

RENEWING MAORITANGA: ECOLOGICAL HEALING  
FOR A POSTCOLONIAL WORLD IN KERI HULME'S *THE BONE PEOPLE*,  
WITI IHIMAERA'S *THE WHALE RIDER*, AND PATRICIA GRACE'S *POTIKI*

by

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This project concerns three novels written during the Maori Renaissance—a time of renewal and resurgence for the indigenous people of New Zealand. Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (1983), Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* (1987) and Patricia Grace's *Potiki* (1986) involve a Maori community fighting to ascertain or maintain its identity and autonomy in the face of post-colonialism. Each also illustrates a resurfacing of ancient, traditional customs and beliefs that the communities must merge with the contemporary Pakeha (European-descended New Zealand) worldview. In a very significant way, these ancient worldviews remind the three fictional Maori communities of the necessity to recreate and maintain a reciprocal relationship with the Earth and all of its non-human inhabitants in order to ensure their own cultural survival. The study brings together postcolonial, ecocritical, and indigenous theoretical perspectives through these texts in order to demonstrate how the novels illustrate the possibilities of healing the chasm between Maori and Western cultures, while also providing an example through their illustration of a reciprocal relationship between humans and the Earth of how fragmented Western identities can be healed. The Introduction outlines the constructs of ecocriticism and

indigenous postcolonial criticism and situates the novels within these frameworks, while also providing more detailed background for understanding the novels' contexts.

Hulme's, Ihimaera's, and Grace's novels map a possible future of wholeness and connectivity for not only the indigenous communities of their books but also for those Western individuals who are floating without roots to ground them. Throughout *The Bone People*, *The Whale Rider*, and *Potiki*, each author illuminates the fact that in order for any individual and community to have a solid identity and sense of belonging, a connection to the Earth is essential. Without this connection, a desire for immediate gratification and material possessions rules the heart and soul.



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For my mom, my champion and greatest supporter. I miss you.

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## INTRODUCTION

This project concerns three novels written during the Maori Renaissance, a time of renewal and resurgence for the indigenous people of New Zealand. Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (1983), Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* (1987), and Patricia Grace's *Potiki* (1986) involve Maori communities fighting to ascertain or maintain their identity and autonomy in the face of post-colonialism. Each also illustrates a resurfacing of ancient, traditional customs and beliefs that the communities must merge with the contemporary Pakeha (European-descended New Zealand) worldview. In a very significant way, these ancient worldviews remind the three fictional Maori communities of the necessity to recreate and maintain a reciprocal relationship with the Earth and all of its non-human inhabitants in order to ensure their own cultural survival. I take this idea a step further and apply it to Western cultures who find themselves without community and without self- or communal identities due to a scientific, rationalistic, and materialistic worldview. I bring together postcolonial, ecocritical, and indigenous theoretical considerations through these texts in order to demonstrate how they illustrate the possibilities of healing the chasm between Maori and Western cultures, while also providing an example of a reciprocal relationship between humans and the Earth of healing these fragmented Western identities. The Introduction outlines the constructs of ecocriticism and indigenous postcolonial criticism and how the novels are situated in these frameworks, while also providing more detailed background for understanding the novels' contexts.

### **Maori History**

Maori culture is comprised of many tribes of the Pacific Ocean, including New Zealand, who are redefining themselves in the wake of colonization and, to various degrees, decolonization. Maori are descended from the Polynesians who settled New Zealand between

800 and 1130. Dutch and British explorers visited Aotearoa (Maori for New Zealand) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with missionaries arriving on the island in the late 1700s. In one of the first efforts at reclaiming traditions lost and stolen through colonization, Maori leaders worked with the British Crown in the mid-1800s to establish the Treaty of Waitangi. On February 6, 1840, more than five hundred Maori chiefs along with the British Crown signed the Treaty of Waitangi, a document of which two copies were written: one English and one Maori. New Zealand, however, did not become an Independent Nation until 1947.

The treatment of Maoris during colonization was harsh. Pakeha (non-Indigenous) settlers and missionaries stole land from Maori people, stole Maori children and sent them to Pakeha boarding schools where forced assimilation took place, and to a large degree, stole Maori culture by making it virtually impossible for the Maoris to live traditionally. Many Maoris moved to Pakeha cities in search of means to make a living, only to encounter discrimination and social breakdown due to the separation of families and communities. Mark Williams in “Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace: The Maori Renaissance” outlines what occurred after WWII drew many Maoris into the cities and away from traditional ways of living:

When the post-war prosperity that had drawn them to the cities began to fail in the 1970s, they were the group who suffered most. This suffering led to greater resolve on the part of many Maori people, a determination to address their problems in specifically Maori terms. The determination among Maori people is dramatized in a number of strong novels written in the middle of the 1980s: Keri Hulme’s *the bone people*<sup>1</sup> (1983), Grace’s *Potiki* and Ihimaera’s *The Matriarch*. In each of these novels the solutions to Maori problems in respect of family life, land loss, economic deprivation and colonization are seen as arising from Maori

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<sup>1</sup> The first edition of the novel used all lower case lettering in the title, but subsequent editions did not.

turning away from Pakeha society and Pakeha solutions towards their own cultural and spiritual resources. (n.pag.)

By the 1970s, a tribunal of Maori leaders began investigating breaches in the Treaty, a process that has led to ongoing legal battles to regain ancestral lands and cultural autonomy. The Treaty of Waitangi is what helped give rise to the Maori Renaissance—the language, culture, and land reclamation efforts that the Maori people are struggling with to this day—and what has given rise to redefinitions of Maori identity and the publication of the three novels under consideration. The two versions of the Treaty offered different terms of negotiation according to translation. Due to this subtle manipulation of language on behalf of the British, Maori people have to fight to assert their need for full proprietorship of their native landscape. Miranda Johnson, in her discussion of the use of Maori oral narrative in legal testimony, outlines one way in which the Treaty adversely affected the Maori worldview by separating the native people from sacred landmarks. In “Honest Acts and Dangerous Supplements: Indigenous Oral History and Historical Practice in Settler Societies,” she specifically discusses the current legal struggle for the Whanganui River in New Zealand and quotes the tribunal of Whanganui elders who gave testimonies of oral histories to justify their claims. The tribunal stated:

[T]he accounts would be no ordinary evidence of a historical kind. We were dealing not with a dry record of past habitations but with evidence that is lived. Witnesses spoke of former habitations as their homes, as though they were occupied now. . . . No matter where people live today, the old sites are still their ‘homes,’ and the river that once sustained them physically still provides for spiritual needs. (264-65)

Johnson points out the information was essential in illustrating the ongoing relationship of tribes to the river and the land (265). Yet, while Maori people still maintain these ancient connections to their ancestral lands, they do not long for simply returning to the way they lived before colonization. Jeffrey Sissons notes in *First Peoples: Indigenous Cultures and Their Futures* that “Nowhere in the indigenous world are cultural reappropriations regarded as returns to the past; rather, they are always reimaginings of the future” (11). These reimagined futures are what I analyze throughout the three texts and what I argue provide models of healing for Western cultures as well as indigenous ones.

The Maori Renaissance appears to have spurred a renewed appreciation for traditional Maori ways of life among contemporary Maori communities. The authors I analyze do not promote an eschewing of Pakeha ways of life in favor of returning to strictly traditional beliefs and modes of living, but instead assert the need for Maoris to embrace again their rich history along with some of the cultural accoutrements left behind by colonization in order to survive as an indigenous people in a global world. Miranda Johnson declares, “[A] political narrative reconciliation . . . provides a new political imaginary of a postcolonial state in which the healing of historical wounds is not necessarily predicated upon decolonisation (that is, the departure of the colonisers)” (261). Instead, the three novels illustrate how both Maori peoples and Western cultures can heal the rifts both between and within themselves.

### **Maori Worldview**

Traditionally, Maori people hold a worldview very different from that of Western cultures. Manuka Henare, in his article “*Tapu, Mana, Mauri, Hau, Wairua: A Māori Philosophy of Vitalism and Cosmos*” defines Maori philosophy as “humanism and reciprocity.” He focuses

his writing on “what vitalism and cosmos mean to Māori<sup>2</sup> of Aotearoa New Zealand, historically and spiritually with reference to creation, ecology, and the environment” (197). Traditional Maori worldview combines these elements into one universal entity, often referred to and symbolized as a spiral or double spiral. According to Joanne DiNova in *Spiraling Webs of Relation: Movements Toward an Indigenist Criticism*, the indigenous concept of identity is far different from Western culture’s conception of identity. In the chapter devoted to Wilma Mankiller, first female chief of the Cherokee Nation, DiNova illustrates the concept of the web/spiral structure so prevalent throughout indigenous literature. She notes that Mankiller’s autobiography “is built upon a web-like or spiraling structure in which there are connections to all of one’s relations, past, present, and future. The concept, which issues from the principle of connectedness, offers an alternative to the linear progressive model, which issues from the principle of individuation” (72). The linear progressive model that DiNova speaks of refers to the Western notion of time. Because time is viewed as a straight line from past to present, Eurocentric cultures find it easier to discount past events and ancestors as archaic, primitive, and irrelevant. Yet, Mark Williams declares: “Being Maori is a matter of one’s sense of belonging, one’s knowledge of the past, and one’s bearing towards the future as well as a matter of ancestry” (n.pag.). Contrary to this worldview of interconnectedness, the Western worldview far too often reflects a priority and focus on individualism, consumerism, and materialism.

Along with the spiral motif inherent in Maori literature, other Maori terms connote interconnectedness amongst all things on the planet. For example, Williams notes:

Architecture is important to [Grace and Ihimaera] as a means of representing the Maori sense of community. In Ihimaera’s work the meeting house of the whanau [extended family] embodies the Maori sense of the world. The body of the

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<sup>2</sup> I do not use this form of Maori due to the fact that none of the authors under consideration in the thesis use it.

building is not simply a metaphor for the life and continuity of the whanau, it *is* the body of the ancestor. The people inhabit the body of the ancestor, and in this sense the building lives. (n.pag.)

The Maori term for the actual meeting house is *wharenuī*, and it is normally located as a central point on a *marae*, a sacred communal site. As ancestors are essential to Maori sense of community, so too is the concept of *whakapapa*—the act of reciting one’s genealogies. Each of these concepts is essential to the layered meanings of the novels.

### **Theoretical Contexts**

Recent centuries, with their explosions and explorations of technologies and science have exacerbated what was an already terrific break from respect and reverence for nonhuman life stemming from shifts in Western ideology during the Middle Ages. Colonization further designated a dominant and oppressive relationship of white European and Euro-American races above all “Others.” The burgeoning field of ecocriticism seeks to heal the ever-widening and festering wounds that leave behind fragmented landscapes, cultures, and souls. Defined by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, “Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment . . . [and] takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies” (“Introduction” xviii). Ursula K. Heise recognizes that advances in science and the Modern Age “imposed on Western culture” several types of separations in her 2006 article “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to Ecocriticism” (506). Heise asserts that one attempt of ecocriticism is to move and “think beyond conceptual dichotomies” that these advances created, only one of which is represented in the separation of “nature and culture” (507). These arguments of ecocriticism influence my own assertions that the three Maori novels I consider break down the barriers

between nature and culture and that Western peoples who have adopted this dichotomized worldview should follow their lead.

Furthermore, Glotfelty, a leading voice in ecocriticism, “insists all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnectedness between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature” (“Introduction” xix). Greg Garrard, assessing the literary connection between humans and the natural world, argues that ecocriticism has too long worried itself over re-critiquing literature of the past in an environmental light, rather than (as Joni Adamson first argued) focusing on “‘sustainable development,’ a highly contested term with almost as many senses as users” (359). The discourse of ecocritics is heading towards a more defined set of sub-topics and categories, such as relationships of gender to nature, ethnicity to nature, and the broad, fundamental relationship of humans to the environment that sustains them, the last of which will inform my own assertions. Interestingly, as I will further explore throughout the chapters of my thesis, indigenous cultures maintain a strikingly different, even polemical, worldview from that of Western cultures in regards to the relationship between humans and nature. While the Maori people are experiencing a resurgence of the worldview that prioritizes a reciprocal relationship between humans and the Earth, some Western peoples appear to be nurturing a worldview that prioritizes materialism, consumerism, and individualism—all philosophies that separate humans from the Earth.

Joni Adamson illuminates this polemical worldview as it pertains to the North American southwestern Tohono O’odham tribe and Euro-Americans in modern U.S. times. As she illuminates in her cornerstone text *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place*, Western society (notably the United States) establishes a

dichotomy in regards to the environment. She argues that rather than viewing nature or “wilderness” as places to be *lived* in, Westerners have instead developed a “fantasy [which] creates a place outside history where it is possible to have the comforts of civilization *and* a pure, pristine wilderness in which to escape the ‘corruption’ of civilization” (38). Adamson further declares: “If the only original and real wilderness must be completely untouched by human culture, and if wilderness adventurers must retreat farther and farther from civilization to find it, then humanity and nature are at widely opposite poles” (42). Contrary to this ideology, though, indigenous peoples “still see the places where they live as a middle place in which nature and culture are not separate, but inextricably bound” (48).

As ecocriticism looks at the effects of a dominant worldview on culture and environment, postcolonial theory looks at analyzing the effects of colonization on culture. Adamson and Slovic argue that “postcolonial theory and environmental criticism acknowledge that Western notions of ‘nature’ or the ‘natural’ have been conceived as the antithesis of culture and civilization” (9). However, indigenous civilizations the world over at one time fostered a balanced relationship with the natural environment. In fact, according to Umi Perkins in “Pono and the *Koru*: Toward Indigenous Theory in Pacific Island Literature”:

Components of Indigenous theory include (a) the concept of harmony or balance, which can be seen in the structure of Indigenous societies and could be described as dynamic equilibrium or pono; (b) the importance of place and history; (c) experience, practice, and process; (d) the holistic and collective nature of indigeneity; and (e) the cyclical and genealogical nature of time, represented by the spiral or koru. The presence of these elements in these authors’ works suggests that despite the ravages of colonization/occupation, Indigenous peoples

have maintained a consistent worldview, one that can be used to undermine the practices of Orientalism or Pacificism. (59)

My readings of the three Maori novels that constitute the nexus of the thesis provide a juxtaposition of postcolonial ecocriticism and postcolonial indigenous criticism in order to demonstrate how changing the ideologies of colonization and reconnecting to the Earth can serve to heal both indigenous and dominant cultures. Keri Hulme, Witi Ihimaera, and Patricia Grace each illustrates in his or her novel a resistance to dominant Western values, providing avenues of exploration of a new, alternate worldview within this juxtaposition. Western civilization values the individual and self-autonomy over the weaknesses implied through an admitted dependence on community and family. The illnesses of soul perpetuated and exacerbated through the continued denial of humanity's need for inter-dependence not only with other humans but all Others—both human and non-human—lead to and signifies alienation in both figurative and very literal senses.

Joanne R. DiNova, in *Spiraling Webs of Relation*, aptly delineates the differences between Western and indigenous ways of viewing existence. The Western worldview, while dominant in thought and practice amongst many cultures around the world, is, as DiNova argues, “an exception to a more widespread—diverse in manifestation though strikingly similar—worldview witnessed among indigenous peoples worldwide” (4). She succinctly notes that, “during the medieval period, Western thought abandoned fundamental connectedness for the lure of fragmentation, and . . . this abandonment is not a feature of classical Aboriginal thought or the literature that springs from such thought” (6). She also outlines the core of the Aboriginal worldview as one encompassing all beings in existence through a fundamental sense of community. Each of the three novels on which my thesis concentrates contains a child character

that emerges from the sea, either literally or figuratively. These child characters provide a bridge that spans past to present, ancient to modern, nature to man, animal to man, and fragmentation to healing. In this way, Simon of Hulme's *The Bone People*, Ihimaera's Kahu of *The Whale Rider*, and Toko from Grace's *Potiki* all restore a wholeness and unity to their respective Maori families and communities and to Pakeha and indigenous cultures.

