A Place to Stand:
Exploring connections between immigrant experience, whakapapa and creative writing.

An exegesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

"A Place to Stand: Exploring connections between immigrant experience, whakapapa and creative writing" is a doctoral thesis in creative writing which comprises a critical (exegesis) and creative (fiction writing) component. The exegesis discusses the themes of colonisation, immigrant experience, identity and grief, and reflects on the transformative potential of connecting with whakapapa for an immigrant author. The creative component consists of a work of literary fiction titled *Waiotapu* (sacred waters) which explores these themes through the imagined experiences of the protagonist, a French immigrant to Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our globalised world is characterised by transience. Narratives of displacement collide and mingle. Colonisation, war, and economic migration continue to uproot individuals, families and communities, disrupting connections with beloved people and places. I find myself part of one such narrative: a migrant, separated from my homeland. Unsettled. An outsider living in a land colonised by my ancestors. A shameful history from which I inherit unearned advantage, despite my status as an immigrant.

Decades of research spans important global themes of immigration, associated socio-political issues, and the impact of colonisation on First Nation peoples. A growing body of literature also explores pākehā engagement with te ao Māori (the Māori world or worldview), however this is written by kaituhi pākehā (European authors) who were born in Aotearoa New Zealand and have an accompanying sense of belonging as *tangata tiriti,* despite being members of the settler community. There is little on the impact engagement with indigenous culture has on new pākehā immigrants. This is the focus of this study, which is unique in drawing together the themes of immigrant experience, whakapapa and creative writing, contributing to the field of narrative theory.

I applied principles of narrative research to explore the impact of my engagement with te ao Māori as a result of my immigration to Aotearoa New Zealand, in the context of transcultural creative writing. My hypothesis was that engagement with te ao Māori, particularly whakapapa (ancestral connections to people and places) could provide me with a metaphorical tūrangawaewae, a place to stand, as an immigrant author with a mixed-up sense of identity and uncertain voice. I found that, while interrogating my own whakapapa did have a profound influence on my sense of identity and voice as an author, an unexpected outcome was the discovery that writing itself can be a tūrangawaewae that provides a space to return to and a sense of belonging; a place to stand.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by any other person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signature Anne Bradley Date 6 August 2023

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Ethics Approval

This research is not human subject research and is exempt from ethics approval.

Mihimihi

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Confidential Material

An embargo has been requested on the public availability of the print and digital copies of the creative thesis for a period of 36 months following lodgement in order not to jeopardise the future intellectual property rights of the author whilst seeking publication opportunities.

Exegesis

A Place to Stand:

Exploring interconnections between immigrant experience, whakapapa and creative writing.

Tīmatanga

Introduction

The tentacles of colonisation reach forwards through time to grasp first nation peoples in a tangle of disadvantage and despair. The pain of past injustice has deep roots, and ongoing consequences in the present. This study in two parts – exegesis and creative work - joins the conversation on what it means to be tauiwi (an outsider), a white European immigrant, living in a land colonised by my ancestors, within the context of transcultural creative writing.

My quest was to investigate the hypothesis that engagement with whakapapa provides a metaphorical tūrangawaewae, a place to stand, for an immigrant author whose connection to their homelands may be lost forever. That engagement with whakapapa can provide a vehicle for growth for transient authors, and that it is the experience of displacement as an immigrant, the rupturing of identity, that provides a catalyst for transformation in which what has been left behind mingles with what is and what can be.

Applying principles from a bricolage of narrative research methodologies, autoethnography and reflective practice, this exegesis explores the impact my engagement with te ao Māori has had on my sense of identity as a writer - specifically the effect of connecting with my own whakapapa as an immigrant author with a mixed-up identity and an uncertain voice.

The juxtaposition of *belonging* versus *unbelonging*, and grief over the loss of an imagined future once treasured, are central themes presented both in this exegesis via discussion and a series of poems, and in the creative work, *Waiotapu.* Both chart the lived experiences of immigrant engagement with an indigenous culture. Together, they reflect a story that is at once personal, national and global: A story of colonisation, immigration, transcultural integration and the impact of trauma and disrupted identity on individuals, communities, cultures and societies.

Chapter one is preceded by a poem, *Tauiwi,* which expresses my sense of displacement as an immigrant. In this first chapter I describe my early experiences as an immigrant to Aotearoa New Zealand, and my introduction to the concept of whakapapa. Chapter two describes my unfolding awareness of the injustices experienced by Māori at the hands of the British government and of my own white privilege. In chapter three, I discuss the theoretical

foundation for my research, and how I have drawn from principles of narrative research, reflective practice and indigenous research methodologies in a critical and creative approach to my own research practice.

Chapter four is introduced by the poem, *Tīpuna,* which illustrates how ancestors live on through their descendants. This chapter expands on the overarching concept of whakapapa and discusses representations of whakapapa in literature. I then turn to my own family story and childhood memories in chapter five, some of which I have woven into my fictional narrative. In chapter six, I continue to explore my whakapapa, drawing from the metaphor of the posts of the wharenui representing key ancestors. This produces some unexpected results as I unravel the facts.

Chapter seven is preceded by the poem, *Mate,* which I wrote as I processed my grief over the loss of my Aunt. This chapter traverses the different perspectives on death and grief found in Māori and pākehā cultures. Grief is a major theme of the creative work – both grief over the death of loved ones and anguish over the loss of treasured places. I also introduce the role of grief in the creative process. Chapter eight develops this further : preceded by the poem *Mauhere,* which harnesses the sense of being cut off from everything one longs for, this chapter delves further into how the grief of displacement can be a catalyst for growth in the context of creative writing practice.

The final poem, *Tūrangawaewae,* mirrors the structure of the first poem, whilst depicting a contrasting sense of place, thus highlighting how this study has impacted me as an author. I conclude with a short pepeha which portrays a new understanding of my whakapapa as a result of my research.

The creative thesis, a novel, *Waiotapu (Sacred Waters),* set in 2019, describes the imagined experiences of a French woman, an immigrant to Aotearoa New Zealand, who is attempting to create a new life far away from the memory of the tragic loss of her husband and son. Haunted by dreams and visions, she seeks peace by taking up residence on a boat moored on the river near the fictional town of Oxford, a place originally known as Waiotapu by its indigenous Māori inhabitants. The narrative charts her growing relationships in the community, both Māori and pākehā. Her unfolding awareness of the historic injustices perpetrated by the British army, and her discomfort that past wrongs have not yet been put right are at the heart of the story, as she wrestles with her grief, and the community navigates the challenges of increasing unrest, protest, and floods.

Tauiwi

Outsider

Untethered
Drifting
Memories fragmented
By the darkening mists of time
I am lost! I am
Lost
I have no place to stand.
I am but a visitor here
An uninvited guest
No place to call
my own
I am not home.

1

Pepeha

(A personal introduction identifying ancestral and geographical heritage)

"When I speak, my pepeha speaks.
I speak with the consent of every single one of my ancestors"
(Gildea, 2022, p. 81).

I am standing at the front of the wharenui. It is my turn to speak. I have prepared my pepeha, but it has been a difficult process. I have no idea where my mountain is, so I chose one we visited in Wales. Long, aching walks up a hill I hated as a child. The river I have chosen is the one that runs through the centre of the ancient port city of Bristol, in the UK, where I grew up. But that is not my whakapapa. As far as I am aware, my ancestral river is the Thames in London. I do not feel connected to it. I do not really know much about the people that came before me. I left my country behind years ago and although I long for its familiar spaces and familiar faces, I do not belong there anymore. Life has conspired to keep me away, at first by choice and later by necessity. To me, Aotearoa New Zealand has been both haven and prison.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, iwi (tribes) have oral traditions which map genealogy back to their arrival in the eponymous Land of the Long White Cloud on the many great ocean-going waka that brought them here (Thompson, 2019). The Te Arawa iwi, for example, trace their ancestral line twenty-one generations back to Tamatekapua's waka, which arrived in Aotearoa from Taputapuatea on the island of Raiatea in French Polynesia some six hundred years ago. Although there was no one name for this land in those early days of migration – the name Te Ika-a-Māui was how Māori referred to the North Island and Te Waipounamu the South Island. The use of the name Aotearoa has become a widely accepted way of honouring our bi-cultural heritage, as opposed to just New Zealand, a name allocated to these islands by a Dutch mapmaker in the seventeenth century. I use the name Aotearoa New Zealand in my writing to acknowledge this.

According to Thompson (2019), the original inhabitants of the Polynesian Triangle, the ten million square miles of the Pacific Ocean between Hawai'i, Rapanui and Aotearoa New Zealand, are unique in the simplicity of their genealogy and the confidence this gives them in recounting it. For thousands of years, they occupied the scattered islands of this vast oceanic region unnoticed, uninterrupted and uncontaminated by invaders or explorers. Despite the vast area they settled, they were identifiable as a single people with commonalities in customs, language and cultural beliefs. She notes the "web of interconnectedness" (Thompson, 2019,

p.9) with its cultural and linguistic similarities that endure to this day, throughout the islands of Polynesia, stretching as far as the Māori of Aotearoa New Zealand.

I do not even know the name of my great grandparents, or where they were from. I feel like a fake. I am determined to pass the course and give my pepeha. I will sound confident. I like learning new languages - I speak four. My iwi is tauiwi. Outsider. That, at least, feels authentic. I am not home.

My upbringing was transcultural: I attended school in three different countries and studied at University in Italy. I first came to Aotearoa New Zealand at eighteen, travelling the world after finishing high school. I had little contact with Māori language or culture during my visit. I was interested, but it was not a priority. One exception was a bush trek, led by a Dutch guide, who told us the names of the native trees and plants as we walked, explaining their medicinal uses in traditional Māori healing. I was fascinated. New Zealand seemed idyllic: at once familiar, with its strong British connections and common language, but also unfamiliar, with its exotic people, semi-tropical flora and fauna, and its isolation from the rest of the w orld. It seemed, as Janet Frame (1990) put it, "on the rim of the farthest circle" (p. 110).

When I married a third generation pākehā (white, European) New Zealander three years later, it did not occur to me that I would experience culture shock emigrating here. I did not give it a second thought: I have made a life in other countries before. New Zealand seemed like England but with nicer weather. Just like other European settlers before me, I was looking for a better life.

After living here for about five years, I read a book on the Waitangi Tribunal in preparation for a job interview. I was shocked at what I read. It seemed to me that pākehā had drawn up a treaty and then spent more than a century lying, cheating and stealing to gain dominance. That was the beginning of my awareness of what was going on beneath the surface of this seemingly peaceful, content society. And the beginning of my discomfort with being an uninvited guest benefitting from a colonial system which had dispossessed the original landowners. The Treaty, the founding document of the new nation, seemed to me to be the biggest con in colonial history. I learned that there are, in fact, two versions of the treaty: The Treaty of Waitangi is the English version, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi the Māori version and the one that has precedence under international law. One is not simply a translation of the other. They contain significant differences which have been a source of controversy and have driven the dynamics of grievance and settlement under the Waitangi Tribunal. As I wrote my creative thesis, the novel *Waiotapu*, I chose to portray the issue of colonisation via a fictional construction of events leading to the confiscation of land, including a pā (hillfort) which is the home of the local iwi, and their forced relocation by the British military. The story is a familiar

one across Aotearoa New Zealand, where, within a few short decades following the signing of Te Tiriti, Māori tribes found themselves virtually landless.

Induction for my new job involved an overnight stay in a marae (fenced tribal grounds with community buildings). A small group of us were prepared via introductory sessions on tikanga Māori. Tamati, the course tutor, was a silver-haired man with twinkly eyes and a face creased by smile lines. He was always making us laugh. He was incredibly inclusive. His favourite saying was "we all bleed the same colour". I was amazed and humbled by his accepting, peaceful attitude, and by the warm welcome we received at the marae.

We each had to give a pepeha in Māori introducing ourselves in the traditional manner. This was my introduction to the concept of whakapapa. I had never really thought about my heritage. The only stories I heard about my ancestors were those that had been relayed to my father by his mother. I found it challenging to reflect on my roots, identifying important aspects of my identity, my river and my mountain. All of these things were in England. I had no connection to my new homeland. I was very homesick. I missed my sisters and friends. A deep sense of loss had settled into my spirit. I did not belong: I had lost my tūrangawaewae, a traditional Māori concept of a place to stand, a place to return to, where you belong. I had no place to stand.

Over my years living in Aotearoa, I have become increasingly aware of the influence of whakapapa. It runs like an underground stream flowing beneath every interaction: *who I am, where I am from, where I belong*. I notice that those who know their whakapapa seem to have a firm sense of self. They are planted. A sense of belonging that comes from deep within. A stark contrast to my own sense of *unbelonging*.

Whakapapa is all around me here: at work, at my children's schools, at the rugby club, in daily interactions. The mountains declare it, the rivers sing it. It is as though everything around me vibrates with the energy of *knowing*. Mauao, the small extinct volcano that marks the entrance to Tauranga harbour and is identified by local iwi as their ancestral mountain, looks down at me and asks me, *who are you? Where are you from? Where do you belong? You are not mine.* To which I reply: *I don't know.* In my creative thesis, I have attempted to communicate this deep connection to the land through the words and actions of the tangata whenua, the people of the land, and the whakapapa that connects them to their mountain and river via their ancestors.

Witi Ihimaera (2007) describes transcultural writers as "mixed up, eclectic and uprooted" (p. 22). For the migrant, the fracturing of connections with extended family left behind in their country of origin, a sense of displacement, and disconnection with familiar social networks and locations presents considerable challenges (Kelley, 2013).

For tangata whenua, all members of the settler population are considered immigrants. However, unlike pākehā who were born here, I arrived as an adult, sharing with other immigrants the disorienting experience of separation from my homeland, and the unsettling sense of being a (possibly unwelcome) outsider in my new location. According to Preece (2016), the concept of identity "only becomes an issue when a person's sense of belonging is disrupted" (p. 2). In my creative thesis, *Waiotapu*, I explore these overarching themes of displacement, loss, and grief, whether experienced through death, colonisation, or immigration.

Gomez and Vannini (2017) highlight a feeling of transience and impermanence pervading everyday life as migrants wrestle with overarching questions about *home* and *belonging*. As Staeheli and Nagel (2006) write, "in leaving home, immigrants must make a new home, and they must negotiate the contradictions of both homes, even as they may feel they belong to neither" (p. 1599). Moura-Koçoğlu (2011) describes this as a sense of *unbelonging*. Gilmartin (2008) discusses the interplay between memories of home, movement and the changing landscape, pointing to "the ever-shifting nature of the relationship between mobility, identity and place" (p. 1838). These are complexities embedded in the immigrant experience.

Norton (2013) defines identity as an individual's understanding of their place in the world, their relationship to it, and their perceptions of future possibilities. Preece (2016) highlights the movement in social sciences to view identity as fluid, not fixed, a multi-dimensional process of *becoming* within its socio-cultural setting. She notes the influence of identity on how we represent ourselves through language and literature. Thus, identity – or rather the fracturing of it and the subsequent ignition of renewal and reimagining – plays an important, yet often unexamined role in immigrant authorship.

As a seafaring, mobile population, it is probable that early Māori groups utilised whakapapa as a means of retaining their sense of identity and belonging amidst a shifting and uncertain landscape. Paringatai (2015) emphasises its role in cultural preservation and dissemination for Māori. It is striking that the personal issues associated with migration are potentially resolved on some level by the tradition of whakapapa and its wider associations. If whakapapa is knowing who I am and where I belong, exploring this concept could surely have a transformative impact, nourishing the wairua (spirit, self-worth) of the migrant, and a foundation from which to write – especially if this 'belonging' can accommodate different geographical locations (Faloa, 2017; Riddell, 2017).

Some aspects of the concept of whakapapa are familiar to western philosophy and research. As Osterhaus (1997) explained, the field of psychology has long recognised the role of family stories in personal development and identity, referred to more recently by McLean

(2016) as the "co-authored self". The complexities involved in inheriting layered stories with multiple co-authors which are lived out by generations of family members who negotiate conflicts, make compromises and interpret situations, imbuing their personal context with unique meanings and personal emotional tones are the subject of much research over recent decades (Rollins, 2013).

Interconnected family stories unfold simultaneously. Truth becomes subject to individual and cultural perception, and multiple interpretations of truth co-exist sometimes uncomfortably or at the cost of connection. Osterhaus (1997) identified the transformative potential of exploring family stories, a process than can empower people to change previously unidentified patterns of thought and behaviour. He noted that, "the authors of our stories shaped and were shaped by us… knowing your own particular family story, how it came to be and how the characters acted goes far in helping you change many of the scripts you've come to live by" (p. 14). More recently, Fivush et al. (2008) found that a knowledge of the "intergenerational self" improves personal resilience and sense of identity, vital elements of human wellbeing.

If migration cuts individuals and families off from these family stories, causing a crisis of self, identity and belonging (Gomez & Vannini, 2017), whakapapa presents an opportunity to connect with the past in order to heal the present and create a better future – a position advocated by the field of narrative psychology (Vassilieva, 2016).

Language, whether oral or written, is at the heart of such stories, and is central to expressions of identity (Preece, 2016). What is said, or unsaid by the author (Lim, 2010; Teleky, 2001); what is seen as valuable, acceptable, or worthy, or not, form a framework through which encounters with narrative are viewed. Language choices are foundational to an author's identity (Preece, 2016; Teleky, 2001). For example, the choice to interweave terms and phrases in both te reo Māori and English in my thesis is an explicit acknowledgement of the importance and value of indigenous language and expresses my desire to uphold the principles of partnership expressed in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Goldberg (2013) discusses how the writing process itself connects the writer with a sense of a deeper self and connection to their wider story, and in doing so "grows strong spines": The writer makes peace with themselves and the world and is not subject to the whims of approval or disapproval from others, whilst paradoxically becoming increasingly reflexive and open to new learning. Wilson and Ringrose (2016) note that, for the writer, delving into divided origins can contribute to a restoration of authenticity. Through this study, I explored the possibility that perhaps, as an immigrant author, engaging with my own whakapapa would

help me develop a deeper sense of, and confidence in, my identity as a writer – a foundation and a launching pad for creative practice.

Lim (2010) discusses the role of creative writing in challenging cultural hegemony and highlights the role creative writing plays in giving voice to marginalised points of view in the face of censorship from traditional academia. This study explores the interconnections between creative writing, immigrant experience and engagement with an indigenous culture – a process that, according to Wilson and Ringrose (2016), may result in the "organising, reshaping and syncretizing of the *spaces between* cultures that contact/collision provokes" (p. xi).

2

Tauiwi

Outsider

"In each and every place I was, sometimes slightly,
at other times blatantly, *out of place*"
(Bauman, 2004, p. 12).

