began to whimper. He started the motor.
'Let me out,' I hissed. 'Let me *out*. That's no native out there. That's *Bernard*.'
A *cous* is a *cous*. (WR 83)

Here, Rawiri refuses to view the incident from "the perspective of colonial ideology": Instead of seeing a native, he sees his friend Bernard (Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 141). Furthermore, by referring to him as a "cous" (cousin), he asserts a deeper, familial connection between them:

This familial claim clearly articulates an Aotearoa-inclusive Oceania, privileging and mobilising whakapapa relationships in order to recognise and subvert the context of colonialism. [...] Rawiri becomes aware of the racist and violent hierarchies that underpin the situation here. He connects with the "iwi" in PNG in a completely opposite way to that which sees them as "natives" [...] and this leads him to a realisation that [...] his "[being] a Maori" makes him a "cous". (Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 141)

In the end, Rawiri recognizes that this familial connection to the indigenous people of Papua New Guinea makes him "interchangeable" with them and thus, he decides to go back to New Zealand (Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 141).

While colonialism and racism in Papua New Guinea are critically addressed, the situation in New Zealand is less intensively discussed. Pakeha occupy a role in the background and race relations are hardly addressed at all. Instead, Maori and Pakeha "cooperate in a climactic scene" when they try to save the beached whales (Albinski 47). However, Ihimaera still incorporates elements that are connected to colonialism, postcolonialism or to resistance to colonial structures. One example is the school that Koro Apirana launches. His aim is to instruct the men of the tribe to learn about their Maori history and customs: "Of course the instruction wouldn't be like in the old days, not as strict, but the purpose would be the same: to keep the Maori language going, and

the strength of the tribe” (*WR* 45). This step towards maintaining the culture is quite similar to Ihimaera’s reasons for writing. He says: “[...] I began to write [to] make New Zealanders aware of their ‘other’, Maori heritage. To convince my countrymen, with love and anger, that they must take their Maori personality into account” (“The Maori in Literature” 84).

Koro and Porourangi (who is next in line of succession) are also active in political movements, and engage with topics such as land issues and Maori sovereignty. Koro has business with Maori Councils in Wellington, he attends meetings concerning the establishment of *kohanga reo* (language nests), and he has established language schools for adults. Furthermore, he takes part in land disputes on the South Island. Additionally, he is very active in Maori protest movements:

Being a big chief, Koro Apirana was often called to meetings all over the country to represent us. [...] He might not always be fair but he was a good fighter for the Maori people. Our pet name for our Koro was ‘Super Maori’ and, even now, telephone boxes still remind me of him. We used to joke: ‘If you want help at Bastion Point, call Super Maori. If you want a leader for your Land March, just dial Whangara 214K. If you want a man of strength at a Waitangi protest, phone the Maori Man of Steel.’ Mind you, he wasn’t on our side when we protested against the Springbok Tour but then that just shows you the kind of man he was: his own boss. (*WR* 48)

All these events are crucial moments in New Zealand’s postcolonial history. Thus, by referring to the anticolonial struggle of Maori, Ihimaera clearly sets the story in the context of postcolonialism. This again “ties in with the theme of nuclear testing in the Pacific which caused the whales to become disoriented and beach themselves at Whangara in the first place, and the parallel colonialism in PNG as viewed by the Uncle during his time there” (Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 374). Thus, the nuclear testing in the sea can be seen as the (cetacean) equivalent of human colonialism. Both whales and humans become disoriented by external influences (nuclear power and European colonialism) and subsequently, they (or in a broader sense, their culture) get “stranded” in an alien environment (the beach and a time that is shaped by colonialism and changing values). In order to “save” themselves, the Maori of Whangara have to address the problems arising with a changing culture and society.

While Koro's thoughts are mostly trapped in the past, Porourangi does engage with these issues:

In his letters Porourangi wrote about the problems he felt were facing the Maori people. He had gone with Koro Apirana to Raukawa country and had been very impressed with the way in which Raukawa was organising its youth resources to be in a position to help the people in the century beginning in the year 2000. 'Will *we* be ready?' he asked. 'Will we have prepared the people to cope with the new challenges and the new technology? And will they still be Maori?' (*WR* 80)

Throughout the novel, the complexity of a changing culture and society is addressed, most prominently in the question of gender roles. Eventually, Ihimaera suggests an answer to the questions posed by Porourangi, as will be shown subsequently.

Gender Roles

In Maori society, tribal leadership is traditionally exercised by males. However, *The Whale Rider* points out that women did have power and authority in certain areas of life, and that there were some female leaders too. The book also suggests that Maori culture needs to re-address gender roles.

Kahu is a firstborn child in a line of chiefs, which would make her a future chief as well. However, Koro does not want to accept this, as he wants a male successor. Koro first appears in the novel when he hears about Kahu's birth, and in this scene, he already expresses this attitude:

'A *girl*,' Koro Apirana said, disgusted. 'I will have nothing to do with her. She has broken the male line of descent in our tribe.' He shoved the telephone at our grandmother, Nanny Flowers, saying, 'Here. It's your fault. Your female side was too strong.' Then he pulled on his gumboots and stomped out of the house. (*WR* 21)

Koro cannot "reconcile his traditional beliefs about Maori leadership and rights" (*WR* 23–24) with the implications of Kahu becoming a female leader. He actively excludes Kahu (and all other women) from acquiring tribal knowledge. Even though Kahu continuously demonstrates that she has a deep connection to Maori culture and that she does indeed possess leadership qualities, Koro chooses to ignore all the signs that show her leadership potential.

Nanny Flowers, on the other hand, has female chiefs in her ancestry: “He [Koro] *knows* I’m a descendant of old Muriwai, and *she* was the greatest chief of my tribe” (WR 24).

Another great chief and female ancestor of her is Mihi:

The story we liked best was the one telling how Mihi had stood on a sacred ground at Rotorua. ‘Sit down,’ a chief had yelled, enraged. ‘Sit down,’ because women weren’t supposed to stand up and speak on sacred ground. But Mihi had replied, ‘No *you* sit down! I am a senior line to yours!’ Not only that, but Mihi had then turned her back to him, bent over, lifted up her petticoats and said, ‘Anyway, here is the place where you come from!’ In this way Mihi had emphasised that all men are born of women. (WR 91–92).

Through accounts like this, *The Whale Rider* acknowledges “the space of women and [rebalances] the relationship between men and women through a conscious mobilisation of structures from within the local and cultural context, specifically, through an invocation of the narrative ancestry of Muriwai [...] in order to balance that of Paikea” (Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 377–378). Being proud of her *whakapapa*, Nanny Flowers continuously challenges Koro’s sexism and supports Kahu in her efforts to prove herself. Koro is disappointed when Porourangi has another daughter, but Nanny Flowers, tired of putting up with his sexual chauvinism, says to him: “Oh, be quiet, [...] Girls can do anything these days. Haven’t you heard you’re not allowed to discriminate against women any more? They should put you in the jailhouse” (WR 90). According to Koro, Nanny Flowers “steps out of line” several times, for example when she encourages Porourangi to name his daughter after Kahutia Te Rangi, the male ancestor of the tribe. Heffelfinger and Wright write in this context: “Women’s transgressions in terms of the patriarchal dictates of their tribe or *iwi* are treated within the novel in ways that demonstrate the complexities of power relations between the sexes, particularly in terms of the ways that women’s influence is foundational and pronounced” (89).

However, it is important to note that gender roles were altered through the colonial encounter. In pre-colonial times, Maori women traditionally occupied spaces of power; they “performed decisive roles and demonstrably possessed authority over specific areas of communal life” (Moura-Koçoğlu 138). Many scholars argue that with the arrival of Europeans the Maori social system was severely altered. The white settlers introduced a Eurocentric ideology, in which the man was perceived as superior and as the sole provider for the family (Moura-Koçoğlu 139). Somerville writes in this regard:

While it would be misleading and unhelpful to claim there is no sexism in the Maori community, many commentators [...] argue that European colonialism radically distorted and in some cases destroyed the complementary gender relationships of so-called 'traditional' frameworks. The paradox is that one arm of the colonising culture introduces its own brand of sexism into Maori communities, and then a while later another arm of the same machine takes it upon itself to represent those same communities as the generic depoliticised 'Native', immersed in a 'backwards' kind of patriarchy. (*Nau Te Rourou* 377)

This shows that the perceptions of gender roles undergo change over time, as they are being influenced by different factors, colonialism being one of them. *The Whale Rider* also illustrates that these gender roles need to be rearranged. In the 1970s and 1980s (the time in which the novel is set), Koro's sexism is out of date. The rest of the tribe, most notably Nanny Flowers, has already come to this conclusion. They do not have a problem with having a firstborn girl in the chiefly line and they realize that Kahu has leadership abilities. It is only Koro who needs to be convinced. However, Koro stands for the old and traditional Maori culture and thus, Kahu's fight to be accepted as a girl can be read as a fight to gain not only the acknowledgement of one important person, but of the whole culture. Therefore, her efforts represent a challenge to the established society and culture in order to facilitate change and progress.