The early writings of Hulme, Grace, and Ihimaera detail Maori life before the Maori Renaissance and the fractures resultant from "city life [that] led to unemployment, dependency on State benefits, family breakdown and violence" (Williams). I will demonstrate how their later writings illustrate a healing through the restoration of an ancient worldview. Keri Hulme's pioneering novel *The Bone People* led the way for authors such as Grace and Ihimaera to write their visions of a broken people and what it would take for them to mend as a community. In this way, all three authors advocate for a melding of two diverse cultures so that progress and healing can begin, not only between cultures, but within each individual culture as well. I assert that the Maori worldview is ecological in nature in that it is inclusive of all beings living on the planet, which is essential for their healing as a people and a community. I argue that this worldview is an important blueprint for the dominant cultures of the world that find themselves fragmented and disassociated from a connection with any meaningful network, be it family, community, religion, the Earth, or humankind's connection between body, mind, and soul. I agree with DiNova's contention that

The reason for reading, and my reason for studying, Native literature is that these texts are of immense contemporary importance. The worldview that disparages Native literature is also the worldview that has given rise to nuclear arsenals, global warming, and "Third-" and "Fourth-Worlds." It is becoming increasingly

evident that this worldview is inherently unsustainable. It is, therefore, becoming increasingly important to examine other ways of viewing the world, to examine diverse ways of imagining a difference, perhaps even to imagine the re-connection of the Settler Nations to the lands they exploit. (15)

What I want to argue that few other critics have is that these three novels offer a model for healing all cultures, races, and ethnicities through their depiction of a unique cultural journey: an ancient culture with a worldview which revered all things as equal, through a time of colonization during which many people lost sight of this worldview and instead embraced a modern, Westernized value system, to the return to a more traditional worldview that continues to embrace all beings—even Pakeha and some of their ways of living.

Throughout the discourses interweaving ecocriticism and indigenous criticism, however, there hasn't been enough discussion of the effects that social and environmental degradation have had and continue to have on the emotional, mental, and spiritual states of humankind. While postcolonial ecocriticism analyzes the effects of development and tourism on indigenous cultures (Huggan and Tiffin), where is the connection between “progress” and its many implications to the ever-increasing state of dispossession and isolation in Western societies and individuals? All people, though in vastly different ways, are suffering from the continued repercussions of colonialism in a postcolonial world. Dominant races more easily discern the physical and spiritual illnesses of marginalized, indigenous cultures since Western society has long known of and romanticized the reciprocal relationship between native peoples and the Earth. However, a bigger challenge may be to turn dominant, Euro-American discerning gazes inward, and to acknowledge the physical and spiritual illnesses exacerbated by the pursuit of global domination.

More narrowly, though, the Western obsession with the individual and the pursuits and achievements of said individual devalues the inherent necessity of community, leading to self-inflicted dispossession and disassociation not completely unlike the forced dispossession of indigenous peoples in the name of colonialism. Cornel West, although centering his discussion on African Americans in the United States, offers a solid argument on the effects of nihilism which he defines as: “*the experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness, and (most important) lovelessness*. The frightening result is a numbing detachment from others and a self-destructive disposition toward the world. Life without meaning, hope, and love breeds a coldhearted, mean-spirited outlook that destroys both the individual and others” (22-23). Similarly, Adamson and Slovic quote Alison H. Deming and Lauret E. Savoy who write: “no monochromatic sense of human history will suffice to express [our] certainty that the pain at the foundation of American culture—whether one’s ancestors have been on the side of the wounding or of the woundedness—informs our sense of place on Earth and our connections with each other” (10). Implying that the pain of colonialism is the common tie that binds all cultures—dominant and marginalized—together, ecocriticism’s focus on the Other will not suffice in bringing to light all inherent evils of presumed racial and cultural superiority. Acknowledging the arrogance and self-importance necessary to view the earth, non-human life, and even human “Others” as inferior informs and strengthens my own argument that dominant cultures are slowly destroying themselves by forming even greater dichotomies and fragmentations within their own lives and communities.

Da Silva, in “Ecocriticism and Myth: The Case of Erysichthon,” reinforces this metaphorical “autophagy” as she analyzes several variations of a Greek myth. She concludes, “Alienation entails loss. . . . It is a material and psychic loss. A physical view has been altered

and so lost and with it has also disappeared a valued relationship with the landscape” (113).

While her use of the term *autophagy* refers to a literal “self-eating” that occurs in the latter stages of starvation, I would like to suggest that it also connotes a self-diminishing and disappearance of identity due to a refusal to acknowledge dependence on family, community, and, catastrophically, the Earth. To wit:

[In] assuming a natural prioritization of humans and human interests over those of other species on earth, we are both generating and repeating the racist ideologies of imperialism on a planetary scale. In working towards a genuinely post-imperial, environmentally based conception of community, then, a re-imagining and reconfiguration of the human place in nature necessitates an interrogation of the category of the human itself and of the ways in which the construction of ourselves *against* nature – with the hierarchisation of life forms that construction implies – has been and remains complicit in colonialist and racist exploitation from the time of imperial conquest to the present day. (Graham and Huggan 6)

As it stands, the “category of the human itself” lies ever more wasted and fragmented, bashed about in a sea of nihilism.

Contemporary Maori literature illuminates the necessity of a return to a balanced, reverent relationship between humans and the Earth. One theme prevails in the novels of the study: re-imagining a new future. My argument is not only that these three Maori novels seek to heal the wounds between Maori and Pakeha cultures, but also that they provide a guide for settler nations to heal the wounds they have created via establishing a dominant/Other relationship with the Earth and other peoples. These wounds are fragmenting relationships and identities within Western communities and individual selves and will only worsen unless a turn of spirit occurs.

While I appreciate the acknowledgement of the Western perception of “civilization vs. environment,” I argue that this severe break from a once acknowledged dependence on and reverence for the natural, non-human world has led to subtler, more sinister intrinsic fragmentations. I also argue the need for a Western convergence with traditional indigenous ways of being, and I see the three novels of the study demonstrating the possibilities of this convergence as they illustrate the power of maintaining a reciprocal relationship with the Earth.

Chapter one of this project examines the portrayal of the essential nature of humans’ relationship to the Earth and to each other in Keri Hulme’s *The Bone People*. The novel illustrates broken Pakeha and Maori communities through three protagonists from very different cultural backgrounds, and while these characters heal their fractured and dysfunctional relationships with one another by the end of the book, Hulme does not portray healed cultures. This is due to the fact that, as Gay Wilentz notes: “Disease, according to Maori healers, is linked to the loss of one’s Maoritanga (one’s Maoriness), a breakdown of cultural traditions and identity often identified with assimilation into Western society” (129). Within her novel, Hulme paints a representation of the effects of colonization and the loss of mankind’s reverence for nature in the frame of a makeshift family comprised of Kerewin, a Pakeha woman raised in a traditional Maori home but who eschews it for a Pakeha lifestyle, Joe, a Maori man who tries to live a Pakeha lifestyle, and a full blood Pakeha child named Simon. Simon literally washes up on the New Zealand shore after a shipwreck and helps Kerewin and Joe imagine, though not yet achieve, a future healed of racial, cultural, and nihilistic wounds. Together, the three of them learn that interconnectedness between people is essential for individual wholeness and healing and that reconnecting to and revering the Earth and the universe is the foundation on which that healing must take place.

In the second chapter, I examine how Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* brings together gender, racial, cultural, and environmental concerns to offer an imaginary (yet thoroughly possible) future for the Maori family and tribe. His novel concentrates on the renewing of an ancient Maori worldview that accepted and revered intelligent communication between animals and humans. However, while graphically illuminating the differences between the Pakeha and Maori worldviews, it deals less with the postcolonial nature of the fictitious Ngati Konohi tribe, and more with rejuvenating relational components between humans and the Earth with which the field of ecocriticism now grapples. Unlike Keri Hulme's novel, the characters of Ihimaera's text are united communally, although in a state of flux. *The Whale Rider* tells the story of a young girl born to the grandson of the current tribe's leader, a man who is determined to continue a male line of successors and refuses to accept his great-granddaughter's role in the tribe. Yet the eight-year-old Kahu stands just as strongly determined to assume her rightful place as the tribe's leader—an act that requires her to place faith in her ancestor's beliefs. She therefore is able to communicate with the whales that live in and migrate through the coastal waters of the tribe's island Whangara. Through this communication, she is able to save the ancient bull whale who loved Kahu's namesake and the tribe's ancient founder, and who also serves as a symbol of the health of the tribe in the face of a changing world.

For Chapter Three, I will examine how Patricia Grace portrays a Maori family who not only physically fight to maintain a claim on ancestral Maori lands, but who also come to care for Toko, a malformed child born into the ocean and abandoned for dead by his mentally ill mother. A novel that similarly portrays a Maori tribe clinging to ancient worldviews, yet far more firmly grounded in individual and communal identity, *Potiki* culminates on the theme of a people's connection to their ancestral lands and to each other, and grapples equally to Ihimaera's text with

the differences between the worldviews of the Maoris and the Pakehas. More narrowly, the novel depicts one Maori family and their struggle against the Pakeha economic development that threatens the family's, and tribe's, ancestral lands. The novel contains characters that portray similar traits to Ihimaera's young Kahu in the character of Hemi and Roimata's eldest daughter Tangi, a girl bent on protecting her family and her family's lands with a strong spirit and the drive for a Pakeha education in law in order to help her eventually battle against the colonizers. The mythical aspect of bridging past and present and the animal and spiritual worlds to the human world is contained in the family's adopted son Toko. Toko, while physically disabled, keeps the family grounded in the past and prioritizes the tribe's ancient worldviews.

## CHAPTER ONE

### KERI HULME'S *THE BONE PEOPLE*: THE SPIRAL OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS

The Maori worldview of interconnectivity is nowhere more strikingly obvious than in Keri Hulme's groundbreaking text, *The Bone People*. The text is groundbreaking because, as Gay Wilentz states in "Instruments of Change: Healing Cultural Dis-ease in Keri Hulme's *the bone people*":

*[T]he bone people* displaces binary oppositions like traditional versus Western, magic versus science, and health versus disease. Furthermore, the three protagonists' moves toward health and their own healing potential enables [*sic*] them to become 'the instruments of change' for self and nation. Finally, Hulme claims her role as a Maori healer to envision a world that proffers the potential for personal and community health. (128)

In addition to providing a model for healing, Hulme's novel lends itself to an ecocritical interpretation, since she uses the natural environment as a character in her text to illuminate the essential and natural dependence humanity has on its physical surroundings. Each of the protagonists of Hulme's novel illustrates this connection between nature and culture in different ways that complement each other, as I will discuss in more detail later in the chapter.

*The Bone People* was first published in 1983. It won the Booker Prize in 1984 and the Pegasus Prize in 1985 and led the way for Maori writers such as Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace to give voice to a culture in flux at the beginning of the Maori Renaissance. It concerns itself with the lives of three broken and fragmented individuals who create a family through seemingly chance meetings. Kerewin Holmes, the novel's only female protagonist, prides herself on needing no one in her life. She is of mixed race but has turned away from her Maori heritage

and she secludes herself on a piece of land on the New Zealand coast; she isolates herself further, literally and metaphorically, within the stone walls of a stark tower she built with lottery winnings. One day, Kerewin arrives home to her tower to find a young boy has climbed in through a high window. He is Pakeha, mute but extremely intelligent, and Kerewin begins a journey of intertwining paths: one she travels alone, one she travels with the mute and severely abused Simon Gillayley, and one she travels with Simon's adoptive father Joe Gillayley, a mixed blood man whose appearance is Maori and who projects his anger and disappointment with life onto his son. Though all three people are broken in body and spirit at one point or another, together they form a union of hope for an imagined future of healing and connectedness.

Within the novel, Hulme consistently employs language and the symbolic spiral to connote a metaphorical and literal figuration of the continuity and connectivity of all things physical, emotional, and spiritual. Ken Arvidson, in his article "Aspects of Contemporary Maori Writing in English" notes that more recent Maori works of literature "call attention to objects that exercise various spiritual and psychic powers within them. Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (1983, 1985) . . . is bestrewn with objects and artefacts of cultural, religious and artistic significance, such as the spiral tower Kerewin builds for herself to live in" (122-23). The irony of Kerewin's tower lies in the fact that she built it with money from lottery winnings to completely isolate herself from all of humanity. However, the tower contains within it the concept of Maoritanga in its symbolical nature of the interconnectivity of all things. Even though Arvidson names only Kerewin's spiral tower, the spiral is a symbol that plays predominantly throughout the novel, intimating the traditional Maori worldview that all of existence is inextricable as individual pieces, including time. Eva Rask Knudsen, in *The Circle and the Spiral: A Study of Australian Aboriginal and New Zealand Māori Literature*, concisely states this worldview as,

“the sacred nexus of . . . origin and legacy, or indeed . . . the perpetual interchange of beginning and end, end and beginning, which is central to the Maori perception of life and living” (128). Knudsen’s assertion serves to illuminate the ever-present symbolism of the spiral throughout Hulme’s book. The opening lines of the Prologue in *The Bone People*, while they don’t name the characters yet, allude to the theme of spiraled interconnectivity: “Maybe there is the dance, as she says. Creation and change, destruction and change. New marae from the old marae, a beginning from the end. His mind weaves it into a spiral fretted with stars” (Hulme 3). Here, Hulme writes from a place of immense hope for the future nurtured by the lessons of the past. The Prologue ends with the foreshadowing of the connectedness of the main characters and their role as catalysts for change within Maori culture: “They were nothing more than people, by themselves. Even paired, any pairing, they would have been nothing more than people by themselves. But all together, they have become the heart and muscles and mind of something perilous and new, something strange and growing and great. Together, all together, they are the instruments of change” (4). Here, Hulme implies that Maori and Pakeha cultures must come together to bring change and hope for the future. Kerewin, Simon, and Joe, the three protagonists of Hulme’s novel, constitute these instruments of change even as their chance convergence brings into harsh relief the wounds of colonization. *The Bone People*, while not resolving the fragmentation of individual cultures and completely avoiding any hint of a sentimental happy ending, proffers a model of potential healing for the Maori/Pakeha world Hulme’s characters inhabit through her portrayal of her characters’ return to and/or embodiment of the traditional Maori worldview. Yet the Maori and Pakeha cultures must come together for healing to occur.

The novel’s themes are postcolonial, although the insidious effects of colonization continue to infect the inhabitants of Hulme’s novel—a narrative which describes a process of

painful decolonization for the characters. For example, Joe, a Maori man who adopted Simon with his wife Hana shortly before her death, is riddled with self-hatred. He is a fragmented man dispossessed and alienated from his ancestral culture, struggling not only with his role as single father to a child of the colonizer's race but also his own place in the world. He is stifled by the internalization of the colonizer's stereotypes of Maori inferiority, and deals with his frustration and anger largely through alcohol and physical violence. Hulme brilliantly summarizes Joe's character and the inherent wholesomeness of the traditional Maori worldview when Kerewin wonders about him: "Why this speech filled with bitterness and contempt? You hate English, man? I can understand that but why not do your conversing in Maori and spare us this contamination? No swear words in that tongue. . . . [T]here he goes again. Ah hell, the fucking word has its place, but all the time?" (12). In this instance, Kerewin overhears Joe spouting off to several other bar-goers and comments inwardly on his ironic use of the English language to express his frustration with his son. Kerewin immediately understands that Joe's frustrations and anger go far beyond his child and more than likely stem from the effects of colonization, the language of which Joe uses well. For, as Cornel West asserts about the dominant culture in the U.S., "One of the best ways to instill fear in people is to terrorize them. Yet this fear is best sustained by convincing them that their bodies are ugly, their intellect is inherently underdeveloped, their culture is less civilized, and their future warrants less concern than that of other peoples" (122-23). This is precisely what Joe Gillayley, three-quarters Maori through his own acknowledgement, has internalized.

