THE LOCAL AND THE UNIVERSAL:
REFLECTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY MĀORI LITERATURE
IN RESPONSE TO
BLOOD NARRATIVE BY CHADWICK ALLEN

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Blood Narrative (2002) is a comparative literary and cultural study of post-Second World War literary and activist texts by New Zealand Māori and American Indians. Its author, Chadwick Allen, is a professor of English at Ohio State University. Its title is inspired by the writings of Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday. In Allen’s words, “it analyses a number of the narrative tactics developed by writers and activists who self-identify as American Indian or New Zealand Māori to mark their identities as persistently distinctive from those of dominant European-descended settlers and as irrevocably rooted in the particular lands these writers, activists and their communities continue to call home” (ibid.:1-2). The present article is written because Allen’s skilful analysis of these “narrative tactics” still opens the way to new reductive interpretations of Māori culture that require careful investigation. It is useful, however, at the outset to understand the considerable methodological weight of Allen’s painstaking enterprise.

New Zealand “biculturalism” is introduced in the officialised architectural language of the layout of Te Papa Tongarewa (The Museum of New Zealand) in Wellington (ibid.:5-6). Māori bicultural action is introduced in a vignette of a local Māori school group dropping in on a “Māori” tourist performance at the Auckland War Memorial Museum. It turned into a model ceremonial encounter, with the school group as guests and the haka performers as hosts, confusing the tourists. According to Allen, the episode

shifted the focus of the concert from a primarily “tourist” performance to a significantly “Māori” performance, serving distinctly Māori purposes. In effect, the occasion of the concert was reframed in terms of a Māori ethno-nationalist discourse. For certain readers, the concert could function as an activist event..., as a potential force for galvanising the younger generation’s sense of its Māoritanga (Māori identity) (ibid.:14).

This act of “reframing” already raises the problem of the present article. With the facts available, this episode could be “reframed” in many different ways. The word Māoritanga means something like “the Māori way of
being-in-the-world”; it is not just a narrative tactic. Allen reduces the narrative tactics of American Indian and Māori texts to what he calls the blood-land-memory complex.

**BLOOD, LAND, MEMORY**

This study is clearly stated as being conceived around three key concepts: blood, land and memory. Allen’s idea of a “comparative study” is to bring out the resemblances between cultures colonised by white settlers, in order to show that all these colonised cultures suffered notably from the loss of blood, land and memory. Allen therefore sets aside major ethnographic differences usually recognised between New Zealand Māori and American Indian socio-cultural systems. He drew his triad of terms from Indian texts, notably Momaday. This approach has the merit of seeking “to liberate indigenous minority identities from definitions of authenticity imposed by dominant settler cultures” (ibid.:16). Blood-land-memory are tropes for a complex set of sacred values that are guaranteed formally but hypocritically to indigenous peoples in treaties. These treaties, some of which create illusions of forms of sovereignty granted to Indigenous Peoples, gave rise to Treaty discourses, “one of the few interpretive frames within which indigenous activists and writers can stage formal dialogue with dominant settler interests”, and again these discourses manifest what Allen calls the blood-land-memory complex (ibid.:17). Such facts lead him to hypothesise that the Treaty of Waitangi “provides a ‘silent second text’ against which contemporary Māori works can be read as allegory” (ibid.:20). Once more, this formulation is based on an American source (ibid.:243, n.28). Applied to all parts of all works of contemporary Māori literature, it would be a gross oversimplification, but it can be applied convincingly to some parts of many published works by Māori.

The book is divided into two parts: one for the period from 1945 to the early 1960s and another for 1960s to 1980. Each part contains one chapter on Māori and one on American Indians. The first period is marked by “indirect” or “symbolic” political opposition, while “the production of tribal, activist and commercial texts by indigenous minority authors skyrocketed” in the second period (ibid.:109). The New Zealand documents studied for the first period are centred on the journal *Te Ao Hou*, which was then the principal outlet for publishing by Māori (ibid.:37-72). Data on cultural context are based on a broad and systematic analysis of well-selected sources. The anthropological interest of this analysis lies in the evidence offered by these texts of indirect and symbolic opposition that the authors of the texts themselves did not explicitly express, but which can be
revealed through an analysis of their choice of patterns of events or even of their wording.

This works well and convincingly for the very simple texts analysed in Chapter 1 dealing with the earlier period. But in Chapter 3, when Allen turns to poems by Hone Tuwhare, and to novels by Witi Ihimaera, Patricia Grace and Kerry Hulme, he redefines the blood-land-memory complex in terms of

three emblematic figures developed in Māori literary and activist texts…: first, the emblematic bond between grandparent and grandchild, which foregrounds “blood” in order to figure the passing of tradition from ancestors to contemporary Māori; second, the emblematic return of taonga (prized possessions), which foregrounds “land” in order to figure the continuing relevance of the Treaty of Waitangi and its promise of tino rangatiratanga (quintessential chieftainship); and, third, the emblematic rebuilding of the whare tipuna (ancestral house), which foregrounds “memory” in order to figure the potent act of rebuilding a viable self as well as a viable community (ibid.:128).

While we shall need to return to Allen’s redefinition of Māori cultural categories, we should note his illuminating and insightful analysis of aspects of the literary material, such as what happens when English is translated into Māori and Māori into English, and how inevitable distortions and willed rhetorical inflections become part of the translation process; or how important the grandparent/ grandchild bonds were in the process of cultural revival; or how the stories about the recuperation of ancient greenstone adzes exemplify a process of reculturation (and not just the phenomena of hau and tapu); and finally, how the rebuilding of meeting houses became the very core of community revival.

The vital question is, however, what Allen really means by the term “essentialism”, which he applies to the whole of the Māori sovereignty movement. This term is used universally today by constructionist schools of social science when they wish to cast an anathema on indigenous revival movements. Its connotations are more ambiguous, but still somewhat negative, in Allen’s book. He launches it in a discussion (ibid.:198-206) of George Manuel, Shuswap leader, activist and author, who, “like Keri Hulme…, emphasises enduring values, strengths, and the basic spiritual beliefs that can be refashioned locally to meet changing needs of future generations; specific cultural technologies or artefacts are secondary”. Allen describes these values as “essentialist markers of indigenous minority identity” (ibid.:199). An important word in the quoted phrase is “locally”; undeniably, each locality has its own way of “refashioning” its values and
thus retains a local, specific way of being-in-the-world, and specific local knowledge of the world. This mode differs from “knowledge” in Cartesian philosophy, based on clear, distinct, universal concepts. It is based on hearsay, passed on orally over the generations, on vague experience, on signs received from unverified sources, on what is best described as opinion or imagination. Spinoza thought that most knowledge acquired and used by humans is of that kind. Rational Cartesian concepts are equally essential to humanity, but are acquired by different processes. Contemporary anthropology is beginning to recognise diverse modes of knowledge, often classifying knowledge as “local” when not based on Cartesian principles.