In the end, Koro finally comes to the conclusion that he was wrong ignoring Kahu and her abilities. He only becomes aware of it when Kahu disappears in the ocean and is thought to be dead. Earlier in the story, on his search for a male heir, Koro gives some boys the task of bringing back a carved stone that he had thrown into the sea. However, none of them succeeds and only Kahu can bring it back later on. When Kahu rides the whale out into the sea, Nanny Flowers gives the stone to Koro. In this moment, he understands that Kahu has always been "the one": "Which of the boys?" he gasped in grief. 'Which of the –' Nanny Flowers was pointing out to sea. Her face was filled with emotion as she cried out to Kahu. The old man understood. He raised his arms as if to claw down the sky upon him" (*WR* 147). This moment changes Koro's perspective, and when Kahu wakes up in the hospital, he finally reconciles with her: "You're the best grandchild in the whole wide world," he said. 'Boy or girl, it doesn't matter" (*WR* 166). The final understanding and acceptance of Koro signals that "the tribe's future leadership goes hand in hand with change" (Kennedy, *Striding Both Worlds* 112).

The Indigenous Modern: The Future of Maori Culture

Kahu represents the “solution” to the struggles of Maori that are depicted in *The Whale Rider*. Namely, these struggles are the difficulties of “fostering tradition in the broken context of a Maori present both diminished and changed by colonization” (Kennedy, *Striding Both Worlds* 110). Kahu leads the way and shows Koro and her tribe how they can successfully face the future as Maori.

On the one hand, Kahu embodies traditional Maori culture (Kennedy, *Striding Both Worlds* 110). She is described as a “throwback” (*WR* 44), because she prefers Maori food (e.g. fermented corn) to the Pakeha alternatives (e.g. sugar and soft drinks). She acquires knowledge about her tribe’s history and customs; becomes fluent in Maori and is quite successful in the cultural group at her school. Furthermore, she possesses a strong connection to the sea, particularly to whales and dolphins; and she accepts Koro’s “uncompromising rules of tribal hierarchy” (Kennedy, *Striding Both Worlds* 110). However, despite being excluded by Koro, Kahu continuously proves her *mana* as she passes several traditional tests (e.g. the recitation of her *whakapapa*, the retrieving of Koro’s sacred stone and the rescue of the stranded whales) (Kennedy, *Striding Both Worlds* 110). Through “heroizing” Kahu’s accomplishments, the novel “privileges pre-modern Maori traditions based on notions of tapu, mana, and a natural mysticism that sets Maori apart from the Western modernity of the Pakeha present, in which sacredness no longer structures social experience” (Kennedy, *Striding Both Worlds* 110). Kahu shows an affinity to traditional Maori values, spirituality, and Maori ways of doing things. Hence, she represents traditional Maori culture.

On the other hand, Kahu also embodies change and progress. Even though *The Whale Rider* emphasizes traditional *Maoritanga*, it also discusses modernity and the way the tribe responds to changing circumstances. Kennedy writes: “Kahu uses skills and structures that exist in Maori culture itself to challenge and extend cultural parameters. [...] [Her] struggle and success represent the kind of change that ensures the on-going relevance of her tribe’s traditions in the present and future”; and thus, she embodies the “indigenous modern” (*Striding Both Worlds* 112). Kahu demonstrates that traditions have to be challenged in order to retain relevance in the present and future. Their ability

to survive and accommodate change “signals their living status” (Prentice, “What Was the Maori Renaissance?” 102).

In an interview, Ihimaera points out: “Traditional Maori values will always remain traditional Maori values. What is changing is the accommodation of those values and the continued discussion of those values” (Ihimaera, M. Meklin, and A. Meklin 361). In regard to the character of Kahu, he says that “[Kahu]-like leaders also exist today, but they don’t ride whales – they carry laptop computers and are to be found in the runanga (pan-tribal) networks at the tribal and local iwi levels” (Ihimaera, M. Meklin, and A. Meklin 361). Thus, *The Whale Rider* illustrates Ihimaera’s view that change is necessary to successfully carry traditional Maori culture into the modern world. The end of the book answers the questions that Porourangi pondered on earlier in the novel: “Will we have prepared the people to cope with the new challenges and the new technology? And will they still be Maori?” (*WR* 80). The reconciliation of Koro and Kahu, and his acceptance of her suggest that the tribe will face and facilitate change in the future, and thus, will be able to cope with the challenges ahead.

As an expression of a renewed and reconstructed Maori culture and identity, *The Whale Rider* resembles other novels by postcolonial Maori writers. Moura-Koçoğlu, for example, writes about Grace’s novel *Potiki*:

While Maori traditions remain instrumental in the formulation of indigeneity, hybrid parameters have begun to shape the tangata whenua, and the author can be given credit for depicting a Maori community embarking on a way of life that is patterned along traditional lines but that consequently requires adjustment to modernity and change. By retaining indigenous culture as a source of identification, Grace offers us the portrait of a people who are steering towards a renewed indigeneity that is capable of adapting to change while translating cultural tradition into an altered environment. (122)

This renewed indigeneity is also expressed in *The Whale Rider*. While Koro often tries to ignore and prevent the necessary adjustments to modernity, he ultimately realizes that he cannot and should not stop these transformations, as they will bring progress for Maori. At the same time, Maori traditions can remain at the core of Maori culture and identity. This recalls the words of Hulme quoted earlier: “our songs will change” (“Mauri” 308). Nevertheless, they will remain Maori songs, just as the culture – even if it has changed over time – will remain distinctively Maori.

3.2. *Once Were Warriors*

3.2.1. Alan Duff and *Once Were Warriors*

Alan Duff was born in 1950, the son of a Pakeha father and a Maori mother. He grew up in a state housing area in Rotorua. Duff was expelled from Rotorua Boys' High School and subsequently became a ward of the state at Hamilton Boys' Home. During his adolescence he was convicted for several petty offences. After he spent some time in London to "grow up", he came back to New Zealand to try various businesses before he started to fully concentrate on his writing (Robinson and Wattie 149). *Once Were Warriors* (1990) was Duff's first novel. It was followed by two sequels, *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted* (1996) and *Jake's Long Shadow* (2002). He also published other novels and non-fiction works, such as the much-disputed *Maori: The Crisis and the Challenge* (1993).

Today, Duff is a polarizing figure within New Zealand's literary landscape, and has often been criticised for his portrayal of Maori. *Once Were Warriors* clearly belongs to the second, more aggressive and critical phase of Maori writing in English. With *Once Were Warriors*, Duff challenged the relations of Maori and Pakeha, which were idealized in the media. He also directed criticism at Maori writers who "had constructed a sentimentalised, 'rose-tinted' picture of Maori life" (e.g. Ihimaera and Grace) (Keown, "Ihimaera's Maori Map" 84). Thus, he wrote *Once Were Warriors* to correct these stereotypes and to show how Maori truly lived.

While the author states that *Once Were Warriors* is not autobiographical, the reader can clearly identify some similarities between the events and topics of the novel and those that Duff had experienced himself. As several sources point out (Thompson 107; Stachurski 143), these experiences grant him the authority to write a portrait about a Maori underclass. In the introduction to his book *Maori: The Crisis and the Challenge*, Duff puts it this way:

I wrote [*Once Were Warriors*] because it had much, too much to do with my childhood. What I'd witnessed. What I'd experienced. [...] I wrote it in outrage. And, quite possibly, in relief that I had not turned out as just another

of the losers I portrayed. [...] I write this because I've lived that life – because I've been on the same path of aimlessness, self-destruction and the destruction of others who have been innocents. [...] I write this because I have not only lived the life, I long anguished, long wondered in absolute frustration at what the hell was always going so wrong with my life, the Maori life, that wasn't happening to my Pakeha counterparts. [...] I write it from a position of strength, from a history of past failures, past wretchedness, that gives me the qualifications of first-hand experience. (xii–xiii)

Once Were Warriors depicts the Hekes, an urban Maori family, consisting of Beth, Jake and their children. They are portrayed as a dysfunctional family that is affected by unemployment, alcoholism, and Jake's outbursts of violence. The fierce plot comes to a climax when Grace, the oldest daughter, is raped in her own bed and subsequently commits suicide; and when Nig, the oldest son who just joined a gang, is killed in a fight. However, the novel does not only portray the disruption of a single Maori family, but the struggles of a whole "lost race" of Maori in a modern world.