Due to the lingering stereotypes and internalized oppression of colonization, Joe's opinion of himself is low. He calls himself a *hori*, which Hulme defines as literally "George" and "Used by Maori among themselves in a jocular fashion but is an insult when used by an

unfriendly Pakeha” (448). Joe tells Kerewin: “I’m a typical hori after all, made to work on the chain, or be a factory hand, not try for high places” (Hulme 229-30). Kerewin responds to him, speaking from her Pakeha privilege: “High places in whose world? And high is as you decide it” (230). While Kerewin and Joe have both internalized Pakeha values, Kerewin is different in that not only does she look white while Joe looks Maori, but she also has money. However, Joe is a fragmented individual, alienated from family and his sense of self, and does not believe that he is worthy of being whole. Joe alludes to his dispossession and displacement from his traditional Maori heritage when he tells Kerewin, “My father’s father was English so I’m not yer 100% pure. But I’m Maori. And that’s the way I feel too, the way you said, that the Maoritanga has got lost in the way I live” (62). Joe further brings attention to his Pakeha ways of living when he confides in Kerewin his dislike for his factory job, which confines him to, “‘being a puppet in someone else’s play. Not having any say.’ He spread his hands and looked through the fan of fingers. ‘It has its compensations, I suppose. I’ve paid off the house, and I’ve got some money in the bank. We’re clothed and we eat. All the good old pakeha standbys and justifications’” (89). Joe’s journey towards healing involves his initial eschewing of all Pakeha “standbys and justifications,” towards a traditional Maori worldview, and finally to a compromise of the two.

Joe’s abuse of Simon, his adopted son, leads to further alienation and eventually complete severance from his family when he nearly kills Simon during a drunken rage. Following this tragedy, Joe is sentenced to serve prison time, and upon reaching its conclusion, he begins to make his way back home. However, before he begins his prison sentence, Joe wonders aloud to Kerewin on their last night together: “I was thinking yesterday, what a waste it all was. . . . I’d worked hard, Pakeha fashion, for nearly six solid years, making money to make a home. And the one thing I never made was a home” (Hulme 324). At this point, Joe finally

realizes that his focus on the Pakeha value of working constantly to attain the basics of life's necessities has left him empty, destitute of all he loves. After serving his prison sentence, and knowing that he has for all intents and purposes lost Kerewin and Simon, his house, and any remaining ties to his family, Joe proceeds to explore his ancestral lands upon being released from prison. He soon finds himself on these ancestral lands attempting suicide by jumping off of a cliff. That Joe decides to kill himself on ancient, foreign land suggests that he needs to reconnect to his heritage, and in fact must metaphorically die and be reborn in order to do so.

Joe's suicide attempt fails, however, and a kaumatua (the ancient, current keeper of the ancestral land Joe returns to) finds Joe and helps him heal physically and spiritually. This kaumatua, whose grandmother prophesied that he would heal three broken people, slowly begins to die after helping Joe recover and passes his role as keeper of the land to Joe, and Joe finds himself caring for the old man and the traditional secrets the land holds. The kaumatua serves as an omniscient being who has seen both the old ways and the new, and he relates to Joe:

I was ten years old, a smart child. I'd been brought up to speak English. I even thought in English. I still can. . . . [T]hey spoke Maori on the farm sometimes, but they were no longer Maori. They were husks, aping the European manners and customs. Maori on the outside, with none of the heart left. One cannot blame them. Maori were expected to become Europeans in those days. It was thought that the Maori could not survive, so the faster they become Europeans the better for everyone, nei? (Hulme 359)

The kaumatua teaches Joe that he must depend on others and recognize his dependence on the spiritual and natural world; he thereby heals the inner fragmentation that once prevented Joe from accepting help from anyone, family or community, aside from Kerewin. The kaumatua tells

Joe, “You are a sick man, a broken man, but now it is time for you to heal, to be whole.” To himself, he thinks, “O man . . . you are still very young, and while your life has broken you, you can still heal yourself. With a little help, with a little help” (355). The kaumatua links nature and culture again for Joe, as he instills in Joe a desire to guard and protect the old ways which are symbolized by the greenstone mauri (loosely defined as the spirit, or life-force, of a place, object or person) hidden deep in a cavernous well. He relates to Joe, “By accident or design, when the old people arrived here, they induced, or maybe it arrived of itself, the spirit of the islands, part of the spirit of the earth herself, it rested in the godholder they had brought” (364). Here the kaumatua reinforces the interconnectedness of nature and culture of the traditional Maori worldview, but simultaneously laments the negative changes brought to his people through the colonizing Pakeha. He offers: “‘Maybe we have gone too far down other paths for the old alliance to be reformed, and this will remain a land where the spirit has withdrawn. Where the spirit is still with the land, but no longer active. No longer loving the land.’ He laughs harshly. ‘I can’t imagine it loving the mess the Pakeha have made, can you?’” (371). In this passage, Hulme comments on the destructive, consumerist nature of Pakeha culture and, through the wise-elder kaumatua, illustrates the fragmentation of spirit and soul that has occurred because of Pakeha presence amongst its Maori victims.

In response to the old man’s words, “Joe thought of the forests burned and cut down; the gouges and scars that dams and roadworks and development schemes had made; the peculiar barren paddocks where alien animals, one kind of crop, grazed imported grasses; the erosion, the overfertilisation, the pollution” (Hulme 371). After the kaumatua teaches Joe that accepting help is not a sign of weakness, Joe learns his place in the cosmos and comes to see that his own alienation stems from the disconnection from his ancestral worldview and the environment

surrounding him. He understands that his internalized individualism is not enough and that it's destructive, and he recognizes that he is embedded in the larger worlds of humans and nature.

During the earthquake following the old man's death, Joe finds himself driven by fear, begging for it to stop. Only after this earthquake does the reader learn of how Joe symbolically reconnects to his family in the woods of these ancestral lands. Through this reconnection, Joe completes his healing and is able to let go of the kaumatua's land when he realizes that remaining its keeper symbolizes a tight hold on the past—a past impossible to reclaim. He is finally able to return home to the people who love him, his biological family as well as Kerewin and Simon. Upon realizing the ludicrous nature of beseeching the mercy of the Earth, Joe “surprises himself by laughing loudly. Jesus, Ngakau! *This'll take heed of you!?* (Hulme 380). In one instant, Joe understands how small are his own personal concerns in the face of the forces of nature at work. However, following the Earth's trembling, he proceeds to locate and check the rahui (land boundary markers) he had carved in the likenesses of his family members. He finds Kerewin's “angled drunkenly, nearly on the ground,” yet he rights her symbol and “stamps the earth down hard round the re-erected pole. The free-flowing spirals face the sea once more” (383-84). Joe's healing is complete as he comes to understand the interconnectivity of all things, human and otherwise, in the universe—seed teachings that Kerewin planted in him long before they took root in his soul. In this way, at least spiritually and emotionally, Joe eschews the individualistic nature of the Pakeha worldview in favor of the more traditional and family and community-centered Maori worldview, even as he returns to life in the city. He is at last able to overcome what drove him to commit horizontal violence (violence directed towards a person with a similar social status) on his son. His beatings of Simon are examples of horizontal violence because it is Joe's own struggle for individual and cultural identity that causes his anger

and leaves him with no constructive way to deal with it, even though he can't identify that at the time.

Simon, the child of the sea, serves as the catalyst for change in Hulme's novel. Similar to Joe, he is a victim of his own culture as he was emotionally abandoned by parents seeking wealth through the drug trade, and eventually physically abandoned through their deaths. Because of these events, he was removed from any biological extended family or community who could have cared for him. He brings Kerewin and Joe together though, symbolizing a potential healing of two cultures. He is portrayed as physically slight and physically broken, his wounds a manifestation of the cultural and individual fragmentation afflicting both Joe, his adoptive father, and Kerewin, the woman whom he draws into their family web. The first descriptions of Simon in the novel immediately connect him to the sea and the natural world. Joe and Hana discuss the "tide-washed child" with "alien sea-coloured eyes" (Hulme 6) and the first hint of Simon's physical brokenness throughout the novel is given when Kerewin discovers the footprints leading to her tower and she asks herself: "Limping? Something in its foot so that's why the sandal is taken off and left behind?" (15). Yet his emotional and spiritual brokenness is powerfully conveyed through his muteness.

Due to previous abuses never explicitly revealed, along with those Joe inflicts on him throughout the novel, Simon cannot give voice to his thoughts, and Hulme instead gives him communication through his own form of sign language. Shortly after meeting Simon, Kerewin watches as, "He shakes his head quickly, and snaps his fingers once. . . . The child nods and snaps his fingers twice." Understanding dawning, Kerewin realizes his hand gestures are "Not a parley, [but] a language lesson" (23-24). His usually quiet, ethereal nature is only compounded by the fact that he is essentially ageless. In response to Kerewin asking Simon how old he is, Joe

responds, “He doesn’t know. I don’t know. Nobody does” (51). Yet the fact that Simon was found washed up on shore after a storm cements his connection to the sea and to the mythical figure Maui. Throughout the novel, the color of his eyes changes like the sea in response to his mood. Knudsen notes several other connections between Simon and Maui, most of which indicate that Simon is an archetypal figure meant to help mankind. She writes:

The main function of the Maui myths is not to be moral, but to explore the trickster personality in a dramatization of “the ambivalent relationship of tension and indulgence between young and old.” Maui must acquire the wisdom of creation and transform it into useful knowledge for mankind; but to do that, as a youngster up against the authority of maturity and the power of elders, he has to be double-dealing. This character-trait resurfaces in Simon, the contemporary trickster of a mythicized New Zealand. (171)

Simon represents a reimagined future for Aotearoa New Zealand as he brings together Maori and Pakeha cultures. Furthermore, through his connection to the sea, Simon shows the broken adults in his life the way for healing: through reopening lines of communication with the Earth and non-human life forms.

Simon’s own healing occurs, according to Wilentz, through Hulme’s “integrat[ion of] Western and Maori medicine” (138). Simon suffers through many severe beatings from Joe, the last of which cripples him permanently. Simon spends months in a Pakeha hospital, isolated from Joe, Kerewin, and Joe’s extended family. Because of this imposed isolation, he is unable to fully heal the emotional and spiritual wounds left behind by the beatings, though his body heals as much as it possibly can. Wilentz notes, “Hulme does not reject Pakeha presence or the medicines that cure Simon’s body, but she insists that true healing comes with uniting Western medicine

with Maori concepts of health, returning to community, and fulfilling prophecy” (139). However, just as his connections to Maui indicate his role as helper of mankind, his healing symbolizes the convergence of two distinct worldviews. In this way, he can aid in the healing of both Joe and Kerewin.

Along the journey of the novel, Simon reminds Kerewin of what it means to be empathetic to all life, which in turn helps Joe to see the necessity of revering a world much bigger than himself. The first example of this occurs when Kerewin takes Simon to the beach to collect pipi (a type of shellfish). Hulme writes that Kerewin:

[S]cooped it out and dug her knife into the back of it, severing the connector muscles. The shellfish went limp and oozed water. She tore off the top shell and cut the fish from the bottom one, and ate it.

He watches, his mouth agape in horror. . . .

“Want one?” He closes his mouth with a snap, and shakes his head vehemently.

She chuckles, and prises another shrinking pipi from its shell.

He flutters his hand with distress. [. . .]

“Berloody oath . . . look boy, to the best of my knowledge, and that’s considerable, it doesn’t hurt shellfish to be eaten straight from the shell. Not as it would hurt us to be gobbled up whole. I believe the scientific expression is, the shellfish receives a terminal negative stimulus, okay?”

And I hope the multisyllables intrigue you enough to stop your weeping because I’m beginning to get some kind of guilty indigestion. (124-25)

Simon has great empathy for all creatures, either because he understands pain, or he feels they are kin from the sea, or both. And he succeeds in causing Kerewin to give a second thought to the pain she may be inflicting on fellow creatures by making her compare the unknown pain felt by the shellfish to the pain humans would feel were they eaten alive and swallowed whole.

Perhaps the most significant way Simon himself communicates with the Earth is through his own singular construction: the music hutches he creates from items found on the shore. Simon first alludes to them when he thinks of the darkness latent within him. He thinks to himself, “The only defence he could raise against the dark and the horror and the laughing terrible voice were his golden singers, the sounds and patterns of words from the past that he had fitted to his own web of music. They often broke apart, but he could always make them new” (Hulme 73-74). When the three characters travel to Moerangi, Kerewin’s family’s lands on the coast, Simon builds one. Kerewin recalls:

He started picking up debris off the beach, and randomly at first, and then with a steady and abnormal concentration, he had built a spiraling construction of marramgrass and shells and driftchips and seaweed.

“What are you doing?”

He whistled and pointed to it.

It whistles?

He lay down on the sand with his ear by it, and she went to him, puzzled. Simon got up quickly. Listen too, he said, touching his ear and pointing to her. So she did, and heard nothing. Listened very intently, and was suddenly aware that the pulse of her blood and the surge of the surf and the thin rustle of wind round the beaches were combining to make something like music. (102)

Again, Hulme employs the symbol of the spiral to denote the interconnectivity of nature and people. Through this experience, Simon begins to remind Kerewin of her connection to the Earth, that all humans are only one small part of the music that is every component of the universe working in harmony. Joe's experience, however, is quite different from Kerewin's in response to Simon's music hutches. He recalls:

The child, when first discovered building them, had written for him THEY MAKE MUSIC. He was feeling wild and joyous from the vigour of the seawind and the roar of the sea, and had hugged him tightly, and called him a nutcase. But he was worried by the look in his eyes. Secretly, when Simon was sleeping his drugged uneasy sleep, he had stolen back down to the beach, and examined by torchlight the structure his strange little son had built.

Feeling foolish, he had lain down beside the husk and listened, absorbed, for nearly quarter of an hour. Then he became scared, squashed it flat, and strode home with the wind whining round his heels. Because he heard, thought he heard, a faint but growing music from Simon's creation . . . nothing he could really hear, a sound of darkness that seemed to sing . . . he had never told Simon about it, and he never listened to the music hutches again. And he stopped the child making them whenever he caught him at it. (102-03)

Unlike Kerewin, Joe is unable immediately to see the significance of the music hutches, and that they connect people through their human-made construction to the Earth through the music made by these constructions. He remains afraid of admitting his small place in the universe and the lack of individual power it leaves him with. For this reason, Joe needs Kerewin too to complete

his healing and to understand that he needs a sense of community and family in order to be complete.