Allen is well aware that some such distinction needs to be made. He points out that Manuel tried to argue that the stubborn defence of local values is a distinctive characteristic of what he called the Fourth World. Manuel wrote a book on this theme (Manuel and Posluns 1974) and organised a preparatory meeting in the same year of what was to become the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. This WCIP successively prepared several versions of a “Solemn Declaration” of collective indigenous identity. Allen analyses in detail an amended Solemn Declaration, arrived at by the end of the First General Assembly of WCIP and adopted as a formal resolution:

The WCIP’s narrative definition of global indigenous identity constructs a set of analogies that translate specific indigenous realities into a comprehensive and comprehensible generalisation. In order to satisfy delegates representing diverse indigenous peoples and to reach its target audience, “the concert of nations”, the Solemn Declaration participates in a number of distinct meaning systems simultaneously—those of the First Nations, the American Indians, the Māori, the Sami, the Aboriginal peoples, and Western culture. It negotiates a single narrative out of the world views, memories, and aspirations of disparate indigenous cultures, while also constructing a dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous understandings of indigenous minority experience...” (Allen 2002:207-11).

Yet, once this local “essentialism” was transposed to the world stage, it had a limited impact. Allen rightly notes that it scored one significant success: it articulated an enduring coalition among diverse indigenous peoples. It was also involved in a United Nations “Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” but here the social, economic and cultural issues have a low priority. Allen connects this attempt to define an international indigenous identity with subsequent developments of “indigenous theory” by New Zealand activists and writers, such as Barry Barclay’s Our Own
Image (1990) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s work (1999). The latter posits a Māori epistemological tradition which “frames the way we see the world, the way we organise ourselves in it, the questions we ask and the solutions we seek”. Allen remarks (2002:219): “Indigenous theory’s most radical move in the fight for self-determination has been and will continue to be its demand to set the terms of indigenous representation in every arena.” Allen, like Fanon, classifies this as “essentialism”, “a necessary stage in the emergence from the process of ‘assimilation’ to a fully decolonised national culture that will ultimately be anti-essentialist” (ibid.:198). Yet, unlike Fanon, he adds a caveat: this ultimate anti-essentialist culture “will not exist as long as indigenous minorities fight for re-recognition of political identities based on a treaty paradigm of nation-to-nation status.… The treaty paradigm requires a level of essentialism, a clear border between one nation and its treaty partner” (ibid.:220).

BRIEF PERSONAL INTERMEZZO

One reason why this book interests me especially is that I was editor of Te Ao Hou during its formative years and I was impressed by Allen’s great skill in unearthing the hidden dynamics of the magazine. It was fascinating to read the chapter about the magazine also because he had seen many government files of whose existence I was not even aware, and he discovered many background dramas that had never been revealed in public. While his reconstruction of the dynamic of the magazine is almost faultless, he also conjectured some complex scenarios that never quite happened in the way he imagines. In that respect, truth is often stranger than fiction.

The main point of his analysis is very sound: it was a period of apparent compliance, but many texts we received expressed hidden, indirect and symbolic resistance. The concept of making the journal into a “marae on paper” (Te Ao Hou 1952) was aimed, as Allen correctly perceives, at stimulating a cultural revival. The one point on which I disagreed with the Department of Māori Affairs, and on which Allen is ambiguous, was that I did not see this cultural revival as being in any way a threat to the Department or to New Zealand in general. I deeply thought, and still think, that New Zealand was destined to be bicultural and that the Māori people and their culture were a wonderful source of cultural enrichment.

Allen’s reading of the Māori language texts and the Māori phrases in the English texts is most astute. His guesses about the production of bilingual editorials are amusing, but he could never have guessed what really happened. My job was not only to edit Te Ao Hou, but also to draft letters
to obtain official permissions, finance etc., and to write the Department’s Annual Reports. Nobody at the Department supervised the contents of *Te Ao Hou*. Officers answered my questions but avoided involvement. The Tourist and Publicity Department was supposed to censor the journal, but never found anything to suppress, except once when I accepted poems by Hone Tuwhare, who was then totally unknown as a poet. A big argument about their poetic value blew up, involving two Ministers as well as Parliament. I was able to justify my selection convincingly, in the view of my Minister, and we heard no more from Tourist and Publicity.

It was curious to see, in Allen’s book, that there had been many earlier written complaints from the Department of Tourist and Publicity, which I was never shown by my superior officers. By this time, T.T. Ropiha, head of the Department of Māori Affairs, and other prominent Māori in senior departmental positions were aware of the journal’s popularity among Māori, and they were probably pleased with my editorial policy. They must have decided not to tell me about the complaints and to let me continue what I was doing. The translator for the journal was Wiremu Ngata, Sir Apirana Ngata’s son, who understood very clearly what I was doing and who acted in his father’s spirit. This translator found exactly the words I would have used if I had known enough Māori. In general, I did not discuss the journal with anyone in Head Office, but did regularly with Māori outside government, who were often rather critical of the Department and acted as my guides. I have forgotten many of their names but the first was Reweti Kohere and later there were Wiremu Parker and Pei Te Hurinui Jones. These people, together with many Māori welfare officers, were like my policy team, pursuing the same purpose. I followed their lead, as only they knew the local situations. Without ever saying so to each other, we were all working for the Māori cultural revival. My role was a menial one: *Te Ao Hou* was made as much by these others who prompted me.

It was much later that I formally learned anthropology. Later still, I discovered the Russian semioticians, like M.M. Bakhtin and J. Lotman, who envisaged literature and anthropology as inseparable twin disciplines. Allen’s work follows procedures similar to Bakhtin’s, whose name is mentioned once (ibid.:64), but whose books do not appear to have been consulted directly. Allen’s ability to detect the presence of heteroglossia from a simple choice of words by Māori translators shows that literary analysis can be an excellent tool in anthropology.³ Admittedly, there is evidence of the presence of two disparate worldviews that are glossable as Pākehā and Māori. But if we compare what the English and Māori texts said about, for instance, *Te Ao Hou* being “a marae on paper”, heteroglossia is not confined to the Māori text. Any English text that uses the word
marae already has an element of heteroglossia, just as much as a Māori text is heteroglossic when it evokes the image of subjecting a marae to an operation like whakawhaititanga (‘being compressed into a small space’—a graphic term introduced by the translator to describe our kind of marae, see Allen 2002:46). Both texts are heteroglossic, each author having, to some extent, internalised both cultures in question. Where the two differed was in the degree to which they had internalised each of the two cultures.

It is clear nonetheless that facts of this order provide no integral concept of either of the two worldviews in question. Though Allen explains adequately what Māori mean by the word marae and how this word reflects the conflict between the worldviews, enquiry of a different order is needed if we are to understand how this conflict was conceived specifically in the Māori case. The first step would be, I believe, to look more deeply at all uses of the term “essentialism” in Māori—and other—cultures, and distinguish the numerous and diverse phenomena to which this term is being applied not only by literary but also by anthropological analysts.

BLIND SPOTS ON THE DOUBLE MIRROR OF “ESSENTIALISM”

Dictionaries define essence as that in which the attributes of something inhere. Essentialism is a philosophical doctrine holding that essence precedes existence. In Manuel’s statement quoted above “the enduring values, strengths and basic spiritual beliefs” of the Shuswap people would be essentialist markers, if they were attributes inhereing in the essence of the Shuswap, but in that case they would have to have been present when the Shuswap came into existence and to have endured unchanged ever since. Seeing that Manuel was careful to specify that these attributes “can be refashioned to meet changing needs”, they can be called “essentialist” only in a loose sense of the word. Yet, as we have seen, it is only on such unstable attributes, listed by Momaday, Manuel and some other indigenous authors, that Allen’s pervasive use of the term “essentialism” is based.