3.2.2. Maori and Pakeha: Binary Oppositions

As explained in chapter 2.3.1, critics continue to emphasize the experience of on-going colonization in New Zealand. *Once Were Warriors* draws the picture of such a present-day colonized society. Pakeha are depicted as present-day colonizers and Maori as being colonized by them and the government. Various characters of the Heke family face the colonizers with different emotions: jealousy and hate, envy and admiration, curiosity and surprise.

"Lucky White Bastard": The Depiction of Pakeha

Bastard, she'd think, looking out her back kitchen window. Lucky white bastard, at that glimpse of two-storey house through its surround of big old trees and its oh so secure greater surround of rolling green pastureland, while she – Clicking her tongue, Oh to hell with him. Or good luck to him, if she wasn't in too bad a mood.⁵⁹ (*OWW* 7)

The first few lines of *Once Were Warriors* show Beth Heke gazing with envy on the property of their neighbours, a wealthy Pakeha family. The Tramberts own a big farm,

⁵⁹ *Once Were Warriors* is written in a colloquial language. Punctuation and spelling are often changed and/or disregarded. As this is a stylistic choice, I do not mark any "mistakes" in the quotations with [sic].

great amounts of land and seem to lead a smooth and easy life without any problems. While the Tramberts are mentioned every now and then (from the viewpoint of different narrators), there are actually only a few Pakeha characters presented in the book. They usually hold positions of power as judges, police officers or social welfare workers (Keown, “‘He Iwi Kotahi Tatou’?” 205). Nevertheless, most of them “appear only on the periphery of the Maori characters’ vision” (Heim 52). They do not really interact with the Hekes or other Maori in the novel and, as Beth points out, they hardly know them: “They’re like strangers – they are strangers, to most Maori I know. May as well be from another country the contact the two races have” (*OWW* 43).

The Trambert family lives across the street from the Hekes, and thus, is a permanent reminder for the people in Pine Block (the state housing area where the Hekes live) of how “the others” live. The Tramberts and their civilized and seemingly smooth lifestyle represent everything that is unattainable for Grace, Jake and other Maori. The Maori characters react in various ways. Beth on the one hand, envies them and considers herself unlucky not to be born into such a “sweet world” (*OWW* 7). On the other hand, the Tramberts also let her start dreaming again, “dreaming of one day owning a house like him, and a farm” (*OWW* 8). She dreams of being like them, of having her own roof over her head and of having peace, like they surely must have. However, as Beth is not in such a privileged position and as she realizes that she might never be, she regards her neighbours (representing Pakeha in general) with jealousy and sometimes, even with hate, calling Mr. Trambert “lucky white bastard” (*OWW* 7) or “Mr. Fuckin white Trambert” (*OWW* 8).

Grace reacts to her wealthy neighbours in a different way. Every now and then she sneaks out of the house and climbs a tree to look at the Tramberts’ house and to catch a glimpse of the way they live. In one scene, she watches the Tramberts’ daughter play the piano. At first, she is surprised and admires the girl, but the fascination soon turns into bitter feelings:

Ohh, at the person playing the piano when she lifted her head. She can’t be... she can’t be any older than me. Grace astonished. Crushed. At the girl her ability. But mostly her confidence. [...] Grace looking at the girl still playing the piano and feeling more and more crushed. Massively deprived. (*OWW* 86)

Then, Grace notices the surroundings and decorations of the house, the nice furniture, the antiques, the paintings, and the beautiful vases with flowers in them. She begins to feel out of place, realizing that she is just a “black girl from over the way there. The state slum” (*OWW* 87). Grace can’t help but break into tears. Before she leaves, she watches the girl ending her playing and being kissed and hugged by her parents, “and her smile so brilliant like on the toothpaste ads” (*OWW* 87). While Grace looks at the Tramberts with interest and admiration, it is hard for her to watch their seemingly perfect lives. She, regarding herself only as a black Maori girl from the slum, is well aware that she might quite possibly end up being stuck in Pine Block and never find the way to a better life.

While Grace feels crushed and depressed observing her Pakeha neighbours, Jake uses anger and hate to deal with his jealousy. In one scene, the Hekes drives to Ainsbury Heights, the best residential area in town, inhabited foremost by Pakeha. Jake and his family want to “gawk” at them, but the little trip only shows them what they do not have. Jake is filled with envy and hatred seeing the buildings: “those aren’t houses, they’re fucking mansions” (*OWW* 98). Staring at the houses and gardens, both Grace and Jake fantasize about living in such places and cannot think of anything they can be grateful for in their own life. Jake gets more and more angry and jealous, and cannot come to grips with the situation:

Hands rising again, The bread [money], Beth. Where do these white shits get the bread from? Looking pained now. And pointing up the driveway out Beth’s side. Three cars. Three. [...] Three fuckin motors, Beth, and here’s us, this dumbarse Maori family from Pine Block, with nuthin. [...]. (*OWW* 99)

The scene ends when the family leaves Ainsbury Heights, Jake furiously saying, “Let’s get outta here before I see one a these white shits and punchim” (*OWW* 100).

Generally, it can be said that the depiction of Pakeha in *Once Were Warriors* is shallow and strongly idealized. Thomson puts it this way: “[They] seem to float in a cocoon of comfort and privilege, surrounded by beautiful things, endowed with natural graces” (113). Thus, his depiction of the “white world” is not convincing and is perceived by most critics as a flaw (Thompson 113). However, one can argue that his portrayal of

Pakeha is created from the viewpoint of his Maori characters, who tend to only notice the things that Pakeha have and they themselves lack.

Binary Oppositions: Divided Landscapes and Races Apart

In *Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon describes the colonial world as “a world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species” (29). In *Once Were Warriors*, Duff portrays such a divided society. He not only shows the contrasts between the lives of Maori and those of Pakeha, but he also links the geography and landscape to the historical and the contemporary colonization.

Once Were Warriors features various locations that represent a certain kind of lifestyle. One could say that it comes down to Pine Block versus Tramberts' land and areas like Ainsbury Heights. The state housing area of Pine Block is built on land that a wealthy Pakeha (Mr. Trambert) has sold to the state. It is a sad and run-down place and for the Maori living there, it is hard to escape the hopelessness associated with Pine Block. When Beth looks out of her window, all she can see is a “whole fuckin street of exact same state dwellings. A mile-long picture of the same thing; all the same, just two-storey, side-by-side misery boxes” (*OWW* 7). Through the “immediate contrast” between the Pine Block Maori and the Trambert family, the “issue of land ownership [becomes] an important component of Duff's dystopic vision” (Keown, ““He Iwi Kotahi Tatou’?” 85). While Maori are landless and portrayed as “the urban dispossessed” (Keown, ““He Iwi Kotahi Tatou’?” 85), Pakeha are shown as rich landowners.

Christina Stachurski draws attention to the use of the names of places and streets, which hint at the colonization process. In New Zealand, “pine” usually stands for the *pinus radiata*, which is an introduced plant but now dominates the forests (Stachurski 134). Thus, it has replaced various indigenous plants – just like the European colonizers, who came to New Zealand and took over the indigenous people's land. Thereby, Pine Block stands as a metonym for colonization (Stachurski 134). In addition, Duff also links “pine” with the word “block”, which can be defined as a “tract of land offered to individual settler by government” (Stachurski 134), and thus, enhances the symbolic image of the name “Pine Block”. However, Pine Block's streets are named after

indigenous trees – Rimu, Manuka, Matai (*OWW* 11, 55, 95). They “crisscross[...] each other in [a] perfect pattern” (*OWW* 11), which, according to Stachurski, means that this “imposed grid contains and controls Maori ‘indigeneity’” (135).

Pine Block is surrounded by a vacant area of land, which separates the housing area from Two Lakes, the adjacent town (Stachurski 135). Nobody has ever wanted to build anything on it, because, as one character in *Once Were Warriors* puts it, “who wants to live next door to a slum full of mad Maoris having allnight weekend parties? [...] Man, I was a Pakeha, I wouldn’t come within ten fuckin miles of this joint” (*OWW* 56). Furthermore, the Tramberts have a brick wall that surrounds their property, separating them from their neighbours. This shows that there are well-defined geographical borders, which separate Maori from Pakeha.

In one scene, Grace notices how different her home and the one of her neighbours look:

[...] the black lawn, which hadn’t been mowed in ages, with bits of junk sticking up out of the high grass, a beer crate, a cardboard carton, a big tyre; and beyond, out there in the vast green expanse, but you wouldn’t believe two such different worlds could be so close, Trambert’s sheep grazing on his acreage, and the stand of pines you could see from Grace’s window [...]. (*OWW* 29)

On several occasions, the narrators of *Once Were Warriors* (Grace in particular) reflect upon the differences between the two worlds. Obviously, they not only look different and have their own specific settings, but their inhabitants live different lives as well.