In the beginning of the novel, Kerewin displays characteristics of Pakeha culture in addition to the fact that she looks to be of European descent. The prevalent Eurocentric characteristic that she forcefully displays is the belief that she can live a fulfilled life alone. Hulme writes of her: “No need of people, because she was self-fulfilling, delighted with the pre-eminence of her art, and the future of her knowing hands” (7). Kerewin loses her ability to create and to paint, though, as she comes to realize her need of other humans. Because her identity is so fractured, she is unable to see herself in anyone else or anything else, including her paintings. She doesn’t manage this realization well, however, as is evident in her substitution of conversing with herself in lieu of another person. Always on the perimeter of her self-imposed alienation is the spiral. It is most blatant in the staircase of her tower, a winding structure that connects the small, closed-off rooms, indicative of Kerewin’s many closed-off inner psychic chambers and further indicating that Kerewin herself holds the ability to fuse, to connect, and to heal herself and others. Kerewin also illustrates the Eurocentric idea of land ownership in her reaction to finding footprints on the beach near her tower: “She frowns. She doesn’t like children, doesn’t like people, and has discouraged anyone from coming on her land” (Hulme 15). Yet, contradictorily, she returns home to her library and “A sliver of sudden light as she comes from the spiral into the booklined room” (15) illuminates a tenet of ecocriticism in the connection between the culture represented in her books and the connectivity of nature represented in the light and the spiral staircase. Kerewin unwittingly uses her books, language, and the natural environment around her to substitute for her individual identity. She uses them all to insulate her from personal relationships.

Kerewin also speaks of her own fragmentation, but with far more honesty and forthrightness than Joe could muster. Although in ways different to Joe, Kerewin too struggles with her own identity, yet it is her confused personal identity that prevents her from identifying with any one culture. She laments to herself in the chapter titled “Mirrortalk,” “You’re wounded, soul, too hurt to heal. Maybe so. I dunno” (Hulme 261). Interestingly, this chapter falls nearly in the middle of the novel, which moves slowly but inevitably towards a healing of body, mind, and soul and an imagined future of connectivity. Yet Kerewin, similarly to Joe, is alienated from her family throughout the bulk of the novel, even though Hulme never explicitly explains why. However, Kerewin is deeply troubled by this alienation which is only exacerbated by the fact that her self-imposed isolation never quite fulfills her. She first alludes to her dissatisfaction with the state of her life when she unexpectedly remembers a colloquialism one of her family members used to say and finds herself “regretting again the gulf between her and her family” (22). Kerewin’s separation from humanity is further illustrated when Simon’s “hand comes out, pauses, and then as if reaching over a barrier, takes her hand” (31). Soon after meeting the Pakeha child that Joe adopted, though, she finds herself reflecting on the symbolism of the spiral figure so prevalent throughout her stoic and cold home, pondering even if unconsciously her reconnection to the world and to love. Hulme writes:

On the floor at her feet was an engraved double-spiral, one of the kind that wound your eyes round and round into the centre where surprise you found the beginning of another spiral that led your eyes out again to the nothingness of the outside. Or the somethingness: she had never quite made her mind up as to what a nothingness was. Whatever way you defined it, it seemed to be something. The spiral made a useful thought-focus, a mandala, anyway. (44)

Kerewin's introspection is further revealed as she ponders the Maori worldview regarding the spiral. She relates, "It was reckoned that the old people found inspiration for the double spirals they carved so skillfully, in uncurling fernfronds: perhaps. But it was an old symbol of rebirth, and the outward-inward nature of things. . . . She doodled a finger in the centre of the spiral" (45). Finally, Kerewin voices her feelings of alienation and dispossession when she tells Joe, "It's very strange, but whereas by blood, flesh and inheritance, I am but an eighth Maori, by heart, spirit, and inclination, I feel all Maori. Or,' she looked down into the drink, 'I used to. Now it feels like the best part of me has got lost in the way I live'" (61-62). The way she lives indeed mirrors the Pakeha cultural values of material possessions and individualism. Kerewin's security is the false security born of financial good fortune and material possessions.

Kerewin's innate connection to the Earth is evident from the beginning of the book, yet she freely admits her spiritual disconnection from it. Both ideas are expressed in her inner dialogue: "I know about me. I am the moon's sister, a tidal child stranded on land. The sea always in my ear, a surf of eternal discontent in my blood" (Hulme 89). Kerewin is part of the Earth and the larger universe, yet appears displaced due to her internal fragmentation of soul. And ironically, Kerewin returns to her family's home at Moerangi again and again despite this inner fragmentation and the alienation from her family as she observes, "it's nice there. Quiet. Healing"—even though she feels that she and her family "wounded each other too deep for the rifts to be healed" (90). Due to her displacement, Kerewin turns inward on herself: "'You are nothing,' says Kerewin coldly. 'You are nobody, and will never be anything, anyone.' And her inner voice, the snark, which comes into its own during depressions like this, says, And you have never been anything at anytime, remember?" (91). The symbol of the spiral comes into play again as, after her defeating inner dialogue, Hulme writes that Kerewin "[feels] her way down

the dark spiral to the livingroom circle” (92). Literally, the spiral refers to the staircase winding through the center of her tower. Symbolically, however, the downward spiral likens itself to Kerewin’s diminishing emotional state. Knowing she needs to feel some connection to her family, Kerewin decides to spend some time at Moerangi, her family’s gathering place.

Kerewin’s discontent with Western culture and values manifests itself as she, Joe, and Simon make their way to Moerangi. To illustrate, Hulme writes:

Cutover bush going past in a blur. Where it isn’t cutover, it’s pines. They start a chain back from the verge and march on and on in gloomy parade.

“This place used to have one of the finest stands of kahikatea in the country.”

“And they cut it down to make room for those?” [Joe asks.]

“They did,” she says sourly. “Pines grow faster. When they grow. The poor old kahikatea takes two or three hundred years to get to its best, and that’s not fast enough for the moneyminded.” (157)

The landscape that Kerewin once felt so attached to “despite the alien trees” (Hulme 157) is now made unfamiliar and consumerist-driven. Even so, when the trio arrives to her family’s cabin on the beach, Kerewin thinks to herself, “Aiiieee, pain and longing and relief. . . . [T]oo long I’ve been away from here. Too long that’s been just a memory. Tears come to my eyes whenever I hear a gull keen, or watch a shag pass on whistling wings. O land, you’re too deep in my heart and mind. O sea, you’re the blood of me” (166). Kerewin recognizes that her connection to the Earth is undeniable, that she is part of the Earth that sustains her and all people, again illustrating the credo of ecocriticism that nature and culture are inextricable.

The beginning of Kerewin's reemerging interest in religion and spirituality and her connection to the Earth actually occurs shortly before she, Joe, and Simon travel to her family's ancestral lands at Moerangi. In this instance, she walks down to the beach, fingering a beautiful, stolen, rosary that Simon had given to her. She wonders inwardly:

Who owned you? Prayed with you? Played with you? What prayers said, in what moods? Joy, or grief? Love, or anger, Or tears? The beads slide by her fingers. It's a long time since I prayed this way, she thinks, why not today? Give deity some prayer-flowers. Say hello to the most gracious lady of them all, sister to tuakana sister, blessed among women, Hello Mary. She . . . walks . . . away along the beach. (141)

Kerewin is beginning to understand that she must rediscover her faith and belief in the universe if she is to feel complete.

The climax of the novel as indicative of the turning point in Kerewin's life and worldview occurs just after the physical altercation between her and Joe during their stay at Moerangi. Kerewin, having been wise to Joe's abuse of Simon for some time, is presently itching to give him a taste of his own medicine. She succeeds in accomplishing this, for at this moment, "Joe [lies] bloody and moaning and breathless, and Kerewin [goes] white and screaming to her knees beside him" (Hulme 192). The irony of Kerewin's physical ailment, which she later discovers is a cancer in her abdomen, lies in the fact that she singlehandedly beats Joe to a pulp, all in exacted revenge for Simon, yet she ends up suffering as much if not more than Joe does from her inflicted punishment. She describes her stomach pains after their fight as "'Fire-er-er,' word lengthened sobbingly by the stabbing anguish" (192). However, the pain subsides this time, she and Joe reconcile, and a day or two after their climactic fight Kerewin tells Joe about her

year in Japan learning Aikido. Her tale encompasses the lessons that she admittedly failed to learn. She tells Joe:

“To quote a master of it, ‘Aikido walks the way of the universal, and has as its sole aim, the perfection of humankind.’ The techniques are based on unifying mind and body and spirit, but they’re immensely practical in any kind of fight. But you’re failing if your only aim is to beat up your opponent. I couldn’t understand that. . . . I was the ultimate warring barbarian. Slam crash along comes Holmes . . . chuck out yer morals and spiritualese, show me how to gut ‘em in half a second flat.” (199-200)

After telling Joe more about her experiences in Japan, Kerewin continues:

“Aiki is not a technique to fight with. . . . [I]t is the way to reconcile the world, and make human beings one family. Winning means winning over the mind of discord in yourself. It is to accomplish your bestowed mission. Holmes addendum: and to discover your bestowed mission. Love is the guardian deity of everything. Nothing can exist without it. Aikido is the realization of love. The way,” stopping reading, and explaining, “Do is Japanese for a way. Ai means love, harmony, and ki is the vital spirit. Aikido can mean, the way of martial spiritual harmony, okay?” [. . .] “The way means to be one with the will of deity, and practise it. How can you straighten your warped mind, purify your heart, and be at harmony with the activities of all things in the universe? You should first make God’s heart yours. There is no discord in love. There is no enemy in love.” (200)

In this discussion with Joe, Kerewin comes to realize how similar the traditional worldviews of the Japanese and the Maoris are. Joe too catches on to the discrepancies between what she is describing and the way she lives, and asks her, “Did you wonder whether that pain might be a consequence of sort of misusing knowledge?” (200). Arrogantly, Kerewin responds, “I did, but I discarded the idea. Deity tends to exact revenge in more subtle ways than that” (200). Deity, however, is about to stop Kerewin in her tracks and offer her an ultimatum: either return to the traditional worldview that nurtures and sustains you, or retain your Western values and selfishness and die.

Kerewin’s spiritual healing begins after the return from her family’s beach, even though she does not recognize it for what it is right away. One evening at her tower not long after their return, Kerewin notices, “The fire in the livingroom circle is out. After the warmth and company of the Gillayleys, the Tower seems as cold and ascetical as a tombstone. Me silent dank grave. And mere months ago, they were the ones who lived in a chilly institutional hutch. . . . [W]hat’s happened? She asks herself, grieving. Even my home is turning against me” (Hulme 272). Kerewin is beginning the healing process, as deep down she knows that it is her isolation turning against her—not her home. Her home is with Joe and Simon and the rest of her alienated family. However, she is her tower: a spiral spirit capable of connecting and being connected to all things, yet maintaining a stone wall exterior that prevents any of it happening. While Kerewin fancies herself at one with the environment surrounding her, she is indeed detached from it. The irony of her spiral-tower lies in the fact that it serves to symbolize the interconnectivity of all things, yet literally walls her off from human contact, thereby gifting her with a fragmented soul and self-identity. Knudsen argues that, “The Tower ‘represents the fantasy of self-sufficient individualism’ or of universalism, in fact, as Kerewin’s many attempts to erase difference and

make the world conform to her perspective indicate, Kerewin must tear it down” (154).

Kerewin’s profound hopelessness rears its head once again, just before she destroys her tower in a symbolic deconstruction of herself. Speaking to her reflection in a mirror, she says, “I don’t want to die, but I don’t know why I live. So what’s my reason for living?” she asks the mirror image. ‘Estranged from my family, bereft of my art, hollow of soul, I am a rock in the desert. Pointing nowhere, doing nothing, of no benefit to anything or anyone. Flaking, parched, cracked . . . so why am I?’” (Hulme 289). At the bottom of her emotional and spiritual black hole, Kerewin is able to create once again. In yet another symbolic gesture, she permanently joins herself to Joe and Simon in a clay bust on which “The hair of their heads is entwined at the top in a series of spirals” (315). Kerewin fails to recognize however that she is imagining her future—a future filled with connections to love, to family, and to Earth. At this point in the novel Knudsen notes:

The three characters part, and the narrative splits into three separate stories. Simon goes to hospital, Joe to jail, and Kerewin destroys her Tower in a symbolic gesture of complicity. Kerewin ‘the cold-forged lady’ (444), however, is dead, and Kerewin the talented artist is reborn for a brief moment. The tricephalos she creates before her departure is a visual image of the remaining plot. . . . Like the firenest phoenix of Simon’s signet ring, this figure appears from the ashes of the Tower. (138)

Kerewin believes that the tricephalos is a final farewell before she dies from complications of her cancer, yet she will rise from her imagined death like a phoenix.

It is after Joe’s imprisonment for nearly killing Simon in a drunken rage and near the end of the novel that Kerewin decides to destroy her tower and complete her isolation from all of

humanity, including Joe and Simon, as she returns to her family's lands to die having discovered the tumor in her stomach and refusing to undergo Western medical treatment for it. It is during her self-imposed isolation and slow death that she is finally able to heal the deeper wounds: those incurred through a Western worldview that encourages fragmentation and alienation, and cause dispossession from one's right and natural ties to Earth, to community and family, and to self. Kerewin's death is both literal and metaphorical, as the stomach cancer will kill her eventually, yet she is also a figure who, though bent on her own destruction, will be reborn. This deconstruction occurs in a very literal sense when Kerewin tears down her tower, stone by stone. Yet her spiritual healing continues and her physical healing begins almost immediately thereafter, as she leaves behind all she had ever known in her illness to be physically healed by a mysterious indigenous/supernatural being. Similarly to Joe, Kerewin too returns to ancestral lands to die, a sort of suicide as she refuses any Western treatment, and she too is healed by an ancient. On the eve of her impending death, Kerewin speaks of what she loves:

“Very little. The earth. The stars. The sea. Cool classical guitar. Throbbing flamenco. Any colour under the sun or hidden deep in the breast of my mother Earth. Ah Papa my love, what joys do you yet conceal? And storms . . . and the thunderous breaking surf. And the farout silent waves . . . and o, dolphins and whales! The singing people, my sisters in the sea . . . and anything that displays gentle courage, steadfast love.” (Hulme 423)

Kerewin's ironic beginning answer of “Very little” only serves to emphasize the boundless union she feels with the Earth and its inhabitants, namely those of the sea. She is finally able to give voice to a piece of herself, her identity, which opens a path for her physical healing.

After admitting her love for and communion with the Earth, Kerewin at long last voices her love for Joe and Simon, closing the spiritual wounds afflicting her for so long: “He’s the bright sun in the eastern sky, and he’s the moon’s bridegroom at night, and me, I’m the link and life between them. We’re chance we three, we’re the beginning free.’ She sighs. ‘It don’t make sense but it’s the only sense, and o lady of the southern land, dear dear to me are my loves” (Hulme 424). The being that comes to Kerewin and heals her cancer does so after Kerewin’s spiritual and emotional healing. In fact, the healing potion bestowed upon her is simply red currant juice to Kerewin’s surprise (425) and the mysterious entity takes no credit for healing her, stating only “There isn’t any debt of gratitude. I didn’t really do anything” (425). I assert that this can mean only one thing: disease of the spirit begets disease of the body and only through healing the former can the latter be cured as well. I also argue that a healing of the whole person is only possible through a connection to other people and the Earth, a connection that Kerewin chooses to acknowledge first which then leads the way for healing her person. Wilentz notes this striking difference between the Maori and Pakeha worldviews:

The concept of Maori healing is a holistic one. According to anthropologist M. H. Durie, it is “viewed as an inter-related phenomenon rather than an intra-personal one,” in which health means a balance between the individual and the community. Traditional Maori healing practices focus on the four basic components of the person: te taha Wairua (the spiritual); te taha hinegaro (the psychic); te taha tinana (the bodily); and te taha whanau (the familial). Unlike Western medicine’s opposition of mind and body, these four components are integrated to produce a healthy person. (128)

While Wilentz does not discuss the necessity of a connection between a person and other people and the Earth for complete wholeness, she does expound upon the role of the spiritual and the familial in one's identity and overall health:

What separates this system (as well as many other systems of traditional healing) from the biomedical model is the importance of both the spiritual and familial components. For the Maori the wairua (spiritual) is "the most basic and essential requirement for health. Without a spiritual awareness, the individual is considered to be lacking in wellbeing and more prone to disability." Moreover, the person whose "first thoughts are only for himself" would be considered "unhealthy."