The impact of colonisation, immigration and the subsequent dispossession and marginalisation of indigenous peoples has been the subject of detailed study spanning decades. In Wolfe's (2006) discussion of the wholesale destruction of indigenous societies and their replacement with colonial societal systems, he defines colonisation not as a single event, but as an invading system with far-reaching and long-term consequences for indigenous inhabitants.

Studies have highlighted the negative impact of colonisation on the health and wellbeing of indigenous populations across the globe (Czyzewski, 2011; Kunitz, 1994; Stephens et al., 2006). Research on indigenous populations in North America (Corpuz, 2015; Eliaz et al., 2012), Australasia (Anderson et al., 2006; Meyer, 2012), Africa (Ohenjo et al., 2006) and South America (Montenegro & Stephens, 2006) has identified that poor health, social disadvantage and economic hardship are common experiences amongst colonised populations.

Similar themes emerge from research on the indigenous population of Aotearoa New Zealand (Barnes & McCreanor, 2019), despite the supposed protection provided to Māori by Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Signed under controversial circumstances in 1840, this treaty was a unique agreement in its day which purportedly preserved Māori rights to self-governance and partnership in the colonised nation, assuring them the same rights as British citizens (Hayward & Wheen, 2016) – rights which were subsequently ignored by successive governments at terrible cost to indigenous communities (Hayward & Wheen, 2016).

My creative thesis seeks to portray the injustices suffered through colonisation, as well as ongoing systemic racism, via the vehicle of the protagonist's observations and interactions and her discovering the story of how this fictional community lost their sacred whenua. As an outsider, she acts as an observer, both reacting to and acting on her growing discomfort at the injustices handed out to the indigenous community.

The need for research to highlight the unaddressed trauma (Wilson & Ringrose, 2016) and ongoing hardships experienced by colonised peoples is well documented and provides invaluable data to illuminate the issues and inform policy and decision making at local and

national levels. A considerable body of research is also devoted to immigration and the associated issues resulting from large numbers of people settling in foreign countries in the current day (Moura-Koçoğlu, 2011). Immigration – whether motivated by the desire for economic or social betterment, or necessitated by the desperate search for safety due to war or famine – is one of the prevalent issues of the modern world.

Kelley (2013) observes that the current portrayal of immigration in global media is most often negative and accompanied by statistical data that presents the issues from a collective standpoint, creating an "oppositional atmosphere" (p. 1). This approach is also referred to be Said (2012) as a *them and us* paradigm which contributes to negative attitudes both to immigration and the immigrants themselves, thus fanning the flames of conflict. Amidst all the negative press, it is easy to forget that immigrants are people just like 'us,' especially when the issues are rarely presented in terms of the reality of individual experience (Kelley, 2013).

This negative framing is less apparent in the relatively moderate society of Aotearoa New Zealand, where media coverage is generally positive. However, there is a risk that hidden prejudice is even more insidious than overt racism as it remains unacknowledged and unaddressed. I have a number of immigrant friends who have non-European names and speak English as a second language, and who encounter barriers in their search for employment, for example. Middlemiss (2016) notes that both accent and name discrimination are an issue in Aotearoa. Just as the popular opinion that *colonisation wasn't so bad for Māori* endures (Stewart, 2022), so does the idea that *racism isn't a problem in New Zealand.* It is this 'hidden racism' I seek to acknowledge and expose through my creative thesis.

On a personal level, I frequently encounter surprised reactions when I describe myself as an immigrant in Aotearoa New Zealand, because I do not 'look like one' to many observers. Immigrants are seen as different, or *other* to the general population (Kelley, 2013), whereas my British heritage makes me invisible to many as a migrant (Van Teeseling, 2011): I am white and my first language is English, so in many ways I apparently blend seamlessly into the pākehā majority. And yet I feel constantly *out of place.*

Immigrants' personal struggles with loss of identity, loss of family connections and social networks, and a sense of displacement, are common themes emerging in recent research (Gomez & Vannini, 2017; Kelley, 2013). Gomez and Vannini (2017) highlight the complexities of multidimensional social networks created as immigrants navigate the desire to maintain relationships with their original home versus the need to develop new connections and establish a new sense of home in an unfamiliar place, an unfamiliar culture, and in many cases an unfamiliar language. As a British immigrant to Aotearoa New Zealand, I have personal

experience of this deeply challenging and, at times, painful process – a growing sense of unbelonging and a fragmentation of the self (Moura-Koçoğlu, 2011).

Over time, I have also become increasingly, and at times acutely, conscious of my own unintentional participation in the structures and systems that innately oppress Māori, for example in my career in vocational tertiary education where the hegemony of neo-liberal values seems to prevail.

Stories of past injustice, deception and dishonourable actions on the part of the British government have led me to a growing sense of whakamā (shame) about the historic behaviour of my ancestors. When I attempt to discuss these issues with my network of pākehā compatriots, I notice that the most frequent response is dismissive. Others are negative or downright derisive. Silence plays a role here (Teleky, 2001): I have often not spoken up in the face of racism. I have portrayed these experiences in the novel as I describe the protagonist being confronted by racist comments about the actions of Māori protestors, or overhearing racist remarks in the checkout queue, or reacting to the actions, and inaction, of the town council. On one level, I am writing this thesis as an apology for my own silence and inaction.

In a study on bicultural attitudes among pākehā participants, Sibley and Liu (2004) found that although most will agree with the principles of fair treatment under Te Tiriti, they tend to dispute allocation of resources to rectify disparities. They categorised these positions as two distinct forms of biculturalism: the first is *bi-culturalism in principle*, which refers to the general pākehā acceptance of the concept of fairness in an abstract sense, or acknowledgement that certain Māori customs, such as the haka, have an accepted place in New Zealand society alongside British traditions.

The second, far less popular among study participants, is *resource-based bi-culturalism* which proposes that inequitable conditions are mitigated through redistributing resources, such as through Waitangi Tribunal settlements or funding for health and education initiatives. (Sibley & Liu, 2004). Among their findings is the conclusion that this unexamined, unstated distinction promulgates a culture of inequality in Aotearoa New Zealand; an inequality which, according to Moura-Koçoğlu (2011), is barely acknowledged by the general population.

Mikaere (2004) notes the historical amnesia that prevails among a pākehā population who do not wish to be reminded of the unpleasant and shameful colonial past, nor acknowledge colonisation as an ongoing process in the present. A similar attitude has been identified in academia by Stewart et al. (2021) who identify a phenomenon they refer to as *agnotology*, a "passion for ignorance" (p. 141), in which inequities are ignored and biases unchallenged by academics despite an appearance of cultural awareness – a kind of hypocrisy they suggest might provide "a theoretical explanation for the most subtle forms of racist systems and

discourses, which apply in these socially liberal, multicultural (Pacific) nations" (Stewart at al., 2021, p. 141). My creative thesis seeks to expose this phenomenon by illustrating some of the unfair processes faced by the colonised population and the spectrum of responses among members of the pākehā community.

This study has caused me to consider my role as tauiwi. An outsider. Particularly a white European. It has caused me to reflect on my 'whiteness' – what this means and how it impacts my life and my writing. As a pākehā, I have never been challenged to think about my whiteness. White privilege is just the water we swim in: Just as the fish never thinks about what water is, white people do not think about their whiteness. Similarly, Doyle (2020) describes racism as like poison in the air we breathe, like second hand cigarette smoke: we cannot avoid breathing it in: it is all around us and we absorb it despite our best intentions. She proposes there are three kinds of people, "those poisoned by racism and actively choosing to spread it; those poisoned by racism and actively trying to detox; and those poisoned by racism who deny its very existence inside them" (Doyle, 2020, p. 218). These are themes I address in the creative thesis through my portrayal of the varying responses amongst the pākehā community to the growing unrest among the indigenous community and their actions to reclaim their ancient pā.

Reflecting on my own encounters with casual racism towards Māori, such as conversations amongst friends and acquaintances, or comments overheard in the supermarket, which I have recreated in the novel, I noticed that I have also made the mistake of viewing racism as individual and personal, when it is in fact systemic (Di Angelo, 2018; Stewart et al., 2021). Doyle (2020) describes systemic racism as an invisible matrix we all live in. If awareness is the precursor to change, (Smith, 2015), or as Doyle (2020) puts it, if "revelation must come before revolution" (p. 218), I must face the idea that my own lack of awareness has made me an unconscious participant in a racist system, an ongoing colonial invasion (Wolfe, 2006) which oppresses Māori people in Aotearoa. How often have I let a racist joke pass? Worse, have I even laughed along? How often have I stayed silent in the face of misinformed opinions on the impacts of colonisation? I need to detox. This study has become an important part of my detoxification process. Rather than succumbing to the paralysis of *pākehā guilt* (Crawford, 2016), my aim is to be pro-active. According to Ani Mikaere (2004), "whether the term [pākehā] remains forever linked to the shameful role of the oppressor, or whether it can become a positive source of identity…. is up to pākehā themselves. All that is required from them is a leap of faith" (p.19). This thesis is my leap of faith.

Reimer et al. (2020) portray systemic racism in their discussion of how historical patterns of power distribution maintain the oppression of minority groups. Colonisation has ensured that pākehā in Aotearoa New Zealand historically have access to superior resources,

have shaped interests through government and have maintained control of participation and debate through politics and education. Important questions need to be asked as we look forward to the future, such as who has a voice and who is ignored? Who is invited and who is excluded? Who delineates what can be discussed, investigated, or reclaimed? My creative thesis is designed to provoke these questions. The novel portrays the iwi's protest against the loss of their pā, their frustration at the historic inaction of the town council, and the unfairness of a democratic system that consistently favours the pākehā majority. It is intended to reveal the unequal distribution of political decision-making power at local level, and to shed light on the undeniable power differentiation that flourishes in modern day Aotearoa New Zealand.

The 'one person, one vote' principle has become fundamental to western democracy, affording equal status to all citizens. However, when there is a significant population imbalance, this becomes an insurmountable barrier to equity and justice for minority groups. In 1998, when the Scottish Act granted Scotland its own parliament and independent elections, the United Kingdom was forced to acknowledge this fact: Scotland had lived for decades with successive governments the majority of its citizens had not voted for, simply because of the balance of population numbers in the United Kingdom. The Scottish Parliament now governs Scotland, while remaining within the United Kingdom – a situation confirmed by a referendum in 2014 (Mullen, 2014). However, Scotland has a defined, historically delineated geographical identity, whereas the Māori population are distributed geographically.

The question Aotearoa New Zealand continues to grapple with, is how to balance societal integration, uphold the needs of nationhood for a minority population of indigenous inhabitants who are distributed throughout the land, and avoid homogenisation, the merging and subsequent loss of unique cultural identities created by urban interculturation (Gyepi-Garbrah et al., 2014). Co-governance is an admirable ideal, supported by the previous labour government, but has become a polarising political football (Neilson, 2021). As Benjamin Franklin famously said, "Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are". Fiction provides an opportunity to increase awareness of issues that are uncomfortable for the general population to hear (Brennan, 1990).

I am an immigrant, and a single parent. I have experienced my share of hardship. However, I have taken the advantages of my whiteness for granted. I have been unaware of the "un-earned privilege" (Robertson, 2004, p. 26) that simply being pākehā affords me. I may be an immigrant, but my whiteness exempts me from most negative consequences of being identifiably so – at least until I open my mouth and speak: my accent betrays me. My invisibility as a migrant (Van Teeseling, 2011), blending seamlessly into the dominant culture, is a huge advantage.

My own engagement with tikanga Māori (Māori cultural principles) has been facilitated largely through a work environment that proactively seeks to embed principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in its values and actions, as well as through my children attending local schools. For example, as part of my training for my new work role, I completed a compulsory course called Māoritanga in Education which introduced me to some key principles for acknowledging and valuing tikanga Māori in my teaching practice.

My youngest son attended a primary school where Māori students represented over half the student body, with classes taught in both English and te reo Māori. Several of his close friends speak te reo, Māori language, at home, and as a result he has learned to walk between these two worlds naturally and with an ease and comfort that has expanded his worldview. He is also a passionate rugby player, and we discovered that the local rugby club is another place where these two worlds, pākehā and Māori, meet and co-operate on a level that is both profound and practical. I have drawn from this experience in my creative thesis. These experiences and cross-cultural connections have also led to the desire to explore how my engagement with this rich indigenous culture has impacted our lives and my own sense of identity as a writer, which is the focus of this exegesis.

Gyepi-Garbrah et al. (2014) describe a process of urban interculturation in Canada, in which urban indigenous and settler populations increasingly live side-by-side, sharing workplaces, shops, social venues, schooling and other infrastructure. They highlight how a pro-active approach to cross-cultural engagement increases mutual understanding, builds relationships and reduces social distance. It is a fact that we now live in a global environment. Immigration is part of everyday life. More than a quarter of the current population of Aotearoa New Zealand was born overseas (Fry & Wilson, 2018); in the major city, Auckland, it is around 40%.

A scan of the literature relating to immigration research, outlined above, identifies these two important themes: colonisation and the impact on indigenous peoples, and the socio-political issues arising from large immigrant populations re-settling in a globalised world. In Aotearoa, there is also a growing body of literature on pākehā engagement with te ao Māori. Articles such as Jen Margaret's *Becoming Really Pākehā* (2019), Debra Hunt's *Hey, White Woman: Māori Culture is not your birthright* (2020), and Alison Jones' *This Pākehā Life* (2020) highlight the issues of navigating what it means to be a member of a settler population in a colonised country. However, these authors write from the perspective of being born here, often with ancestry spanning two or three generations in Aotearoa, and an associated sense of belonging. My experience as an adult immigrant is different.

There is recent research on immigrant engagement with indigenous culture from an Asian perspective such as Emma Ng *Old Asian, New Asian* (2017) and Lincoln Dam's *Be(com)ing an Asian tangata tiriti* (2023) which offer insightful perspectives on the increasingly diverse population of Aotearoa, as well as the discrimination experienced by minority groups. Recent anthologies of Pasifika poetry, such as *Katūīvei* (2024) and *Te Kinakina,* edited by Māori poet Vaughan Rapatahana and colleagues, add to the growing evidence that traditional framing of Aotearoa as bi-cultural, a binary Māori-Pākehā conceptualisation, needs re-framing in an increasingly multi-cultural society.

The focus of this study is the impact of engagement with te ao Māori on a recent pākehā immigrant which is a gap in current research, despite the ongoing trend of European migration. This study is unique in drawing together the themes of engagement with te ao Māori, immigrant experience and creative writing practice.

Bhaba (1990) noted "the excluded voice of the migrant" (p. 5). One of the few recent studies in this field, Blanco (2018), explores the experiences of four migrants to Australia who participated in a social justice event aimed at promoting and protecting aboriginal languages. They embark on a journey of discovery that connects them to the indigenous culture of their chosen land for the first time. The study describes how this experience resulted in the immigrants' realisation that they are participants in the system that oppresses the indigenous people. Engagement with this cause helped them simultaneously gain increased self-awareness and connection to their own heritage while also feeling more connected to their new country – growing a transcultural mindset.

Recent decades have seen the development of a globalised world characterised by increasingly fluid borders. Despite the travel restrictions brought about by the COVID 19 pandemic, economic globalisation remains a fact of life in the 21st century, meaning that the ability to adopt a transcultural frame of mind (Moura-Koçoğlu, 2011), negotiate complex issues of belonging and identity and actively engage with diverse cultures is a necessity in both professional and personal contexts. This study explores these issues from a narrative perspective, gathering stories and reimagining them through creative writing to provoke reflection on important issues of nationhood.

Watt (2001) provides an account of how fiction can encourage a sense of national identity among the general population, by capturing and expressing the textures, forces and undercurrents present in contemporary social spaces, together with the blend of experiences, traditions and cultures that co-exist in a society. Moura-Koçoğlu (2011) further highlights the possibilities fiction provides as a means of "imaginatively tracing and creating societal moments" (p. xxix). Fiction can act as a mirror reflecting aspects of reality that might otherwise

be ignored or un-noticed. Brennan (1990) identified the power of the novel in representing the nation as an imagined community – both for the purposes of propaganda or as a means of pointing out absurdities, injustices, or inconsistencies in a way the general populace can embrace. This is the power of the novel – an imaginative vision, a romantic ideal which can be powerfully instrumental in constructing societal attitudes (Brennan, 1990).

The aim of this study is to construct narratives that capture these ideas about fairness, about cultural integration, about action or inaction: to hold up a mirror and by doing so encourage self-reflection and increased consciousness of our individual and family stories which in turn re-tell and reimagine our local and national story.

Wilson and Ringrose (2016) propose that new cultural frames can emerge from "encounters with indigenous peoples, recognition of racial and ethnic differences and ideological reassessment of the nature of civilisation." (p. xi). They note that the creative arts have always negotiated and expressed cultural differences. Tangible examples are seen in architecture, but such processes are inherent in both visual arts and literature. More than recording and recounting facts, creative writing can express complexities, layers of meaning and engage the emotions. Thus, Albert Wendt (1976), in *Towards a New Oceania,* writes:

> So vast, so fabulously varied a scatter of islands, nations, cultures, mythologies and myths, so dazzling a creature, Oceania deserves more than an attempt at mundane fact; only the imagination in free flight can hope — if not to contain her — to grasp some of her shape, plumage and pain (p. 49).

3

Kaupapa

Research Principles

"My past is not a dead thing to be examined
on the post-mortem bench of science without my consent.
I am the primary proprietor of my past"
(O'Regan, 1987, p. 142).

This study is constructed as a narrative inquiry in two parts, one personal, one fictional, both of which explore experiences of a modern-day exchange between cultures, European and Māori.

My research is centred on experience, and how that experience can be captured, reimagined and communicated through narrative. *Dewey* (1938) highlighted the connection between experience and reflective practice in learning, and the significance of the social context in creating knowledge. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) drew from his work to situate narrative research within the domain of anthropological inquiry, identifying narrative as a foundation for exploring the richness of human experience. "People live stories, and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi). Said (2000) refers to this as *immanence,* which he defines as the "meaning embedded in human, lived reality" (p. 3), a philosophy which is at the heart of cultural anthropology.

Polkinghorne (1988) emphasised the need for research strategies that enable us to understand narratives in an ever-changing landscape of human experience, a sentiment echoed by Andrews et al. (2012), who note the growing popularity of narrative inquiry in social science research, in particular because of its ability to reveal layers of meaning, embrace diversity, and increase understanding of the complex, dynamic and ambiguous modern world. Husserl, a German philosopher, used the term *lebenswelt* (Said, 2000) which translates to life-world, as a central pillar of this interpretivist research domain.