At the same time, when Allen describes the discourse of New Zealand Māori and American Indians activists as “essentialist”, he does have some facts that seem to back him up. Māori have a concept of genealogy that antecedes even the creation of man, and that is therefore an essence in the strictest sense of the term, giving rise to relations, rights and obligations that have been theirs from the beginning of time and have never changed. The worldview constructed on such an essence inevitably leads to a value system “unlike mainstream contemporary European ethics” (Patterson 1992:183). Hirini Mead (1997) brilliantly stated, in his answers to U.S. journalists in 1984, how Māori today love and venerate their ancestors. As
he pointed out, “we certainly live with our contradictions, but the ancestors are not a part of the contradictory world” (Mead 1997:209). This experience seems normal to Māori, though it seemed contradictory (of scientific knowledge, etc.) to U.S. journalists. As formulated in Māori ‘sacred, ancestral customary rules’ (tikanga), the only immediate way Pākehā law courts or media understood such rules was in a framework ultimately derived from Herderian romanticism, hence identifiable as “essentialist”.

Allen’s analysis of such Māori “narrative tactics” as “essentialist” cannot therefore be summarily dismissed. Likewise, his analysis of American Indian narrative tactics appears to show some “essentialism”, even though the passage I quoted from Manuel cannot be classified as such. Allen also notes (2002:64) that any narrative text where the same character incorporates such divergent perspectives was designated as “heteroglossic” by Bakhtin, and if such perspectives are all part of the character’s personal worldview, this could be termed “internal dialogism”. Could Allen’s monograph therefore be similarly classified as being a heteroglossic utterance?

This question is neither rhetorical nor polemical but forms part of self-reflection prompted by my reading of that monograph. Allen abundantly demonstrates that, during my editorship, Te Ao Hou contained many heteroglossic editorials, articles and stories, and that the journal as a whole might well be thus classified. Some parts of the text expressed an official government worldview but other parts expressed an (indirect) Māori sovereignist worldview. Though there was heteroglossia, there probably was little real “essentialism”, as the notion of “change” in the form of “cultural revival” was central to the design of Te Ao Hou.

There is a further point about Te Ao Hou’s heteroglossia that should be mentioned here, for the record. Though, in the 60s and later, several of its Māori authors did publish texts of political opinion, they never tried to do so during my editorship. On one occasion, I was called in by the Minister of Māori Affairs who warned me that Te Ao Hou was not to become a “journal of opinion”. He did not imply that I had tried to do so, but it had come to his ears that this allegation had been made and he wanted to let me know his own policy. Looking back on these years, I think it was remarkable that no Māori submitted texts that would have challenged that policy. They did submit such texts during the 1960s, when I was no longer editor, but by that time government policy had become less rigid.

This discretion of Māori authors during my editorship illustrates an aspect of marae etiquette. Although that etiquette does not rule out challenges, Māori recognised that this “marae on paper” was precarious and did not wish it to fall apart. Their attitude was protective. Heteroglossia is so
much part of Māori everyday experience so that most members of that culture are familiar with the unwritten rules of heteroglossic discourse. In the beginning, I followed these rules as Māori around me imposed them (external dialogism), but thanks to their coaching, I gradually internalised them (internal dialogism).

While in general, the phenomenon of Māori heteroglossia has not been much studied, Māori “essentialism” certainly has. It became a major doctrine in the hands of F.A. Hanson (1991), N. Thomas (1997), H.B. Levine (1999) and others. Essentialism in general is treated as a major topic of epistemological anthropology in a recent, UNESCO-sponsored manual for that discipline, edited and authored by Michael Herzfeld, aided by 18 eminent contributors. The chapter devoted to Epistemology quotes Nicholas Thomas’ story of how this arose:

“Because the people studied have ceased merely to be scholarly objects, and become partially incorporated within an expanded field of discussion, the anthropologist’s text may be increasingly drawn in two directions, on the one hand toward a global (in fact typically a Euro-American) professional discussion, that privileges the discipline’s questions, and the elevated register of ‘theory’, and on the other toward audiences within the nation if not the locality studied” (Herzfeld 2001 [citing Thomas]:30).

It was at first mostly the second of these directions that became the target of professional ire, on the basis of its presumed relativism, essentialism and “invention of tradition and identity”. Yet, as early as 1984-85, these fashionable arguments met with an embarrassing epistemological obstacle: virtually all the relativist and essentialist models, all the invented cultures, turned out to be heavily indebted to 19th century European folkloristics, exported by the anthropological trade, then resold to the Western world under new labels by noble savages: “What is the proper response to the use of ‘our’ concepts by the essentialisers and reifiers?” (Herzfeld 2001 [citing Thomas]:33). Evidently, no agreement between constructionists and culturalists is in sight.

Herzfeld, principal author of the UNESCO manual, concludes a 12-page summary of the heated debate on essentialism by reverting to the idea, “consistent with the middle-ground perspective”, that anthropology as a discipline is “defined by a simple tension between local ethnography and global theory”. He recognises this (2001:41) to be “an ultimately impossible goal” but “all the many political and ethical entailments of the discipline” complicate idealised views and, moreover, “many anthropological theories are more useful somewhere in the middle range between the local and the
universal”. It is useful, at any rate, to admit that much anthropological input coming from “European settler nations” has undoubtedly been essentialist.

In New Zealand, such critique began in 1979 with Sorrenson’s *Māori Origins and Migrations*. That book mostly chronicles the importation of the myth of the Aryan Māori, created by Pākehā New Zealanders who were “perhaps overfond of referring everything to the Sanscrit”, but its concluding pages pose the question: “What of the Māori role in this myth-making?” Sorrenson showed that “the myths that the Pākehā made have become Māori property”. Yet, we might recall that many myths, in all cultures, are borrowed from diverse sources, transformed and integrated with the core worldview of receiving cultures. There have never been boundaries blocking the transmission of myth; the very idea of such boundaries is essentialist and fruitless. Again, if we wish to know more about the contemporary processes of Māori myth-making, our richest source of understanding would come from innovative novels generated from myths such as Grace’s *Potiki* (1986) or Ihimaera’s *The Whale Rider* (1992) or Mead’s *Ko Tāwhaki nui a Hema* (1996). These stories, each in its own way, all go beyond the Treaty of Waitangi syndrome and turn to universal issues, values that are both anterior and posterior to colonial obsessions. Their narrative strategies assume the Māori heritage, but focus on its general human dimensions.

The epistemological status of “essentialism” in anthropology is dubious, but it remains a tool of rhetoric between local and central interests in nation-states, where each side labels the other as essentialist. It acts as a double mirror. It promotes unending negotiations of the realia of co-habitation between majorities and minorities. What both sides share is in effect a double self-image, as both sides have, to some extent, absorbed a double identity. In New Zealand, this negotiation process takes the form of an unending electoral see-saw, each of the two principal political parties—Labour and National—being identified with a negotiating viewpoint mirroring that of its supporters. If we wish to raise an epistemological issue, it may be wiser to concentrate on the coexistence, within the same society, of internalised double or multiple cultural identities that surface at many conceptual levels.

THE HETEROGLOSSIC PRODUCTION OF MEANING

This issue of multiple identities has indeed become a major issue in anthropology, but largely in the wake of Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia. This theory was initially rather marginal in literary scholarship (Holquist 1990), but scholars such as Allen to some extent rely on it today. The fact remains that Allen’s methods led him to present contemporary Māori
literature as essentialist and as a kind of rhetorical adjunct to arguments of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. In view of these limited results, it is useful to supplement his methods by a more anthropological approach.