This kinship- and community-based notion of health and wellness is related to the fourth component: whanau (family). An individual who might appear physically healthy could not be truly well if isolated from his or her family and community.

(128)

Kerewin's illness is a manifestation of her isolation from her family and community for the large majority of the novel. However, upon realizing the gift of life bestowed upon her for a second time, Kerewin endeavors to return and rebuild a home suitable for her entire family, both biological and adopted.

On her way back, she stops to help rebuild a wharenuī, this one a dilapidated Maori hall, and writes in her journal, "*I started rebuilding the Maori hall because it seemed, in my spiral fashion, the straight-forward thing to do*" (Hulme 431). Kerewin's healing does not end with her individual self, but extends to a renewal of Maoritanga for a community. In her rebuilding, Kerewin remains fully conscious of the fact that she is now whole which, just as her previous tower with its many shadowed, secreted-away rooms represented her inner fragmented psyche at

the time, now symbolizes her completely healed and connected self. She writes of her new tower: *“I decided on a shell-shape, a regular spiral of rooms expanding around the decapitated Tower . . . privacy, apartness, but all connected and all part of the whole. When finished, it will be studio and hall and church and guesthouse, whatever I choose, but above all else, HOME. Home in a larger sense than I’ve used the term before”* (434). Kerewin, similarly to Joe, eschews some Pakeha cultural characteristics in favor of the traditional Maori worldview. She comes to understand that she cannot live a fulfilled life as an individual removed from all of humanity, but that she needs—as do all people—relationships with the Earth, with community, and with family. She succinctly sums up her journey, and the journey those with a Westernized, materialistic, and individualistic worldview can endeavor to commence, when she writes in her journal at the end of the novel, *“Direction one, is recovery; two, a renewed talent; three, rebuilding; and four, tying up loose ends, making the net whole. Direction five is endeavoring not to dodge responsibilities, for me, or a wandering cat, or whomever. Six is related: I know I can move, can lead, can direct. Therefore, I will. No more sequestration, no more Holmes against the world”* (436).

The tricephalos that Kerewin creates before destroying her original tower brings home Hulme’s point that healing the individual must occur in relationship to other people, community, and the Earth. This, however, cannot happen if either culture is rejected; instead, Pakeha culture must undergo Maorification. It must hybridize itself with the Maori worldview, and most importantly, prioritize Maori values of oneness and interconnectivity.

## CHAPTER TWO

### WITI IHIMAERA'S *THE WHALE RIDER*: OUR EMPTY SEA

Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* (1987) tells the story of the fictional Maori Ngati Konohi tribe caught in the flux of a changing world. It serves to bridge an ancient yet known and remembered past to an unknown and uncertain future through the figure of an eight year old girl named Kahutia Te Rangi. The novel's main characters comprise a family within the tribe, the patriarch of whom is Koro Apirana, the tribe's leader. The novel also features Nani Flowers, Koro Apirana's wife, their grandsons Rawiri and Porourangi, and Porourangi's daughter Kahu—Koro Apirana's unwelcome great granddaughter and unlikely successor. Because Kahu is female, Koro Apirana deems her unfit to fill the role of leader in his patriarchal tribe. Through these characters, Ihimaera addresses many themes affecting contemporary Maori culture, including Pakeha influence on traditional Maori worldviews and beliefs.

Ihimaera also comments on the importance of reclaiming ancient heritage, and rediscovering and reconnecting to the sea and the creatures it sustains. The importance of these ideas directly relates to the people's survival as a tribe and the ultimate survival of Earth. Ihimaera goes beyond Keri Hulme and Patricia Grace in this regard to show the effects of colonization on whales and their migratory pattern through the whales' perspective. Within this last theme, Ihimaera more specifically notes the impact of nuclear testing in the Pacific Ocean on sea life. Ihimaera is able to show these impacts of colonization by portraying a community that is united in and of itself, unlike the Maori and Pakeha cultures portrayed in Hulme's *The Bone People*. However, Koro Apirana is desperately trying to heal his tribe through a staunch hold on tradition. While most of his people have lost much of their connection to the past, some eventually come around as a result of Kahu's reliving the myth of their tribe's founding and her

restoring communication with the whales. Healing is impossible through traditional means alone, however, because of the contemporary setting of the novel and the fact that it is a female leader who has emerged. She will not only lead her people back in time to a reclaiming of traditional modes of living which included strong female leaders and a very literal communication with non-human beings, but also into the future when equality for women is possible.

*The Whale Rider* opens with the fictional ancient Maori tale of the original whale rider—Paikea, the ancestor from whom Kahu, the novel's protagonist, is descended. Immediately the deep connection once held and nurtured between humans and nature is visible. In fact, nature is initially given precedence over humans as Ihimaera illuminates. He writes, "In the old days, in the years that have gone before us, the land and sea felt a great emptiness, a yearning" (16). By positing the environment as a living being that lacks fulfillment without the participating presence of humans, Ihimaera places humans in the role of equal beings that hold a reciprocal relationship with nature. As the novel progresses from the ancient, original story of the Maori settlement of Aotearoa, Ihimaera describes a fractured relationship between nature and the humans it still longs for. Largely due to colonization by the Pakeha, this fracture and fragmentation leads to fractured and fragmented Maori people who risk complete alienation from their traditional culture. Kahutia Te Rangi—the improbable yet destined leader of *The Whale Rider*—must negotiate a new cultural role for women within her traditional indigenous community as well as for all Maori people within the Pakeha world. She does this through reconnecting to her people's ancient worldview. Kahutia Te Rangi possesses a strong sense of individual as well as cultural identity which allows her to provide the necessary blending of past and present worldviews to ensure survival for her tribe in a quickly evolving world. She also

serves to demonstrate a model of interconnectedness and healing for Western people who have allowed their relationships with the past and with the Earth and all of its inhabitants to atrophy.

Witi Ihimaera develops his female protagonist Kahutia Te Rangi, or Kahu as she is more affectionately called, from her birth through shortly after her eighth birthday. In actuality, her story begins with her ancestor's first arrival in New Zealand and continues further into the future than the reader can see. Ihimaera relates in the novel that the land Kahu's ancestor discovered was occupied, but not yet thriving with its human companions. He writes that the ancestor Kahutia Te Rangi "came riding through the sea astride his whale, and he brought with him the life-giving forces which would enable us to live in close communion with the world" (39). In the ancestral history of Kahu's people, Paikea—upon arriving at the new land of Aotearoa/New Zealand on the back of his whale (the old bull whale whose perspective Ihimaera shows through alternating chapters with his human characters)—shot spears into land and water that "were very special because, among other things, they gave instructions on how man might talk with the beasts and creatures of the sea so that all could live in helpful partnership. They taught *oneness*" (Ihimaera 39). Through the descending generations, though, the fictional Ngati Konohi people lose their ability to communicate with whales and other sea life, an indication of their impending disintegration as a unified culture. The tribe's current leader, Koro Apirana, understands the dangers facing his people, and his desperation to save them leads to his severe disappointment in the birth of a female successor, the first in an unbroken chain of male leaders. Intriguingly, Ihimaera leaves the generation of Koro's children completely absent in the text, implying that Koro has maintained the role of chief in his children's absence. Otto Heim notes, "Not surprisingly the motif of the trauma emerges as the privileged trope enabling Ihimaera to engage with the legacy of colonization as an unassimilated cultural injury, one that had originally shaped

his work according to a European sense of continuity, but which he now reorients explicitly in response to the disruption of Maori lines of succession” (312). Koro Apirana illuminates this trauma in his struggle to reclaim his tribe’s ancestral beliefs and worldviews and pass them on to a successor he deems worthy.

Yet, in the interest of preserving his culture for the future, Koro Apirana is ironically unable to see past his traditional worldview which states, “By Maori custom, leadership was hereditary and normally the mantle of prestige fell from the eldest son to the eldest son” (Ihimaera 26). However, Kahu’s birth in and of itself signifies the catalyst that initiates a new perspective, a new worldview, for the tribe. The theme of continuity, of belonging to the past and knowing that that belonging makes one stronger for the future, is exemplified when Kahu’s grandmother and uncles Rawiri and Porourangi bury her birth cord in the ground at the meeting house “in sight of Kahutia Te Rangi, after whom Kahu has been named. May he, the great ancestor [Nani Flowers prayed], always watch over her. And may the sea from whence he came always protect her through life” (33). Then, after Kahu’s mother Rehua dies when Kahu is but three months old, her father and grandfather allow her maternal grandmother to raise her away from them. Nani Flowers remains firmly grounded in her cultural knowledge though and knows that since Kahu’s birth cord is buried on her father’s people’s land, she will forever remain connected to it. Rawiri, Kahu’s uncle, recalls that before she is taken away to her mother’s people, “‘Never mind, girl,’ she [Nani Flowers] said to baby Kahu. ‘Your birth cord is here. You will never be lost to us.’ Then I marveled at her wisdom and Rehua’s in naming the child in our genealogy and the joining of her to our lands” (38). Nani Flowers grieves not only for the loss of her granddaughter-in-law, but also for the fact that her husband refuses to acknowledge the

passing away of a strictly patriarchal society, much as the bull whale grieves the loss of his human companion.

Kahu's strong adherence to cultural traditions can be attributed to her bloodline and the love and support she receives from her family, namely her uncle Rawiri and her grandmother Nani Flowers. The traditional Maori worldview strongly emphasizes the core values of family and community. Nani Flowers, while filling the traditional female role of rearing the family and supporting and perpetuating cultural values (but who is relegated to the fringes of political issues because she is a woman), still provides Kahu with a strong model of leadership. As she is fond of pointing out: "He [Koro] *knows* I'm a descendant of old Muriwai, and *she* was the greatest chief of my tribe" (Ihimaera 27). In regards to traditional female roles Ihimaera declares, "[M]y perspective is that while Maori women may have had *cultural* power, Maori women did not have *political* power. . . . [N]o matter their triumphs, their whole lives were engaged in negotiations within a primarily patriarchal cultural and political framework. That is still the situation today" (Meklin 360). Traditionally, Maori women are not allowed to speak on the marae, the communal sacred gathering place, illustrating their lack of political power in the community. Yet, in spite of this cultural characteristic, Kahu is able to learn from the traditional worldview through its representations in her grandmother and stubborn grandfather in order to look ahead at her role in the survival of her people.

Kahu's individual identity stems too from her heritage, as she shares a unique connection with Paikea, the headwaters of her ancestral bloodline. Kahu's innate spiritual connection with the ocean's whales (which allows her to communicate with them on a literal and spiritual level) is shared by no one else among her tribe. She first demonstrates her deep empathy with whales when she overhears Koro Apirana's lesson on how his people lost the ability to communicate

with the magnificent sea creatures due to man's arrogance and new practice of whale killing (Ihimaera 50). In addressing his men for the task ahead of them in saving the ancient bull whale and his herd, who have beached themselves on the shore of the island, Koro Apirana summarizes the history of the relationship between mankind and the animal kingdom on the Earth:

'Once, our world was one where the Gods talked to our ancestors and man talked with the Gods. Sometimes the Gods gave our ancestors special powers. For instance, our ancestor Paikea . . . was given power to talk to whales and to command them. In this way, man, beasts and Gods lived in close communion with one another.' . . .

'But then,' he continued, 'man assumed a cloak of arrogance and set himself up above the Gods. He even tried to defeat Death, but failed. As he grew in his arrogance he started to drive a wedge through the original oneness of the world. 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 the 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. (120-21)

Ihimaera is commenting on the fact that humans have tried desperately, and futilely, to order and control the Earth and its inhabitants as well as unseen realms. However, the quest for such control has separated mankind from essential parts of his being—elements needed not only to survive, but also to live wholly and completely.

Koro Apirana then asks his followers about the tattoo on the whale's head, a spiral shape unique to the whales in the novel. He wonders aloud if it is real or unreal, natural or supernatural. He finally tells his listeners:

‘[I]t is *both*. It is a reminder of the oneness which the world once had. It is the birth cord joining past and present, reality and fantasy. It is both. It is *both*,’ he thundered, ‘and if we have forgotten the communion then we have ceased to be Maori.’

‘The whale is a sign,’ he began again. ‘It has stranded itself here. If we are able to return it to the sea, then that will be proof that the oneness 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.’ (Ihimaera 121-22)

Koro Apirana inherently knows that the fate of the whales directly correlates to the fate of his family and community, as they are interconnected. He leads a culture on the brink of losing its connection with the past and with its ancestors, a big part of which are the whales who have beached themselves a total of three times on their islands. Koro Apirana harbors no uncertainty when he declares, “If the whales die, we die” (127). He understands that the whales are the concrete tie to the past and that if they are intent on beaching themselves and awaiting death, then his people are not far behind.

Furthermore, Koro Apirana perpetuates a theme that characterizes ecocriticism and the necessity for the reconnection of nature and culture. He alludes to the fact that if the Earth cannot sustain the whales, it will not be able to sustain humans either. For his people, the Western values of materialism and individualism have led them astray from ancient teachings. He first

recognizes this truth upon returning from his battle in another city to reclaim his people's ancestral lands. After all two hundred whales (a herd that beached itself only a short time before the ancient bull whale and his herd) have died on the beach, Koro exits the car above the beach and turns to Rawiri, pleading "'No wai te he?' he shouted. 'Where lies the blame?' . . . And the seagulls caught his words within their claws and screamed and echoed the syllables overhead. . . . 'This is a sign to us,' Koro Apirana said again" (115). While Koro Apirana never explicitly names Pakeha colonization as complicit in the strife his people and the whales are experiencing, Ihimaera clearly juxtaposes this strife with Eurocentric lifestyles and pressures on the Maori people to conform to it. He achieves this namely through the polemically different manner in which the Maori people and the Pakeha treat the beached whales. Rawiri recounts of the news footage of the beached whales:

The camera zooms in on one of the whales, lifted high onto the beach by the waves. A truck has been driven down beside the whale. The whale is on its side, and blood is streaming from its mouth. The whale is still alive.

Five men are working on the whale. They are splattered with blood. As the helicopter hovers above them, one of the men stops his work and smiles directly into the camera. The look is triumphant. He lifts his arms in a victory sign and the camera sees that he has a chainsaw in his hand. Then the camera focuses on the other men, where they stand in the surging water. 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. (105)

Ihimaera does not denote who on the beach is Maori and who are Pakeha, yet the tenet that one is Maori if one identifies him or herself as Maori is seen playing its role. There are both Maoris and Pakehas on the beach, but there are some of both groups who try to save the whales and some of both groups who exploit them. There is a clear delineation between those with no respect or reverence for the whales (described by Rawiri as “younger”) and those desperately trying to protect and, if possible, save them (those whom Rawiri describes as “older”). It is interesting to consider the fact that the older people, Maori or not, are the ones who still retain a shred of respect for non-human beings, while the younger generation appears to have moved too far beyond traditional Maori beliefs and into Pakeha worldviews to care.

In an earlier scene, Koro Apirana touches on this theme when he tells the young men of his culture school that, “We try never to overfish for to do so would be to take greedy advantage of Tangaroa and would bring retribution” (Ihimaera 57). He comments on the consequences of living according to the Pakeha standards of consumerism and materialism when he states:

’But we have not always kept our pact with Tangaroa, and in these days of commercialism it is not always easy to resist temptation. So it was when I was your age. So it is now. There are too many people with snorkeling gear, and too many commercial fishermen with licenses. We have to place prohibitions on our fishing beds, boys, otherwise it will be just like the whales –‘ For a moment Koro Apirana hesitated. Far out to sea there was a dull booming sound like a great door opening, a reminder, a memory of something downward plunging. . . . ‘Listen, boys,’ he said, and his voice was haunted. ‘Listen. Once there were many of our protectors. Now there are few. *Listen how empty our sea has become.*’ (57-58)

Koro Apirana draws a clear parallel between what has occurred on their islands' beaches to mankind's loss of respect for nature and for life.