Later on in the novel, shortly before she commits suicide, Grace watches the Trambert family once again. She imagines what would happen if the two worlds ever came together:

A girl thinking: What if you people came over to our world, joined our party? What’d happen? Imagining the novelty of havin not just Pakehas in their midst but posh ones at that; all over em, breathin beer fumes over em, getting over-friendly the way they do when they’re drunk, askin em stupid questions, rude questions, insulting questions. Eyin em up, the men, for trouble to pick. [...] Then sure as eggs [...] someone’d walk up to one of em and ask: The fuck’re you lookin at, cunt? Then, Tramberts and friends, they’ll punch the shit out of you, kick hell out of you, spit on you, scream abuse on your bloodied head. Then they’ll party on, inspired, spurred by the beating they have given you. For they know it is the only taste of victory they get from life. (*OWW* 118)

As mentioned earlier, the Tramberts are portrayed as a wealthy middle class Pakeha family, who neither have financial nor emotional worries. However, it is clear that Duff thinks and writes “within a framework of cultural binarities” (Calvert 326). Mr. Trambert is portrayed as an educated and successful person, who has good taste and speaks good and elegant English. Maori characters, however, are scarcely educated; they are mainly unemployed and are out of money most of the time. Furthermore, they speak very colloquial English, using many swear words. Duff associates progress, be it economic or social, with Pakeha and “everything indicative of ‘stone-age’ ignorance’ with Maori (Calvert 326). Thus, as Calvert summarizes, “[everything] Pakeha is assessed as progressive and everything Maori as regressive” (326). Thompson also points out that Duff continues to reflect on Maori values in negative terms, while he never critically observes those of Pakeha (110).

In *Once Were Warriors*, Duff uses binary oppositions in a sometimes trite and stereotypical way. In doing so, he highlights the “socio-economic gaps that exist between middle class Pakeha and the predominatly Maori underclass” (Calvert 282). At the time of the publication of *Once Were Warriors*, New Zealand was praising itself for its “bi-racial harmony” (Keown, “‘He Iwi Kotahi Tatou’?” 205). Thus, his strong message – Maori and Pakeha are not one people, but divided races, races apart – came as a “shock” to many readers.

The construction of binary oppositions also enables the creation of a certain Maori identity: The Tramberts provide them with a contrast as they represent everything that the Maori of Pine Block do not possess. Therefore, their identity is articulated in relation to and in negotiation with Pakeha.

3.2.3. A Lost Tribe: Maori in a Postcolonial World

Having discussed Pakeha as the present-day colonizers and as a culture against which Maori identity is defined, I will now take a look at the other side. In *Once Were Warriors*, Maori are portrayed as a “Lost Tribe” (*OWW* 30) and as people full of unrealized potential. The novel depicts what can happen to a culture when its people have to live within another culture with very different values. Duff draws the picture of a disrupted society – disrupted by its colonial past and present. The following chapter

deals with the various struggles that are created through the process of colonization, and examines how Maori culture and identity are imagined in this context.

Urban Realities

While *The Whale Rider* is set in a rural environment, *Once Were Warriors* deals with urban life. The city in the novel is based on Duff's hometown, Rotorua. The author alludes to this fact by naming it "Two Lakes": Rotorua consists of the Maori words *roto* (lake) and *rua* (two, both, second). Thus, Two Lakes is a literal translation of Rotorua.

As noted earlier, Pine Block provides a miserable and hopeless setting for its characters. The Pine Blockers are as hopeless as the housing area itself. Beth calls them the "going-nowhere nobodies who populate this state-owned, half of us state-fed, slum" (*OWW* 7). Violence and alcohol form a big part of the every-day life of the inhabitants, and "unkempt, ill-directioned, neglected kids" (*OWW* 7) crowd the streets. They cannot rely on a caring *whanau* or on the spirit of community that Kahu has in *The Whale Rider*.

Duff's characters are unemployed, uneducated and caught in a vicious circle of alcoholism, drug use and violence. A conversation between two men, who discuss what to do with their unemployment payments, shows how people get stuck in this circle:

Tomorrow, man, gonna get my dole money and buy me some Chinese. Gonna buy me *lotsa* Chinese. And fuck the power bill. Spare ribs, man, oh far out. And a loafa bread. And butter *thick*, man, gonna dip it in that sauce they do and gonna *stuff* myself. [...] Ah, man, you call what they give you on the dole bread? [...] Less'n a hundred bucks a week if you're single, you call that bread? Well it beats having to *work* for it, man. I mean, work... just the thought of it makes me tired. [...] How long does it last? Brother, it ain't gonna last me one day by the time I'm finished tomorrow. Buyin pork bones too. I'll be waiting for his truck to come, the Pork Bone Man. Gonna be waiting with that look, you know, real cool, casual, eh, like I just won something. The horses, like I just won a big trifecta or sumpthin. Or this Lotto. Man, what I wouldn't do to win that. Million bucks first prize. But hey, what would I be doing standing in the middle of Pine Block waiting for some cunt to arrive with overpriced pork bones? Eh brother? You wouldn't see me for dust. So where would you be then, man? I'd. I'd – a frown creasing the brow, having to think about that one, really think about it – Well, not Pine Block thaz for sure. Maybe, brother, but you'd be back. Back what? Back here, where you started. Come on... When the bread ran out you'd be back. Ran out? Man, how's a fuckin cool million gonna run out? Same way as it ran in, bro – luck. When it's in, it's in. But it always goes. And half the time don't come back. What we all

count on in this shit joint, Pine Block – luck. No wonder a man’s gettin himself drunk all the time: it’s the – the – the. No word for it. Not even so simple a word as frustration. It’s being what we are, man, that’s what’ll bring you back. That’s what keeps us drunk. Luck. (*OWW* 17)

This dialogue illustrates the situation in Pine Block. The characters cannot be bothered to work, as they will earn little more than they get from the unemployment benefit (“dole”). Thus, they spend their days at home getting drunk with their fellow unemployed Pine Blockers. On the first few days after they get their benefit, they buy beer and have parties, while by the end of the week, there often is no money left to buy food. It can be regarded as “living in the moment”; a hedonistic way of life.

Jake also lives in this way. When he loses his job, he does not save up the first cheque of unemployment benefit he receives. Instead, he spends the money on expensive seafood. Jake is not upset by the loss of his job, but he thinks he got “lucky”: “Telling her it worked out at only seventeen bucks less than what he was paid at the quarry, and to think, all them years of working it was for nothing” (*OWW* 20). While Beth thinks that her husband will find another job soon, he becomes one of the long-term unemployed of Pine Block. Beth reflects on the high unemployment figures of urban Maori: “The country suffering its worst-ever unemployment figures. Why, half of Pine Block was out of work. Though a person had to be blind and deaf not to see the figures published in the papers, on the TV, about Maori unemployment being much higher than their white counterparts” (*OWW* 20-21).

The adults set examples for the children, who are “practising to be the nothing nobody, but violent, adults of the future” (*OWW* 8). Hulme writes about the bitter position of young Maori in the city:

In the cities, you are cut off from the life of the land, the sea, your family *marae*, from your ancestral roots. You are generally first, or at most, second-generation city dwellers, and this separation aches. You are a member of a highly visible minority, and you know only a few ways to deal with city pain. You can gather together with other Maoris [sic], because that is familiar and comfortable. You can isolate yourself and drink away the pain. You can become a brown Pakeha [...]. Whatever way you choose, you will still have to deal with the fact that you are a Maori New Zealander. (“Mauri” 293)

The characters in the novel apply the strategies described by Hulme in order to deal with their hopeless situation. Both Beth and Jake turn to alcohol to forget their troubles. They are too occupied with themselves to take care of their children when they are in need. While Beth sometimes realizes that things are going wrong and that change is necessary, she still fails to do anything about it. Thus, her son Boogie becomes a warden of the state (after some minor offences); and Grace feels more and more alone and isolated. Nig, on the other hand, does what many other young Maori in the novel do: he joins a gang. The children become “the epitome of estrangement from indigenous culture and of the absence of identity parameters” (Moura-Koçoğlu 134). They look for an identity and community. Joining a youth gang seems to provide them with a place to stand, and offers a sense of belonging – something that their disrupted families cannot. However, while at first Nig actually feels a great sense of belonging, he eventually comes to realize that the gang “imposes a mutilated notion of family” (Moura-Koçoğlu 135). It draws him away from his actual family and from “authentic” Maori culture in a broader sense, while the gang life turns out to be “a world of perverted values” (Moura-Koçoğlu 136). The traditional notion of Maori warriorhood, which is emphasized by Duff throughout the novel, is transformed into brutal violence.

The Maori of Pine Block (the gang members in particular) are just “a mock image of their warrior forebears”, as they “have lost all connection to their culture and misrepresent traditional practices” (Moura-Koçoğlu 136). Thus, the gang culture turns out to “provide an inauthentic version of Maoritanga and Maori identity” (Stachurski 101).