The reproduction of post-colonial local cultures requires a conscious planned effort, oriented toward the safeguarding their durability and towards their viability in new circumstances. These ends are pursued systematically in contemporary Māori culture. The Māori language pre-school movement (kōhanga reo) is planned as a means of transmitting not only a language for social communication, but also values and knowledge encoded in its lexical concepts and in its syntactic logic, and as a way of channelling the transmission of that language through oral communication provided by competent members of the culture. Before adulthood, identification with the ancestor is achieved in part by the presence of carved meeting houses (whare tipuna) and the practice of various arts and crafts. Respect for animated objects, animate life, cosmic phenomena is part of this programme. Above all, this reproduction process requires adequate autonomous spaces for communal exchanges to provide adequate material opportunity for the transmission of values and install the habitus of social and cultural intercourse.

This process could be interpreted as “essentialist” if it were conducted in a hermetically closed environment, but in fact the environment provides an unceasing flow of events that are both challenging and contradicting the structural framework thus transmitted. It would be simplistic even to suppose that these countervailing forces are generated principally outside the community. After two centuries of Pākehā settlement, strategies for dealing with this other society have become internalised within Māori communities and are being transmitted—not always consciously—by a people who have acquired a great deal of plural cultural competence.

How can anthropology study this kind of intrinsically diversified cultural conformation? Is it possible to distinguish modes of Māori discourse and thus arrive at recognising distinctive modes of mental functioning? Moreover, anthropologists have mostly, in the past, studied oral discourse, but if written and published discourse was added to the record, there would be a gain in coherence and in conformity with the considered viewpoint of authors. This is especially so when authors are highly educated, skilful and insistent on their authorial rights.

In any event we badly need, also, to establish more clearly a sub-discipline devoted to the anthropology of literature. Such a sub-discipline would, for a start, make use of the analytical distinctions employed in the study of verbal communication (addressee / message / addressee / context / code / channel). In the case of literary communication, these analytical distinctions could
be conceived somewhat differently, as in Jakobson (1960), who suggested distinguishing a set of functions useful for analysing works by authors such as Tuwhare, Ihimaera, Grace and Hulme. Such analysis would focus on elements, usual in the study of poetics, such as: emotive, conative, referential, phatic, metalingual and poetic. Once these functions are identified, we can explore also theories such as Bakhtin’s and distinguish between monoglossic and heteroglossic modes.

Bakhtin’s starting point is that many characters in novels do not have just one “worldview” but oscillate between several so that their discourse is made up of several sub-texts, each of which relates to one particular worldview selected from the plurality of worldviews entertained by the character. Our total interpretation will then comprise several conceptual frames or, in Bakhtin’s terminology, several “languages”, each characterised by its own objects, meanings and values. As such they encounter one another and co-exist in the consciousness of real people—first and foremost, in the creative consciousness of people who write novels. As such, these languages have a real life, they struggle and evolve in an environment of social heteroglossia…. They may all be drawn in by the novelist for the orchestration of his themes and for the refracted (indirect) expression of his intentions and values” (Bakhtin 1981:291-92).

When Bakhtin analyses texts that he marks out as heteroglossic, they often refer to acute sufferings of characters in the novels of authors such as Dickens and Dostoyevsky. The external world of these characters is sharply divided into disparate domains, each with their own conceptual universe (or “language”). The characters express themselves in one or another of these languages. The sufferings of those living in such disparate domains is well expressed in John Rangihau’s essay “Being Māori” (1975). Yet that article is not heteroglossic, but has the object of advising others on how to remain sane in such a situation. Heteroglossia occurs typically when a character’s discourse shows signs of suffering and confusion, but has not reached the self-awareness needed to cope with it. Bakhtin identified heteroglossia in the discourse of the hero of Dostoyevsky’s Crime and Punishment, but only in the period before his process of healing has passed beyond a certain point. In Ihimaera’s stories, we also find a good deal of heteroglossia, as illustrated by this simple example:

When we came out of the theatre, Willie Boy and I saw ourselves as white, aligning ourselves with our heroes and heroines of the technicolour screen. Although we were really brown, we would beat up on each other just to play the hero. Neither of us wanted to be an Indian (Ihimaera 1996:222).
Many anthropologists have used this kind of model over the last 20 years. One of its favourite applications is the analysis of the mental universe of peripheral populations or conquered nations, aliens to dominant values of the State. Such peoples “came to experience the curious situation of seeing whatever was most ordinary, intimate and unexceptional in their daily lives treated as relics of an undesirably exotic past” (Herzfeld 1987:102). These same peoples also have an alternative system of self-representation, consistent with the State’s dominant values, “laying symbolic claim to an Edenic perfection that denied the very fabric of social life” (ibid:46). The tension between these sides of the self (self-recognition and self-display), this multiplicity of sign systems, “constitutes the dialectic of identity” (ibid:114).

This kind of model, characteristic of Indigenous Peoples, is given a wider range of applications in Holland et al. 1998. These authors demonstrate at the outset that the operation of a multiplicity of sign systems does not come “naturally”, but needs protracted, intensive learning experience. Examples given by the authors are: induction into Alcoholics Anonymous, by learning the appropriate story-line and self-concept of an “alcoholic”; and developing skills and ideas about the conduct of romantic affairs and a concept of self as actors in the figured world of romance (Holland et al. 1998:99). The regular operation, simultaneous or alternative, of a multiplicity of sign systems and a composite self occurs also in certain borderline psychotics who identify with the public world of work and social interaction, but also with the world of mental health care, a heteroglossic double posture, enabling them to create their own form of autonomy. Another example is female identity in Hindu Nepal, “figured by the Brahmanical model of the expected life path of women” (ibid:215). These women have an alternative space for authoring new worlds and new selves, focused in and developed from songs performed at transitional life cycle festivals (Tij), where women “can express sentiments and ideas that they usually keep hidden” (ibid:257).

This tendency of Indigenous and Subordinated Peoples to author renewed identities leads them also to conceive new worlds by a process to which Holland et al. gave the term co-development.

In this process, “the political self becomes personal” (Holland et al. 1998:251). Thus, “whether it is Kabyle houses, Occidental court life, or the songcraft of Hindu women in rural Nepal, a figured world enters the very landscape of social life. Only so can the public constituency of its practice, the imagined community, be stably reproduced” (ibid:252). In this co-development, heteroglossic fictional narrative is apt to flourish and play an important role, as happened also in the case of the Māori of
Aotearoa. A brief functional summary of this system of narrative will clarify the process involved.