Rawiri witnesses Kahu's first communication with whales as he takes her home following a day of harsh lessons for the young girl. He remembers spotting orcas on the way and that upon seeing them, "Kahu had begun to make eerie sounds in her throat. I swear that those long lamenting sighs of hers were exactly the same as I had heard in the movie theatre. It sounded as if she was warning them [the whales]" (Ihimaera 53). Kahu never questions her ability, but rather accepts her unique identity as the destiny she inherently knows she must fulfill. And in spite of Koro Apirana's dismissal of her both as a future tribal leader and as a great granddaughter, Kahu obeys the directives of her ancestry. In so doing, she ensures the survival of her people by communicating with Paikea's whale, an ancient bull whale that has lost the will to live due to an excruciating sadness over the loss of his human companion as well as the new dangers that humans pose to his kind.

Critics such as Margaret and Andrew Meklin in their introduction to an interview with Witi Ihimaera titled "This Magnificent Accident" sometimes refer to Ihimaera's novel as magical realism due to the portrayal of whales and all of nature as intelligent life forms. Yet, these scenes of the novel that illustrate the whales' thoughts and where Kahu communicates with and rides the whale are the book's portrayal of the ancient worldview and the contemporary worldview merging. Furthermore, Ken Arvidson in his article "Aspects of Contemporary Māori Writing in English" wonders about "the extent to which a western literary tradition which requires of its readers no more than a willing suspension of disbelief in its tales of the supernatural, can accommodate the more deeply held beliefs of another culture" (121). I maintain that Western readers should not simply suspend their disbelief when reading the novel, but rather should

experience the connections themselves. Not only should Eurocentric cultures “accommodate” such beliefs, but they should also begin to internalize and adopt some of them: namely that those with a dichotomous Westernized worldview of humans vs. Others must recognize the intelligence of animal species and humanity’s undeniable interdependence on them.

Kahu, strong and resolute in her cultural identity, knows that the whale represents the future of her tribe whether he lives or dies. And Kahu, strong and resolute in her individual identity, knows that she is the one to determine that fate, regardless of her unacknowledged role within her tribe. She commits to a course of action regarding the beached whale, knowing “*If the whale lives, we live*. These were the only words Kahu could think of. The water was freezing, but not to worry. The waves were huge, but she could do this. The rain was like spears, but she could do this” (Ihimaera 128). Her thoughts represent what is true for all peoples who inhabit the Earth today: in order for humankind to thrive, we must respect the interdependence of all species. In this way, *The Whale Rider* demonstrates the theme of reciprocity so essential to the survival of mankind. Yet physical survival is not the only aspect of humanity at stake, even though it is the most concrete. Humans must return to a worldview that mandates respect for all beings or death of the human spirit and death of the body is imminent. Kahu’s perpetuation of an ancient cultural belief, combined with her non-traditional role as future female leader of an ancient tribe, ensures that not only will her tribe survive, it will also be prepared to sail into the future with a collective mind open to new possibilities.

The old bull whale is as equally important to the novel as Kahu since they are linked by the relationship of their ancestors in the tribe’s origin story. Ihimaera assigns separate chapters for the whales’ perspectives in the early part of the novel before merging them with the humans’ perspectives, indicating their integral role in Maori culture and worldview. Early in the novel, the

ancient bull reminisces on his youth and the original Kahutia Te Rangi, the ancestor who befriended the young whale and rode him to Aotearoa. In relaying his memories, the whale illuminates the traditional Maori worldview regarding the relationship between humans and animals and how that worldview has changed over the centuries. On their migratory route to and from their feeding grounds in the seas of Antarctica:

They watched for danger, not from other creatures of the sea, but from the greatest threat of all—man. . . . Yet it had not always been like this, the ancient whale remembered. Once, he had a golden master who had wooed him with flute song. Then his master had used a conch shell to bray his commands to the whale over long distances. As their communication grew so did their understanding and love of each other. (Ihimaera 36)

The worldview of humans once being able to communicate with animals goes back to the Maori creation story, which Ihimaera relates in his novel:

The whale has always held a special place in the order of things, even before those times of Paikea. That was way back, after the Sky Father and Earth Mother had been separated, when the God children of both parents divided up between themselves the various Kingdoms of the Earth. It was the Lord Tangaroa who took the Kingdom of the Ocean; he was second in rank only to the Lord Tane, the Father of Man and the Forests, and so was established by them the close kinship of man with the inhabitants of the ocean, and of land with sea. This was the first communion. (48)

Ihimaera goes on to discuss the Maori belief concerning how humans lost their ability to communicate with animals when he discusses the shift of mankind's priorities. He writes, "But

as the world aged and man grew away from his godliness, he began to lose the power of speech with whales, the power of *interlock*. So it was that the knowledge of whale-speaking was only given to a few. One of these was our ancestor, Paikea” (49). The theme of reciprocity is further illustrated when Rawiri tells the reader:

The years went by, and the descendants of Paikea increased on the land and always paid homage to their ancestor and the whale island. In those days there was still communion with the Gods and a close relationship between land inhabitants and ocean inhabitants. . . . So it was that ceremonials of respect were employed between man and sea. . . . Until the time came when man turned on the beast which had been companion to him and the whalekilling began. (49-50)

The break from spirituality and loss of the perception that each individual is only one small piece of a fathomless universe is what ended humans’ ability to communicate with animals and began their journey to fragmented beings, disassociated from any sense of reciprocity.

According to Mark Williams, Ihimaera observes that colonization caused fragmentation among the Maori people. Williams writes, “Ihimaera acknowledges that the coming of the Pakeha and the signing of the Treaty (to which his own family never set their moko, or sign) diminished Maori sovereignty and frayed what he has called ‘the rope’ of Maori culture *te taura tangata* that stretches from the beginning to the end of time” (n. pag.). This notion of the “rope of man” that Otto Heim further explores in “The Interplay of the Local and the Global in Witi Ihimaera’s Revisions” is demonstrated in the role of Kahu. Kahu is not merely a descendant of her people’s founding ancestor Paikea, but she also symbolizes the traditional aspects of Maori culture explained in this quote. Therefore, she is part of the “rope of man,” connecting past beliefs and traditions to the future via the present generation. Furthermore, Heim notes that, “in

focusing on the trope of the trauma,” Ihimaera “conceptualizes the impact of colonialism on Maori communities and on his writing, and its counterpart, the image of the rope of man, which he develops in order to indicate a path from conflict to reconciliation” (310). Kahu certainly conveys this image as she leads her tribe through the conflict brought about by colonization to a reconciliation of not only man with himself, but also of man with nature. More significantly, however, Kahu illustrates what Heim refers to as, “Ihimaera’s . . . efforts to enlist the discourse of globalization in the interests of cultural empowerment and the vision of a locally shared world” (311). While I strongly agree with Heim, I would like to make his statement more specific to Westernized cultures and argue that peoples with a Westernized worldview might look to their role in developing a shared world not only between themselves and other cultures but also, as Kahu demonstrates, people and the Earth and its nonhuman inhabitants. Reciprocity is called for, especially among those who now value a dichotomous relationship, between humans and other beings of the Earth.

Furthering his commentary on the effects of colonialism, and to link the plight of the Earth’s oceans and sea life to that of humans, Ihimaera interestingly portrays the effects of nuclear testing in the Pacific Ocean through the perspectives of the whales. One of the younger whales, in his eagerness to be led to safety during a nuclear experiment, notes that:

[Their] leader was still mourning. Two weeks earlier the herd had been feeding in the Tuamotu Archipelago when suddenly a flash of bright light had scalded the sea and giant tidal soundwaves had exerted so much pressure that internal ear canals had bled. Seven young calves had died. The ancient whale remembered this occurrence happening before; screaming a lament of condemnation, he had led them away in front of the lethal tide that he knew would come. On that pell-

mell, headlong, and mindless escape, he had noticed more cracks in the ocean floor, hairline fractures indicating serious damage below the crust of the earth. Now, some weeks later, the leader was still unsure about the radiation level in the sea trench. He was fearful of the contamination seeping from Moruroa. He was afraid of the genetic effects of the undersea radiation on the remaining herd and calves in this place which had once, ironically, been the womb of the world.

(Ihimaera 64-65)

The fractures and cracks that the whales notice appear as a result of the nuclear explosions are only indicative of the internal fragmentation and fractures that are ever widening within humans as we risk realizing “with despair that the place of life, and the Gods, had now become a place of death” (66). Nuclear testing in the Pacific Ocean is but another example of Western cultures’ desire to know and dominate all facets of the planet. Elizabeth DeLoughrey, in her article “Radiation Ecologies and the Wars of Light” notes:

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, writing amidst the state-sanctified violence of World War II, argued that the instrumental rationality of the Enlightenment perpetuates its self-destruction and utilized metaphors of light to warn against the dangers of the “fully enlightened earth.” “What men want to learn from nature,” they argued, “is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men.” (468-69)

DeLoughrey devotes most of the article to discussing the physical effects produced through nuclear testing, such as the production of art in the forms of photography and filmmaking and the terminal illnesses suffered by those most blatantly exposed to radiation. However, she does hint at the internal (in the way of spiritual and psychological) effects on humans when she states:

Radiation suggests a universal and global ecology that implicates the human and the nonhuman; methodologically it is best approached in terms of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of "planetarity." . . . "Planet-thought," as she calls it, "opens up to embrace an inexhaustible taxonomy" of alterity often read in terms such as mother, nation, God, and, most relevant to this essay, nature (73). Planetarity, she argues, insists that we configure our relation to alterity as not necessarily continuous nor discontinuous. It is the process by which the familiar is rendered uncanny and unhomely, similar to the ways that the apprehension of (invisible) radiation and its ecological properties destabilize our understanding of place and space. Planetarity is a method of reading that represents "the defamiliarization of familiar space." (471)

My understanding of DeLoughrey's comments is that radiation involves all of "us": humans and the "Other" species that many humans dismiss or discount. Furthermore, I understand from her assertions that the lack of total illumination renders disoriented and unbalanced those who seek such illumination. In this paradoxical sense, humans bring about their own internal and external fragmentation in the pursuit of omniscience. In fact, DeLoughrey promotes "a move away from scholarship that privileges the individualism of the omniscient (human) cosmopolitan toward a framework that conceives of the constitutive nature of global alterity through human and nonhuman relations" (472). Again, I would like to take her assertion one step further and declare that humans must not simply apply this practice to what they *write*, but more essentially, to how they *think* and how they *behave*, models for which *The Whale Rider* offers.

Also inherent to the novel's message is the portrayal of Pakeha influence on Maori lifestyles, which changed from community and family centered before colonization to city

centered with a focus on the individual after colonization. Graeme Wynn, in his article “Tradition and Change in Recent Maori Fiction: The Writing of Witi Ihimaera” notes:

Maori society has changed drastically since the Second World War. The predominantly rural population has been increasingly attracted to the cities; the Maoris have become more and more dependent upon the “Pakeha” (white) economy; radio and television foster scorn for old customs as they encourage emulation of increasingly familiar “Pakeha” ways; and modern values are eroding the foundations of the rural Maori community. Divisions have emerged between the young, convinced of the need to follow the “Pakeha” lead, and the old, nostalgic for a valued, fast-fading way of life. Many Maoris have had to come to grips with their failure to feel at ease in either city or village. Others have suffered opposition and misunderstanding in urban areas. Yet despite these tensions and the changes they have brought, “Maoritanga” survives. (127)

In this particular novel, *Porourangi*, the eldest grandson of Koro Apirana and Kahu’s father, portrays the smaller but no less significant voyage of Maori people to cities and Pakeha modes of living and worldviews. Rawiri recalls that the summer his older brother brought his daughter home for a visit, “At that time he had returned from the South Island to live in Whangara but to work in the city. Koro Apirana was secretly pleased with this arrangement because he had been wanting to pass on his knowledge to Porourangi” (Ihimaera 41). The trouble is, and what Koro Apirana refuses to accept, is that Porourangi has moved away from his culture’s traditional worldview and is living a fragmented life alienated from his family and cultural traditions. Furthermore, Rawiri leaves New Zealand for Australia and comes to fully understand the impact of Pakeha lifestyles on his people. He perpetuates the theme of needing to belong though when

he states of some of his cousins and their Pakeha accoutrements that, “They may have turned their lives upside down in the process, like Sydney Bridge’s reflection in the harbor, but they always craved the respect of our tribe. They weren’t embarrassed, but hiding the way they lived was one way of maintaining the respect” (69). Rawiri goes on to tell of his own immersion in “the hedonistic life of the lotus eater” as he spends his time “partying with buddies, or hiking out to the Blue Mountains” (70). The longer Rawiri stays away from his culture, his family, and his home, the more he loses his individual identity within that culture and family.

Rawiri illustrates the necessity of indigenous people who are willing to merge traditional worldviews with Pakeha modes of living when he tells of the accident on the road while he is helping his white friend in Papua New Guinea with his coffee plantation. His friend hits an indigenous man Rawiri had befriended, and rather than offering assistance, driving the man to a hospital, or even apologizing, he drives off and leaves him on the road to die. Rawiri thinks, “But all I could think of was the waste of a young man who had come one thousand years to his death on a moonlit road, the manner in which the earth must be mourning for one of its hopes and its sons in the new world, and the sadness that a friend I thought I had would so automatically react to the assumptions of his culture” (Ihimaera 81). Those assumptions are symptomatic of an unacknowledged internalized self-hatred that disallows Eurocentric cultures to view any others as equal or even human. Graham and Huggan acknowledge:

One thing seems certain: if the wrongs of colonialism—its legacies of continuing human inequalities, for instance—are to be addressed, still less redressed, then the very category of the *human*, in relation to animals and environment, must also be brought under scrutiny. After all, traditional western constitutions of the human as the ‘not-animal’ (and, by implication, the ‘not-savage’) have had major, and often

catastrophic, repercussions not just for animals themselves but for all those the West now considers human but were formerly designated, represented and treated as animal. (18-19)

Williams goes on to assert, “[The] solutions to Maori problems in respect of family life, land loss, economic deprivation and colonization are seen as arising from Maori turning away from Pakeha society and Pakeha solutions towards their own cultural and spiritual resources” (n. pag.). I would like to extend Williams’ argument to say that Western peoples of European descent must begin to turn away from their individualistic worldviews and lifestyle choices to heal themselves of inner fragmentation. In the words of Graeme Wynn, “It behooves the ‘Pakeha’ to ponder Ihimaera’s vision of Maori life” (130).

## CHAPTER THREE

### PATRICIA GRACE'S *POTIKI*: CARVING CULTURE WITH WORDS

*Potiki*, first published in 1986, tells the story of a Maori family and their fight to reclaim and hold on to ancestral lands. Grace uses storytelling within the novel to connect past to present and to connect the reader to the lessons conveyed in the text. In the Foreword to *Potiki*, Kirsty Gunn writes of a “master carver” who essentially carves Maori culture in the community’s whareniui, or meeting house. She states that, “His way of working, the significance of his tropes and figures . . . these have been handed down from generation to generation, through the stories the family tells of their forebears and their land, their connection to the sea and the stars and the heavens” (Gunn 7). Mark Williams notes, however:

The carver, in Maori understanding, is not an individual so much an expression of the communal voice. (One would have to go back to the middle ages to find a similar understanding of the artist’s role in European traditions.) This sense of the artist’s place in the community is especially important after the traditional world of Maori life has been interrupted by European intrusion. After so much cultural loss the carver reconstitutes the community’s knowledges, and this is true of other artists as well. The carver, the weaver, the builder these make the community whole again. In *Potiki* Grace acts as a carver in words collecting the stories of the people, giving voice to the people, releasing a shapely image of the community. . . . At the end of the novel one of the characters, the crippled child who has died and whose spirit has been carved into the house in the form of a potiki, speaks from beyond the grave as the voice of the house and of the community. (n.pag.)

