

Otto Heim and Anne Zimmermann

*Hu(l)man Medi(t)ations: Inter-Cultural
Explorations in Keri Hulme's
The Windeater / Te Kaihau*

It all depends
on what story
you hear
The Windeater 240

Considering their comparatively influential role in the distribution of Fourth World Literature,¹ critics should be aware of the political implications of their readings and theories. This seems to have been generally accepted as a premise by critics who focus on post-colonial literatures today, in particular by those who write from the centre of their institutional activities in "marginal" (i.e. non-British and non-American) universities. Our particular concern was originally to explore the controversial relationship between recent critical theories and post-colonial literatures, as well as its political significance for our activities as teachers and researchers; what the present paper has resulted in is an attempt to portray how our reading of Keri Hulme's *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* has modified our perception of this relationship. Apart from offering interpretive comments on Hulme's writing, we delineate theoretical impulses which we think can be gained in the interaction with texts by an author who works with a profound and ambivalent sense of the intricacies of cultural identity in New Zealand.

Published in 1986 and variously described in reviews as a collection of stories, short stories, short fiction, short narratives, or stories and poems, Hulme's fourth book has received comparatively little critical attention, despite the fact that its author won the Booker Prize for *the bone people* one year earlier.² We believe that one of the causes for this neglect is the unsettling composite nature of the book: it contains an unexpected mixture of types of narratives that presents readers with a literary practice appealing to both the post-colonialist and post-modernist frames of interpretation, which have been — and still are — usually perceived as antagonistic.

The relationship between post-modernism and post-colonialism has been one of the main foils for the general academic debate referred to initially, in which ideological concerns and positions have been spelled out. In 1985, for

example, Simon During published an influential, controversial, and in parts ambiguous essay in which he took New Zealand academics to task for what he considered to be their principal fault: their refusal to "welcome foreign intellectual discourses" (376) and allow (post-modernist) theory and political awareness to infuse their readings of New Zealand literature. In an attempt to palliate this deficiency, During engaged in a description of post-modernism and post-colonialism, underlined the fact that "both ... are terms whose application involves a politics" (371), and described the relationship between the two discourses as one of dependency of the latter on the first.³ To illustrate his understanding of critical practice he applied his theoretical frame to Janet Frame's *Living in the Maniototo* and Keri Hulme's *the bone people*, describing the first as post-modern and the latter as "[u]nwillingly, blindly ... enter[ing] into the postmodern condition" (374). Thus, he concluded, "it does seem that post-colonialism can be absorbed by post-modernism" (374).

This is not the place to challenge During's reading of *the bone people*,⁴ nor, for that matter, to discuss his problematic definition of post-colonialism (see Slemon); since 1985, the debate surrounding post-colonialism's intrinsic difficulties has greatly progressed and others have ploughed the field fruitfully enough (see Adam and Tiffin). We would like to enter the debate at the node where the anti-referentiality of post-modernism and the specific referentiality of post-colonialism are (still) conceived of as antagonistic and therefore usually engender irremediably opposed critical positions. Indeed, as we pointed out above, our reading of *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* has led us to rethink the relationship between post-modernism and post-colonialism; we would like to suggest that the discursive potential of both theoretical frames can be used to negotiate a more thorough appreciation of this book and of its significance for the current debate about the position of Maori literature in English.

The presence of the "Maori" on the literary scene in New Zealand, especially in criticism, reviews, and the media, has often been perceived (by Pakeha) as excessive, and analyzed as the result of the coloniser's guilt trip. At any rate, it seems to portray a relationship between Pakeha and Maori which any sociological and political analysis of the country reveals is inversely proportioned. During expresses his view of the situation rather pointedly in his 1985 article:

In terms of parliamentary representation, money, education, entry into the professions and so on Maori do badly. But as far as what can be called discursive politics the comparative strength of the two communities [Maori and Pakeha] is, if anything, overturned. (370)

Though it seems that During's evaluation appears somewhat dated in the present political context, his statement is interesting because of the paradox

it seems to reveal. As we see it, the problem is that two apparently disconnected sites of power coexist; one can be more readily described in sociological, the other in discursive terms. If post-modernism and post-colonialism can be seen as "the two critical discourses which today constitute themselves specifically in opposition to [the] historical conjunction" of modernism and colonialism, as Slemon (1) suggests, then During's paradox is also an expression of "one of the major fault-lines that runs between them" (1-2). While post-modernist criticism might limit its attention to the discursive power of Maori writing, to its exposure, parody, and deconstruction of colonialist and colonising discourses, in terms of a general critique of the idea that language might in any way be grounded in reality, post-colonialist criticism will want to emphasize the recuperative function of Maori writing, its bearing on an historical reality, and its claim to construct a social identity in its own terms.