Traditionally, formal research practices seek to quantify experience, identify patterns and create models or theories to clarify results. This is founded on Eurocentric philosophy that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define as the "Grand Narrative" (p. 22) of research. Stewart et al. (2021) characterise this as "academic whiteness" (p. 141), in which (supposed) objectivity, observable behaviour, numeric value, causal relationships, replicability and formulation of generalising principles are of paramount importance and a fundamental measure of research validity. Smith (2012) notes that many social scientists take it for granted that this so-called

scientific approach is what defines 'good' research. Narrative researchers, however, seek to avoid such reductionist methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), which is also criticised by feminist theorists as being both patriarchal and oppressive (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Fraser & MacDougall, 2016).

Said (2000) notes the tension between "the stability of principles and the shifting variety of human experience" (p. 2). In contrast to traditional 'scientific' research philosophies, narrative research encourages holistic, person-centred approaches in which the richness of participants' individual and social narratives – past, present and future – are valued and acknowledged within their diverse, multifaceted contexts (Andrews et al., 2012). Fraser and MacDougall (2016) note that, within feminist narrative research, the goal is "not to find universally generalisable themes and understandings of experience but to offer insights, glimpses into others' worlds and ways of seeing the world" (p. 249). They further propose that the need to justify a narrative approach in terms of research credibility is evidence of the overarching hegemony of neoliberal values – in other words, Clandinin and Connelly's "Grand Narrative" (2000, p. 22).

Andrews et al. (2012) note convergences between post-war humanist and post-structuralist traditions within current narrative research philosophy: their mutual stance against the positivist empiricism of traditional research approaches was previously highlighted by Polkinghorne (1988). Their shared preference for narrative as a strategy for resisting existing power structures is also a point of connection between feminist and socialist theorists. Preece (2016) highlight that non-essentialised perceptions of identity, which view identity as fluid, multi-dimensional and socially constructed, are shaped by post-structuralist perspectives and echo the move away from universalist assumptions in modern social research.

From a feminist research perspective, stories have the power to make knowledge accessible to a wide variety of people, and do not only serve to stimulate transformational self-reflection but also action through participation in identifying and addressing social issues (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Fraser & MacDougal, 2016). Atkinson (2011) notes *reflexivity,* the ability to evaluate one's own feelings, motives and reactions in response to a particular experience or situation in a continuous process of learning, is an additional connection between contemporary critical and social research perspectives, in common with feminist theorists who place reflexivity as a cornerstone of feminist research practice (Ackerley & True, 2008; Fonow & Cook, 1991).

According to Wilson and Ringrose (2016), this energised interdisciplinary approach with its overlapping cultural modes, its critical, intellectual and literary exploration and its refusal to "ossify into a singular monolithic discourse" (p. xii) is typical of postcolonial studies

which navigate the "twists, turns, contradictions and complexities" (p. xii) of the postcolonial era.

In contrast to a focus on evidence and results, narrative research forms an "interpretive pathway between action and meaning" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 27). Far from attaining certainty or theoretical generalisation, the outcome of narrative research is tentative and open to interpretation (Andrews et al., 2012). This is something Said (2000) refers to as a *philosophy of ambiguity*. The researcher and participant are engaged in multiple stories and versions of stories co-existing simultaneously, at times in harmony, at other times in disharmony. Reflexivity in this context involves collaboration and a continuous process of critical reflection, a process which creates a vantage point from which to explore both the content and research process (Ackerley & True, 2008; Fonow & Cook, 1991).

For narrative anthropologists and feminist researchers alike, the purpose is in the unfolding meaning, the challenging of assumptions and transformative change (Coles, 1989; Fonow & Cook, 1991). The same can be said of the author and reader of works of fiction: according to Gilbert (2015), the reader imbues the literary work with their own meaning, independent of the original intent of the author, and at times even at odds to the narrative itself, but creating nonetheless a meaningful and valid interpretation of their own. This phenomenon was at the heart of Reader Response Theory, developed in the 1960's, which emphasised the reaction, and sense-making, of an audience or reader beyond the text itself (Harkin, 200 5) and was made famous by French essayist Roland Barthes' (1967) *La Mort de L'Auteur* (The Death of the Author). An interest in the reception and interpretation of texts is also reflected in recent social research by Atkinson (2011), who built on Mills' (1959) concept of *sociological imagination* to explore the interpretive imagination induced when reading sociological research. "We read, and read into, the text, based on our own background knowledge and assumptions" (Atkinson, 2011, p. 2). Thus, it is impossible to predict how readers may respond to my work: they will view my writing through the lens of their own worldview.

Research in a colonised country

Research is a deeply controversial topic amongst colonised peoples. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Smith (2012) identifies a sense of distrust and hostility amongst Māori communities in relation to research as a result of being 'poked and prodded' by pākehā researchers since the beginnings of European contact. This issue is also highlighted by Thompson (2019) who asks, "how can Europeans be trusted to tell the story of a people they have subjugated and dispossessed?....And how can anyone be trusted to tell a story they may not fully understand?" (p. 316).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, there are a wide range of positions both within indigenous research communities and across academic fields. For example, Smith et al. (2016) note that some indigenous scholars conceptualise indigenous research as a continually developing kaupapa, whilst others argue that, to be truly authentic, indigenous scholarship must replicate traditional, pre-colonial practices as far as possible. For these scholars, authenticity is weighted with the premise of recapturing precolonial traditions. The late Dame Judith Binney, a well-known pākehā academic who published numerous non-fiction works charting Aotearoa New Zealand's history with a focus on Māori individuals and communities, was herself the subject of controversy as a pākehā scholar documenting Māori experiences and issues. She acknowledged that this is a complex path to tread, containing many contradictions (2001).

Some within the Māori community denounce the use of te reo by non-Māori, for example in Anahira Gildeas's poem *Speaking Rights* (2022). Her outrage is palpable, and understandable, as she asks: "who do you think you are? You butcher me. Two hundred years you insult my whare, pissing your kōrero everywhere" (Gildea, 2022, p. 81). Others highlight the threat to indigenous languages from dominant languages, and the vital role the majority can play in revitalising indigenous language (Higgins, 2016; Te Huia, 2022). This is the position adopted by Te Puni Kokiri, the Ministry of Māori Development, (2019). There has been a noticeable shift towards normalising the use of te reo Māori in recent years, including widespread use of common words and phrases by media, such as newsreaders and other presenters. I have adopted this philosophy in both my creative thesis and exegesis, integrating te reo Māori with English to promote an equality of status as languages of Aotearoa New Zealand.

I anticipate widely differing reactions to my creative thesis. I am a European immigrant writing Māori characters and integrating te reo into my writing. Māori colleagues who have walked alongside and helped me with this are very supportive of my project, on the basis that I am writing to expose racism and injustice both past and present, to celebrate and promote Māori language and culture. However, I have no doubt that others will disagree. I have been deeply conscious of this throughout my writing process. I noted the controversy surrounding

international recording artist Lorde's release of an album in te reo Māori in 2021, which some in the Māori community applauded and others criticised angrily as cultural appropriation. However, my personal view is that for a language to live, it must be spoken and shared. It is vital to acknowledge the complexities involved, and, as the well-known anthropologist Kenneth Emory once said, "keep our minds as sensitive as we can to every little breeze of thought that flows" (Emory, 1944, as cited in: Krauss, 1988, p. 249*).*

Recognising the imperialistic and colonial ideology embedded within western scientific research traditions, I am aware of the need to de-colonise research (Lee, 2009; Smith, 2012; Stewart et al., 2021). Stewart et al. (2021) highlight the Eurocentricity, or "normative whiteness" (p. 142), underpinning academic practice in Pacific nations. With this in mind, I have accepted the challenge to "think deeply about [my] own implicit assumptions underpinning [my] everyday thought and behaviour in practice" (Stewart et al., 2021, p. 142). I have intentionally sought kaupapa congruent with indigenous culture in Aotearoa New Zealand (Smith, 2012).

Lee (2009) identifies that indigenous research has begun to utilise qualitative narrative approaches to give a voice to indigenous communities, and ensure their lives and realities are heard. She also notes a revival of traditional storytelling modes in contemporary indigenous research around the world, commenting that: "storytelling has always been one of the key ways knowledge was sustained and protected within Indigenous communities" (Lee, 2009, p. 2). Pūrākau, traditional Māori storytelling, is an example of this.

Pūrākau refers to a uniquely Māori paradigm spanning a variety of forms and methods, including myths and legends relating to historical and cultural origins, philosophy, and epistemological ideology. It is a form of narrative which has historically been adapted by Māori speakers and writers for a variety of contexts and purposes, including a narrative approach to research (Lee, 2009). Expressing my research findings in creative writing is congruent with this paradigm. Smith et al. (2016) note that the academic literature on indigenous knowledge "identifies a noisy, politicised, historically nuanced, transdisciplinary, epistemological and ontological set of understandings and vocabularies" (p. 132) and that attempting to legitimise it using European research philosophy is at best confusing and at worst an indication of the ongoing colonisation of knowledge creation.

Thompson (2019) highlights the European habit of claiming ownership over things that already belong to others – such as their claims of 'discovering' other lands which had already been discovered and inhabited by indigenous peoples. The same can be said of claims to knowledge. Ackerley and True (2008) raise important questions about intercultural research ethics which are important to consider in the study of oppressed populations in the post-colonial

era – in particular as a white, European woman studying and expressing aspects of an indigenous culture in my writing. The tangata whenua have good reasons to distrust pākehā intentions - a sentiment echoed in Professor Jeanine Leane's essays on representation and appropriation, such as *Other People's Stories* (2016), *Subjects of the Imagination: on dropping the settler pen* (2018) *and No Longer Malleable Stuff* (2020). As an award-winning Wiradjuri writer, poet and academic from New South Wales, Professor Leane offers profound insights on issues surrounding cultural appropriation, representation and the power dynamics of settler literature.

The continuous interrogation of issues relating to motive and representation is an ongoing process for me as kaituhi pākehā: for me to claim any kind of positional certainty on this would be to have missed the point entirely. It is vital to acknowledge and examine the ways in which I, the pākehā/tauiwi researcher, am a participant in the often invisible, existing systems of power and oppression (Stewart et al., 2021). Questioning the power relationship between me and the subject of study, mitigating inequities, and avoiding biases, assumptions and exclusions in my research perspective are vital to this process. Honouring indigenous ontology in my research involves acknowledging the metaphysical realm and its relationship with the physical world in which my characters dwell, as well as the reciprocity interconnecting all life forms (Hart, 2010). The mountain, the river, the people, the nature of death as conceptualised through whakapapa are portrayed in my creative thesis, echoing principles of pūrākau.

My research also acknowledges the experiential nature of indigenous epistemology in which experiential knowledge and insights are gathered and expressed through oral traditions such as story-telling. This may include the influence of dreams, visions and other perceptual aspects drawn from an individual's inner world (Hart, 2010). This has led me to a growing awareness of the "seascape, landscape and mindscape that has informed and constituted the legacies of language, the storying of peoples and the understandings of human endeavour and survival" (Smith et al., 2016). Dreams and visions have played a part in the development of this thesis: the idea for my creative work came to me in a series of dreams, a process common in the world of creative practice (Gilbert, 2015), and the protagonist in the novel, *Waiotapu,* is haunted by vivid dreams and visions which influence her in the conscious world.

Hart (2010) discusses an axiology of research ethics in indigenous research paradigms which includes principles of respect, reciprocity, involvement, deep listening, connection and community, as well as reflexivity and humble self-awareness, which I have sought to hold close as I traversed this landscape. I have tried to tread a careful path, telling a story through the eyes of the European protagonist's experiences, observations and conversations. My intention is to

portray my protagonist's growing understanding of the appalling treatment of the local iwi at the hands of the British colonists in the past, and the ongoing racism embedded in the systems and attitudes of the current day as she experiences and perceives it, rather than attempting to speak *for* Māori. Essentially, this is a re-telling of my own growing awareness and discomfort resulting from my research, as well as experiences, observations and conversations throughout my years in Aotearoa New Zealand.

At times, when necessary to the story, I have written words spoken by Māori characters. I have done this with the utmost care and guidance from my Māori advisor. However, this raises an additional ethical issue: the fact that Māori academics are expected to provide cultural advice, unpaid and unrecognised by academic institutions, is deeply problematic. I was advised during the confirmation process to 'engage with a range of Māori academics' regarding my thesis, something that I view as both necessary and valuable, but I am also deeply conscious of the potentially exploitative nature of such requests. A recent study (Haar & Martin, 2022) confirms the significant additional workload experienced by indigenous scholars, simply because they are Māori, and are required to act as cultural guides for non-Māori colleagues.

A critical feminist research perspective, which examines how concepts such as race and gender underpin assumptions and perpetuate oppression, has prompted me to reflect on my research aim and questions, theoretical conceptualisation, research design, and methods, as I seek to illuminate and address potential issues, and in doing so improve my scholarship. As Ackerley and True (2008) note, "the insight from feminist theoretical reflection on epistemology is that it is possible, and indeed essential, to reflect on the epistemologies that inform our own work" (p. 695). The assumption that western scientific traditions are the benchmark for research validity and academic rigour, and that this has silenced and marginalised diverse research perspectives, is one example of a significant insight gained through critical reflection on research philosophy. I have also needed to reflect on the power dynamics involved in my research process, as a pākehā researcher working across cultural boundaries.

Creative writing regularly crosses boundaries of language, culture and gender. Male writers create female characters and dialogue, and vice versa. Writers from one culture create characters from another. This is not usually seen as controversial. However, there is a sensitivity necessary within the post-colonial context revolving around unequal power dynamics—what Said (1978) termed *positional superiority* that must be acknowledged. I anticipate some criticism as a pākehā writing Māori characters, however carefully and humbly I approach my task. Lucas-Pennington (2020) notes the nervousness and apprehension with which non-indigenous writers approach writing indigenous characters in an Australasian

context, stating that this is necessary to ensure the process is well-researched, humble and carefully treated. She cites an interview with aboriginal writer Tony Birch, who compares the process to all character creation in literature, arguing that "authenticity is created via craft, not identity" (Lucas-Pennington, 2020, p. 1). The creation of nuanced and authentic characters is the challenge all writers face, and one I must accept as a writer in this space.

Narrative research design therefore has a basis in social, anthropological, and feminist research as well as congruence with indigenous Māori tikanga. This is an appropriate approach for a research project based in the post-colonial context of Aotearoa New Zealand, as opposed to imported research philosophies which, according to Groot et al. (2018) have "failed to recognise or embrace our own psychological frameworks, histories, socio-political conditions and worldviews" (p. 198).

This kaupapa acknowledges that the journey towards knowledge is not a steady march towards a finite destination, a single defined 'truth', but an exploratory expedition, an adventure into a "twisting, braided rope of intersecting narratives, a set of conversations between different people with different bodies of knowledge, different ways of thinking, and different reasons for wanting to know" (Thompson, 2019, p. 316).

Method

Said (2000) proposed that "the start of any philosophical enterprise is man's own life." (p. 2). Part One of this study, the exegesis, represents an experience-centred approach to narrative research that employs information and impressions gathered from a variety of sources (Andrews, et al., 2012; Atkinson, 2011). I have reflected on what it means to be a tauiwi writer in modern Aotearoa New Zealand, and how an engagement with tikanga Māori, and specifically whakapapa, has impacted my writing practice as an immigrant. My research on my own whakapapa included identifying significant places, stories and family myths, gathering notes, ancestral records, census records, artefacts such as newspaper articles, photographs, letters, and recollecting memories of people, family stories and places. The process has enabled me to reflect on how my experiences as an immigrant, and an increased understanding of my whakapapa, have shaped my creative practice.

This exegesis draws together my interpretation of events, thoughts and feelings (Andrews et al., 2012) as "proprietor of my past" (O'Regan, 1987, p. 142), and describes my reflections on both the process and its impact on me both as an immigrant and a writer. Fonow and Cook (1991) noted the importance of including the "active voice of the subject" (p. 145) in feminist research narratives, an approach I have adopted in my exegesis by writing in the

first person as both subject and researcher. Geertz (1995) captured the essence of the process, describing narrative research as an intellectual setting which constructs:

> hindsight accounts of things that seem to have happened: pieced together patternings… showing how particular events and unique occasions, an encounter here, a development there, can be woven together with a variety of facts and a battery of interpretations to produce a sense of how things go, have been going, and are likely to go. (p. 2-3)

I am both subject and researcher, so this study can be viewed as an autoethnographic narrative inquiry (Trahar, 2009). Connolly (2007) highlights the importance of providing clarity for the reader that the account is my own "voice, stance, assumptions and analytic lens" (p. 453), to enable the reader to comprehend that it is my personal story. Trahar (2009) explores the relevance of autoethnography in intercultural studies, noting how holding on to an open and flexible methodology, which emerges and evolves as the research progresses, enables the researcher to explore multiple possibilities. "Holding on to this *not knowing* was uncomfortable but maintaining the position of the agnostic enabled me to recognise eventually the suitability of narrative inquiry and autoethnography for this evolving study" (Tahar, 2009, p. 1).

Part Two of the study, the creative thesis, explores the topics of colonisation, racism, immigration, grief and whakapapa through the imagined experiences of the protagonist, a French immigrant to Aotearoa New Zealand. Her anguish over the loss of loved ones, her experiences of the cultural interchange and her unfolding awareness of the impacts of colonisation, both past and present, on the local indigenous community are depicted via a work of literary fiction. Neumann (2008) points to the infinite possibilities literature provides to construct individual and collective identities, as well as to portray new opportunities and alternatives that do not yet have a place in reality. Bingel et al. (2011) expand on this concept, emphasising that "not only do fictional representations expose the problems, intricacies, and limitations of identity construction, but they may further disseminate new models of identities, which in turn may impact on extratextual contexts" (p. 58), alluding to the potential for fiction to reveal truths that may impact society.

Andrews et al. (2012) note that experience-centred narrative research may include "imagined phenomena, things that happened to the narrator, or distant matters they've only heard about" (p. 5). The novel weaves together creative re-imaginings of my own experiences of places, people and social issues in Aotearoa New Zealand to evoke a fictional place and community. I have interlaced this with narratives drawn from existing stories of colonisation, conflict, dispossession and the marginalisation of Māori communities which are available through historical records, including Waitangi Tribunal records. I am not a historian, and my aim was not to catalogue or chronicle historical events, but rather to capture the essence of the

accounts and the themes that emerge: stories of injustice, dispossession, systemic inequity, and the complexities of tribunal claims.