Warriorhood and Violence

Violence and warriorhood are also the means by which Jake tries to define his identity. His cultural alienation can be explained through childhood discrimination by other Maori (as he descends from slaves). As a result, he rejects all Maori traditions, which contributes to a sense of not belonging. As he denies his cultural roots, “Jake mocks the very notion of indigeneity by playing on his ancestral warriorhood despite having lost all connection to Maori traditions or cultural practices” (Moura-Koçoğlu 133).

According to Duff, Maori possess “warrior genes”, which make them aggressive and violent. In the past, this warriorhood was something to be proud of, but today, violence is all that is left. Jake is the best example: he is aggressive, loves to fight and constantly thinks about violence. He is proud of his toughness and considers himself a warrior: “Us Maoris, man, we used to be warriors. And that mighta been a long time ago, but you walk into any public bar in the land where there’s Maoris and tell Jake Heke that warriors are a thing of the past. [...] there’s still warriors left in our race.” (*OWW* 54). However, there comes the moment when Jake loses a fight in the middle of a bar, after being accused of raping his own daughter. This incident brings into question Jake’s toughness or warriorhood, the one element that has defined his character.

Doreen D’Cruz and John C. Ross write about the creation of identity on the basis of warriorhood:

The warriorhood of contemporary Maori, as represented by Duff, is played out within the imaginary dimensions of bodily and imagistic exchanges, and thus exists as the non-symbolized adjunct of constituted cultural and legal authority. This representational degradation not only contributes to the warrior’s effective eviction from history, but also demonstrates their lack of symbolic instruments of mediation for helping to lift their gaze from the elementary world of bodily drives. Isolation is the outcome of the lack of a symbolic locus or bridge for building community among Pine Block Maori. In this symbolic vacuum, the degraded warrior culture rates as little better than a tragic parody from the past, rupturing generational, familial, and gender relations through the viciousness of a vision locked in the dimensions of brute physicality. (351)

This quote demonstrates that an identity mainly based on warriorhood is highly problematic. Yet, Duff seems almost “obsessed” with this warrior attitude. Even the title of the book contains a strong message. Once, Maori were a race of warriors, but not anymore. What happened to them?

After Beth recovers from one of Jake’s beatings, she reflects on this warriorhood and how her people “lost” it over time:

We used to be a race of warriors [...]. And our men used to have full tattoos all over their ferocious faces, and it was chiselled in and they were not to utter a sound. [...] And we used to war all the time, us Maoris. Against each other. Tribe against tribe. Savages. We were savages. But warriors, eh. It’s very important to remember that. Warriors. Because, you see, it was what we lost when you, the white audience out there, defeated us. [...] But the warriors

thing got handed down, see. Well, sort of handed down; in a mixed-up sense it did. It was more toughness that got handed down from generation to generation. Toughness, eh. Us Maoris might be every bad thing in this world but you can't take away from us our toughness. (*OWW* 47)

In this quote, Beth sees the toughness, the remains of the warriorhood of the past, as positive – or at least, not negative. However, when looking at characters like Jake or members of Nig's gang, what is left does not seem to be toughness, but only violence. According to Duff's theory, Maori show a "cultural predilection for violence which, in pre-Pakeha days, was expressed (heroically) as a warrior ethos", and in the present day is "manifest in a residual and degraded but nonetheless recognizable form" (Thompson 115), such as in the physical and violent world of Jake.

Duff draws a picture of Maori culture based on a traditional warriorhood. While Maori were indeed warriors and practiced warfare, the warrior notion is partly influenced by Eurocentric representations. Thus, it is crucial to question this warrior ethos.

Language

Through the use of strong vocabulary and an inevitable narrative technique, violence is not only visible within the content, but also within the form. *Once Were Warriors* is mainly written in free indirect discourse (from the perspective of several characters). It alternates with an omniscient voice, which often seems to express Duff's personal views. Keown writes: "The omniscient narrative voice is accorded a vocabulary and command of Standard English which is lacking in the majority of the Pine Block residents, serving (by contrast) to emphasize their limited opportunities and achievements in education and employment" (*Postcolonial Pacific Writing* 173).

Duff lets his Maori characters speak in a particular vernacular, which Calvert analyses in "Contextualising Maori Writing" (283): Pine Blockers tend to shorten the "-ing" suffix of gerund forms to "in", such as in "comin" or "killin" (*OWW* 73, 131). They often compound words, which is typical for spoken language – for example "coulda" instead of "could have", or "Turnitup" (*OWW* 63), where several words are joined together. The characters also shorten and change words, as in "dunno" for "don't know" or "sumptin" (*OWW* 77, 63). Duff also incorporates terms that are typically associated

with Maori English, such as “fulla” (*OWW* 136) for “fellow”. Thus, he creates a “distinctive urban Maori dialect”, which is also heavily influenced by Black American culture (Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing* 173).

Examples of the violence and the roughness of the language can be found throughout the novel, for instance in various fighting or gang scenes. One example is Jimmy Bad Horse, the leader of the local gang, announcing to the new members that the gang comes before anything: “YA GOT THAT! YA FUCKIN *GOT* THAT CLEAR IN YA MUTHFUCKA HEADS, YA *GODDIT!*” (*OWW* 136). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, swear words are heavily used throughout the novel. However, they are not simply a “sad counterbalance to every phrase”,⁶⁰ but they “vary in tone according to the situation” (Calvert 283). The language that the Pine Blockers use “serves to emphasize [their] linguistic and socio-economic deprivation” (Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing* 174). While prose like this is at times hard to read, both linguistically and psychologically, Duff’s distinct and often brutal style certainly adds to the power of the novel.

Another notable aspect about the use of language is the role given to *te reo Maori*. In Duff’s novel, the Pine Block characters do not speak Maori. During a party, Beth asks her friends: “You call yourselves Maori? [...] Can any of us in this room speak the language? No reply” (*OWW* 28). Later on, while she listens to a formal speech in Maori, she drives the point further, saying that even though there are revitalisation programmes in action to save the language, most people still do not understand it: “What damn use your formal speeches, elders, in a tongue most of us don’t understand and never will understand even though they’re drumming it into us from everywhere, on the TV, the radio the papers, this kohanga reo stuff, [...]” (*OWW* 122).

As mentioned earlier, language forms an important part of Maori culture and identity. Beth marks the failure of the Pine Block Maori to speak *te reo* as “a form of cultural poverty marking their separation from the proud traditions of their ancestors” (Keown,

⁶⁰ This is the case in Hulme’s *The Bone People*, where this phrase originates (Calvert 283).

Postcolonial Pacific Writing 174). Consequently, Beth identifies a schism between the urban Pine Blockers and “traditional” Maori society (Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing* 174), whereby the traditional culture is represented by those “Who Have History” (*OWW* 120).

“They Who Have History”

While so far this chapter has focused on Maori and Pakeha forming binary oppositions, there is a third group that has to be considered. Beside the Maori of Pine Block, there are the more “traditional” Maori, who live in rural areas. They have an established and secure Maori identity and a living culture. This tripartite structure is also expressed in the naming of three chapters as, “They Who Have History” (the Pakeha), “...And Those With Another” (the Pine Block Maori), and “They Who Have History II” (the rural, traditional Maori) (*OWW* 32, 36, 120). Duff suggests that part of the social struggle of urban Maori lies in the fact that they have lost the connection to their cultural heritage, making them “The Lost Tribe”.

Duff does not portray the traditional, pre-colonial Maori society as being without flaws (e.g. he mentions slavery and the implications of being of low birth), but he still emphasizes the importance of cultural traditions as a crucial aspect of Maori cultural identity. These traditions are acted out by Beth’s *iwi*, whom she has lost contact with. When Grace dies, her *tangi* (funeral ceremony) is held on the *marae* in Wainui, which enables Beth to reconnect to her tribe and her cultural roots. She returns to her rural home and realizes that the Maori of Wainui possess something that the Maori of Pine Block do not, namely: “a positive self-image, a sense of pride in themselves which derives from a strong sense of their own history and cultural heritage” (Keown, “Taku Iwi, Taku Whenua, Taku Reo” 79–80).

In Wainui, Beth and her children are confronted with various cultural expressions. In the beginning, the Pine Block characters still experience the culture as guests or outsiders. The description of the meeting house to which Beth returns after years of absence reminds of Ihimaera’s depiction quoted in chapter 2.3.3:

A single-roomed building of huge dimensions [...]. Walls of woven and rolled plant, decorated with simple geometric patterns of traditional design. Every

pace a carved wooden slab of wall column, depicting an illustrious ancestor, the legends of the people; the lore of the tribe etched out in intricate (but secret) detail. Warrior figures with huge tongues poking grotesque defiance at the imagined (and assumed) enemy; three-digit hands holding a weapon, and perhaps an animal depicted at the warrior's feet, a lizard, a whale, a bird. [...] Ceiling a rib-row of rafters painted in traditional fern-curl or geometric pattern. Two main centre support poles, each an elaborately carved totem of massive log. A bookless society's equivalent of several volumes. If you knew how to translate it, that is. (*OWW* 121)

Duff describes the *marae* from the view of an outsider. The last two sentences suggest that Beth is still partly excluded from the *marae* and from traditional culture, as she is not able to translate the Maori carvings in the meeting house. However, during the time spent at Wainui, Beth is drawn into the culture and gains a deeper understanding of its values.