**THE LOCAL AND THE UNIVERSAL**

*Emotive function*

By Jakobson’s definition (1960:354), the emotive function, focused on the addresser, aims at a direct expression of the speaker’s attitude towards what he is speaking about. In Ihimaera’s novel *The Whale Rider*, a new version of the myth of Paikea, the author’s personal attitude is stated in the first sentence: “I suppose that if this story has a beginning, it is with Kahu” (1992:12). Here the conditional phrase signals that the story, being a myth, may not have a beginning, may not be situated in time at all. It could be viewed as a paradigm. The name Kahu, moreover, is ambiguous; it alludes to the founding ancestor of the hāpū, Kahukutia-te-rangi, but also to the newly born child who was to perpetuate the mana of the hāpū in modern times. Secondly, the child so named was a girl, whose sex was normally excluded from such a role. The success of the novel (and the film) was no doubt due largely to the reversal of the sex of the hero(ine), destined to become the Whale Rider. In a number of earlier works, the author had likewise called the traditional male supremacy code of Māori culture into question. At the same time—from the viewpoint of global feminism—the novel innovates by investing the heroine with supreme mana in her community. While the moral principle mostly invoked by feminist rhetoric is equality, Ihimaera’s myth set up female supremacy. This ingenious mixture challenges both local and universal codes. On the one hand, no universal code, not even an alternative one projected by feminists, prescribes absolute female supremacy, but feminists will still love Kahu’s story. On the other hand, the Māori ethos is notably heteroglossic on the issue of equality as such. When negotiating with Pākehā, Māori are staunch advocates of egalitarianism of every kind, which can only advantage them as a group, but within the Māori cosmo-social system, all persons, human or non-human, are ranked by relative seniority, while sociability between partners in the same activity (hoa) does not always have all connotations of full “equality”. The only way of demonstrating the justice of a concept of “equality” between male and female is to present a plausible Māori case where a woman can exercise supreme mana by the same right as a man. Thus a female supremacy myth is the best way of arguing the cause of sexual equality. This example shows the complex ways in which an artwork can be universal: it fitted a local ethos without which it could not have been created, but it also conveyed a universal message. The
further study of this issue, however, pertains to the conative rather than to the emotive function.

Another aspect of the emotive function, raised by Ihimaera, shows how attitudes to essentialism may vary in the course of the lifetime of individual authors. In his Introduction to Volume 5 of *Te Ao Mārama*, he quotes the Māori proverb: “At the same time as the spiral is going forward, it is going back.” He is referring to the common pattern of the talented young leaving home villages on educational scholarships and spiraling outward, settling in urban jobs. Later, with maturity, they spiral back:

> we go back to our own, constructing the Māori past and present as characterised by the reo, marae and kaupapa Māori, tūrangawaewae and wā kāinga, acknowledging that we have a pito, an umbilical that, whether we like it or not, whether we want it or nor, replenishes us (Ihimaera 1996:16-17).

This kind of statement could be interpreted as essentialist. It is balanced, however, by a less linear reading of the spiraling process:

> As often as we go forward or outward, increasingly, we do so by looking backwards at where we’ve come from. It is also our belief that the constant going out and returning, te torino haere whakahua, whakamuri, possess the kind of tensions which can push our work, informed by kaupapa Māori, into a new form that is an amalgamation of both. We are the writers of the spiral (ibid.).

In effect, this reading enounces a distinctive local Māori variant of the universal artistic system of heteroglossia, where characters subject disparate worldviews to unending negotiation.

**Conative function**

The conative function is the orientation to the addressee (Jakobson 1960:355). A text written in Māori is addressed exclusively to Māori addressees, but only 20 percent of the Māori population has a very good oral knowledge of Māori and the percentage with a regular habit of reading written Māori is even smaller. The five-volume anthology contains many songs and children’s stories in Māori, but essays in Māori included in that anthology are usually transcripts of recorded speeches.

Most publications by Māori are in English. Some small Māori publishing enterprises exist, but most books by Māori are handled by publishers who also, and usually mainly, sell to Pākehā. The size of the Māori reading public is, however, increasing rapidly, and makes up a substantial part
of the readership of certain titles. Many Māori authors are thus able to address their writings mainly to Māori audiences, but they tend to make accommodation to arouse the interest and understanding of their publishers and of Pākehā readers. This audience pattern explains the presence of many Māori words in English texts, as well as the care that is often (but not invariably) taken to translate these into English. There may be an assumption that Pākehā readers of some books do have elementary knowledge of Māori vocabulary. The image Māori authors have of Pākehā readers is projected to some extent by the public gatherings attended mainly by Māori but admitting Pākehā guests. Unless these guests are prominent personalities, their presence remains marginal, but attention tends to be paid to their comfort and involvement. Moreover, Māori authors cannot assume that Māori readers will all be well informed about their own supposed culture. The aim of the cultural revival was also to help those of their people who were just beginning to grope for images of their identity.

Some other publications by Māori, principally addressed to Pākehā, are conceived differently, in a more activist spirit, either in a style of virulent attack (Awatere 1984) or else of elegant persuasion in popular Pākehā media (Walker 1996), aiming to give them, respectively, a foretaste of the Last Judgment, or a boost to their moral principles. Such texts are eagerly read by Māori also, who identify warmly with the authors. It is such texts in particular that Allen’s model is intended to analyse.

A third, more ambiguous but highly important category of authorial conation is the descriptive interpretation of the Māori world order, with the dual aim of raising Māori ethnic consciousness and of presenting Pākehā with a faithful, scrupulously reliable understanding of it. The works of Grace, Tuwhare, Ihimaera and Hulme exemplify this tendency. They earned and still earn the highest literary distinctions in New Zealand and beyond, and are at the same time highly popular and influential among Māori. Thirdly, as was pointed out by both Grace and Ihimaera (in King 1978), their addressees were “all New Zealanders—to make them aware of the tremendous value in Māori culture and of the tragedy for them should they continue to disregard this part of their dual heritage” (Ihimaera 1978:84). This last point lies outside the scope of Allen’s study: the chief external rallying point of Māori culture lies in New Zealand rather than with the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.

Both Grace and Ihimaera, in separate parts of the text just quoted, offer Māori culture as a free gift to New Zealand, but that gift is also a worldview, and strings are always attached to donated worldviews. Pākehā are not invited to substitute the Māori worldview for the one they have always had,
but just asked to juxtapose the two worldviews as equally valid. The hidden catch in this offer, and the reason why Pākehā find it hard to accept, is that hierarchical monotheistic systems like the Pākehā’s do not normally tolerate a juxtaposed alternative system, unless it is distinctly subordinate to their own. Yet, the hero Patricia Grace offers in a novel like *Potiki* (1986) is an avatar of Maui and equally of Jesus Christ, both of whom are in “God or Io” as universal deity. Her gift object is ontological. Pākehā are beginning to get used to constructions like Aotearoa/New Zealand, but may defer acceptance of constructions like “God or Io” to a later date. Difficult as this problem may be, it is worth noting that Io is not conceived only as a local god but also as a universal one. Māori conation always has a composite object, combining a local with a universal perspective.

**Referential function**

In the works of Ihimaera, Grace and Hulme, the predominant function is the one Jakobson calls referential, “denotative”, “cognitive” (1960:353) consistent with the principal intention of Māori literature of cultural revival: the raising of Māori as well as Pākehā consciousness of ill-understood facts about the Māori social and cultural situation. A strongly documentary bias was intended by the authors and welcomed by all parts of the public. The facts actually presented, however, focused less on the radical changes of urbanisation than on familial patterns that had emerged throughout the colonial period, but that had never before been the subject of critical observation and description in literature, whether Pākehā or Māori. So the question arises why these “referents” had previously never inspired literary treatment and why they suddenly began to do so after 1970.