Research for the novel also involved an exploration of tikanga Māori through literature and experiences. I have attempted to present de-colonised expressions of some aspects of te ao Māori (the Māori world) as experienced by the protagonist. Texts such as Thompson's *Sea People* (2019), Stewart's *Māori Philosophy: Indigenous Thinking from Aotearoa (2020),* Hayward and Wheen's *The Waitangi Tribunal* (2016), O'Malley's *The Meeting Place: Māori and Pakeha Encounters*, *1642-1840* (2012) and *The New Zealand Wars Nga Pakanga o Aotearoa* (2019), as well as historical accounts provided by websites such as Parihaka (n. d.) have provided the inspiration for the fictional events portrayed in my creative thesis. I also drew from news coverage of recent events such as the Ihumātao land protest (2016-2019) which ultimately resulted in the return of this site to iwi, and the tsunami surges following earthquakes offshore in March 2021.

This study did not involve human subject research, but an overarching ethic of representation is of primary concern as a non-Māori writer depicting Māori characters and worldviews. As Cosgrove (2009) discusses, "representation is an issue inherent to narrative technique, involving strategies from tone to character to point of view, and these can have ideological implications" (p. 135). I am privileged to have been able to consult with Kimberley Rangiahua (Tuhoe/Ngati Porou) regarding the te reo Māori dialogue. Kimberley has shared the precious taonga of te reo Māori with me, a privilege for which I am deeply grateful. James George (Ngāpuhi), my Māori research advisor, has overseen the tikanga (cultural context) and kaupapa of my work. Careful research informed the creation of Māori characters, with the aim of ensuring an authentic voice and characterisation free from colonialist misconceptions. For this reason, I focussed on reading fiction by kaituhi Māori in my research on literary representations of whakapapa.

It was my intention, in creating this work, to tread a path delicately and respectfully between these two worlds – the world of my past, my heritage, and the world of my new country and its narrative-rich indigenous culture. Paulo Freire (1970) highlighted the creative insight that can be gained by experiencing such contradictions, which can be a catalyst for transformation, emotional catharsis and academic insight. Collins (1991, as cited in: Fonow & Cook, 1991) proposed that it is often the *outsider within* who can observe with a clearer perspective and challenge the assumptions of *insiders*.

I approached this project conscious of my status as an outsider within, cautious of the risk of moving beyond cultural engagement to cultural appropriation as I drew from Māori pūrākau (myths), reo (language) and tikanga (culture) to bring to account and address the

colonial history of Aotearoa New Zealand through my own creative expression. I am walking through sacred waters, echoed by the title of my creative thesis, *Waiotapu*. I may make some mis-steps but my intentions are honest. With this in mind I am grateful to my Māori cultural advisor James George for his support of the project concept. As an award-winning Māori author who has now published five novels, and a respected academic, his critical perspective has been vital as I navigated the complexities of this project, and his challenge to interrogate my 'cultural wallpaper' has been illuminating. Our detailed discussion has been invaluable and his advice and oversight of my philosophical and methodological approach has been reassuring.

Both Mills (1959) and Atkinson (2011) describe the intellectual craft connecting narrative ethnography and literary works and the many media and genres through which we experience individual and collective expressions of culture. Drawing from Carolyn Ellis's keynote speech at the first Annual Advances in Qualitative Methods Conference (1999), which encapsulates the connection between research and art, I sought to create two accounts that include my most vulnerable self: to produce evocative stories that celebrate and endow my experiences and memories with meaning, to extend the autobiographical to include the artistic, seeking a "fusion between social science and literature" (p. 669), a creative composition of inner and outer events – physical, emotional, spiritual – which, in my context as a migrant, "helps [me] know how to live" (p. 669).

Tīpuna

Ancestors

The dead walk with me.
I am them.
They are me.
My heart: their rhythm
My voice: their words
My blood: their cells
My belief: their faith
My self: their being
My heart: their love
My grief: their sorrow

The dead walk with me.
I am them.
They are me.
My sight: her eyes
My smell: his nose
My hair: her curls
My hands: his touch
My body: her shape
My laugh: his humour
My hurt: her pain

The dead walk with me.
I am them.
They are me.
My life: their story

Whakapapa

Ancestral heritage

"Our dead are woven into our souls like the hypnotic music of bone flutes:
we can never escape them"
(Wendt, 1976, p. 50).

Whakapapa can be defined simply as "knowing who you are and where you belong" (E Tu Whānau, 2020, p. 1). According to Te Huia (2015), whakapapa is fundamental to Māori identity, a view echoed by Orr (2017, in: Birns et al., 2017), who explained that whakapapa carries the voice of tīpuna (ancestors), providing a sense of mutual obligation, reciprocity and connectedness between past, present and future, between tīpuna and mokopuna (grandchildren), and as such, whakapapa represents a shared history and narrative amongst members of extended whānau (family).

Paringatai (2015) describes whakapapa as a framework which forms the foundation of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge), combining physical and spiritual worlds to create a system of knowledge which is continuously developed and passed on from one generation to the next. In this sense, whakapapa is vital to the preservation and dissemination of cultural knowledge. Paki (2007) concurs with this view, describing whakapapa as "an overarching philosophical matrix" (p. i), highlighting the interconnectedness between genealogy, spirituality and ecology in mātauranga Māori. These ideas about whakapapa are depicted in the novel, *Waiotapu,* for example in the personification of the mountains as ancestral figures, and in the ongoing connections between the existing indigenous community and their ancestors.

Whakapapa begins with the story of the very origins of the earth and the first human inhabitants, woven into legend, through to the arrival of the first waka (canoe) in Aotearoa and subsequent lineage and history, recalled through kōrero (speeches), waiata (songs), carvings and karakia (prayers), often recounted through stories and songs shared in group settings over communal kai (food) (Newson, 2017). More than just a form of oratory ritual, Wilson (2014) describes whakapapa as a *practice* in which love is shared between people in relationship to each other and the wider environment. Mikaere (2010) indicates that whakapapa "establishes that everything in the natural world shares a common ancestry. With this knowledge of interconnection comes an acute awareness of interdependence which, in turn, fosters the realisation that our survival is contingent upon the nurturing of relationships, both with one another and with the world around us" (p. 225).

Faloa (2017) describes how knowing all the stories back to her great, great grandfather and his arrival on the first waka gives her a sense of belonging and responsibility to continue her whānau story. She also highlights how this connects her to her ancestral lands and gives her strength and the sense of being able to walk confidently anywhere. It is this sense of past, present and future that imbues someone who knows their whakapapa with confidence; an unshakeable sense of identity and belonging – even if that belonging spans a number of different places and ancestral stories (Faloa, 2017; Liddell, 2017). These ideas made me curious about how engaging with my own whakapapa might impact my sense of identity as an immigrant author.

Strathern (1988) proposed the concept of *dividual voice* to differentiate the indigenous sense of self from the western idea of the individual. The dividual self is experienced "not as singular, autonomous and individual, but instead as participatory and communal; shaped by gods, ancestors and family" (p. 256). This concept is reflected fully by whakapapa in taha Māori (Māori perspective), encouraging the development of self-knowledge in the context of community. This concept of self as *more than* the individual reminds me of the concept of *identity multiplicity* identified by the research on immigrant identity (Verkuyten et al., 2019). It may be that, for those for whom the concept of identity is complex and layered, engaging with whakapapa offers unique insights.

For many, including me, the first exposure to whakapapa is via a pepeha at the beginning of a formal event, as I described in chapter one. This is one of the most important forms of Māori orature, a fundamental part of formal occasions and public speaking for Māori, in which the speaker – before addressing any audience or topic – identifies their whakapapa both in terms of ancestral tribal connections and prominent places – including a mountain and a river (Orr, 2017, in: Birns et al., 2017). It describes *who I am and where I am from* in terms of both people and geography. In chapter one I have described how challenging I found that as someone who had never really looked into my ancestral origins.

More than just an introduction, the implication carried within the pepeha is that tīpuna are standing with the speaker sharing the greeting (Birns et al, 2017), a notion encapsulated by Gildea's (2022) assertion that "I speak with the consent of every single one of my ancestors" (p. 81). Stewart (2020) notes that the concepts of time and space merge in te ao Māori. Te reo does not have separate words for time and space, and ancestors "can collapse the space-time continuum to be co-present with their descendants" (Stewart, 2020, p. 3). I have expressed this co-presence in my creative work by drawing from the sense of interconnectedness between the metaphysical and physical worlds, and between those who have passed away and yet continue to speak and live in the present. For example, Anahira, who is an important ancestral figure, is

represented by her descendant Anahira in the present day, as well as being personified by the volcanic mountain, expressing her anger by shaking the ground or erupting, and ultimately being credited with causing the tsunami that precedes the return of the pā site.

The pepeha enables the listener to locate the speaker contextually, understand them in broad cultural terms and often allows them to find connections through extended family or common ancestral relationships (Barlow, 1991). The pepeha invites us to know ourselves, to make ourselves known, and to know others. Exploring my whakapapa has led me to meet relatives I didn't know existed, which has been a surprising and welcome outcome.

Whakapapa, as embodied through the pepeha, is much more than just memorising and reciting genealogy, it is also about whenua – a sense of place and connection to ancestral lands (Te Huia, 2015). Just as the decorative tukutuku panels inside the wharenui were traditionally woven together from different materials such as flax, ferns and grasses to represent ancestral figures and mythology, whakapapa weaves together people, places and ancient stories of origin. Gildea (2022) references this deep relationship in her poetry: the mountain, the river, "the ground beneath that remembers every breath," (2022, p. 82). Thus, people and places play an important role in establishing identity. Māori have traditionally been referred to as tāngata whenua – people of the land. A deep sense of coming from, and belonging to, the land is prevalent in mātauranga Māori (Barlow, 1991). The sense of permanence of the whenua is contrasted with the transience of human existence in this ancient whakatauki:

Whatungarongaro te tāngata , toitū te whenua

As people disappear from sight, the land remains

Whenua can also be translated as placenta, indicating the nurturing relationship between Māori and Papatūānuku, the earth mother (Barlow, 1991). The concept of kaitiakitanga, stewardship of natural resources, is embraced in contemporary Māori culture, at times in contrast to the tikanga of some earlier iterations which resulted in resource depletion as some food sources were hunted to extinction (Roberts et al., 1995). Blisset (2011) notes that, for Māori, wellbeing is not just connected to having land but also about the health of the land. On an individual level, Wilson (2014) describes a feeling of love for Mount Ruapehu, referring to the mountain as koro, a beloved elderly relative to be revered and cared for. I have tried to capture this sentiment in the novel, through my portrayal of the iwi's connection to their beloved mountains.

Māori were historically ocean voyagers who travelled immense distances to explore and find new lands. This means that their sense of 'place', by necessity, can connect to different locations. Their mythical place of origin, the land of Hawaiiki, is a place imbued with both literal and metaphysical meanings (Orbell, 1994; Royal, 2015). As a result, a pepeha may identify several tribal locations, and even encompass the ancestral lands of European tīpuna

following the inter-marriage which resulted from colonisation (Riddell, 2017). In this context, ownership of the land is less relevant, as Faloa (2017) explains, someone else may own the land, but she still belongs there because of her ancestral connections to that land, and that knowledge gives her strength and confidence.

Whakapapa merges the physical and spiritual worlds. Natural features such as mountains are viewed as ancestors with mythical powers, a concept I have drawn from in my creative work. Ancient tribal tīpuna are depicted as atua - godlike characters who were involved in legendary battles, secret trysts, and who participated in the formation of the very land itself (Paringatai, 2015). People, and all of the natural world, are seen as descendants of the gods and thus "everything has a whakapapa: birds, fish, animals, trees, and every other living thing; soil, rocks, and mountains also have a whakapapa" (Barlow, 1991, p. 173). Whakapapa describes the interconnection between the spiritual, natural and human worlds, and an exploration of whakapapa leads to the need to understand the concepts of both whenua and wairua.

Wairua can be translated as spirit, but can refer to anything connected to, or related to, the spiritual realm. Every living thing has whakapapa, because every living thing has wairua, and this needs to be nurtured and protected just as we protect our physical bodies (Durie, 2001). However, western concepts of spirituality tend to limit spiritual experience to rituals, ceremonies, or specific religious dogma. Wairua, on the other hand, can be experienced and identified in every day, ordinary moments in life, and is not just found in spiritual practice (Moeweka Barnes et al., 2017). In traditional Māori medicine, illness can be identified as a spiritual condition needing a spiritual cure, and wholeness or wellness is seen as springing from wairua (Durie, 2001; Moewaka Barnes et al., 2017).

Attending to wairua involves acknowledging the heart, the emotions, attending to the Self (Durie, 2001), and exploring intention and meaning. Information and circumstances are viewed holistically – an open, flexible and fluid approach which is often avoided by westerners with their discomfort with spirituality. To Māori, however, wairua is inseparable from true knowledge (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2017). In a sense, it is wairua that provides the pulse, the living thread that connects past, present and future through whakapapa: from atua to tīpuna, to whānau and mokopuna. Wairua encircles all living things in a reciprocal and interdependent existence, blurring the boundaries between the natural and the supernatural (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2017).

Representations of Whakapapa in Literature

Prior to European contact in the late nineteenth century, te reo Māori was not a written language. The assumption that writing should be the primary means of accessing expressions

of whakapapa is an indication of the prevailing European colonial epistemology. According to Boswell (2017) the European binary definition of literate/illiterate is overly simplistic and discounts the intricate and complex expressions of culture found in indigenous artefacts, carvings, tattooing, textiles, architecture, song and dance and orature which, before contact with Europeans, formed an encyclopaedia of Māori tribal knowledge with whakapapa at its core.

Sullivan (2005) emphasises the richness of the fluid, living oral tradition which carried domains of knowledge, genealogy, history, geography and navigation through the generations, versus the rigid, European, *frozen* written word. Whakapapa, as described by Newson (2017) is a shared remembering, a communal practice of looking back to the past and reminding each other of "who, and where, we have come from". The oral recounting of whakapapa was, and is, included in speech-giving, traditional songs and prayers. Contrary to western criticisms regarding the mythologizing of oral histories (Green & Troup, 2020), such shared remembering can serve to protect the accuracy of the recollections: others are present to remind, correct and contribute.

Other prominent representations of whakapapa are found in traditional carving – the structural posts of the wharenui (meeting house) are carved to represent important tribal ancestors who oversee all the meetings and group activities within – ancestors are close by and involved, not distant and separated by death (Ihimaera & Makereti, 2017), and in *moko* (traditional tattoos) which depict connections to whakapapa on the face or limbs. Other traditional artistic forms such as weaving and dancing are imbued with ancestral meaning and value.

The presence of such detailed recordings of indigenous heritage spanning generations of artists, and via such varied media, was an inconvenience to the colonial agenda, and early settlers were encouraged to view colonised peoples as illiterate savages (Birns, et al., 2017) and to discount the wealth of indigenous cultural expression as worthless. Clues to the inaccuracy of this view are contained in the writing of Captain Cook himself (Thomas, 1997), who was accompanied on some of his explorations by the Polynesian aristocrat Tupaia from Raiatea. Subsequently immortalised in the poetry of Sullivan (2005), Tupaia was by all accounts a man of many accomplishments: he was a linguist who had rapidly acquired English and acted as a guide and translator, a skilled navigator and cartographer: one of his maps is held in the British Museum. Cook remarked on his intelligence, his intimate knowledge of geography and local religious and legal customs (Thomas, 1997).

It is extremely important to note that historical accounts, such as those mentioned above, are observations and interactions written by tauiwi *about* Māori. Not *by* Māori. This is

a vital distinction. Esteemed Māori scholars, such as Professor Emeritus Ranginui Walker (1932-2016), Sir Hēnare Ngata (1917-2011), Sir Mason Durie, and Hirini Moko Mead – who's daughter, Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith is also a well-known and widely respected academic cited in this exegesis – have made the reclaiming of Māori history, culture, language and scholarship their life's work. In recent decades Dr. Danny Keenan, Dr Tākirararangi Smith, and many others, join an impressive group of colleagues such as Professor Georgina Stewart, Dr. Awanui Te Huia, Associate Professor Karyn Paritangai and Ani Mikaere whose work is cited in this exegesis.

Until quite recently, literature education in New Zealand was also focussed largely on a British prescription – a hangover from the colonial era in which university education to some degree still seems stuck (Birns et al., 2017; Ihimaera & Makereti, 2017). However, in recent decades, a number of prominent Māori authors have achieved recognition, among which Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace are possibly the best known (Birns, et al., 2017).

As a concept, philosophy and practice that permeates every aspect of Māori life and culture, it is unsurprising that whakapapa is a reoccurring theme intrinsic to contemporary New Zealand fiction. Whether in famous works by indigenous writers such as Witi Ihimaera's *Whale Rider* (1987), whose young female protagonist fights to have her inheritance and role in the tribal whakapapa recognised, and A Game of Cards (Ihimaera, 2008) in which the death of a beloved Kuia is soothed by the knowledge of her presence even beyond the grave, or Taika Waititi's *Boy* (2010), a film which explores the negative impacts of a fragmented whakapapa, or lesser known writers such as Anahera Gildea (2017) who hears the voices of the kuia whispering, whakapapa is at the heart of literature in Aotearoa.

Ihimaera's writing often uses the device of the grandparent-grandchild relationship to link past, present and future. Alan Duff's *Once Were Warriors* (1990) made globally accessible through the medium of film, speaks to the loss of whakapapa through urbanisation, also touching on the impact of Jake's whakapapa on his self-concept.

Expressions of whakapapa which weave spirituality, gods and spirits into the human story creating a sense of magical realism differentiates writing as uniquely Māori (Marquise, 2017). For example, Patricia Grace's *Potiki* (1986) presents human characters as living embodiments of Māori gods, and depicts the wharenui as a living being, embodying tribal tīpuna.

Whakapapa is recognised as so central to authentic portrayals of New Zealand characters that kaituhi pākehā also allude to it in their storytelling – for example Barry Crump's (1997) character Bella in *Wild Pork and Watercress*, who invents her own whakapapa in an attempt to find peace with her identity which has been lost through adoption. David Hair's

(2010) adolescent *Aotearoa* series depicts a teenager discovering his previously unknown whakapapa, a past which takes him back to ancient cultural roots.

Other recurring themes in contemporary Māori literature, born from "a history of subjugation, marginalisation and discrimination" (Kennedy, 2017, p. 56), span issues relevant on a global scale: conflict, racism, responses to poverty, gender, sexuality and the environment; small communities collapsing under the weight of consumerism, globalisation and cultural neutralisation. However, there are also themes of friendship, love and shared transformation (Orr, 2017, as cited in Birns et al., 2017).