This role of the carver as provider of the mirror that reflects the Maori people themselves, as community and as individuals, grounds them in a common worldview and allows them to more easily identify themselves as members of a common group. Gunn further states that the novel “tells of the changes that occur in one family who, having realized that there seems no place for them where they can live with dignity, return to their home on the land to make a living there from the earth and sea” (Gunn 8). In this way, the community of Grace’s novel has achieved a substantial measure of cultural autonomy and self-sustainability, the pinnacle achievement that Hulme and Ihimaera portrayed their characters as working towards.

The novel’s contemporary setting illustrates the move of indigenous Maori people to the city in search of a better life, only to realize that Pakeha ways of living are fraught with fragmentation, alienation, and individualization—all ideas that contrast sharply to the traditional Maori worldview. Yet Grace portrays a family, a people, who are able to strongly identify themselves in a tumultuous time. This family includes Roimata, a Maori woman who leaves her ancestral family land after the passing of her father for better opportunities in the city. However, she finds herself alienated from her cultural identity and returns home to marry Hemi, a man she has known and loved since childhood and who represents the tie to the land that she herself lacks. Together, they raise one daughter and three sons, the youngest of which is adopted from Hemi’s mentally disabled sister. Together, as a family and as part of a larger community, they fight encroaching Pakeha who use violence to try to coerce the Maori people into selling or leaving their land to make way for tourist developments.

The spiral is a prevailing motif throughout the novel and is used in strikingly similar ways to Hulme’s *The Bone People* and Ihimaera’s *The Whale Rider*. The beginning of Grace’s novel

alludes to the significance of the spiral and the “something from nothingness” it promises as she opens her Prologue with:

From the centre,  
From the nothing,  
Of not seen,  
Of not heard,  
There comes  
A shifting,  
A stirring,  
And a creeping forward,  
There comes  
A standing,  
A springing,  
To an outer circle,  
There comes  
An intake  
Of breath –

Tihe Mauriora. (Grace 11)

This poem, in similar fashion to Hulme’s novel, brings to mind the interconnectedness of all things—from the center to the outermost circle of existence and from nothingness to “somethingness.” Manuka Henare emphasizes the significance of the spiral to Maori culture: “Intriguingly, Māori artists trained in the traditional schools of learning have, in wood and bone carvings, body tattoos, and hand painted scrolls, presented the cosmos process as a double spiral,

which swirls into and out of a primal center” (198). The master carver that Gunn mentions in her Foreword could easily be perceived by those Western readers with a dominant vs. Other worldview as an owner of or superior being to all others. However, this perception stands in glaring error as Grace writes, “This does not mean that the man is master of the tree. Nor is he master of what eventually comes from his hands. He is master only of the skills that bring forward what was already waiting in the womb that is a tree—a tree that may have spent further time as a house or classroom, or a bridge or pier” (12). Similar to the unpopulated, “yearning” Earth of Ihimaera’s ancient landscape, so too does the tree of Grace’s novel await human presence in order to be complete.

In Patricia Grace’s *Potiki*, several characters illustrate the traditional Maori worldview as a means of healing both the internal fragmentation of soul and the external wounds afflicting the Earth. To begin, a young female character is charged almost by ancestral decree with the task of continuing the cultural traditions of her tribe; however, she must find ways of doing so that incorporate ancient laws into modern elements. Similar to Kahu from Ihimaera’s *The Whale Rider*, yet far more solidly grounded in her identity, is Tangimoana—the passionate spitfire of *Potiki* who must negotiate a new cultural role for women within her community. The female protagonist of this novel possesses a strong sense of individual as well as cultural identity, which allows her to provide the necessary blending of past and present worldviews to ensure survival for her tribe in a quickly evolving world. Furthermore, her mother Roimata nurtures the continuance of her people’s culture and imagines a future for her people that internalizes the traditional worldview in an ever-encroaching Pakeha world.

*Potiki*’s heroine Tangimoana maintains her cultural identity which is initially formed through a connection to the sea. Tangi’s mother Roimata relates, “She is not patient, but is as

sharp-edged as the sea rocks, and hears every whisper of the tide. On the night she was born I woke to the pained crying of the sea. We took her name from the sounds that the sea made” (Grace 21). The survival of Tangi’s family and her entire village is continuously threatened by Pakeha land developers through ever growing degrees of brutality. Because of the community’s cohesiveness and strong cultural identity, the outsiders have no recourse but external violence. In order to protect her people, Tangi behaves in ways often contradictory to her culture’s traditional values. Her little brother Toko recalls that in reaction to the land developers, “There were sharp shouted words too, from my sister Tangimoana, though most of the people thought that this was not a right thing for her to do in the house of Rongo” (109). Tangi’s actions are justified though, even in the eyes of her elders, because, as Mark Williams asserts, “Grace’s writing shows the force of an effort to reintegrate the past with the present, to *undo* the loss. Another way of saying this is that Grace sets out to change the present by recovering the values, loyalties and meanings of the past. There is nothing nostalgic or sentimental about this endeavour” (n.pag.). Tangimoana embodies these characteristics of Grace’s writing in her noticeable lack of nostalgia and sentimentality; she is a young woman who realizes that tradition must be protected through non-traditional means. Her father, Hemi, understands this about his daughter as he thinks, “His own daughter Tangi . . . never let anyone put her or her people down. Had such a clear view of what she stood for and nothing got past her. . . . Yes, Tangimoana was the one. He hoped his daughter wouldn’t suffer too much for the sort of person she was” (76). While Hemi does not elaborate on his statement that Tangi “was the one,” because she is so sure of her cultural and individual identity she will become the leader the tribe requires to carry it into an uncertain, tumultuous future. At the least, she will mediate between her people and the Pakeha world through her knowledge of the law.

The more Tangimoana develops as a leader for her people, the more she is able to control her forceful personality. For example, in contrast to her normally passionate voicing of her thoughts and opinions, Tangi waxes silent after the burning of the village's meeting house. Toko relates that even after restoration begins, "My sister Tangimoana had not yet come to the ordinary things. She was quiet, as yet unable to help with the ordinary things" (Grace 157). Her silence is not that of grief alone, though, as when the village priest indicates that what goes around comes around, Toko notices, "My sister who was standing by me did not look up when he spoke the words, but turned and walked away" (157). Tangi has come to understand that in this tilted world, words aren't always enough to effect change. She exhibits qualities incongruous with her people's traditional beliefs, and at times receives admonishment from her elders; yet when she takes charge and leads her people in an act of cultural preservation, they must on some level come to understand how desperation provoked the Pakeha violence against them. In this way, Tangi is a model for turning from strictly traditional modes of living, and towards a merging of traditional with more contemporary modes of handling her people's struggles.

Tangi's strong individual identity stems from very traditional values, though. The final blow of her youngest brother's murder, which initiates Tangi's coup against the Pakeha, first propels her to the men working the earth-moving machinery: "'You bled the land,' she shouted, and those who had been about to move remained. 'And you almost destroyed the sacred place in a time of rain. You fired our first house and now you've killed our brother'" (Grace 176). A deep spiritual connection with the land and her native culture motivates Tangi to use words to persuade others to see the wrong they are committing. Roimata recalls from the conversation that in fact, "The men did listen to her. It's a way Tangimoana has, a sharp boldness that will make people listen to her. Also it is a way of hers to act alone" (177). Tangimoana determines the

future peace and survival of her people by carrying out actions both selfless and self-sacrificing. After Toko's murder and burial, but before Tangi leads and participates in the destruction of the Pakeha developers' machinery, Roimata remembers that, "Tangi was quiet and happy in her manner, with the anger seemingly gone from her" (181). After the revolt led by Tangi's strong sense of justice, her people—represented through Hemi's voice—realize that, "[G]ood has come of it, and I think it was . . . right" (194). Tangimoana's passionate leadership provides hope for her people, and her education in Pakeha law will only aid in cementing their survival as a culture. Her uncanny understanding of her identity and her role among her people illustrate her ability to join past with present and future for the good of her threatened heritage.

Tangimoana's name carries great symbolism in regards to the sense of hopelessness perpetuated throughout fragmented and individualistic communities and cultures. Tangi, as the heroine of the novel, is meant to save her people's lands from outsider Pakehas. Her struggles, though, are fraught with tears and heartache. While not commenting on the novel itself, Manuka Henare illustrates the significance of the word "tangi" when he references a speech given by a Maori elder during a Waitangi Tribunal hearing:

In his greeting and speech to the lawyers, the elder spoke of weeping for the land handed down from ancestors of the past. Remembrance of the mythic history gone before the people links humanity to the environment. His narrative informs us of the continuing personal relationships of the living with the ancestors and with the land. His words remind us that the land and the resources are a sacred gift passed on to the present generation from the human and spiritual ancestors. At a deeper affective level, the *tangi*, the weeping, is a declaration about and a reference to the tragedy of land loss and cultural identity. *Tangi* flows from the remnants of land

in which resides the wounded soul handed down by ancestors. Such weeping is not just for the immediate material loss, but also for lost potential and the diminution of spiritual and cultural identity. In the Māori mind there is an ongoing connection between the health of Earth Mother and the well-being of humans in communities with rights and obligations. For generations it has been considered that psychological and social illnesses can be attributed to the mistakes and evils of the past associated with the loss of land and the abuse of Earth Mother. (205)

Tangimoana's name can literally be connected to "the remnants of land in which resides the wounded soul handed down by ancestors." Tangimoana is the keeper of her people, indicating her connection to not only the past and the ancestors, but also to her ancestral lands.

The decision of Patricia Grace to charge female characters with carrying forward cultural traditions implies that women are inherently connected to the Earth and the environment. Having inherited this ancestral connection to land and sea, Tangi and Roimata possess the unique ability of staying grounded in the past while looking to and embracing the future, symbolizing great positive change within their cultures. For example, Roimata ponders the double spiral and its meaning when she returns to her ancestral lands after living the Pakeha way upon being sent away at the age of fifteen after her father's death to a Pakeha school. She begins by remembering that in the small house she shared with her father as a child, "The little kitchen window was a window onto curving steel—steel which had come from the earth and was now riveted to it" (Grace 24). This curving steel of the Western world is what takes Roimata from her childhood home when she leaves in search of supposed better opportunities than what her traditional culture offered her. However, she returns to the desolate shoreline when she fails to find fulfillment in the city, illustrated in her comment to Hemi that, "I felt as though I was floating," I said. 'As

though there was nothing . . . important” (39). Roimata voices the hopelessness she felt while living in a state of alienation and fragmentation among many more people than what lived in her small community. She further relates after returning to her family’s and community’s ancestral lands, and more specifically the shoreline:

Yet because of being a nothing, a neutral place—not land, not sea—there is freedom on the shore, and rest. There is freedom to search the nothing, the weed pile, the old wood, the empty shell, the fish skull, searching for the speck, the beginning—or the end that is the beginning. Hope and desire can rest there, thoughts and feelings can shift with sand grains being sifted by the water and the wind. I put my bag down there one evening and rested, leaving a way for the nothing, the nothing that can become a pinprick, a stirring. I took warm clothing from my bag and waited through the night for the morning that would become a new beginning. (24-25)

Here, Roimata foretells the imaginings of a new future, but what that future entails she doesn’t yet know. At this point in her life and her people’s lives a cleansing is taking place. She makes the cleansing concrete and literal, however, when she “went down to the sea to wash. . . . It was a salt cleansing that washed not only the road dust away. It was a discarding, or a renewal, like the washing of hands that takes leave of death and turns one toward the living” (33).

After she and Hemi marry and have children, Roimata finds herself learning more about what she has to offer her family and people in the stories she contains within her. After Manu, their youngest biological son refuses to attend school anymore because “there were no stories for him,” Roimata realizes:

It was a new realization that the centred being in this now-time simply reaches out in any direction towards the outer circles, these outer circles being named ‘past’ and ‘future’ only for our convenience. The being reaches out to grasp those adornments that become part of the self. So the ‘now’ is a giving and a receiving between the inner and the outer reaches, but the enormous difficulty is to achieve refinement in reciprocity, because the wheel, the spiral, is balanced so exquisitely.

(47)

This manifestation of the spiral engages the concept of reciprocity unlike anything the modern Western worldview accepts or acknowledges. In Western perception, the past is gone and the future is a thing that often contains only potential material possessions. In a much more wholesome manner, though, the Maori traditional worldview maintains and nurtures distinct connections between past and present, understanding that any present moment in time is not an isolated occurrence. Nonetheless, without the evolution that each female character’s unflinching, unapologetic grasp on her cultural and individual identity represents, their Maori culture may well have been lost to an apathetic, disconnected, and individualistic future.

As Grace writes two significant female characters to illuminate the Maori worldview, so she also creates two significant male characters that complement the female characters in developing a fuller picture of a Maori worldview. Hemi, Roimata’s husband, is her tie to the earth and the grounding she so desperately needs. She says of him, “He worked on the land for some years, learning all that he could, and intended this to be his life’s work, using the knowledge that had been given to him and eventually passing that knowledge on. Then for some years the land had to be left and other work found, but Hemi always knew that he would one day see the land supporting us all again” (Grace 24). In this quote, Grace alludes to the number of

Maoris who left their ancestral lands behind in hopes of finding better opportunity in the city. Hemi, however, consistently maintains his attachment to the land and never ceases to feel that the land is all he and his people need to survive. Due to his belief, he is able to help his family and his community become increasingly self-sufficient. Roimata, in her discussion of the stories she and her husband and children tell, states that Hemi's stories: "told more and more about people who were not working any more because there was no work for them, and of people who were beginning to be cold and poor. More and more he was telling about the land and how the land and the sea could care for us. It could care for those who had gone away too, but who would return now that work was hard to find" (49). Hemi underscores the fundamentals of ecocriticism in his deep respect for both the traditional ways of his people and his ancestral lands. In fact, for him and for many of their tribe the land and their culture remain inextricable. A third person narrator emphasizes this connection that Hemi forms to the land and his people:

His own apprenticeship, his own education, had been on the land, and after his father had died Grandfather Tamihana had taught him everything to do with planting, tending, gathering, storing, and marketing. He'd been taught about the weather and seasons, the moon phases and the rituals to do with growing. At the same time he was made aware that he was being given knowledge on behalf of a people, and that they all trusted him with that knowledge. It wasn't only for him but for the family. (69-70)

Grace shows that the reciprocal relationship between people and the land is not reserved for the Maori people alone. Rather, it is a relationship that can be shared between all humans and the Earth, and one that must be if humans are to survive.