There certainly were narrative codes governing Māori mythic, historical and anecdotal oral literature. The nature of these codes has not been fully studied, but bilingual, professionally edited text collections such as Jones and Biggs (1995) certainly make this possible. Classical texts of this type give significance to a limited range of narrative themes. Historical texts, conceived mostly as commentaries on genealogies, focus on wars and dynastic marriages among high chieftains. Myths, on the other hand, give significance to a wider and more flexible range of narrative themes and may thus have offered contemporary Māori writers a broader basis for the innovation of artistic codes. It was probably by projection of contemporary stories on a foundation of mythic texts that the modern Māori novel was born. The first published was Ihimaera’s *Tangi* (1973), which won the James Wattie Book of the Year Award in 1974. It was a full account of a modern tangi (funeral), with which many Māori were able to identify. It may
have helped Pākehā to grasp why Māori who go to tangi need some time before returning to their employers. But the referential frame of the story is a myth:

My mother was the Earth. My father was the Sky. They were Rangitāne and Papatūānuku, the first parents, who clasped each other so tightly that there was no day. Their children were born into darkness. They lived among the shadows of their mother’s breasts and thighs and groped in blindness among the long black strands of her hair. Until the time of separation and the dawning of the first day (Ihimaera 1973:204).

Later works, like Grace’s Potiki (1986) and Ihimaera’s The Matriarch (1987), were constructed after a similar schema. These modern myths are mixed with concrete accounts of lived modern experience that extend versions of ancient myths. But the link between these accounts and myth does not make them any less realistic. Thus, the birth and fosterage of the hero Potiki, as also of Jesus Christ and of Maui, depends on some familiar types of feminine mythological figures, models for the self-identification of women. In Grace’s first novel, they are called Tangimoana, Roimata and Mary. In her novel Cousins (1992), the same three types recur under the names of Makareta, Missy and Mata. Their “positional identities”,4 concretely specified, form a microcosm of all female whānau (family) role attributes: Makareta, as the pūhi (Grace 1992:202-3), is typed as a member of the bicultural elite; Missy, “like an investment or insurance policy” (ibid.:229), consolidates alliances between local whānau; Mata is she who sought nothing, following many tracks going nowhere (ibid.:95,201). The novel ends as Mata, attending Makareta’s tangi, meets all her living relatives again, but among them are also many, sitting by the casket or walking into the house, who are already dead. “I didn’t know if I was the only one who could see the shadow people, but I know it didn’t seem strange to me” (ibid.:255). The mythic framework that holds this novel together is no less mysterious and inscrutable once the intimate details of their particular lives have been revealed.

With regard to Hulme’s The Bone People (1984) nothing much needs to be added to Allen’s fine analysis (2002:151-54). Except, perhaps, that his conclusion is more sanguine, less mythic, than mine would be. He writes: “She successfully mediates between Pākehā and Māori values and constructs a viable contemporary Māori self.” This may be right “in substance”, but literature is always form as well as substance. Now, the form of this novel is given by the Māori creation myth, made explicit in the Prologue and Epilogue. It is also this form that brought the novel universal
recognition, and translation into several other languages. The story does not assert that “mediation” between Pakehā and Māori values is possible. On the other hand, it was Hulme’s mythic/realistic “narrative strategy” to state Māori mythic values in such a way as to domesticate their inscrutable universality.

Similarly, Allen’s discussion of Ihimaera, Grace and Hulme correctly notes the symbolisation of the Māori revival through “emblems” such as restored rituals, carved houses, cultural transmission to the alternate junior generation. Such emblems did not become fundamental in their writing, however, except when they were connected to one of the basic frameworks of Māori literary ancestry, namely the mythological system. A seeming exception to the ubiquity of this code was Ihimaera’s *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* (1995). Lest I be accused of subjectivism in my comments on this novel, I shall rely almost entirely on a talented Māori literary critic, Sandra Tawake (2000), who describes it as a “stunning representation of post-coloniality”. She interprets its narrator as impersonating a sort of tourist guide, introducing the reader to the exotic territory of the gay community and designating its members by jocular nicknames alluding to their physical attributes or their social oddities.

When the narrator makes the comment that “our real life is often one we do not lead”, he is referring to his role as *pater familias*, with a devoted wife, two daughters and a well-maintained suburban home. Yet, as Tawake pertinently remarks, all the characters and sites of his heterosexual existence are given names taken from the vocabulary of English-language fairy tales. The term *real* as used by the narrator should therefore not be taken at its face value. Even less *real* than life with his fairy-tale family is life in the dissolute “Gardens of Spain”. The narrator fleetingly introduces a magnificent bisexual Māori, part of the gay landscape, with the nickname of The Noble Savage, who definitely does not personify “reality” either. Tawake incisively comments that the narrator “speaks the truth even if it never happens” (ibid.:167-71). This is the only novel by Ihimaera so far to have a Pākehā as its main character. The novel was warmly welcomed by mainstream New Zealand critics, who classified it as “post-modern” in style and content.

One of Ihimaera’s innovations in *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* was to redraw the boundaries between mana-endowed and marginal/precarious. The boundaries man/woman and Pākehā/Māori were supplemented by the boundary hetero-/homosexual. The primal separation of Rangitāne/Papatūānuku, still the basic paradigm, remained unstated, though there was a multiplication of ludic avatars, which were decidedly no longer all reducible to what Allen calls the treaty paradigm. Yet, the novelist restored
the link to his own mythic paradigm (“real life”) in a companion story on homosexuality, *The Uncle’s Story* (2000), centred once again in internal conflicts of the Mahana family. The narrator discovers that the autocratic patriarch of *The Matriarch* had blotted his homosexual uncle out of the family genealogy. He re-establishes his Uncle’s Story in a search that led him all the way to the United States and Canada. This story was published too late for inclusion in Allen’s study, but it would have been grist to his mill as the hero actually attends international meetings of Indigenous Peoples and makes a sovereignist speech at one of them. Yet, the hero also becomes the founder of a new Māori tribe, made up of homosexuals and lesbians, a further avatar of the Creation Myth. The novel ends in a chant to construct the world again, bind the new world’s top and bottom with light, tell the wonder of homosexual love until the whole world knows it: “With that love I will bind the outer framework of the world with the inner framework.”

The myth-based representation of “real life” has thus taken over from the emblematic simulations of post-modernity.

**Poetic function**

In Jakobson’s schema, the focus on the *message* as such, for its own sake, is the poetic function of language (1960:356). As it is not normally predominant in prose, it may be useful, for the analysis of works by Ihimaera, Grace and Hulme, also to list its main components in a breakdown suggested by Bakhtin. His five categories of the *message* all play an important, easily recognisable role for the novelists considered here: (i) direct authorial literary-artistic narration; (ii) stylisation of the various forms of ordinary, everyday narration; (iii) stylisation of the various forms of semi-literary (written) narration (the letter, the diary, etc.); (iv) various forms of literary extra-artistic authorial speech (moral, philosophical, scientific statements, oratory, ethnographic descriptions); (v) the stylistically individualised speech of characters. Bakhtin comments (1981:262): “These heterogeneous stylistic unities combine to form a structured artistic system, and are subordinated to the higher stylistic unity of the work as a whole, a unity that cannot be identified with any single one of the unities subordinated to it.” Ihimaera makes great use of all these devices, differently in each of his novels; Grace allots separate chapters to the voices of each of her chief characters; Hulme’s narration is a constant flow of a mosaic of voices, steeped in profound heteroglossia. In all these novels, the authorial voice provides some of the poetic function, but its heterogeneous stylistic unities combine to form a structured artistic system.