Literary representations of Māori have tended to highlight selective aspects of the culture post-European contact. Early commentary, such as found in Cook's diaries (Thomas, 1997), focussed on the ferocity and bravery of Māori warriors, an ideal which also dominated in World Wars I and II. Others have echoed Rousseau's (1754) romanticised ideal of the *noble savage*, contrasting with colonialists who framed the culture as primitive and barbaric to suit their agenda of domination and deracination. The stereotypical story of Aotearoa popularised on the global stage through modern New Zealand film and literature portrays the very real social issues and suffering of a marginalised, dispossessed people living in exile in their own country. Narratives of a disempowered people existing around the edges of a wealthy and powerful colonial nation.

That is, however, not the whole story. There is another narrative beneath the layers of oppression and systemic racism. An earlier narrative. Whakapapa unveils stories of migration, resilience and adaptability. The tangata whenua are a people with a deep connection to their ancestral mātauranga, which enabled them to pass down intricate knowledge, such as ocean navigation, from generation to generation (Thompson, 2019). They are also an outward looking people who have historically been interested in engaging with other cultures (Petrie, 2002), as illustrated by this whakatauki (proverb) attributed to Sir Apirana Ngāta (1989):

E tipu e rea Mō ngā ra o tō ao

Grow tender shoot for the days of your world.

Ko tō ringa ki ngā rākau ā te Pākehā Hei oranga mō tō tinana

Turn your hand to the tools of the Pākehā for the wellbeing of your body

Ko tō ngakau ki ngā taonga ā o tīpuna Māori Hei tikiti mō tō mahunga

Turn your heart to the treasures of your ancestors as a crown for your head.

Ko tō wairua ki tō Atua Nāna nei ngā mea katoa

Give your spirit unto the creator of all things.

The notion of culture as an evolving concept is illustrated by the contemporary reappraisal of historical European roles in colonialism, genocide and slavery, one manifestation of which is the Black Lives Matter movement. This study is located within the current world-wide re-engagement with indigenous and first nations peoples, and an increasing recognition of the need to right the wrongs of the past. Examples include the re-naming of Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples Day in the USA, and in Waitangi Tribunal claim settlements in Aotearoa New Zealand. Another example is the recent removal of statues around the world memorialising colonists such as Captain Hamilton in Kirikiriroa, New Zealand, and slave traders such as William Colston in Bristol, United Kingdom. I have re-created a similar event in the novel, *Waiotapu,* in which the statue of the British army captain who was responsible for the confiscation and burning of the pā, is defaced, and subsequently removed.

This study seeks to engage with the contemporary renaissance of indigenous culture in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. According to Taylor (1992), identity is at the heart of human wellbeing. He discussed the trauma inflicted on individuals and groups when their identity is not valued, recognised, or is mis-represented or marginalised – as is clearly the case among indigenous communities - and highlighted the serious problems which arise from confining individuals or communities within a demeaning or disempowering definitions of identity.

Weiner (2008) asserts that wellbeing is relational and deeply rooted in the social context of identity. Thus, interrogating previously unexamined and unchallenged stories can play a pivotal role in personal and societal healing. I have tried to capture some of these concepts in my creative work, by providing a counterpoint to some common narratives. For example, the portrayal of a pākehā mother and daughter, who have been victims of domestic violence at the hands of a pākehā man, is intended to invert a narrative which is overwhelmingly attributed to Māori families in literature and the media. The protagonist also offers to 'help' the iwi in their fight to have their pā site returned, but they have lawyers among their whānau who are more than capable of representing the cause, and have no need of a "Great White Saviour" (see page p. 166).

Oral traditions, such as pepeha and kōrero (discussion), invite shared participation in the remembering and re-telling of family history and stories. All the characters – past and present – can contribute, correct; remind and re-focus. The combined recollections of many people joining in a retelling of the past creates the potential for a powerful, accurate and authentic representation of the layered narratives of history. This is the benefit of a rich oral tradition, reinforced by other representations of whakapapa which are, literally, carved into the surroundings, forming records which are now supported by a growing body of archaeological

and genetic evidence (Worall, 2020). Gildea's (2022) poetic assertion that the blood of her ancestors reaches forward into the future through her and her future descendants is certainly not inconsistent with scientific thinking, and recent research suggests that psychological impacts, such as intergenerational trauma (Pihama et al., 2014), may also be carried forward. This leads me to investigate and reflect on how my own family stories and heritage have shaped me.

5

Maumahara

Remembering

"The hand that holds the pen writes history"
(Westmoreland, 2018).

We do not tell our ancestral stories in pākehā tradition. Or at least, we do not remember and re-tell them together. In western tradition, unless someone writes the stories down, they are lost. The person who holds the pen controls the narrative: they decide what is remembered, who is remembered and how they are remembered. They choose the heroes. And the villains. And who shall be forgotten.

My father's house

I love listening to my father's stories about his childhood. He was born in Kent, in the 1930's, where his family enjoyed the luxury of a large estate. His memories are like a doorway into a lost world. He is old now, and when he leaves this world, the greatest living repository of information about my family history will be gone forever. There will be no-one left who remembers.

My paternal grandmother held the pen. She defined, illustrated and coloured in the stories my father recounts. He was an active participant, avid listener and focussed observer, but his recollections are vividly and intensely created by her. This effect was magnified by the separation she created from the outside world: they lived in grand style yet in almost total isolation from other people. There was no-one to challenge her version.

My grandmother treasured the memories of her own whakapapa, although tragic circumstances separated her from her ancestral heritage. Her mother (my great-grandmother) had married against her family's wishes, and emigrated to South Africa with her new husband, who proceeded to disappear without a trace one evening. He walked out of the house and vanished, never to be seen again. Abandoned, with no means of making a living, my great-grandmother managed to procure a passage home to England with her children, but had apparently been cut off by her relatives and survived by working as a seamstress in Victorian London. My grandmother survived heartbreak and hardship to forge a new life as a working single mother in 1930s London only to be rescued at a crucial moment by a handsome and wealthy Prince Charming - the necessary happy ending. But that is not the whole story. And it is not the only story. It is also not the end of the story.

My earliest memory is lying in my pram as a baby, being pushed uphill along the pavement by my mother. It was an old-fashioned heavy white carriage pram, with wire spokes on the wheels. A generous but impractical gift from my other grandmother. I can hear the 'gah-ding, gah-ding, gah-ding' of the wheels as they run over the cracks between the paving stones. I am looking at the black shapes of tree-branches silhouetted against an ominous grey sky. It must be winter.

My next memory is at about the age of 2. I am with my mother in the kitchen of the beautiful, impressive Victorian house in London with a view across the rooftops of Greenwich. Through the window, we can see a storm outside. Suddenly, there is a big flash of lightning followed by a crack of thunder, and I run and hide in her skirt, clinging to her legs for safety. The fabric of her emerald green skirt is soft, silken, scented.

The house has since been turned into nineteen flats. It was gifted as a wedding present to my parents by my paternal grandfather, who in turn had inherited it, and many others, from his grandfather – an important figure in my family's whakapapa, and by all accounts an affluent and successful member of Victorian London society who had accumulated a substantial portfolio of property by the time of his death in 1909.

I remember hearing the rag-and-bone man calling out as he led his horse-drawn cart around the streets, stopping and chatting to people as they brought out their household rejects. An early form of community recycling. A visitor once played a game with my sister, who was three at the time, asking her what sounds animals make.

"What does a cow say?"

- *Moo*

"What does a pig say?"

- *Oink oink*

"What does a horse say?"

- *Rag-and-bone! Rag-and-bone*!

My parents dined out on that story for years. As soon as I could sit up reliably, my mother gave the old carriage pram to the rag-and-bone man. On to the cart it went. Good riddance. It had been too heavy and bulky for the uneven and hilly Greenwich pavements. She created a double-decker pushchair for my older sister and me, by upcycling one she bought second-hand. She balanced a plank of wood across the metal seat frame just in front of the backrest: my sister sat in the seat, and I sat behind her up on the plank, my legs either side of her. It was a brilliant and creative solution, typical of my mother: inventor, survivor, pragmatist.

My parents may have had an impressive first home, but cashflow was a problem despite the gift of a house: my father was paid a meagre wage as a junior building surveyor in his

father's firm – the ingeniously named Davey & Father Ltd., as opposed to the more traditional Davey & Son, a sign of the eccentricity and wit that punctuated my grandfather's personality. My mother was given strict instructions that she must leave her job as a secretary. It was not appropriate for a married woman to work in their day. In his old age, having watched my sisters and I enjoy great success and satisfaction from our careers, my father has apologised to her profusely for not seeing past this old-fashioned attitude.

My grandmother was a woman ahead of her time –a career woman: a sub-editor at a London newspaper, until she met my grandfather. Perhaps her drive for independence grew from her poverty-stricken childhood. My grandmother also nursed a longing to write, and self-published several novels which accomplished the goal but did not achieve the recognition now more widely available through access to social media and other publishing channels. She encouraged her children into broadcasting, a career which was a feature of my father's early life. His elder sister was a fragile beauty. Her film star looks were echoed by my father, who was by all accounts a great catch: tall, dark and handsome – an effect enhanced with the purchase of a bright red E-type Jaguar in 1964, which is still his pride and joy over fifty years later. His own father, my grandfather, was academically brilliant. He had several degrees in science and imbued in my father a critical and searching mind, and an unending capacity to see the cloud in every silver lining.

My father and his siblings lived a glamorous, if lonely, existence – the Winter Season spent skiing at Grindelwald and socialising with a small circle of European aristocrats; expeditions to Africa involving adventures on the long journey by sea to Cape Town, and childhood memories of summer holidays spent on the South Coast of England, at Hallsands. They stayed in the famous Prospect Hotel, built by the Trout sisters after the village was washed into the sea in a storm in January 1917. The sisters had hand-cast every one of the eight thousand blocks needed for their building from the shingle down on the beach, carrying each one up the long climb to the cliff top.

The hotel is still there, set high on the cliff away from the erosion of the relentless storms (see Figure 1). It was during one such storm that Ella Trout, my older sister's namesake, is famed to have rowed out to sea single-handed and rescued a number of drowning sailors from a shipwreck, her bravery earning her an OBE. Much like the village, which was literally washed into the sea by storms, the lifestyle my father and his family enjoyed has disappeared under a tide of war and ensuing societal change.

Figure 1: The Prospect Hotel (Now Prospect House), and what is left of the village of Hallsands, Devon. Photograph reproduced under Creative Commons licence.

My father enjoyed an extraordinary upbringing, living in crumbling mansions in Kent, such as the medieval Poundsbridge Manor (see Figure 2). The original building is listed in the Doomsday Book, and some of my father's favourite memories are of the work he and his father did together to restore the building, using traditional methods. He was very amused by the findings of a historic buildings expert during a documentary produced by the BBC, who pronounced work he himself had completed as medieval in origin. The family lived surrounded by horses and dogs, and my father even learned to fly a Tigermoth biplane. There was little contact with the outside world, though. My grandparents' reclusive tendencies grew as they aged, until my grandmother reached the point where she would no longer leave the comforting boundary of their final home, hidden away in the Sussex countryside: her little kingdom.

Figure 2: Poundsbridge Manor, near Penshurst, Kent. Photograph from family archive.

My mother's house

My mother was born into a more ordinary, suburban existence in Surbiton, South-West London, just before the end of World War II. My grandfather told the story of how, in 1947, the Winter was so cold the Thames froze over and he went skating on it on borrowed ice-stakes. The family moved to Brighton when my mother was seven: there was a direct train link to London, so my grandfather could commute to his job at Lloyds Bank, Pall Mall, and my mother and her younger sister could grow up by the sea.

I remember my grandparents' cottage, down a cobbled lane called Norfolk Buildings, just behind the seafront. Apparently, it has now been gentrified and re-named Norfolk Mews. I remember window boxes full of bright red geraniums in front of pretty diamond shaped panes of glass. I loved our visits there. My maternal grandparents were warm and loving. I remember wallpaper covered in faded roses, my granny's fabulous cooking, windy walks on the pier, and my grandpa holding my hand to help me balance on the wall of the promenade. The beach at Brighton is shingle, and I remember picking my way across it in my bare feet, trying to avoid the sharper stones.

My maternal grandmother, Eileen Timms (née Tomlin), was born in Darlington, North Yorkshire, in 1919, and attended Wolverhampton Girls High School on a scholarship. Her mother had been abandoned by her father shortly after Eileen's birth and had to return to her nursing career to make a living. As a child, she endured cruelty and neglect at the hands of relatives who raised her. She hid her Northern origins with elocution lessons and always spoke

the best BBC English - a living manifestation of the importance of language, or at least, in this case, dialect, to identity.

As an adult, Eileen became a fabulous cook and wrote magazine articles on hospitality and entertaining for *Woman* magazine, and answered cookery questions for *Good Housekeeping*, seemingly intent on never going hungry again. She met my beloved grandfather, Tony Timms, at a dance in Rugby. He was an RAF flight instructor during the war and sported a dashing moustache. He rarely spoke of the war and suffered bad dreams from experiences he would rather forget. He had a brother, John, who was two years older, and never married. Their father had been killed in a car crash when Tony was 17. After the war, he returned to his job at the bank. My great great grandfather on the Timms side is listed as a Master Chimney Sweep in Battersea, which would have horrified my paternal grandmother had she known!

Eileen was an amateur actress with a love of the bright lights of the stage – dreams nourished by her aunt, Florence Easton, a famous opera singer at the New York Metropolitan Opera. It was there that Florence created the role of Lauretta at the world premiere of Puccini's Gianni Schicchi on December 14, 1918, the first person to sing the now world-renowned aria, *O Mio Babbino Caro.* She was subsequently invited by Puccini himself to sing the first ever gramophone recording of this aria, which to my great delight has now been uploaded to YouTube so we can enjoy listening to her.

Tony and Eileen (see Figure 3) were the hub of a lively social scene, and I have fond memories of flamboyant parties with treasure-hunts for the adults and lavish feasts going on into the small hours. I loved sitting on my granny's bed, 'helping her' choose an evening dress, watching her apply her make-up and decide which jewellery to put on for the evening's festivities. She would dab a little perfume on my wrists. I would do up her necklace. It would be hard to imagine a more different world to my father's isolated yet luxurious existence.

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Figure 3: Tony & Eileen Timms, my grandparents, photographed at the Brighton Little Theatre. Photograph from family archive.

My Childhood

My parents sold the big house and moved away from London when I was three years old, so that my father could attend Theological College in Bristol. He wanted to become a Vicar. I imagine there are few people less suited to that role than the aristocratic, outspoken character who is my father. Having been mostly kept away from people as a child, educated at home, and never socialising beyond very limited occasions controlled by his parents, he had never had the need to 'fit in'. He explained to me once how, at the age of about seven, he had attended school for one week. Horrified to see the headmaster hitting one of his peers with a cane, my father called him out as a bully. His father had taught him it was dishonourable to hit someone smaller and weaker than oneself. His parents were telephoned and promptly removed him from the school and that was the end of that.

My paternal grandmother had great disdain for 'commoners' – a group she classified as "people who have to buy their own furniture" (!). They hired an ineffectual young man – a conscientious objector – to 'tutor' their children, and kept their children away from the frightening world outside the estate gates. Consequently, my father had a very limited general education. He also had few friends, other than his dogs, his horses, his little sister, and his father, a genius with a list of degrees longer than his arm. They lived in a crumbling twelfth century manor house with the family coat of arms carved into the gatepost. I grew up playing hide and seek in cobwebby attics, carefully avoiding ancient furniture you were not allowed to

sit on or touch; gazing up with wonder at beautiful curtained works of art too precious to expose to daylight.

Despite the bumbling bureaucratic failings of the Church of England, they must have had a pretty robust selection process, and despite successfully completing his theological studies, my father's application to the church was rejected outright. In 1975, at a crossroads in his life, he had a conversation with his only childhood friend, David, who was working for a missionary organisation. And so began my father's lifelong quest to *Save the World*: he became a preacher.

Between the ages of six and 16, I regularly accompanied him to the town centre, and stood with him as he painted bright images on a large board, which created enough interest for people to stop and listen to his message. Sometimes he preached to a lamp-post. Sometimes to a small crowd of intrigued onlookers. There were interesting conversations with people who were intrigued by his presentation of who Jesus is. Others were interested in the painting method, and he began to be invited to visit schools and churches: his story-telling and illustrations were engaging and unusual. He and my mother both saw this work as a calling. Sometimes he was given gifts of money, but my mother's income from her job as a secretary helped them make ends meet – my father's attitude to her working having changed over the years. My mother enjoyed her career and was recognised for her achievements with a top secretary award.

When I was nine, we loaded up our camping gear into the old Ford estate car and drove to Spain where his unique method of communicating the Christian message drew huge attention from the devoutly Catholic crowds out in their masses for the Easter parades. This was the first of many adventures in Europe and beyond. Deeply frustrated by what he saw as the irrelevance of traditional church ministry, his message was one of action, not religiosity. He inspired many others to act, and now, fifty years on, he has been the catalyst for people running a variety of projects in seventeen countries around the world, including orphanages and safe houses for the vulnerable. But that is his story. Although his story plays a big role in mine.

My father has always been a god-like figure to me. His vitriolic criticism of religious people who do nothing to change the world for the better settled into my bones. I absorbed the message deeply and profoundly. As an adult, I have become increasingly aware of how strange my childhood was. We were brought up to view ourselves as protagonists in God's plan to save the world. It has taken me much of my adult life to free myself from the weight of these expectations.

I have many fond memories of my upbringing. We did not have television at home. Reading was our primary pastime. Once or twice a week, we would run down the road to a

friend's house and watch a favourite programme, a huge treat. We spent several weeks a year over summer on my father's varnished mahogany sailing yacht, which had no engine. This was a charming eccentricity which left us stranded in many an isolated anchorage, *Swallows and Amazons* style (Ransome, 1962), until the wind changed. Those summers were happy, carefree times.

My favourite place to sit while we sailed – if the sea wasn't too rough - was astride the bow, legs dangling over the side. I gripped the metal bow rail above my head whilst the yacht plunged into the waves, soaking me up to my thighs. One balmy evening, sailing up-river in Normandy, France, I was allowed to sit on the boom. This was not usually allowed, as the risk of a sudden squall could have seen me flung into the water. I leaned back against the mainsail as if it were a hammock, basking in the evening sun. It felt magical.

I remember falling asleep tucked up in my orange sleeping bag on my bunk, looking up at the patterned grain of the cabin ceiling and listening to the sound of the water lapping against the hull. We woke early: I loved sitting out in the cockpit watching the sun rise over the water. Not a ripple. Not a sound except the call of distant birds. I have recreated some of these childhood memories in my creative thesis, which places my protagonist living on a boat.