Grace's funeral is a traditional, several days long ceremony, which features traditional chants, speeches, recitals of *whakapapa*, and a *waiata tangi* (lament for the dead). Yet, the strongest assertion of Maori culture is the *haka* (posture dance or war dance) performed at the end of Grace's *tangi*:

A roar from the chief began it: *Aa, toi-a mai!* And thirty voices answered: TE WAKA! [...] Thirty and more right legs rising as one then *down* they came to the floor, shuddering the very building. [...] Arms going out, feet coming down, arms coming in, legs raising. [...] Words exploded forth: *KAMATE! KAMATE!* Each line, every encrazed utterance a spit-laced outpouring of *WAR! WAR! WAR!* [...] Man, it was a beautiful, crazy war-dance; like a mad fuckin ballet, man; like they were risen from a swamp. [...] And the sweat dripped – it flew – from them, men and equally encrazed women. And still their fury unleashed itself: *RISE UP! RISE UP AND FIGHT! AND FIGHT!!* (*OWW* 127–128)

The *haka* stuns Beth and the other urban visitors, and at the same time, it shakes them up:

And The People sat stunned. Stunned beyond all comprehension. You know, knowing they'd witnessed the profound, and knowing it was, you know, it was somehow *emselves* they'd witnessed. Emselves but with a different force behind em. History?
[...] you coulda heard a pin drop, eh. And just the wind, moaning up there like a distant dog howling. Up in the ceiling, eh, the rafters, or up there somewhere. Kinda spooky too, eh? Like your ancestors'd sent a sign, eh? A sign to you, those of you who don't know your culture, you better get your black arses into gear to do sumptin about it. Before it's too late. (*OWW* 128-129)

Here, the characters from Pine Block, Beth in particular, become aware of the positive energy of cultural expression. The same positivity is expressed in relationships. The community of Wainui is similar to the one portrayed in *The Whale Rider*. The people take care of each other and form a loving and supporting group, as can be seen at Grace's *tangi*:

People came; they stood in their little groups before the coffin with bowed heads and just the wail of formal weeping. Then a speech of welcome from a host elder, followed by a reply from the visitor leader. Then around the room rubbing noses in the old way: *hongi*.⁶¹ Getting to Beth and embracing her, sobbing over her, patting her back, mostly wordless, and then gone. Ghosts. Just nice ghosts being kind to a woman, not because they knew her but because she was one of them. (*OWW* 123)

Beth is immediately welcomed back to the community, even though she has been away for years. The death of her daughter and the subsequent reintroduction to her *whanau* and to Maori culture enable her to foster a more positive Maori identity. She also manages to transport this newfound sense of identity back into the city. However, its original establishment was only possible in the rural environment. Thus, *Once Were Warriors* creates a clear opposition. The city with its “associations of modernity, social deprivation and lack of traditional culture, set against the country/land with its implied associations with Maori cultural identity and salvation” (Spooner 95). The rural environment with its focus on culture and community provides a positive and powerful counterpart to the city. Nevertheless, the focus of the novel lies on the portrayal of the urban setting and the various problems that urban Maori have to face.

Whose Fault? Colonialism and Unrealized Potential

In *Once Were Warriors*, Duff tries to answer the question whose “fault” the current distress of Maori society is. I have already mentioned that the author subscribes to the opinion that Maori violence is something inherent to Maori rather than a product of colonization. Now I look at how he deals with the “disruption” of Maori culture in general and the role he sees colonization playing in this.

⁶¹ *Hongi* is a traditional greeting, where Maori press their noses.

While the Tramberts and other Pakeha are portrayed as the present-day colonizers in *Once Were Warriors*, the historical colonization of New Zealand is mentioned a few times as well. In one scene, Beth directly addresses the Pakeha reader: “[We were] warriors, eh. It’s very important to remember that. Warriors. Because, you see, it was what we lost when you, the white audience out there, defeated us. Conquered us. Took our land, our *mana*, left us with nothing” (*OWW* 47). Here, Duff comes close to claiming that colonization is responsible for present-day problems such as violence. He concedes that Pakeha have committed some injustices in the past (the taking away of millions of acres of land, or the continuous breaching of the Treaty of Waitangi), and that educational and employment opportunities of Maori have not been equal to those of Pakeha (Thompson 109).

However, he puts the blame for the contemporary problems and failures straight back on Maori, saying that they do not make most out of their opportunities and do not tap their full potential. Beth’s development (she stops drinking and uses the approach of self-help to start over) illustrates that the people from Pine Block *could* change if they only wanted to. Duff blames the attitudes of the characters (and also the contemporary colonization of the government, which provides them with welfare which they can use for drinking) for the violence in Pine Block (Stachurski 136). Thus, he “exposes the cultural dilemma of the common Maori, oppressed as much by the traditions of their own culture as by Pakeha power, and reserves his strongest castigation for the former” (D’Cruz and Ross 309). With such a proposition, he lets the Pakeha readers “off the hook” (Stachurski 133), as he does not blame them (as the “colonizers”) for the distress of Maori.

The Future of Maori Culture

In *Once Were Warriors*, Duff delivers an ambiguous message: On the one hand, he suggests that the future of Maori lies in a successful integration into the Pakeha world, while on the other hand, he lets one of his main characters establish a healthy identity through a rediscovery of her cultural roots.

The novel suggests that the way out of the “misery” requires a certain level of assimilation with the dominant Pakeha society and economy (Heim 50). Te Tupaea, the Maori chief, promotes this approach: “[Te Tupaea would] turn up with someone well known, a local Maori fulla who’d become an All Black, a Maori lawyer, a Maori doctor, a Maori surgeon; and he’d prance these fullas out before the crowd there on Beth’s front lawn as well as her neighbours’, tellin the crowd, This is what you can achieve” (*OWW* 191). Te Tupaea only presents people who are successful in the Pakeha world and not any of those who are in the “socio-economically well-functioning Maori communities that do exist in real life” (Heim 50). Thus, Duff implies that in the “socio-economic domain” there is nothing of Maori culture that can be successfully used in the modern world (Heim 50).

Another option is suggested through Beth’s development, which, according to Stachurski, “relies on her innate Maoriness *and* a revision of Maori cultural identity” (108). As explained earlier, the return to rural Wainui allows Beth to rediscover Maori culture, which has a healing effect on her. The fact that she finds “redemption” through reconnecting with her roots indicates that *Maoritanga* can certainly play a role in dealing with social problems. The time in Wainui also enables Beth to foster a new sense of Maori identity. Back in the city, she puts an effort into educating the other Pine Block Maori about their cultural heritage, as they hardly know anything about it:

No one taught us this at school. They taught us *their* history: English history. They forced us to learn, off by heart, dates and names of great Englishmen and battles fought in a country none of us have ever been to nor are likely to go. And they gave us no marks in our exams when we couldn’t remember these dates and funny names and strange-sounding places, and they never understood that to remember things of knowledge ya have to have fire in your belly for it, like the great chief there, or just ordinary passion of wanting to remember it because it, well, it’s about yourself, historical knowledge most easily remembered. (*OWW* 179)

Beth invites Te Tupaea and other Maori of Wainui to teach the Pine Block Maori about their culture and language. When the chief tells them about the history that they have not been taught in school, their own history, he presents it as something to be proud of. Moura-Koçoğlu writes: “Te Tupaea already enunciates a transcultural understanding of native history, where tribal stratification of precolonial society underwent a profound

systematic change [...]. In consequence, Te Tupaea's listeners are made aware of the fact that understanding Maori history is vital to shaping their sense of being Maori today" (141).

Te Tupaea is the "embodiment of a viable Maori identity, which he derives from knowledge of the past as much as from cultural practices in the present" (Moura-Koçoğlu 141). He tells people to "stop feeling sorry for emselves" (*OWW* 182) and encourages them to take things into their own hands. He and Beth follow a programme that is "intended to foster a new generation of Pine Blockers with a knowledge of (and a pride in) Maori history and tradition, as well as a determination to succeed within the Pakeha world through education and self-help initiatives" (Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing* 188).