However, “dialogisation of the word is not put to artistic use in genres that are poetic in the narrow sense” (ibid.:285). If Hone Tuwhare’s work is
also extremely important in the anthropological study of the Māori cultural revival, it is on somewhat different and complex grounds. The study of Māori poetry, comprising a number of distinct, mostly chanted, genres, has had limited scholarly attention. Each culture has detailed, largely intuitive criteria for recognising what it views as good poetry. A world-wide survey of these criteria, which vary greatly between cultures, was made by Jakobson (1960), who also proposes some universal principles underlying these criteria. Tuwhare appears to be very familiar with the classical Māori poetic genres, which are not mentioned by Jakobson. He has been inspired at times by their messages, images and rhythms, but his basic poetic intention, as summarised by O’Brien (1997:85), has rather been “to marry the language of Māori/Pākehā working class life to an essentially English poetic”.

Pākehā New Zealand poets of his period (R.A.K. Mason, Bill Manhire and others) befriended and inspired Tuwhare, but his road was different from theirs—guided by different literary ancestors, different ideological commitments and above all, different intentions on poetic speech. While Māori prose writers could introduce heteroglossia to weave together disparate elements of plural cultures and worldviews, tolerance for heteroglossia is very limited in poetry. As Tuwhare’s work seeks to satisfy Jakobson’s universal key criterion for poetry, by which every “verbal element is converted into a figure of poetic speech” (1960:377), he had to renounce any intention to “marry” two languages, for as Bakhtin pertinently argues:

The language in a poetic work realises itself as something about which there can be no doubt, something that cannot be disputed, something all-encompassing. Everything that the poet sees, understands and thinks, he does through the eyes of a given language, in its inner forms, and there is nothing that might require, for its expression, the help of any other or alien language. The concept of many worlds of language, all equal in their ability to conceptualise and to be expressive, is organically denied to poetic style (1981:286).

Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one’s own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process (1981:294).

Fortunately, such demanding rules can always be eluded, but careful precautions have to be taken. Bakhtin admits a certain latitude for heteroglossia, but “only in the low poetic genres” or “in the speeches of characters”, where “it does not lie on the same plane with the real language
of the work; it does not appear as an aspect of the word doing the depicting. Even when speaking of alien things, the poet speaks in his own language” (ibid.:287). It may be useful, at this point, to analyse Tuwhare’s strategies in a particular poem, such as *On a Theme by Hone Taiapa* (Tuwhare 1987:98, see Appendix), of which Allen (2002:127) has already published his own analysis, opening a frame for dialogue.

Stanzas 1-2 satirise Taiapa’s “theme”. The images of the poet’s waste-words either limping to heaven or going down “easy” to Raro-henga both look like what Bakhtin would regard as the “low genres” of satire and comedy. In Stanza 3 the poet is opening a dialogue with Taiapa, who uses the word “chips” in the literal sense of fallen chips of wood. Tuwhare responds with a string of his own metaphors—“the chips are down; down and out”, thus casting mild doubt on the efficacy of Taiapa’s ritual. The poet points out that he dies whenever he writes a poem; no ritual can protect him. This fatal difficulty of writing is one of his recurring themes (see Tuwhare 1987:80, 93).

Furthermore, he sets up a heteroglossic universe, contrasting “heaven” with “Raro-henga”, but not with Hell. On the one hand, it is possible to laugh at the idea of the chips limping to a (Pākehā-conceived) heaven as Pākehā consider “chips” to be inanimate, devoid of soul. On the other hand, non-Pākehā may believe that those chips are animate, spirit-possessed and thus could make it to Rangitāne. The poem envisages two worlds, each with its own codes. Bakhtin’s theory allows the poet to let doubt remain in his subject matter but “even doubts must be cast in a language that cannot be doubted” (Bakhtin 1987:286). Tuwhare conforms with this principle when he starts the poem as a vacillation between Māori belief that art leaves dangerous traces of *tapu*, and Pākehā belief that it confers beneficent immortality (*Exegi monumentum aere perennius*; *My love shall in my verse ever live young*).

Stanzas 5-7 set up the poet’s own neo-neolithic counterfoil: what his death leaves behind is not himself but vanity, pleasure, wonder, awe—experiences *all on the same level*—passionate responses to the world’s beauty. At the same time, he voices a *caveat* (“walk careful”), interpretable in many ways. By Allen’s reading, in line with localist views of cultural revivals, “All representation must be conducted with the care of carving, its spiritually dangerous excesses handled in accordance with Māori tradition” (Allen 2002:127). Certainly, this is a possible reading, but comparison with Tuwhare’s other poems, and artistic/literary commentary such as Gregory O’Brien’s in *Hotere: Out the Black Window* (1997), suggest other approaches as well. A useful starting point to these other approaches is provided
by Tuwhare’s references to poetry and lectures on poetics by Federico García Lorca, the first of which occurs in Tuwhare’s elegy *Ron Mason* (1987:93-94).

In that elegy, he described Mason as a “shrewd guardian of that infrequent *duende* / that you and Lorca knew about, playing hard-to-get”. Tuwhare returns to this concept in *Shadow*: “Implicit above all and / as persuasive as the Duende / of Federico García Lorca / is the sense that I must tread / the liveliest and loneliest / of measures on my way / to Rarohenga cocking a snook / at the shadow of my creative / bones, thinning” (1992:91). Now Lorca’s theory of *duende* is based on Lorca’s own practice, clearly distinguishable from classical Western theories such as Jakobson’s and from classical Māori theories as revived by Tamati Kruger (1980) and Hirini Mead (1984).\(^9\) Lorca introduced a new distinction between two kinds of poetic function, which he called *tener ángel* and *tener duende* respectively. The word *duende* is usually equivalent to ‘imp, elf, goblin’ but in Andalusian and especially in Gypsy folklore it refers to a black power deeply hidden in the blood, burning up the blood. The *duende* does not appear unless it senses a possible death. While *ángel* comes from on high, casting its grace upon the artist who produces it with hardly any effort, *duende* emerges from the most secret part of the self, banishing intelligence, responding to suffering and struggle by a demonic mockery of death (see Pons 1992:12-13). The spirit of *duende* finds its perfect expression in Lorca’s *Romancero gitano* (1998 [1928]).

Tuwhare follows Lorca in conceptually separating two domains: that of material objects, familiar to the Māori/Pākehā working class culture with which he identifies, and that of non-human *mana*-endowed, mythic or magical objects, mysterious and inscrutable, with which that culture is in frequent dialogue. Lorca wrote: “Myth is mixed with elements that we could call realistic, though it is not suggested that contact with the magical level makes the latter any more mysterious and inscrutable.”\(^{10}\) Now the question arises why these poets keep the two domains so carefully separate. Spanish critics of Lorca have suggested that the central theme of his *Romancero gitano* is *la Pena*, i.e., ‘suffering’, and the same may well be said for Tuwhare’s *Mihi*. It is not mentioned directly in the *Theme of Hone Taiapa*, which bears on poetics, but it predominates in most Tuwhare poems, such as the anthology piece *We, Who Live in Darkness* (Tuwhare 1987:57).