My mother had the exhausting task of feeding and entertaining my sisters and I, aboard a small yacht with only a camping stove and a paraffin lamp. There was no hot water, and no modern appliances except the transistor radio. We were transfixed by *Listen with Mother* on radio 4, and waited all day for the magic words which preceded the day's story:

"Are you sitting comfortably? Then I shall begin".

We loved the poetic rhythm of the shipping forecast, another daily ritual. I can still recite the place names - some familiar, *Dover, Wight, Portland, Plymouth* - others mysterious, *Viking, Cromarty, Forties.* The forecast follows a strict protocol and a limit of 370 words written in a kind of coded poetry predicting regional windspeeds, visibility and general conditions: *Humber, Fisher, German Bight, four or five, increasing six, rain or drizzle, good.* Comprehensible only to its seagoing listeners, it was like being part of a special club.

My mother invented stories and songs to while away long hours at sea or at anchor, many of which I can still remember word-for-word. She was extraordinary in her patience, creativity and endless cheerfulness amidst rainy British summers – it was hardly a holiday for her.

Once aboard, my father put his work aside and relaxed. He was truly ours on the boat. He was an expert yachtsman – he needed to be on a yacht where the only engine was an old Seagull outboard which was stored down in the hull under the floorboards ready for emergencies. If there was an emergency when an engine was required, it would take so long to

retrieve, mount and start, it wasn't much help. We learned knot-tying and sailing very young. I have a vivid memory of him giving me the helm and sitting back while I tacked out of Poole Harbour in Dorset, aged about 10, a responsibility requiring a perfectly timed set of manoeuvres through a notoriously difficult network of channels in which running aground would mean a wait of hours for the tide to change. My self-esteem grew ten feet at the accomplishment. My father proudly tells how, sailing up to the quay in Morlaix, France, under jib, my sister and I hopped over the side and had the boat tied up expertly in seconds, much to the amusement of several adults who were hovering on hand to offer help. We were six and eight.

My father was reluctant to send us to school. Thankfully, and unexpectedly, he listened to my mother on this subject and we attended our local primary and high schools – a normalising experience which I firmly believe equipped us to live in the real world.

I am conscious of how these memories have shaped me. How my family's stories have moulded and formed me, and yet how I have broken free from my family history by emigrating to the other side of the world. My experience as an immigrant, with the inevitable rupturing of identity (Preece, 2016), has played a dramatic role in my developing sense of self, and has reshaped and transformed me as an adult. As Said (2000) notes, "exile and memory go together…..it is what one remembers of the past and how one remembers it that determine how one sees the future" (p. xxxv).

I have woven aspects of my childhood experiences and memories into my creative work: for example, my glamourous grandmother on stage, the flamboyant parties at which I felt slightly out of place, life on board an old wooden boat, and the feeling of not quite being able to meet the expectations of parents, are all reflected in my protagonist's story.

In a sense, I have left the past behind. And yet. And yet. In some ways I am reliving the story of my tīpuna. Resourceful, determined women feature repeatedly in my family history. Abandonment, divorce, determination and survival against the odds are threads woven through the lives of generations of women on both sides of my family. Women who overcome obstacles and hardships to forge their way in the world. The fingerprints of whakapapa are all over my life. As Klinkenborg (2013) notes, "this is a planet of overlapping lexicons. Generation after generation, trade after trade, expedition after expedition. Sent out to bring home… terms of identity in endless degrees of intricacy" (p. 42). My own story sounds awfully familiar. Does the "dim, unreachable, mesmerizing, endlessly entrancing past" (Thompson, 2019, p. 320) hold the keys to who I really am and where I really fit? How might reconnecting with my whakapapa provide me with a secure foundation, a place to stand, as an immigrant writer? These were the questions that foregrounded my research.

My struggle with a sense of unbelonging and a fragmentation of the self (Moura-Koçoğlu, 2011) has been deeply impacted by my engagement with whakapapa. Gomez and Vannini (2017) identify common themes in narratives of immigrant experience: loss of identity, family and social connections, and a sense of displacement: When you feel lost and alone it is difficult to flourish. I have attempted to recreate this feeling in my protagonist, Mariana, as she grapples with her own loss. Whakapapa provides a counterpoint to this: an opportunity to know oneself in connection to significant people and places, crossing geographical distance, and providing a sense of continuity between past, present and future. Gildea (2022) describes this in her poem, *Speaking Rights:*

> Their blood the stratum reaching forward into the future,
> accumulating, hardening
> into this exact moment
> into this very person who matters.
> It matters what she says, it makes a difference every time
> not throw away, not nothing
> Not ever alone (p. 82).

I did not arrive here, in the present, from nowhere. I came from somewhere. If I do not know where I have come from, or why, or how I got here – literally and psychologically – how can I understand where I am going? Or what drives me? What am I trying to resolve? In creative writing, this is known as the *backstory*: it enables us to understand the protagonist in a new light. Why is this woman here, in these circumstances? Why is she living like this? Why is she making these choices? In a very real sense, whakapapa enables me to understand my own backstory as a writer, which in turn will enable me to consciously curate my words and sentences. Words have "complex histories. They derive from dense contexts…. They resonate with the ghosts of all their earlier forms" (Klinkenborg, 2013, p. 21).

6

Wharenui

Meeting House

"Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell, 1987).

According to well-known British historian and archaeologist David Rohl (1996), the discipline of Egyptology was developed in the nineteenth century with a singular purpose in mind: to prove the historical validity of the biblical Old Testament documents. Every piece of evidence was evaluated with this agenda in mind, and new findings were, in some cases, manipulated to fit the desired narrative. Undergraduate Egyptology courses today still largely employ the timelines developed in these early years, and when new evidence is discovered which calls into question such academic traditions, it is met with scepticism and even outrage by some scholars. Rohl (1996) highlighted the interpretive nature of history as a discipline, noting that "the criterion of acceptance of any historical writing is whether it combines interpretations of evidence into a narrative consistent with our perceptions of the past" (1996, p. 38). Family histories can suffer from similar tendencies to edit and censor – depending on who holds the pen.

Knowledge is guarded by layers of tradition and structures which rely upon its maintenance. Throughout history, scholars such as Galileo or Darwin, who dared to challenge what was seen as *truth*, have experienced intense persecution. As Victorian essayist Walter Bagehot (1869) put it, "one of the greatest pains to human nature is the pain of a new idea. It makes you think that, after all, your favourite notions may be wrong, your firmest beliefs ill-founded. The common man hates a new idea, and the one who brings it" (ch. 5).

In *Ask the Posts of the House* (2007), Witi Ihimaera describes the wharenui (meeting house) as the living representation of whakapapa. Walking into the wharenui is like walking into the stomach of your ancestors. Important tīpuna are embodied in the posts of the wharenui, and their stories are woven into the tukutuku panels. In ancient Māori lore, the *pou* or posts of the house were seen as "living, sacred, able to talk" (Ihimaera, 2007, p.73). If you ask the posts of the house, the ancestors will whisper the truth to you. So, if I walk into the stomach of my whakapapa, what will I learn?

The exploration of my whakapapa was an exciting prospect which promised illumination, as if blowing the dust off the mosaic of the past to view it in its full colours. Excavating the storied layers encircling my heritage would, I hoped, shed light on my own

identity and offer me a glimpse into the past that may help me understand the present and provide me with a secure foundation as an author in the future.

The Posts of the House

Sir Charles Bond (see Figure 4, below) was a mythical figure – a central post - in the whare (house) of my upbringing. My grandfather was immensely proud of his connection to Sir Charles, and spoke of him as a member of Victorian society well known in London for his services to the poor. He listed his achievements as including the building of Heronsgate in Hertfordshire, a housing project for the disadvantaged.

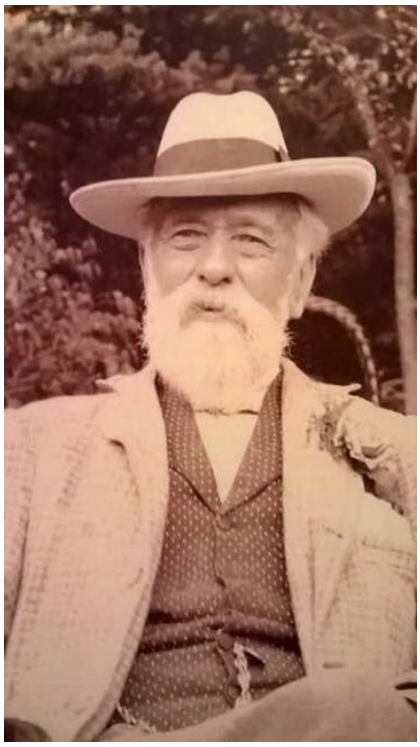

Figure 4: Charles Bond. Photograph from family archive.

There are a few records of his life. His death in September 1909 drew surprisingly little attention apart from a simple acknowledgment in the death notices. The main evidence of his life in London is found in the classified sections of newspapers and society magazines, such as *The Queen* and *The Lady*, in which he placed regular advertisements for his business. This suggests he was a self-made man and ran a successful business initially in Oxford Street and then New Bond Street (see Figures 5 and 6, below).

Charles was born in Bishops Nympton, North Devon in 1825, on the doorstep of the beautiful peaks of Exmoor. The river near the village is the Barle which is spanned by medieval stepping stones and an ancient bridge. Charles trained as a hairdresser. At some point he moved

to London and set up business on Oxford Street as a hairdresser, wig-maker and perfumier to the British aristocracy.


GREY HAIR RESTORED to its Original Colour in one week by the use of CHARLES BOND'S HAIR RENOVATOR. The quickest, safest, and cheapest Hair Colour Restorer extant. Large Bottles, 5s. 6d. each; carriage-free for six extra stamps. Charles Bond, 239, Oxford-street, W.

Figure 5: London Illustrated News, 2 Feb 1878


THE GENUINE EXTRACT OF QUININE AND GLYCERINE, made only by CHARLES BOND, HAIR CULTIVATOR, 239, OXFORD STREET, LONDON, and Sold in Brighton by W. WALKER, 47, EAST STREET, Perfumer, is a most delicious Wash, and an infallible remedy, when the Hair is falling off or is weak, from ill health, change of Climate, Sea Bathing, &c. No Lady or Gentleman valuing their Hair should ever be without it. In Bottles 2s. 6d., 4s. 6d., 8s. 6d., 14s., and 20s. each. Also the Electrical Hair Restorative for thin Partings, Bald Patches, &c., 2s. 6d. and 10s. 6d. per Bottle.

Figure 6: The Brighton Gazette, 29 March 1860

Rather than 'building Heronsgate,' records from the Hertfordshire Record Office show that, in fact, he built a house for himself there in the late 1800s, "Herons Court," and lived there until his death in 1909. He left the house to his son George, also listed as a hairdresser. He is recorded as donating funds for the building of the chancel at Saint John the Evangelist's church in Heronsgate, in 1886. This is an example of how facts can be altered by simple changes or omissions in language over time: "he built a house at Heronsgate" became, in my grandmother's memory, "he built Heronsgate".

A book on Heronsgate (Foster, 1999) describes it as a residential estate started by the Chartist movement. The Chartist movement was created to promote political reform with a focus on equal voting rights based on citizenship rather than property ownership, and vote by secret ballot. The Reform Act of 1912 extended earlier parliamentary reforms to extend voting rights to all male citizens aged over 30, and in 1918 was revised again to include all males who were either over the age of 21, or who had served in the army. The property ownership requirement had previously excluded the working classes from any role in the political system. Essentially, the Chartists were a suffrage movement for men of the working class just as the suffragettes later campaigned for equal voting rights for women. According to Foster (1999), Feargus O'Connor set up Heronsgate as a kind of social experiment: he purchased the land through a co-operative share scheme, selling shares to sixty members who then built their

houses on the site. The scheme was controversial amongst the traditional Chartists whose aim was the political, not economic, emancipation of the working classes.

Charles made a donation to the building of the chancel. Other charitable causes and philanthropic deeds are by their nature difficult to trace. However, his involvement with the Chartist movement through Heronsgate points to an ideology that prioritised the betterment of humanity.

Charles Bond's daughter, my great grandmother Ada, was a special character in my father's childhood. He remembers her as a delightful person with a kind nature, and loved his grandmother very much. Records show Charles had a family from his second marriage, and left his estate to 3 people, his son George, daughter Ada and an Alfred Pretchel (Ada's sister-in-law's husband).

Ada Bond married my great-grandfather (Charles) Ward Davey on the 1st March 1905. The Bonds and the Daveys were obviously close: Charles Bond signed as a witness at Ward Davey's father's wedding, when he married Charles' niece Lizzie Bromley on 2nd October 1863. Census information for Charles Bond from 1901 reveals that his nephew, Lizzie's brother, Walter How Bromley, was living with them. There is evidence of an early connection between the Bonds and the Daveys, which began with Charles Bond and Thomas How Bromley (Lizzie's father) marrying sisters.

Thomas How Bromley was a licensed publican – referred to in the records as a "Licensed Victualler". He was prominent in the Licensed Victualler Association. Part of the organisation ran an asylum under the earlier meaning of that term – a place of shelter/community. There was no unemployment benefit or health care system, so organisations such as this organised welfare for members who fell on hard times, including the elderly and infirm. His involvement is perhaps evidence of an ideology he shared with Charles Bond. Thomas, by all accounts, was a very active member of the society who had, based on comments recorded in a newsletter, a fine singing voice.

Over the years the Bromleys ran many different pubs at different times around London, living in apartments above the premises. One of the most interesting of these was called Sir Paul Pindar Public House, at 169 Bishopsgate (see Figure 7). Sir Paul Pindar was a wealthy city merchant in the reign of James I, and built the house in 1599. A pub by that name still exists in the Bishopsgate Arcade, though not in the original building, which was demolished to make way for building construction in the late 1800s. The original public house was a fine Tudor building, one of the only timber buildings to survive the Great Fire of London in 1666. The front of the entire house was removed and preserved and can be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. However, 'restoration' work removed the patina of the ages,

including the original glass and interesting layers of antique wallpaper, leaving it a bare shell (see Figure 8), which to me is a tragedy. The same can be said of a scientific approach to the past: I do not want to 'renovate' it, I like the quirky layers.

Figure 7: The Sir Paul Pindar Public House. Photograph from family archive.

Figure 8: The "restored" frame on display in the Victoria & Albert Museum. Photograph from family archive.

Thomas's daughter, Lizzy Bromley, married my great-great-grandfather Charles Davey, also a licensed victualler, and she ran the business after Charles died, aged only 47, in 1882. Lizzy outlived him by over 30 years (d. 1914). The trade of licensed victualler seems to be one of the few acceptable employment options in which women could take over a licence and carry on in the place of a man. Another independent, determined woman.

Charles Davey was the youngest of a large family who lived in Fasbourn Hall, in Buxhall, Suffolk (see Figure 9), with his father George and grandfather Robert Davey (born in Eye, Suffolk, in 1751), a gentleman farmer. The nearest maunga (mountain) is "Devil's Hill" and the awa (river) Gipping flows from here through Stowmarket, and is the source of the River Orwell further downstream. The Daveys evidently have a long history in Suffolk, going back centuries, making this a significant place in my whakapapa, and one which I have never visited. Fasbourn Hall was operating as a Bed and Breakfast Hotel until the onset of the pandemic. I hope to be able to visit at some point, travel permitting.

Figure 9: Fasbourne Hall, Buxhall, Suffolk. Photograph reproduced under Creative Commons licence.

As an adult, Charles moved to London and joined his brothers in trade as a licensed victualler, which is where he met Lizzy. Charles and Lizzy had four living children, Kate, Ward (my great grandfather through his marriage to Ada Bond), John and Walter. John became an estate agent and amassed a portfolio of investment properties, as did Ward and Ada's father Charles Bond – presumably due to their connection with John. My grandfather inherited a large fortune through his father Ward Davey and grandfather Charles Bond, which enabled him and my grandmother to live the lavish lifestyle I so vividly remember. Census records indicate that my grandmother's family, the Searles, also had roots in London.

It has been illuminating to uncover some facts about my ancestry on my father's side. Far from being insipid aristocrats who were born into money and who viewed the real world from the safety and distance of great wealth and walled estates, my tīpuna were business people – publicans, hairdressers, farmers. To me, the facts make my ancestors real people: people I can relate to, people who worked hard and made their own living. Many historical accounts emphasise the men, but the women are just as interesting and admirable – if not more so.

This highlights to me the responsibility of the writer: It is very important to think about what I choose to write about, and who, and why. And what I leave out. Readers will construct my identity – and interpret theirs - through the text. Klinkenborg (2013) emphasises the significance of silence, of what is left unsaid and how that silence can impact the reader powerfully. According to this conceptualisation of silence in writing, crafting the written word involves an intensity of focus, of noticing, and of careful selection of words which is only

available to writers who are willing to reflect on the layers of their own backstory. This will eliminate the un-necessary noise of redundant words, as "sentences [listen] for the silence around them. Listening for their own pulse" (Klinkenborg, 2013, p. 11).

Engaging with my own whakapapa has been immensely therapeutic. I have discovered roots in places I have never visited – Suffolk and Yorkshire – and also in places with which I am very familiar – North Devon and London. My whakapapa on both sides of my family is firmly connected to the city of London, and I can therefore confidently say that my awa is the Thames. There are few maunga in London. Probably the most significant hill is Greenwich Park (see Figure 11) where I played as a child – my family's history revolves around this part of London. My mother shopped at Greenwich Market. My father studied marine navigation on the tall ship the Cutty Sark, in dry dock in Greenwich (see Figure 10). I always return here when I visit home.

Figure 10: The Cutty Sark, Greenwich, London. Photograph from family archive.

Figure 11: Greenwich Park and the Greenwich Observatory. Photograph from family archive.

Greenwich Park is the site of the Greenwich Observatory and the 'beginning of time', or at least Greenwich Mean Time, for the world. To me, it represents a different beginning, the start of a new time, a time of connecting to my roots whilst simultaneously putting down roots on the opposite side of the world. A time of acknowledging what was, and facing the future with a new sense of who I am and where I am from. I have found that Osterhaus's (1997) theory regarding the transformative potential of exploring family stories has certainly enabled me to engage with important aspects of my identity as an author.

Connecting with my whakapapa has meant far more than familiarising myself with my ancestral heritage: it provided a unique opportunity to make sense of my present in the light of what is past and face forwards as a writer with a new sense of my place in the world. According to Klinkenborg (2013), it is a vital process for writers to untangle "all the words, histories and utterances, the residue of generations of lives" thus "making myself intelligible" (p. 28).