As a result, some of the Maori of Pine Block gain a new identity, "fed by a sense of pride in their own history, traditions, and culture, and they are equipped with the tools to build a better future" (Keown, "Taku Iwi, Taku Whenua, Taku Reo" 84). The novel also suggests that a revitalization of culture involves change and needs to leave room for the adaptation of values and traditions in a modern, urban setting. As in *The Whale Rider*, the moment of change is addressed through the discussion of gender roles. Beth is constantly abused by Jake, and because she is a woman, he generally treats her as inferior. After Grace's death however, she not only leaves him, but she also comes to play an important role in Pine Block as she rises to a leadership position. She develops the programme of self-help and teaches other Maori. She becomes a female leader, just as Kahu in *The Whale Rider* will one day be. Thus, both Beth and Kahu resist the "traditional" Maori practice that disregards females and undermines the authority of female leaders.⁶²

In the end, the development of Beth proposes that a healthy and modern cultural identity is something similar to Ihimaera's "indigenous modern". In regard to this, Moura-Koçoğlu writes:

⁶² As mentioned in chapter 3.1.3, in precolonial times, women held positions of power in Maori society. The image of a "traditional" sexist Maori society evolved over years of negotiation with Pakeha culture.

[*Once Were Warriors* calls] for a modernization or, rather, appropriation of indigenous traditions for a modern context. [...] Maoridom is not represented as static and archaic; rather, Duff makes clear the profound culture change that has taken place since colonial contact, and the blurring of boundaries between settler-colonial and native culture. It thus seems that the feather cloak, as a symbol of Maori culture placed over the dead bodies of failed characters, has a change of being revalorized if indigenous culture can gain significance for the Maori of Pine Block – for those, that is, who accept and embrace change. (143–144)

Thus, a healthy cultural identity involves a return to the roots of *Maoritanga* and the adaptation of its values for a modern (urban) context. This idea emphasizes the ability of Maori culture to adjust to change and to remain of relevance in the time to come.

3.3. Comparison and Conclusions

At first glance, *The Whale Rider* and *Once Were Warriors* appear like quite dissimilar novels in terms of their content and form. However, as this thesis has shown, they deal with similar themes, albeit they do it in different ways.

3.3.1. The Depiction of Maori Culture

The Whale Rider's focus lies on the positive representation of “traditional” Maori culture. It is set in a rural environment where said traditions are still practiced. The life of the Maori of Whangara centres on the community, the tribe and family, the *marae* and the chief. The novel is a celebration of mythology and Maori customs. For Kahu and her family, culture forms an important part of every-day life and it also plays a crucial role for establishing identities. Thus, the novel clearly belongs to the first, pastoral tradition of Maori literature in English.

Once Were Warriors, which belongs to the second, more critical phase, works quite differently. Instead of a slightly sentimental description of rural Maori life, the novel tells the story of urban, dispossessed Maori. It is a very negative and hopeless account of Maori society, in which traditions seem to have no place. Maori culture is presented “largely scathingly, and one-dimensionally, as a warrior culture that belongs in the past,

with nothing of value to bring to the modern world” (Prentice, “What Was the Maori Renaissance?” 98).

Both novels portray a culture in struggle. In *The Whale Rider*, the (post)colonial past is only mentioned, as the novel focuses on the difficulties of the culture in adapting to modern times. Koro, who represents the old world and traditional Maori culture, has to accept that culture change is inevitable and is in fact positive for the progress of culture. A similar problem is presented in *Once Were Warriors*. While the devastating situation of urban Maori is in the foreground, culture plays its part in this as well. The novel presents a “bleak picture of widespread cultural breakdown” and shows Maori as “hopelessly imprisoned in urban ghettos that anachronistically confirm the colonial paradigm within the postcolonial nation-state” (D’Cruz and Ross 356, 308). While Ihimaera emphasizes “the need for refiguring the symbolic order to enable Maori representation”, Duff suggests that the symbolic order for Maori has to be restored before it can be refigured (D’Cruz and Ross 356). The Pine Block Maori first have to gain knowledge about their cultural roots. Then they have to learn how to transfer the culture into a new, postcolonial environment.

Duff’s “raw, uncompromising social realist stance” (Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing* 189) contrasts strongly with Ihimaera’s more idealistic style. However, as Keown points out, both novels have the “same underlying pattern of wounding and healing”, and both authors write as idealists who seek “to nudge the wounded indigenous body towards a healthier, more positive future” (*Postcolonial Pacific Writing* 189, 190).

In the end, Ihimaera and Duff show Maori culture as indeed being able to renew and “heal” itself, and as being able to adapt to change. This is addressed in both novels in quite similar ways: women challenge established customs and traditions; and in doing so, they act as an instrument of change. Consequently, they occupy roles that are in opposition to traditional Maori views (Tawake 165). Thus, even if the importance of the past is strongly emphasized (especially in *The Whale Rider*), the flexibility of Maori culture provides for its continued validity in the present and in the future.

3.3.2. Cultural Identity

Since 1992, Mason Durie and the Department of Maori Studies at Massey University have been undertaking a study concerning contemporary Maori values and identities. “Te Hoe Nuku Roa” is a “longitudinal study which tracks the progress, problems, aspirations, and circumstances of Maori people from all walks of life” (Durie 57). It is based on a multi-axial framework, which consists of four dimensions: human relationships, Maori culture and identity, socio-economic circumstances and change over time (57). In the survey, cultural identity is regarded as “an amalgam of personal attitudes, cultural knowledge, and participation in Maori society” (57). On closer examination, the following key markers of cultural identity are identified: identification (self-identification as Maori); cultural knowledge (tribal history, *whakapapa*, customs, social arrangements); access and participation (to Maori institutions and society; e.g. *marae*, *whanau*, *hapu*, ancestral land); and communication (ability to speak and understand Maori language) (Durie 58). As a consequence, four cultural identity profiles can be constructed: a secure identity profile, a positive identity profile, a notional identity profile and a compromised identity profile. Durie explains:

The concept of a secure identity rests on definite self-identification as Maori together with quantifiable involvement in, and/or knowledge of, *whakapapa* (ancestry), *marae* participation, *whanau* (extended family), *whenua tipu* (ancestral land), contacts with Maori people, and Maori language. The positive identity profile has lower levels of involvement in Maori society, *te ao Maori*, and the notional identity profile has no access – notwithstanding self-identification as Maori. A compromised identity, on the other hand, reflects non-identification as Maori, often despite quite considerable access to *te ao Maori*. (58)

If this model is applied to *The Whale Rider* and *Once Were Warriors*, various cultural identity profiles are revealed. The main characters of *The Whale Rider* (Kahu, Koro, Nanny Flowers, Rawiri, Porourangi) all have a secure cultural identity: they identify as Maori; they possess knowledge about their history, customs, and *whakapapa*; they have access to their ancestral land, their *marae*, and their *whanau*; and they are able to communicate in Maori.

In *Once Were Warriors* however, the situation is more complex. The Maori of Pine Block can be best described as having a notional identity, which sometimes even drifts off into a compromised identity. The reader only knows that the depicted characters are Maori because he/she is told when the members of the Heke family refer to themselves as Maori. Thus, the first key criterion – self-identification as Maori – is fulfilled, even though the characters often doubt their “Maoriness”. Furthermore, they have loosened or lost the connections to their *whanau* and *hapu*, have no access to their ancestral land or *marae* (or, if they do, they still choose not to go there), and do not know about their history, customs and *whakapapa* (or they reject it). Apart from a few words, such as *kia ora* (hello), they cannot speak Maori. Hence, they possess a notional identity profile.

They seem to float in a state of liminality, where they neither belong to “traditional” Maori nor to Pakeha. Instead, they occupy a state of in-between-ness. This position is an unstable and ambiguous one, which leads to the problem of being an outsider in both the Pakeha and the Maori world. However, Duff contrasts the Maori of Pine Block with those Maori who “have history” and practice Maori culture (e.g. Beth’s extended family and chief Te Tupaea). In opposition to the majority of urban Maori, the “Maori Maori” have a strong grasp of who they are (Calvert 285) and can be regarded as having a secure cultural identity.

Since the urban Maori do not have a secure or positive cultural identity and are not able to successfully connect to the culture of their ancestors, they look towards other cultures (Calvert 287). They import and borrow identities from other societies, such as the Black American culture. Using elements from other cultures and adapting them as their own is one strategy of constructing identity (this is used by Nig and, to some extent, by Jake).⁶³ Another one, as demonstrated by Beth (and also by her son Boogie), is to reconnect to one’s origins – the family, past, land and culture; and thus, get a sense of what it means to be Maori. As a result, Beth progresses from having a notional cultural identity profile to a positive identity profile, and maybe, in the future, to a secure identity profile.

⁶³ However, Jake mainly creates his identity through his toughness: His nickname is “the Muss” (for muscles) and all he thinks about is violence. He sees himself as a strong warrior, and he gets his satisfaction from using violence, which is also his only way of dealing with problems.