This is the story of the rebellion of the children of Rangi and Papa, told from the perspective of the children. Accordingly, its “realistic elements” are in the description of experiences of earthly life in darkest night. Here,
O’Brien (1997:118-22) notes the “obsessively subtle modulations of black”, as in the lines: “black intensities / of black on black on black feeding on itself”. The story of Tane’s discovery of the existence of light—momentary, precariously, as it briefly shone through “the armpit hairs of the father”—shows the nature of the children’s contact with the “mysterious, inscrutable magical level”, i.e., the level of the parents and the invisible environment, a level known to the children only by the few signs they were able to read. The story says nothing about suffering; the children had no grievance until they saw light and rebelled in a last line which, exceptionally, forms a perfect trochaic pentameter with paronomasia in the consonants.

While Allen is right in saying that the poet’s “chips” contain “an excess of representation”, he does not explain the cause of that excess. For poets like Lorca and Tuwhare, this excess arises out of their obsession with the sufferings of Gypsies in Spain, of Māori in New Zealand and of many others in the world. A theme like liberation from the bonds of omnipotent primal enclosure, familial or political (which not only Māori consider to be the essence of genesis) underlies Tuwhare’s work and also that of Grace, Hulme and Ihimaera. The treatment of such a theme leaves the writer with a choice of an infinite number of signifiers, but most of these cannot effectively be included in their stories. Many “chips” are discarded just to give form to the stories (those are the ones Allen had no doubt in mind) but others—much more dangerous—are discarded because they are much too painful for the addressees to live with; these would sap the courage they need for their self-liberation, reopen their deepest wounds without projecting a remedy. Hence many writers, like Lorca and Tuwhare, limit their language to the cognitive resources of their imagined addressees. It is thus that they come to impose on their language a system of knowledge made up of these addressees’ concrete everyday world, to which are added the messages which they receive from myths, ancestors, magicians, as well as living forces in nature—animals, plants, cosmic phenomena like wind and rain etc. These two sources of knowledge may not be objectively separate, and the mythic sources may be taken as (pre-Cartesian) “local knowledge”, but they bear on universal themes. The objectivity discarded by these writers has been achieved only very partially by the world’s known populations. I would suggest that Tuwhare had all this in mind when he told poets to “walk careful”.

This sifting process is most visible in Tuwhare’s poems when they seem to describe “culture”. In his drama In the Wilderness Without a Hat (1991), it is not only the meeting house symbolism that matters but also the fantail’s
omen, the *tangi*, Cappie’s lapidary use of Māori speech and his gift of muttonbirds, all of which concretely express significata of great delicacy. The fantails’ omen announces the death of the only man who could name the ancestors in the carved meeting house. This fact only heightens the mystery of the ancestors, the stories around the *tangi* and the state of the language concretely show the critical state of Māori familial and cultural structure, but all this is effaced by the kerosene tins of muttonbirds from the legendary islands off Murihiku.

Tuwhare’s work, mingling everyday marginality, suffering and pleasure with a mythic world of ancestors and nature, does not present an ethnic group but a universe. The king penguin, that opens the *Mihi* volume, is Antarctic, but a *mana*-endowed bird, resembling *kaitiaki* and other non-human persons in Māori villages (see Schwimmer 1963). The tree dying in the nuclear age is an animated being (*No Ordinary Sun*, in Tuwhare 1987:112); the rain may be a cosmic person who visits and orates at a *tangi* and whose speech is listened to (*A Fall of Rain at Mitimiti* in Tuwhare 1987:40), or it may pleasurably stimulate the senses of a human whose body it will ultimately dissolve (*Rain* in Tuwhare 1987:167). The wind is also an animated being who “like an old friend come back” held the *Old Comrade* as he fell, but not enough to stop him from dying (Tuwhare 1987:119). Forces of nature, in Tuwhare’s work, do not act metaphorically as they do in Western poetry, but are powerful, mythic non-human persons.

Although the present paper falls short of a general conceptual presentation of the anthropology of literature, it tries to bring out at least one point essential to such a sub-discipline: it will not be a refuge for local essentialisms, nor dissolve local literatures in a universalist gravy. The local and the universal are set up as semi-independent foci, between which communication may be arduous but is never excluded. At the same time, literature of Indigenous Peoples, but also of “popular” social classes, will often be heteroglossic, not only in prose but also in poetry. It will, notably in poetry, be apt to create its own language, attuned to the speech of those it addresses primarily, and thus tend often to stay at some distance from the mainstream. With regard to the Māori case, both in prose and poetry, it will resemble mainstream literature in requiring constant reference to its “literary ancestors”, but this should not be misread as essentialism. Literature, like all arts, is necessarily a product of history, of the slow development of accordances between forms and substance. This is just as true for predominantly oral as for predominantly scriptural cultures. As long as the former have a distinctive worldview, they will draw on the literary and artistic ancestors who codified it.
APPENDIX

*Hone Tuwhare: On a Theme by Hone Taiapa*

Tell me poet, what happens to my chips after I have adzed our ancestors out of wood?

What happens to your waste-words, poet? Do they limp to heaven, or go down easy to Raro-henga?

And what about my chips, when they’re down – and out? If I put them to fire do I die with them?

Is that my soul’s spark spiraling; lost to the cold night air? Agh, let me die another thousand times: eyeball to eyeball I share bad breath with the flared nostril of the night. For it’s not me I leave behind: not me.

Only the vanities of people; their pleasure, their wonder and awe alone remain.

Bite on this hard, poet: and walk careful. Fragmented, my soul lies here, there: in the waste-wood, around.
NOTES

1. Allen does not define the term “activist” and always describes the works he analyses as “literary and activist texts”. He hardly ever qualifies an analysed text as specifically “activist”, nor does he qualify as “non-activist” any novels, poems, or short stories he mentions.

2. Allen writes (2002:241, n.1): “Momaday coined the phrase in his Pulitzer Prize-winning first novel House Made of Dawn. A character uses blood memory to describe the intensity of his Kiowa grandmother’s knowledge of her people’s oral tradition.” Her memory recalled, in particular, the migration history of Kiowa and the landscapes through which her ancestors traveled.

3. This instance is, nonetheless, a special case of heteroglossia. See fuller discussion below. A lengthy explanation of what heteroglossia means may be found in Bakhtin (1981:428). To quote two sentences: “It is that which ensures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions;...”

4. For this term, see Holland et al. 1998, Chapter 6.


6. These problems of cross-cultural understanding have led to many discussions of judicial pluralism in the field of the philosophy of law. For the Māori case, see for instance Edward Taihakurei Durie 1995 and Andrew Sharp 1997 (especially Chapter 1 and pages 301-4).

7. The original of this chant is: “Tuia i runga, tuia i raro. / Tuia i roto, tuia i waho. / Tuia i te here tangata ka rongo te Ao / Ka rongo te Po. / Tuia. Tuia. / Tuia” (Ihimaera 2000: 371).

8. Horace, Carmina, Lib iii, xxx; Shakespeare, Sonnets, 19.

9. The latter are focused on three concepts: ihi, wana, wēhi, and explicated in terms of a specifically Māori value system. These concepts resemble Jakobson’s (see above), who distinguished between the emotive function (creative authorial, like ihi), the poetic or phatic function (mana of the artwork, like wana) and the conative function (addressee’s experience, like wēhi). According to Mead (1997:211), Māori “believe these qualities (ihi, wana, wēhi) to be present in all good art in any culture”.


11. I take these points to be implicit in Lévi-Strauss’ discussion on mana (1950: xlvi-l).
REFERENCES


[Horace] Horatius Flaccus, Quintus, 24 or 23 BC: Carmina Lib i-iii.