Exploring my whakapapa has helped make my identity as an author intelligible by prompting me to identify and critically evaluate old assumptions, family stories and beliefs, enabling me to move on from a past self and reconstruct a new sense of self, a new sense of place and belonging. For a writer, this means I am no longer relying on "a life staffed by volunteers" (Klingkenborg, 2013, p. 47), whether those volunteers are values, beliefs, sentences, subjects, structures, or some other inheritance. Instead, I am paying attention, alert, listening, interrogating and making conscious choices. Whakapapa is not just about the past. It

is also about the present. And the future. Whakapapa has made me think about the kind of ancestor I want to be for my descendants. What am I adding to the family story?

In Aotearoa, Māori affirm and discover extended family connections through recounting whakapapa. This has also happened for me. One example, is that through her own research into family ancestry, a cousin, Jill Freeman, uncovered her connection to my father and contacted him. We discovered that she has been living ten minutes from my house in Tauranga for the past twenty years. Whakapapa has connected me to relatives I did not know existed, and has given me a family in this distant land.

Mate

Death

Death comes softly in the end
A breath, a smile, beloved friend.
A rest, a peace, an end to pain
She walks the garden with her love again.

Death comes softly in the end
A whisper, gentle, all shall mend.
A grief, a hurt, as we remain
Tears fall quietly, healing rain.

Lost, for now, to our embrace
Gone, for now, to a different place.
We'll meet again beloved friend,
Death comes softly in the end.

7

Tangihanga

Mourning

"When grief rings: Surrender. There is nothing else to do.
The delivery is utter transformation"
(Doyle, 2020, p. 272).

I am in mourning as I sit to write this in September 2020. The deaths of my Uncle and Aunt weigh heavily. He went first, in August. British midsummer storms rained torrents as he passed. She lived without him for eight weeks. Fifty days. Seventy years of marriage falling in on her like a landslide. She suffocated under the deluge of loss. Alone in the little island haven they had created together on the Isle of Man. She told her little brother, my father, on the phone that week, that she did not want to stay. She was ready. And, mercifully, the universe listened. A blessing not always given to those who seek it. A couple of days in hospital, then death came softly. Quietly, gently, she fell asleep. A smile on her lips. She walks the garden with her love again.

My aunt (see Figure 12) was a person with a remarkable story. A last link to a forgotten world. Born in 1929, she was one of the first women in Britain, in fact the world, to gain her light aircraft pilot's licence. Her instructor was Cecil Pashley, British Pilot's Licence number 10. The 1950's was the dawn of the aviation era, and my aunt wanted to train as a commercial pilot but was told by British European Airways that, as a woman, they would only employ her as a cabin attendant. So that is what she did. That and winning the occasional car rally. An adrenaline junkie in her day.

Her funeral, on a quiet, grey Autumn day, was a solemn affair: Only two of her daughters present, another daughter and her son unable to attend due to travel restrictions brought about by COVID-19. A handful of nephews and nieces. Strict social distancing protocols. The Isle of Mann in lockdown. Photographs shared online show flowers on the fresh mud, glowing in pale sunlight. A chill in the air and in our hearts. Not for them the solace of a gathering of long-held friends and wider family. Not for me a trip home into the arms of my sisters. Pandemic World.

Figure 12: June, my aunt. Photograph from family archive.

Even without a pandemic, we do not deal well with death in western culture. We do not like to think of our mortality, let alone speak of it. Brennan (2015) notes the Western proclivity for arbitrary and impersonal death rituals which subdue emotional or creative expressions of grief and sustain Victorian era attitudes towards death as a subject "best left unstirred and untouched" (p. 295), or, in the words of Feifel (2013), "an obscenity to be avoided" (p. 9). According to Pulitzer Prize winner Ernest Becker (2020), it is not love that makes the world go round, but *the denial of death*. Unresolved grief, however, has far-reaching psychological consequences (Pihama et al., 2014).

Becker (2020) observed how humans spend a great deal of their lives trying to evade the reality of their own mortality. Denying its power over us, convincing ourselves that age is just a number. Doing battle with the symptoms: stiffness, forgetfulness, wrinkles, grey hair. We enrol in yoga again, write lists, inject, dye. And yet, inevitably, it comes. One day. Softly and quietly (if we are lucky) we fall asleep. Some far too early – several of my friends have lost husbands before the age of 50. Cancer reminds us it is truly a privilege to get old.

The word tangihanga, most often shortened to tangi, means to weep and lament, and is the traditional Māori ceremonial farewell for the dead. The closest thing to a tangi in European culture is the Irish Wake, a gathering of friends and family lasting several days. The clan surrounds the deceased with singing, storytelling and no small amount of drinking, seeing them

off into the next world on a wave of memories and love. The origins of the wake also had a practical purpose: to check if the person was actually dead. Would they wake? For Māori, the tangi is a place to remind one another of their whakapapa and reaffirm connections from the past to the present and into the future.

At the end of a tangi, which usually lasts three days, similarly to many other funeral traditions around the world, the deceased is interred in the ground at their traditional tribal burial ground. There is a strong awareness of 'tapu' (sacred, forbidden) for those attending a tangi. It is a sacred event, and tapu is lifted by handwashing upon leaving the site. The deceased's home is also cleansed of tapu by a ceremonial prayer chanted as a priest or spiritual leader walks through the house.

According to Higgins (2011), the modern-day ritual of tangihanga bears the closest resemblance to Māori customary practices pre-colonisation and is therefore one of the most significant ceremonies for Māori today, ensuring unique cultural practices are retained as they navigate a pākehā world. In the words of Elder Tīmoti Kāretu, quoted by Higgins (2011), "ki te wareware i a tātau tēnei tikanga a tātau, arā te tangi ō tātau tūpāpaku, kātahi tō tātau Māoritanga ka ngaro atu i te mata o te whenua ki te Pō, oti atu" (If we forget our cultural practices, particularly those pertaining to the dead, then the very essence of our existence as Māori will be lost from the face of this earth to the underworld forever) (p. 5).

In western culture, grief is most often kept private, which stands in stark contrast to the visibility and accessibility of Māori tradition. In the days, weeks and months following a loss, friends often feel uncomfortable around a person who is grieving. Unsure what to say. Avoiding mentioning the loved one's name for fear of upsetting those who are left. The result is that people are isolated at a time when they most need support. I have several friends who have commented on this experience following a bereavement.

In pākehā culture, there is a sense that the person needs to move on. Let the dead go. Put the past behind them. In Māori culture, however, expressions of grief and emotion are seen as therapeutic and not to be hidden. The dead are treasured as on-going and ever-present members of the extended family. They are acknowledged, welcomed and included at every meeting and ceremony. Not seen as far away, but as standing with their whānau when they speak, and able to provide answers on important matters (Ihimaera, 2007; Gildea, 2022; Grace, 1995).

Much of the literature on grief focusses, understandably, on bereavement – the death of a person who is significant to us – and the varied emotional, psychological and social distress which follows. As Ariès (1974) commented, "a single person is missing… and the whole world is empty" (p. 92). Mourning is defined as the process of gradually adapting to this loss (Christ

et al., 2003) and involves internal processes of grieving as well as external processes such as rituals and memorials which enabled the bereaved to feel a sense of connection with the deceased person and find comfort in the sharing of treasured memories. The path to healing and acceptance of the loss is different for everyone and contains many ups and downs, but the aim is that eventually the bereaved finds a way of continuing to live a full life without the deceased (Christ et al., 2003; Raphael, 2006; Kochen et al., 2020).

The loss of any person dear to us is painful, but the death of a child is more traumatic than any other loss (Christ et al., 2003). The novel *Waiotapu* explores the theme of a mother's loss of her husband and child to cancer. When a child dies – even if an illness has been lengthy and death is anticipated (Raphael, 2006) – the impact on parents is profoundly disorienting, and the intensity of parental distress can be utterly consuming (Kochen et al., 2020).

The literature discusses varied reactions to the death of a child. In addition to the more common emotions associated with grief such as anger, sadness, despair, parents who lose a child may experience vivid dreams, hear their child's voice, maintain a relationship with their child long after death, and are more prone to suicide (Raphael, 2006). Christ et al., (2003) also highlight the intensity of separation trauma resulting from the death of a child, and note that parents may experience symptoms of post-traumatic-stress, including intrusive thoughts, yearning or searching for the deceased, extreme loneliness, purposelessness, numbness, a feeling that part of you has died, and experiencing a shattering of identity and worldview. I portray these symptoms in my creative thesis, as the protagonist lives with the life-shattering consequences of the loss of her husband and child.

Brennan (2015) acknowledges other life events, aside from bereavement, that can provoke grief: when the world we are familiar with is disrupted, whether through death, or a change of place or loss of connection with a person, a social network, a routine, or another source of identity and meaning, the impact can be disorienting and debilitating. Implicit within this is the acknowledgment that the very act of colonisation, with its accompanying loss of land, identity, place and people, inflicts grief upon indigenous peoples.

Pihama et al. (2014) describe how colonisation creates "collective distress and mourning in contemporary communities" (Pihama et al., 2014, p. 253). This is echoed by Walters et al. (2011), who note that "for indigenous people, loss of place is akin to loss of spirit or identity" (p. 173). While displacement and separation in many forms are common threads in the human condition, the experience of colonised peoples is uniquely injurious. Loss of ancestral lands, for Māori, can be likened to the loss of a beloved relative (Wilson, 2014). It is impossible for pākehā to truly understand the anguish experienced by colonised peoples, displaced in their own country, watching as ancestral lands are desecrated, and treasured ways

of life are destroyed by colonising powers (Pihama et al., 2014; Stewart, 2022). I acknowledge that I can only attempt to imagine the anguish of such loss in my creative work.

Pihama et al. (2014) highlight the intergenerational impacts of historical trauma on colonised peoples, noting that whilst historical trauma theory is well-established in North America, in Aotearoa New Zealand it is viewed as controversial. Native Americans were massacred in their thousands, a genocide that undeniably stains the history of North America with blood. The destruction of Māori communities may appear less dramatic, but the British colonial policy of deracination was certainly no less traumatic for Māori. In Aotearoa New Zealand, deracination involved the confiscation of whenua (land), the slaughter of reo (language), mātauranga (knowledge), tikanga (cultural practices), the imprisonment or execution of rebels, and the forced separation of children from their families, which together represent a cultural genocide which was no less cataclysmic, as discussed in recent research literature (Barnes & McCreanor, 2019; Pihama et al., 2014). Stewart (2022) highlights the unrelenting pressure for Māori to assimilate, a concept she describes as "symbolic annihilation" (p. 466). I have sought to acknowledge this through the words and actions of the fictional community in my creative thesis, for example the reference to Koro being punished for speaking te reo at school.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the intergenerational legacy of these traumatic events, combined with an ongoing "philosophical extermination" (Stewart et al., 2021, p. 141), perpetrated over many decades, remains to a large degree unacknowledged and unaddressed despite the efforts of the Waitangi Tribunal to provide compensation and apology. As Duran et al. (1995) pointed out, the strategies for facilitating healing of such wounds are themselves generated by the colonists and continue to be based in a Eurocentric worldview which assumes "the moral legitimacy and universality of state institutions" (p. 6).

Nearly thirty years later, this is still the case. As Barnes and McCreanor (2019) note, colonial values remain hegemonic in all domains of Aotearoa New Zealand society, such as politics, education, and health. According to Sloan et al. (2020), historically, the "grand sweep" (p. 322) of world events has been recorded and recounted from a largely Eurocentric perspective. Fundamental to decolonising understanding in contemporary society is "the re-telling of history from the perspectives of those who have been historically silenced. These narratives disrupt our taken-for-granted understandings of the world" (Sloan et al., 2020, p. 322). This presented me with a significant challenge as I engaged in the creative writing process as a non-indigenous writer wishing to resist colonial ideology. The research process, which employed principles of reflective practice, together with the supervision process, shed light on my own taken-for-granted understandings and held me accountable for hidden assumptions.

There is currently an upsurge in indigenous creative expression through film, writing and art giving voice to previously silenced Māori perspectives on historical events in Aotearoa New Zealand. Prominent writers such as Tina Makereti and Anahera Gildea are joining established voices such as Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace, providing a rich source of literature to immerse myself in. Makereti's first novel, *Where the Rēkohu Bone Sings* (2014), depicts the intergenerational legacy of cross-cultural dilemmas amongst a group consisting of Moriori, Māori, and those of pākehā descent. Gildea's latest publication, *Sedition* (2022) is a powerfully emotive collection of poems voicing the agony and anger of her lived experience as a Māori wahine in a colonised nation.

The 2022 Aotearoa New Zealand Film Festival showcased a number of films such as *Muru* (written and directed by Tearepa Kahi, 2022), which documents the experiences of a Māori community subjected to armed police raids on Rūātoki in 2007, and *Whina* (written by James Lucas, James Napier Robertson and Paula Whetū Jones and directed by Robertson and Jones, 2022) which documents the extraordinary life of Dame Whina Cooper and her lifelong fight for justice over the government's ongoing failure to uphold the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi. Creative expression has been shown to be therapeutic for individuals (Brennan, 2015; Jarrett, 2007). Literature and film are powerful vehicles for building awareness and can act as agents for societal healing – a kind of community therapy (Brennan, 1990; Moura-Koçoğlu, 2011).

Intergenerational trauma resulting from the unresolved grief of past injustices has been shown to manifest itself amongst indigenous communities in a number of ways, for example in poor mental or physical health. Survivor guilt experienced by later generations can feature the transposition of temporal perception, where the past and present are experienced as concurrent, with "ancestral suffering as the main organising principal in one's life" (Brave Heart, 2000, p. 246).

Indigenous cultures generally have a deep bond of connection with those who have passed away (Brave Heart, 2000; Ihimaera, 2007; Pihama et al., 2014), which can develop to the degree that life is experienced as a kind of living death in later generations. An intense loyalty with the afflictions suffered by ancestors can lead to the re-creation of suffering in the lives of descendants (Brave Heart, 2000). My creative thesis attempts to depict and acknowledge this suffering, for example the reference to the ongoing impact of their ancestor's untimely death following the loss of the pā. According to Pihama et al. (2014), evidence of this in Aotearoa New Zealand is the fact that Māori are "grossly over-represented in New Zealand's trauma profiles" (p. 256). They cite studies which indicate Māori are substantially more likely

to experience serious illness, early death or injury of loved ones through disease, suicide, accident, or violence.

Historical trauma is exacerbated by the ongoing oppression of indigenous peoples in the modern world, which is a place where colonised communities continue to experience loss through poor health outcomes, poor educational outcomes, unstable employment, high levels of homelessness, alcoholism, domestic abuse and racism (Wolfe, 2006). The evidence is that this is as true for Māori communities in Aotearoa New Zealand (Barnes & McCreanor, 2019; Pihama et al., 2014; Stewart, 2021) as it is for Native American communities in North America (Brave Heart, 2000). However, as Pihama et al. (2014) note, the strong political reaction against historical trauma theory amongst the pākehā community in Aotearoa New Zealand illustrates a pervasive refusal to recognise and acknowledge the severity of impacts on Māori. This is a theme I explore in my creative thesis, for example via the comments and actions of members of the pākehā community in response to the protest.

The evidence is clear that colonisation causes ongoing emotional and psychological damage, both individual and collective. There is also evidence that refugees may experience intergenerational trauma. Sangalang and Vang (2017) highlight the unprecedented levels of refugee migration in the modern world, with the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) anticipating in 2021 that, by the following year, 100 million people would have been forcibly displaced (UNHCR, 2021), either through persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, or civil unrest. The figure includes those who are internally displaced as well as international refugees and asylum seekers. Sangalang and Vang (2017) note that many refugees are exposed to trauma both prior to and during migration, in addition to the ongoing trauma of separation from homeland and families, and that both types of trauma can be linked to continuing psychological distress for the individual, as well as "potential long-term effects on the health and psychosocial wellbeing of individuals in subsequent generations" (p. 746).

Sangalang et al. (2019) have also researched the impact of post-migration stress on non-refugee immigrants: people who leave their country of origin by choice. According to their study, economic migrants are also prone to experience acculturative stress and family conflict, as well as discrimination, which can lead to psychological distress for some migrants. To me, it is striking that the concept of intergenerational trauma has been understood in mātauranga Māori for centuries, with the interconnectedness of past, present and future expressed through whakapapa: that ancestral experience lives on in subsequent generations.

I am not a refugee. I chose to emigrate. It would be repellent to compare my experience to the trauma of the forcibly displaced. However, my own experience of migration carried with it a deep experience of grief. I grieved the loss of my family: still living, but half a world away.

Out of reach. There but not there. In the early days of my new life in Aotearoa New Zealand, before the days of email and smartphones, I wrote and waited for letters. The invention of the fax machine made this correspondence more immediate – my sister and I had access to these at work. But communication was intermittent. Neither they, nor I, had the funds to visit. I found myself living a kind of half-life. Going about my daily tasks feeling numb. Fulfilling the role of wife in this new life I had chosen. Going to sleep feeling sad. Waking with tears flowing down my cheeks. I was desperate to go home. Held captive by a promise I had made under the terms of the extreme religious values of my upbringing.

At age 21, my life felt like death. I inhabited the exile's "mansion of sorrow" (Darwish, 1974, as cited in Said, 2012, p.179). I watched from a distance as my younger sisters grew up without me. I was filled with longing and regret. Many years later, when I finally gained the courage to act and free myself, I lived another decade lost in grief over my divorce. And still unable to go home because of the bond of shared parenting. Unresolved grief marked my life for many years. The loss of family, home, future, weighed heavily. It was as though everything I longed for was always out of reach. Beyond my grasp. I was a captive. And I had chosen it. My life became punctuated by sorrow, regret and longing. I express this in the poem, *Mauhere.*

The emotional effects of grief are well-documented – despair, chaos, anger (Brennan, 2015; Kübler-Ross, 1969), and an overarching sense of melancholy described by Kristeva (1989) as an "abyss of sorrow" (p. 3). However, grief can be a catalyst for transformation and creativity. Doyle (2020) discusses the shattering experience of grief, and the transformative process of reconstructing a sense of self that is part of the process of recovery, of rebuilding.

People who are willing to "really sit in their pain" (Doyle, 2020, p. 271) start to see everything differently. Goldberg (2009) describes the process, for writers, as being willing to sit in the bottom of the pit. To face the darkness. To befriend it in a sense. Grief changes us. Grief can remake us. Brennan (2015) notes that mourning is the foundation of growth and change, and can equip us for living creatively. Going back to our old ways, old thoughts, old self would be "like a snake trying to fit back into old, dead skin, or a butterfly trying to crawl back into its cocoon…. There is no going back" (Doyle, 2020, p. 272). That has been my experience. This process has changed me, irrevocably. I am not the person I used to be.