In *The Whale Rider* and *Once Were Warriors* Maori cultural identity is displayed and discussed in different ways, which shows that it is by no means a fixed concept. Instead, it has diverse meanings for various groups, as Durie writes: “Maori are as diverse as any other people – not only in socio-economic terms but also in fundamental attitudes to identity” (59). In *Once Were Warriors*, this diversity is demonstrated through the negotiation of Pakeha and Maori culture. At first, the Maori of Pine Block and Pakeha are depicted as binary oppositions. Then, the “traditional” Maori of Wainui are introduced. As a consequence, Duff avoids the dichotomy between Maori and Pakeha (Keown, “Taku Iwi, Taku Whenua, Taku Reo” 86) and instead, indicates the existence of a multi-faceted Maori identity.

3.3.3. Mediators of Culture

The Whale Rider and *Once Were Warriors* mediate a certain picture of Maori culture and identity. As a consequence, they also contribute to the construction and negotiation of Maori culture and identity in “reality“, within New Zealand as well as internationally. In the past, Maori culture has mainly been described by outsiders. Prentice writes: “Indigenous cultures in (post)colonial contexts have struggled to assert the right to self-representation against a history of incorporation into colonial discourses” (“Riding the Whale?” 257). Then, Maori writers rose to speak and began to write their own versions of their history and culture. Even though Ihimaera and Duff both have affiliations to the “Pakeha world“, the narratives are situated within a Maori world-view.

In *The Whale Rider*, this not only demonstrated through detailed accounts of mythological and historical stories, but also through the use of Maori language within the text. Most of the time, the words in *te reo Maori* can be understood due to the context or due to a repetition of the phrase in English, but every now and then, a part of the text remains untranslated. This distinct use of language contributed to the development of a unique style, which Ihimaera achieved not only in *The Whale Rider* but also in his other works. As explained in chapter 2.4, there are certain typical elements of Maori writing in English. One of them is the proximity of the written text to oral literature. In *The Whale Rider*, this is demonstrated through the intermingling of

several storylines (the narrative of Kahu's community, Rawiri's time in Papua New Guinea, the plot about the whales) and the use of multiple narrators (Rawiri, the whales). This strategy reminds of the Maori practice of speechmaking, in which several orators have their turn in making or answering to a speech.

Ihimaera also uses the form of the circle in the structure of his novel. Multiple chapters end with the same words: "Hui e, haumi e, *taiki e*. Let it be done" (e.g. *WR* 85).⁶⁴ Thus, the author keeps coming back to the same structure, and to the notion that something is about to happen. Furthermore, the fate of the humans is mirrored in that of the whales. While at first, their stories are told separately, their similar paths become obvious soon. In the end, the plot comes full circle when the storyline of the humans and the one of the whales merge. Thus, the incantation "join everything together, bind it together" is fulfilled.

Another typical aspect of Maori writing in English is the incorporation of magical realism. This is not only shown through the perception of myths as forming part of history and reality, but also through supernatural elements in every-day life (such as the ability of Kahu to communicate with the whales). Often, Maori writing has been described as "allegory, parable, fable, and epic" (Keown, "Taku Iwi, Taku Whenua, Taku Reo" 90), and this descriptions certainly fit *The Whale Rider* as well.

As a result of all these strategies – the use of Maori customs, mythology, language and specific narrative forms – Ihimaera creates a distinct Maori voice.

Duff, on the other hand, writes quite differently. He also applies the literary technique of multiple narrators, and he also uses an individual language. However, there is no place for the supernatural in his writing. Instead, he creates a harsh, uncompromising and "accurate reflection of [the] socio-historical context" (Brown 76). Like Ihimaera, he too speaks on behalf of contemporary Maori culture (Brown 75).

Both Ihimaera and Duff deliver strong political messages, which demand reactions from their readers. Ihimaera argues for the importance of culture and tradition as a basis to

⁶⁴ Ihimaera provides a translation for the Maori words: "ritual incantation: join everything together, bind it together, let it be done" (Glossary. *WR* 179).

gain power in the wider world. Duff on the other hand not only emphasizes the “healing” power of culture, but also promotes the idea of using Pakeha strategies and ways to successfully participate in a postcolonial Pakeha world. In and through their works, Ihimaera and Duff construct new postcolonial Maori identities, which incorporate aspects of traditional Maori culture, adaptations of this culture for a modern context, as well as elements of Pakeha culture. As a consequence, *The Whale Rider* and *Once Were Warriors* also play a part in the on-going negotiation of the role of Maori in New Zealand; and thus, the novels contribute to the processes of identity making. However, their accounts are individual interpretations. Ihimaera, being aware of the subjectivity of his writing, states:

Mine is only an individual response to Maori life and should not be taken as the definitive view. It can only be an interim report and is in danger of setting up a stereotype of its own. I look forward to the emergence of more writers who are Maori. Only then can the broad spectrum of Maori experience become available and the Maori map become fully drawn. (“The Maori in Literature” 85)

Maori culture identity will continue to be reassessed in the present and in the future, by writers such as Ihimaera and Duff, as well as by other people, books, films, and so forth. Thus, as various “painters” contribute to the “Maori map”, it promises to be a colourful amalgamation of different styles and images.

4. Conclusions

This thesis did not provide an exhaustive account of the field of postcolonial Maori literature. Instead, it gave an overview and discussed some key aspects of this writing and of the processes that inform it. The most important ones are connected to the colonial past. Land loss, language loss, a Pakeha historiography that ignored the Maori perspective, and the aim of self-determination have had a major impact on Maori culture. Thus, these issues are reflected in postcolonial Maori literature. The writers deal with them in various ways, but what most of the works have in common is a critique of the colonising culture and an assertion and defence of the indigenous one, as well as a “prodigious attempt to forge a way of writing that embodies a specifically Maori sense of life” (Williams 111).

This thesis has demonstrated that postcolonial literature by Maori authors is a colourful field, which comprises many different voices and perspectives. Many of the themes, concerns and desires of its writers reflect experiences that are shared by people across cultural boundaries and all around the world (Rika-Heke 160). Postcolonial Maori literature discusses universal questions, such as the construction of culture and identity, the importance of language, history, traditions, changing values and so forth. Thus, it becomes relevant to readers and scholars in the rest of the world, and it is a useful subject to compare with other literatures that deal with similar topics.

Postcolonial Maori literature also questions dominant histories and discourses. As a minority literature, it continuously writes back to and challenges the centre. It critically reflects on the ways the past is remembered, rewrites history and contributes its own unique perspective. Thus, to study such literature and its particular assumptions requires to question established methods of literary criticism and of the ways literature is taught (Docker 31).

Today, Maori literature is a core area in many English departments of New Zealand universities. Over the last few decades, the literature has also gained some international presence. Fuelled by the international success of the films *Whale Rider* and *Once Were*

Warriors, Ihimaera's and Duff's works were distributed around the world. This process supported New Zealand's path from cultural isolation to a position connected to the rest of the world. It reached a peak in 2012, when New Zealand was Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair. This has brought the country, and Maori literature as part of the New Zealand cultural landscape, onto the global stage.

The fair has shown that Maori literature is able to interact with other cultures and literatures. As it is translated into different languages, disarticulated from its original context and discussed from different perspectives, new meanings are created. Thus, the combined efforts of writers, readers, and scholars – both insiders and outsiders – will continue to bring Maori literature further “into the world of light”.

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6. Appendix

6.1. German Abstract

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit postkolonialer Literatur von Maori-Autorinnen und -Autoren aus Neuseeland. Die Thematik wird in zwei großen Teilbereichen behandelt, wobei der erste eine Einführung bildet, während im zweiten zwei Werke detailliert analysiert werden.

Das erste Ziel dieser Arbeit ist, die Hintergrundinformationen zu geben, die zum Verständnis der Literatur benötigt werden. Dabei wird sowohl der historische und der kulturelle Hintergrund dargestellt als auch die spezielle Situation der Maori in Neuseeland. Neben einer Einführung in die Kultur der Maori wird erklärt, wie Kolonialismus die Kultur beeinflusst und verändert hat. Im Anschluss daran wird ein Überblick über postkoloniale Maori-Literatur gegeben. Dabei werden wichtige Autorinnen und Autoren behandelt und thematische Tendenzen diskutiert.

Der zweite Teil beschäftigt sich mit *The Whale Rider* von Witi Ihimaera und *Once Were Warriors* von Alan Duff. Anhand dieser Romane wird untersucht, auf welche Art und Weise Maori-Kultur und -Identität dargestellt und vermittelt werden. Die Romane werden zunächst individuell analysiert, um anschließend in einem Vergleich gegenübergestellt zu werden. Die Diskussion der Literatur findet in einem postkolonialen Kontext statt, in welchem verschiedene Prozesse wie Geschichtsschreibung, Kulturschaffung und -vermittlung, und der Einfluss von Kolonialismus kritisch hinterfragt werden.

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