Similar to Roimata, Hemi too had left his ancestral lands as a young man to pursue better opportunities in the city, but like Roimata had returned with the self-awareness that he was unfulfilled without the responsibility of caring for his family, his people. To illustrate Grace writes, “He had not been happy about giving up what he knew was a charge that he’d been given. But it had only been given up temporarily, he’d always known that. He’d always known that one day he would return to the land, and that the land would support them all again” (70). Here Grace speaks of the uniting bond created through a joint effort of survival and flourishing. Continuing, Hemi relates:

These days people were looking more to their land. Not only to their land, but to their own things as well. They had to if they didn’t want to be wiped off the face of the earth. There was more determination now—determination which had created hope, and hope in turn had created confidence, and energy. Things were stirring, to the extent of people fighting to hold on to a language that was in danger of being lost, and to the extent of people struggling to regain land that had gone from them years before. (70-71)

Grace refers to the Maori Renaissance in this quote as she notes a burgeoning renewal in the interest of reclaiming Maori culture. Packaged with this reclaiming of culture is a return to balancing a reciprocal relationship with the land and the Earth. Hemi embodies this worldview, and Roimata understands and respects Hemi’s grounded nature: “Only Hemi could secure me, he being as rooted to the earth as a tree is. Only he could free me from raging forever between earth and sky—which is a predicament of great loneliness and loss” (30). Not only does Roimata connect herself to her ancient gods, but she also indicates her need for family and community. This sense of community, of belonging—to someone and some place—is further illustrated

through Hemi's epiphany: "It was meant, everything was meant, and people hadn't forgotten how to care. . . . And people were looking to their land again. They 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 anywhere—you were lost, gone. It was good there was more focus on it now, and more hope" (71-72). To conclude, Hemi understands something about his culture that could be viewed as a warning to all people. He relates, "Everything was meant, that's what he'd always believed. But if you missed the signs, or let yourself be sidetracked, you could lose out. Everything was meant but you had to do your bit too" (Grace 72). Hemi is aware of the dangers of materialism and not only understands the necessity of eschewing Pakeha consumerist ways of living, but also does much to lead by example for his people. Roimata explains, "The week we learned of the closing down of Hemi's job was a time of some anxiety for me, as it was for many people. I wondered what we would do, how we would live. But when I spoke to Hemi he only said, 'Everything we need is here.' . . . And Hemi told the new story too, of how it would be again. . . . As he spoke I felt how full of hope and confidence he was" (80). Roimata, in her state of floating somewhere between earth and sky, looks to Hemi for the solidity and stability she needs.

Another significant character with a unique role who serves to tie not only the events of the novel but also the people together is Toko, a child of the sea. Toko illustrates the foundation of ecocriticism as well as indigenous criticism because he embodies not only a bridge between humans and the earth and sea, but he also serves as a link between past and present and the spiritual and physical worlds, essential connections at the core of the Maori traditional worldview. In an interview with Grace, Thomas E. Tausky reminds her: "[Y]ou mentioned that the character of the boy was linked with a mythological figure. How widespread was that in the

*novel? Are the main characters all to be identified with a mythological figure?"* (95). Grace responds:

No, just the boy, Tokowaru. I made him a bit of a Maui figure. Maui was a demi-god, I suppose you would say, who inhabited the earth as well as the spiritual world, and who brought from the spiritual world gifts to the people of the earth. But he was a mischievous type of a character who challenged lots of things, but also had special gifts. He was misshapen and was born under unusual circumstances—he was the last child of his mother’s old age, he was born on the beach in secrecy and his mother thought he was dead. But she probably didn’t think he was really dead, because she cut off her top-knot of hair, put the baby on it and she floated him out to sea, and he was looked after by the fishes and the seagulls. If you look into the myth deeply enough, you realize that it was something that the mother meant, because she inhabited the spiritual world by night and the earthly world by day. Her children belonged to the earthly world. (Tausky 95-96)

To further cement the connection between Toko and the mythological Maui, Roimata tells of his birth: “What she held out to me, what I took from her, was a misshapen and cauled baby boy” (Grace 42). From the outset, Toko is a central figure from which the spokes of family, community, and nature extend. He encompasses and connects all of them and appears to span the breadth and depth of time and knowing. He explains that, “what I have known ever since then is that my knowing, my own knowingness, is different. It is a before, and a now, and an after knowing, and not like the knowing that other people have. It is a now knowing, as if everything

is now” (63). His assertions explicate his centeredness in time and place and his illumination and embodiment of the interconnectedness of all things.

Toko also serves to foretell the coming of the Pakeha. However, he indicates more than their entitled greed and in his heightened state of knowing alludes to the nihilism infecting them when he asks Roimata after running home one day: “When will they come? Are they coming soon? . . . ‘Will they stamp their feet and march and run? Will their eyes shine green, yellow and silver?’ . . . ‘And will their hunger and anger be hard?’ he said. ‘What will they do and what will we do? Will we feed them and help them? And will they help us too?’” (Grace 81).

Although Toko knows of the coming of a people, an alien people, he cannot fathom the destruction they will wreak. Yet he knows of their hunger and anger, both signifiers of nihilism that indicate an inner fragmentation and outer disassociation from any literal or figurative roots which allows them to take heartlessly from those who still find themselves bound to the earth and whole because of it. And in fact, Toko’s premonitions materialize when Mr. Dolman “whom they had named ‘Dollarman’ under the breath” appears to try to convince the people to sell their land for a “First-class accommodation, top restaurants, night club, recreation centre with its own golf links” (100). Dollarman serves to illuminate what imagining a new future means to the Maori people and how it has very little to do with Western values or modes of living. As Dollarman’s proposals are rejected again and again at the meeting between him and the people of the tribe in their wharenuī, he exclaims, “And you’re looking back, looking back, all the time.” The tribe’s unidentified spokesperson calmly explains to him that, “Wrong. We’re looking to the future. If we sold out to you, what would we be in the future?” (106). This Maori tribe is fully aware of the impact selling out would have on their community and that it would lead to no other choice but living by Pakeha standards. In fact, the spokesperson refutes Dollarman’s claims by

responding with, “I tell you if we sold to you we would be dust. Blowing in the wind. . . . One puff of the wind and that’s it. And who is the first to point the finger then, when our people are seen to be broken and without hope?” (106). The Maori community of Grace’s novel understands the connection between their ways of living and the physical structures that define and protect them. Most importantly, however, is how the united community of her novel serves to illustrate that healing fractured souls is only possible by reconnecting to the land.

*Potiki* maps an imaginary future not only for the Maori people but also for those people who live by a Western worldview through the depiction of a community and family firmly grounded in their individual and communal identities. One significant cultural aspect that Westernized peoples are missing is the act of working and sacrificing to protect heritage. Without this common interest, too easily is the direction of focus turned towards the individual and the individual’s interests. Western cultures must turn from their egocentric self-view outward to the larger, and more meaningful, constructs of family, community, and spirituality. Furthermore, the “psychological and social illnesses” that Henare speaks of echo the nihilism so prevalent throughout Western civilization. The alienation of Western peoples from reverence for the Earth has led to a literal dispossession from the assured nurturance of the Earth and the figurative dispossession from reverence and spirituality. Henare further notes the polar disparity in Western and Maori worldviews: “Philosophically, Māori people do not see themselves as separate from nature, humanity, and the natural world, being direct descendants of Earth Mother. Thus, the resources of the earth do not belong to humankind; rather, humans belong to the earth. While humans . . . can harvest the bounty of Mother Earth’s resources, they do not own them. Instead, humans have ‘user rights’” (202). In this way, it is easily discernable that the Western worldview’s disassociation from Earth and all of its natural environments could easily lead to a

fragmentation of the inner souls of those who honor it. Grace's main concern in her novel is to illuminate the necessary and essential balance that keeps the concept of human's "user rights" equal to individual and community wholeness and interconnectivity.

## CONCLUSION

### HOW WESTERN AND INDIGENOUS CULTURES CAN HEAL

*All around us we see life “dying back”—in nature, in our families, in society. Homo sapiens are literally killing their own seed and the seed of other life forms as well. One cause of this suicidal violence is greed. And that greed feeds on the philosophy that Earth is not our Mother, but an “it” that can be used and consumed.*

--Marilou Awiakta, *Selu: Seeking the Corn*

*Mother’s Wisdom* (qtd. in Adamson 162)

Hulme’s, Ihimaera’s, and Grace’s novels map a possible future of wholeness and connectivity for not only the Maori communities struggling to hold on to or regain an indigenous identity, but also for those inheritors of a Western rationalist, materialist worldview who are arbitrarily floating without roots to ground them. Throughout *The Bone People*, *The Whale Rider*, and *Potiki*, each author illuminates the fact that in order for any community, much less any individual, to have a solid identity and sense of belonging, a connection to the Earth is essential. Without this connection, a desire for immediate gratification and material possessions rules the heart and soul. The conversation that Kerewin has with herself in the mirror interestingly calls to mind Cornel West’s discussion of how to cure nihilism when he states, “Nihilism is not overcome by arguments or analyses; it is tamed by love and care. Any disease of the soul must be conquered by a turning of one’s soul. This turning is done through one’s own affirmation of one’s worth—an affirmation fueled by the concern of others. A love ethic must be at the center of a politics of conversion” (29). While West may be discussing this “politics of

conversion” as it pertains to an entire race, it nonetheless applies to Kerewin’s state of being and furthermore signals her own individual conversion. West notes, “Like alcoholism and drug addiction, nihilism is a disease of the soul. It can never be completely cured, and there is always the possibility of relapse. But there is always a chance for conversion—a chance for people to believe that there is hope for the future and a meaning to struggle” (29). Kerewin’s role as the Pakeha of *The Bone People*, who identifies herself as Maori culturally and spiritually, develops the irony latent in her very Eurocentric, Westernized worldview. She too symbolizes the process of healing that Westernized peoples can look to as a model as she deconstructs her own fragmentation in order to meld with her environment, herself, and her family.

In Witi Ihimaera’s novel *The Whale Rider*, Rawiri’s admission of his lifestyle while he lives in Australia echoes Cornel West’s assertion that the threat of nihilism is largely constructed through “the provision, expansion, and intensification of *pleasure*. . . . Pleasure is a multivalent term; it means different things to many people. In the American way of life pleasure involves comfort, convenience, and sexual stimulation. Pleasure, so defined, has little to do with the past and views the future as no more than a repetition of a hedonistically driven present” (26). Rawiri runs the risk of falling into a nihilistic trap away from his family and culture as:

This market way of life promotes addictions to stimulation and obsessions with comfort and convenience. Addictions and obsessions—centered primarily around bodily pleasures and status rankings—constitute market moralities of various sorts. The common denominator is a rugged and ragged individualism and rapacious hedonism in quest of a perennial ‘high’ in body and mind.” (West 45-46)

Even though Rawiri eventually realizes that he belongs with his family and his tribe, he is able to observe and comment on the severe absence of empathy in Pakeha culture due to the “status rankings” that Cornel West speaks of in his discussion of the nihilistic state of African Americans in the United States in *Race Matters*. Unfortunately, in Westernized societies, strong familial leaders are decreasing due to the fact that in general adults are working more and more in pursuit of “The American Dollar.” Western cultures might benefit by heeding the necessity and importance of returning to a family-centered lifestyle. Without strong leaders, children grow up believing in priorities driven by consumerism and materialism, both of which lead to a lack of rootedness in core values and a strong cultural identity. Cornel West defines culture as “what human beings create (out of antecedent fragments of other cultures) in order to convince themselves not to commit suicide” (24), and just as the whales in Ihimaera’s novel, without culture self-effacement and self-destructiveness compound exponentially.

As West points out, people who are internally wounded often seek external fixes. When living becomes only about the individual self and the availability of instant pleasure people lose sight of the truth that they are part of a larger force at work. Yet Cornel West asserts that, “First, we must acknowledge that structures and behavior are inseparable, that institutions and values go by the larger circumstances in which they find themselves” (18). The Maori tribe that Patricia Grace creates in her novel demonstrates full understanding that their way of life goes hand in hand with the ancestral land they live on, their houses, and their communal meeting house. They further understand that one slip in the direction of Pakeha greed and consumerism will lead to a landslide of values which will end with a drop into a pit of nihilism. The discussion between Dollarman and the spokesperson for the tribe in *Potiki* is an illustration of imagining a new future for the Maori people and it contains within its dialogue lessons and warnings to all

Westernized peoples. As soon as Dollarman accuses the Maori community of blaming the Pakeha for holding them back, the spokesperson replies:

‘Blaming is a worthless exercise. That would really be looking back. It’s now we’re interested in. Now, and from now on. . . . What we value doesn’t change just because we look at ourselves and at the future. What we came from doesn’t change. It’s your jumping-off place that tells you where you’ll land. The past is the future. If we ever had to move our tipuna it would be for our own reasons, some danger to the area, some act of God. It would not be for what you call progress, or for money. . . . Nothing wrong with money as long as we remember it’s food, not God. You eat it, not worship it. . . . Either way, too much or too little, you can become a slave.’ (Grace 107)

Those peoples who honor an individualistic, materialistic worldview stand to benefit by focusing more intently on having a cultural foothold rather than blowing in the wind. In many Westernized cultures today, a pervasive sense of entitlement has come to infect nearly all citizens. This entitlement stems from a consumerist and materialist driven society and Cornel West asserts:

The expansion of corporate power is driven by this pervasive commercialization and commodification for two basic reasons. First, market activities of buying and selling, advertising and promoting weaken nonmarket activities of caring and sharing, nurturing and connecting. Short-term stimulation and instant titillation edge out quality relations and substantive community. Second, private aims trump public aspirations. Individual success—sometimes at any cost by any means—

downplays fair and just transactions so workers' and citizens' power is weakened.

(XVI)

The proponents of a Western worldview, living materialist and consumerist lives, do originate from various cultures, races, and places from around the globe and are therefore not completely to blame for having no “jumping-off place.” However, in lieu of roots and tradition, the almighty dollar has secured a foothold. So too must these Westernized individuals and cultures look to a source of solidity and stability—a source easily found in the indigenous Maori worldview. As Knudsen asserts in her article “The Community as Protagonist” about the master carver who opens *Potiki*: “One finds, in the ancient craft of carving, a focus on the individual effort, but also an overall centering on the collective response, because the house in which this craft is displayed is communal” (195). If those who harbor a Western worldview could begin living lives of increased individual effort with an eye towards the greater communal good, the nihilism so prevalent may just be lost to an incoming tide of healing.

With the failure to recognize, to remember, that humans are ever so dependent on the Earth and all forms of life it sustains for its survival, we risk bringing about our own slow demise, rife with nihilism. Cornel West discusses the arrogance of humans, although he narrows his focus on a specific demographic. Yet what he argues is obviously applicable to all humans, especially when he states, “The relative absence of humility in most black political leaders today is a symptom of the status-anxiety and personal insecurity pervasive in black middle-class America” (59). Most Westerners struggle with the anxiety of reaching and maintaining high social status, which of course leads to a lack of individual identity. We must begin imagining a new future for ourselves and for our planet. As Joni Adamson asserts, “imagination can be the first step to saying ‘no’ to social and environmental injustices. It plays a powerful role in the

struggle for survival—for empowerment, recognition, and respect—and in a peoples’ emancipation from the oppression of material want, from domination by others, and from environmental degradation” (25-26). We must begin to pay attention to what really matters, which will involve a painful shedding of our concern over status in society and material possessions because, “If we are to survive . . . we must imagine new stories about human relation to nature. Our very future depends on it” (Adamson 26). The hope and optimism of forward-looking visions such as this suggest the futility of looking inward only to the individual self to correct the ills of self and society. Instead, dominant races and cultures must look forward too toward a world of collaborative cohesion that melds past modes of living with contemporary, looking to the marginalized indigenous peoples who have long recognized the futility of eschewing one worldview for the other.

The nihilism pervading cultures that maintain a Westernized worldview is one born of such sequestration and a championing of the individual. Left behind in the wake of such insidious values are humans with no sense of place, no sense of community, no sense of belonging anywhere, to anyone. Yet admitting the need for a sense of place and belonging to a community shows all humans how we too can heal: admitting we need to do so is the first step.

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