According to Brennan (2015), the idea of a relationship between grief and creativity is widely accepted across scholarly disciplines. Although it seems counter-intuitive, the evidence is clear that the destructive and debilitating experience of loss can often be a catalyst for creative endeavour. The desire to create something meaningful, to remember and to acknowledge what is lost is at the heart of much creative practice. Kristeva (1989) noted the

paradoxical reciprocity of the relationship between grief and creativity: melancholy is the catalyst for creativity, which in turn resolves the melancholy.

Creative practice is a popular strategy in trauma therapy. Creative expression is uniquely empowering, bringing with it a sense of agency in a situation otherwise beyond our control – whether dealing with bereavement, terminal illness, or other kinds of trauma and loss, creativity provides a counterweight to feelings of powerlessness (Brennan, 2015; Jarrett, 2007). The human need "to create something beautiful from the ugly detritus of pain and suffering" (Brennan, 2015, p. 301) can be seen in many forms throughout the world in visual, musical and written artforms.

In the next chapter I continue to develop the themes of grief over the loss of one's homeland as both a catalyst for creativity, and creativity as a vehicle for growth and healing. "For creativity serves here as a bridge (and to some extent a choice), between a life dominated by the pain and suffering of loss, and the future possibilities by which these feelings can be (fashioned)…into something that can help sustain rather than destroy life" (Brennan, 2015, p. 301). Tangihanga, mourning, is fundamental to this process.

I recently held a tangi for my past. I sat with my sorrows and I mourned. I wailed over my regrets and lamented my mistakes. I sang to my past, kissed it goodbye one last time and washed my hands. Enough grief. Enough sorrow. Enough regret. The time has come to live. To look forwards. My past will always be with me, part of me, speaking to me like ancestors now passed on, but I choose how much power I give to it. It is not me. I carry it in my pocket. I take it out and look at it from time to time. I remember. But then I can put it away, take a deep breath and square my shoulders to the future. A new future. A new hope. A new sense of identity.

I began this chapter writing from a place of mourning for my Aunt and Uncle some two years ago. I now finish it with the news this morning of the death of Queen Elizabeth II, the longest reigning monarch in British history. For many here, the monarchy is a painful symbol of colonisation, stirring up anger over the many injustices perpetrated under its flag. From a post-colonial perspective, her death exposes a profound ambivalence surrounding the nature of monarchy in the modern world, and the increasing perception of its irrelevance. It also highlights intense controversy over the meaning of sovereignty for First Nation peoples.

According to the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand (Papa & Meredith, 2012), the Māori King Movement (Kīngitanga) was formed in response to the lack of political power for Māori in the early days of European Settlement. Iwi were independently governed by rangatira, and without a single unified representation of Māori interests, it was difficult to gain traction on

issues affecting the tangata whenua (the people of the land). It was a controversial idea amongst the rangatira (chiefs), but many of them recognised the unifying power of Queen Wikitoria.

Waikato chief Pōtatau te Wherowhero was finally persuaded to assume the role and was declared king at Ngāruawāhia in 1858 (Papa & Meredith, 2012). As the movement grew and the Māori King and his successors took steps to protect Māori lands from being appropriated by settlers, this was treated as a rebellion against the British Crown, and troops invaded the Waikato in 1863, resulting in war and a large-scale confiscation of Tainui lands – a wrong that was not remedied until over 130 years later in 1995, when Queen Elisabeth II signed the first ever Waitangi Tribunal Settlement into law, including an official apology (Papa & Meredith, 2012).

The first Māori Queen, Te Atairangikaahu, was crowned in 1966 following the death of her father, King Tāwhiao and she became the longest reigning Māori monarch (Papa & Meredith, 2012). Both Queen Elisabeth II and Queen Atairangikaahu were widely loved and respected by many of their subjects, and were a unifying force for their people, while others have good reason to be deeply cynical about their role. Despite misgivings over the concept of monarchy, many thousands attended the tangihanga of Queen Te Atairangikaahu, including foreign dignitaries, just as many thousands will attend the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II. I am surprised at how the death of Queen Elizabeth moved me, and others around the world. In some ways, her death represents the end of an era, and to many that is a good thing. I am increasingly uncomfortable about my connection, as an Englishwoman, to one of history's great colonising powers and the atrocities committed in the name of empire. We do not choose our whakapapa.

As an immigrant, separated from my homeland and family by a vast distance, there was a time when happiness and healing seemed out of reach. Beyond my grasp. Everything (and everyone) I longed for seemed permanently hidden. Grief itself has changed me. The experience of exile has been "a canyon of grief" (Doyle, 2020, p. 272) lasting decades, but has also been responsible for my transformation. At last, I have come to see my time in exile as a gift: a fountain of creative inspiration. As writers, we choose to show ourselves, to allow our deepest feelings to be seen, handled by others as we share our words. As Doyle (2020) notes, "good art is the desire to show yourself, to be seen – that's what people connect to" (p. 253). In *Waiotapu*, I portray these strands of grief: the loss of loved ones, the loss of lands, the death of tino rangatiratanga (self governance) through colonisation, and how unresolved trauma haunts the present. I continue to explore the theme of exile, creative practice and the longing for home in the next chapter.

Mauhere

Captive

Beyond the shadows misty sheen
Beyond the iridescent gleam
Beyond the ravens steaming cup
Beyond the crowds who swarm and sup
Beyond the pain when all seems night
Beyond the unrelenting fight
Beyond the fall of Autumn's leaf
Beyond the loss, beyond the grief
Beyond despairs consuming fires
Beyond the turmoil of desires
Beyond the dream of love’s embrace
Beyond the veil, beyond times race
Beyond the stillness of hopes tears
Beyond the silence of the years
Beyond the glow of sun’s last frond
Beyond the sea,
Beyond
Beyond.

8

Tūrangawaewae

A Place to Stand

"Exile is… the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (Said, 2012, p. 173)

Although a sense of belonging can be geographically diverse in te ao Māori, the importance of tūrangawaewae, a place to stand; a safe haven to call 'home', is acknowledged as a cornerstone of both individual and community wellbeing (Barlow, 1991). However, tūrangawaewae means more than the western definition of home implies. Kāinga is the word in te reo for 'home'. It refers to the place you currently live. Tūrangawaewae is a deeper, more nuanced concept of home, acknowledging a connection to, and roots in, a particular place through whakapapa. Tūrangawaewae carries a sense of safety, of belonging. As Walters et al. (2011) note, "indigenous knowledge recognises place as integral to one's sense of being which is also central to both individual and collective spiritual health and wellness" (p. 173).

The human need for roots was described by Simone Weil, a Jewish refugee in World War II, as "the most important and least recognised need of the human soul." (Weil, 1952, p. 43). Powell (2019) highlights the importance of *belonging* for human wellbeing, and contrasts this with a social phenomenon he calls *othering* – a process that engenders marginalisation and inequality across the range of human differences. Belonging implies full participation, co-creation of structures and policies, which defines full membership of society. Powell (2019) contrasts this with *inclusion* – a state in which people are still classed as outsiders but tolerated and permitted to visit or attend but do not have a voice, as is the case for minority populations around the world.

Tūrangawaewae is a place of true belonging and connection – not just to tīpuna, whānau and community but to the land itself, to Papatūānuku, the earth mother. It is a place of strength and empowerment: a spiritual home. There is an awareness in te ao Māori, of an underlying need to return from distant places to your tūrangawaewae, to recharge and regain a sense of place and purpose (Blisset, 2011). This awareness is illustrated by the following whakatauki:

Hokia ki te maunga kia pūrea e ngā hau a Tawhirimatea!

Return to your homelands so that you may be replenished by the winds

The notion of home as more than a place is echoed by Rohr (2012), who defines home as an "inner compass and a North Star" (p. xxxvii). He highlights the reoccurring themes

throughout legend, literature and religion, of leaving home and returning; of loss and renewal. Campbell's controversial work on comparative mythology, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), proposed that it is only in leaving our safe places, in facing the pain of loss, that we encounter true growth and transformation, echoing concepts identified in the previous chapter. He suggested that hidden within life itself is an invitation to leave, to challenge boundaries, to move out - and yet returning home transformed is the ultimate prize – "home is both the beginning and the end" (Rohr, 2012, p. xxxvii).

Said (2012) describes the modern world as the era of the displaced person, a concept highlighted by Powell (2019) who defines the current global meta-narrative as one of demographic change and mass migration. The UNHCR (2021) data on migration confirms this. Polarising themes of globalisation versus nationalism and of curated and strategic marginalisation highlight a cataclysm of xenophobic populism and reactionary ethnocentrism. Mass immigration – the need to escape war, totalitarian regimes, or economic deprivation – has "torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family and geography" (Said, 2012, p. 174).

Exiles are unable to return to their homelands - differentiated from those who may choose to return home, whom Said (2012) refers to as expatriates. Expatriates share in the isolation and estrangement of exile but enjoy the benefits of visiting home, as well as an entirely different economic and social status to refugees who are permanently cut off from "their roots, their land, their past" (Said, 2012, p. 177). Exile has a permanence which brings an intensity to the sense of loss not experienced by those who have a choice.

My own experience is not uncommon in the modern era: I originally chose to emigrate. Following my divorce, I have been held here for the past decade by the Hague Convention which dictates that children must remain in the country in which they usually reside. I am one of the lucky ones – I have been able to visit home regularly to experience the replenishment of connecting with my whānau. Many single parents I know in a similar situation have not.

I fall somewhere between Said's definition of an exile and an expatriate. It has been an odd imprisonment full of conflicting emotions. I have lived in the exile's "mansion of sorrow" (Darwish, 1974, as cited in: Said, 2012, p.179), feeling isolated and displaced. Yet, within the mansion, I also discovered rooms full of joy: the beauty of the place, the gratitude of watching my children enjoy childhood freedoms that would not have been available to them in my country of origin. I have experienced the pleasure of returning home for short periods of time (limited by my ex-husband's decree) to be enfolded in the love and support of my whānau and friends on the opposite side of the world, only to experience the sorrow of leaving them again

and again. The repeated sense of loss has been disorienting. A roller-coaster of contrasting emotions.

Rohr (2012) notes how human beings cling to the easy consolation of "the familiar and the habitual" (p. xvii), the reassuring patterns and rules we associate with *home*. He highlights how our institutions – religious, political and educational - perpetuate a condition of 'sameness' by supporting and rewarding conformity. We have a preference for the predictability and control we associate with safety. We resist the idea of leaving home because it requires us to walk unfamiliar, uncertain and untested paths which carry with them a sense of risk, and loss. "The human ego prefers anything, just about anything, to falling or changing or dying" (Rohr, 2012, p. xxiv).

The greatest impact of this strange exile/expatriate experience for me, has been the self-reflection and the questioning of identity that have resulted from my estrangement from all that was familiar. I am as "mixed up, eclectic and uprooted" (Ihimaera, 2007, p. 22) as the transcultural writers Ihimaera discusses. Rohr (2012) describes home as a metaphor of the soul: leaving home is like leaving oneself. For me, the result has been an outpouring of critical and creative thought as I have re-evaluated the constructs of my upbringing with a perspective brought about by separation and distance. Like a lizard wriggling out of an old skin that no longer fits, the growth that leaving home has facilitated has been a kind of falling apart that has become, as Rohr proposes, a "falling upwards" (2012, p. xxv) into new heights of understanding and emancipation.

Klinkenborg (2013) proposes that it is precisely this questioning of the "imprint of assumptions and prohibitions and obligations" (p. 6) of cultural heritage and upbringing that forms the heart of good writing. He describes the process of becoming conscious of the teachings and assumptions, the 'volunteers' I identified in chapter six. Paying attention to subtle shifts in feelings, to the intricate cultural details present in words and sentences that is fundamental to writing practice. He uses the metaphor of a sailor – something I relate to after my childhood spent on a yacht - standing in the crow's nest of a sailing ship gazing out over a sea of words, alert, listening, seeking, wondering, intercepting the slightest shift in the wind or current, able to rise above and see with a fresh perspective – a perspective that is, according to Said (2012), uniquely available to the immigrant.

Said (2012) notes the rich variety of thought - academic, intellectual and aesthetic – that has been produced by exiles, to whom he gives credit for the creation of what we would paradoxically term *modern western culture*. This creative intensity appears to correlate directly to the experience of the exile: the grief, the frustrations, the cross-cultural perspective, resulting in original and illuminating streams of thought.

According to Said (2012), the exile seeks to create a new world to compensate for the loss of the old one. He highlights the literary achievements of itinerant writers throughout history – the unique vision of the displaced. He describes writing as a kind of transcendental home that writers inhabit as they create their literary worlds: the writing itself becomes a place to live, a place to create continuity between past, present and future – to be a "generative" individual (Erikson, 1950, as cited in: Rohr, 2012, p. 20), not just concerned with life in 'my' own tiny portion of time but oriented toward future generations. Inhabiting this space is, therefore, a life deeply grounded in whakapapa, connecting past, present and future.

Writing has become a safe place to reflect on what I have been taught, what I have assumed is true, what I feel, what I have learned through experience, and what I do not know. My journal, for example, has certainly become a place I inhabit. A place to feel heard. A place to belong, to feel safe. It is also a place where I notice new things: I become conscious as I record experiences, thoughts, ideas, readings and feelings. As I re-read my writing, I suddenly notice something new, a detail that stands out, something Klinkenborg (2013) calls "a pinpoint of awareness…. It's catching your sleeve on the thorn of the thing you notice. And paying attention as you free yourself" (p. 39).

For me, writing has brought about a process of freeing myself from the debris of childhood teachings and experiences. Through writing, I have been able to interrogate and untangle the past. A process of piecing together the patterned mosaic of my whakapapa, densely populated as it is with centuries of people, places, memories, and myths. I have been able to journey towards a place where I can admire it from a distance, appreciating its intricacy, acknowledging its historical value, understanding the influences of its residue, and yet consciously and intentionally choosing my own path. Through engagement with whakapapa, I can "calmly and confidently hold (my) own identity" (Rohr, 2012, p. 42) whilst engaging with others through writing. This process of untangling and reframing the past through writing and story-telling has been well-researched in the field of Narrative Therapy, a branch of psychology.

According to Klinkenborg (2013), most writers do not have a problem with writing, they have a problem with "consciousness. Attention. Noticing" (p. 49). He suggests that the thing we struggle with most is noticing *language.* Our familiarity with our own language and life is a disability for most writers, in particular our response to our own writing, because, he notes, "in responding to your own prose, you're responding in some sense to yourself, and no matter how hard you look, you're almost invisible to yourself. Camouflaged by familiarity" (Klinkenborg, 2013, p. 51) in this sense, we are unintelligible to ourselves. Perhaps that is why

immigrant writers, flung as we are into unfamiliar and disorienting strangeness, catch our sleeves on such unexpected thorns and are able to free ourselves with new insights.

Exploring my whakapapa has given me a new sense of identity and voice. A sense of authenticity and authority as a writer (Wilson & Ringrose, 2016); a place to stand as an author. Rather than relying on the authority or approval of others, I have a greater sense of grounding in my own choices about what I write, and how I write it. As Klinkenborg (2013) put it, "being a writer is an act of perpetual self-authorisation" (p. 37). I know much more about the choices I make – how each sentence got there, why particular words were used. I have a stronger spine as an author (Goldberg, 2013) – something I identified as lacking at the beginning of my research process.

This increased self-awareness makes me more confident in my identity as a writer and yet, paradoxically, also humbles me. The simultaneous revelation of my developing identity together with my weaknesses and cultural preconceptions as a curator of words and sentences that form stories and ideas that others may read and interpret provides a new sense of foundation and responsibility. I am also more willing to accept myself, with all my faults, as worthy of a place in the world of writing – no more or less than anyone else. My past may be co-authored by many others, but now I have taken hold of the pen myself. I cannot go back in time and rewrite the events of the past, but I do have the choice to write something new. Not just a new chapter, but a completely new book. A new story: I want to be a worthwhile ancestor for my descendants.

Whilst engaging with whakapapa provides me with a foundation of identity and voice as an immigrant author, I have learned through this process that it is also writing itself that has become a place to live for me. A metaphorical tūrangawaewae. A place to return to, to belong. A balm for the scattered self. A place of gathering, recollection and remembering. A place where I can be fully myself, carrying with me the mana of my whakapapa like a korowai (a traditional feather cloak worn at ceremonial occasions, symbolic of whakapapa and mana), heavy with meaning and yet light as the feathers which are woven together. Not a weight but a warmth, each one an intricate and delicate symbol of a past I carry with me. In writing I can return 'home' whenever I like. Through whakapapa, although I am separated from my geographicial tūrangawaewae, I have a new place to stand as a writer. *I am my home*.

Give me a firm place to stand, and I shall move the earth.
(Archimedes, AD340)

Tūrangawaewae

A Place to Stand

Anchored
Belonging
Memories transformed
By the healing balm of time
I am found! I am
Found
This is my place to stand.
Connected and deep-rooted here
More than just a guest.
I call this place
my own.
I am my home.

Whakatau

Ka mihi ki te hunga mate.
Kō ingarangi te whakapaparanga mai.
Kō London te whenua tupu.
Kō Greenwich Park toku maunga.
Kō Thames toku awa.
Kō Tauranga Moana toku kainga.

This study, exegesis and creative work, is not a history project. The focus was not to create a chronicle of things that actually happened. It is an imagined story intertwined with experience. Incomplete, partial; a fiction. A recreation of things that might have happened. It seeks to join the conversation, in Aotearoa New Zealand, on what happened in the past, what is happening now, what might happen in the future.

Think of it if you like as a sort of tribute, a riff on the past, a re-telling of an old tale, an apology. An acknowledgment that, as an immigrant writer, my engagement with the indigenous culture of Aotearoa New Zealand has profoundly impacted my life and work. The exploration of whakapapa has given me a new understanding of how the invisible matrix of ancestral connections creates a porous frontier between insider and outsider, between past, present and future, the living and the dead, the human and spiritual worlds: a kind of oratory wharenui; a space where history, genealogy, cosmology and spirituality are welcome to mingle, and connect. Whakapapa provides a place for the dividual self to meet with atua, tīpuna, and whānau, promising that "time past is not time gone, it is time accumulated" (Frame, 1990, p. 225), that future is secured by its reference to the past.

This exegesis and creative work weave together my story with the collective human story of grief and loss, the possibility of restoration and the hope of new beginnings. The process has given me a new understanding of how learning can be embedded in stories, a catalyst for creativity and growth. And that creative writing itself can become a place to return to, a metaphorical tūrangawaewae; a place where narrative can connect me to myself, to others, to my ancestors. A place to stand.

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