It is by making an intervention in this area of incongruous power relations that criticism of Maori literature gains its (political) relevance. The task for the critics, then, would be to try to throw some light on the eclipsed connections between the two diverging power structures. At this stage, it seems useful to introduce the concept of ethnicity, because it is here that the deconstructive politics of post-modernism, as it appears for instance in the contemporary debate within anthropology, can be related to the sociological concerns of a post-colonial society. Ethnicity, as we will argue below, is both a focus for the construction of powerful new social formations, hence relying on some sense of referentiality, and the site of a deconstructive negotiation of existing discursive structures.⁵

David Pearson provides a sociological definition of ethnicity as a dynamic process of group identification, involving "a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory, a sense of solidarity" (15). Following Anthony Smith, he distinguishes a more permanent quality of ethnicity, manifest in such constituents of group identity as language, religion, or territory, from a more transient one, where ethnicity appears as "an ephemeral political strategy that emanates from specific situations" (Pearson 16). As a dynamic concept of group awareness, ethnicity thus designates a particular perspective in which members of a group view their history and culture in a specific situation. To this definition one may add that such a perspective only becomes relevant when one or more of the more stable constituents of group identity or culture are threatened. For the Maori, ethnicity has gained in importance as their traditional control of the territory of Aotearoa has diminished. According to Walker, ethnicity only became a component of Maori identity with the arrival of the Europeans. Before that, they "thought of themselves in terms of *iwi* (tribes)" (35). In other words, while in pre-colonial times the Maori may have more readily perceived the differences among themselves as tribes, during the

process of colonialization they increasingly came to see what they had in common and hence to perceive themselves as one people. Minority situation, urbanisation, and the loss of their language further accentuated the need for the Maori to construct such an identity. Nowadays what used to be a criterion for differentiation among Maori tribes in pre-European times – descent from one of the ancestral canoes that made their landfall in New Zealand around the middle of the 14th century – has paradoxically become one of the main constituents of modern Maori ethnicity.

The construction of an ethnic Maori identity contains a further paradox, for it relies strongly on early ethnographic accounts made by Pakeha scholars. Although it may be based on dubious sources, the tradition of the coming of the Great Fleet represents a component of their cultural identity that the Maori cannot afford to give up, since, as M. P. K. Sorrenson points out, "genealogies showing descent from Maui and the commander of the ancestral canoe from Hawaiki could be used to establish a charter to the land" (84). Hauraki Greenland discusses more recent attempts by radical Maori to define Maori ethnicity without recourse to Pakeha sources. In their efforts to construct Maori ethnicity as an ideology in order "to understand and resolve perceived grievances such as the loss of language and land, communal decay, racism, sexism, alienation and lack of power" (91), they explore such concepts as *negritude* and black power, and emphasize a fundamental difference between Maori and Pakeha world views. Such radical articulations of Maori ethnicity draw their legitimation mainly from the powerful contribution they make to the enhancement of Maori cultural awareness. Aimed primarily at immediate political action, they may at times adopt a rather exclusionist rhetoric which not only makes it virtually impossible for progressive Pakeha to express their solidarity with Maori concerns, as Greenland notes, but also runs the risk of dividing Maori society itself.

The problems involved in the construction of a useful concept of ethnicity give some weight to Fischer's criticism of the shortcomings of a sociological view of ethnicity. According to Fischer, ethnicity is primarily an experience of incongruity or difference, "something reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation by each individual and that is often something quite puzzling to the individual, something over which he or she lacks control" (195). As an experience of inter-culturality, of the interaction of two or more cultures in one's life, ethnicity cannot be directly represented in terms of any single culture. Rather, its articulation is always the emergence of something new, involving complex processes of recollection and of translation between cultures. The articulation of ethnicity is, therefore, also a probing of the relationships between cultures and of the conditions under which they can coexist. In Fischer's words,

ethnicity is a process of inter-reference between two or more cultural traditions, and ... these dynamics of intercultural knowledge provide reservoirs for renewing humane values. Ethnic memory is thus, or ought to be, future, not past, oriented. (201)

This understanding of ethnicity explains the importance of literary texts in Fischer's analysis of ethnicity, for literature is one cultural area where experiments with ethnic recollections and inter-cultural translations are conducted. His remarks about ethnicity are made in view of narrative experiments by writers of various ethnic backgrounds in the USA, but they also seem appropriate to Maori writing in English. Keri Hulme, for example, discusses Maori poetry in English in her early essay "Maori: An Introduction to Bi-cultural Poetry in New Zealand"; she points out that it is "poetry written by people of dual heritage, Maori and Pakeha ancestry" (295). While she stresses that the experience of being of dual ancestry can be painful and heart-rending, she maintains that "Maori poetry written in English ... is the most vital, stimulating, and innovative force in New Zealand writing today" (295). Hulme's description of Maori writers in English as "[w]riters of double beginning, inhabiting both *Te Ao Maori* and *Te Ao Pakeha*, but writing for *Te Ao Hou*" (296), expresses a view that is similar to Fischer's understanding of ethnicity.

In post-colonial contexts, the probing of the relationships between cultures which, according to Fischer, is at work in ethnic writing, takes as its point of departure the asymmetrical power relations established during colonialism by the use of economic domination, violence, and the control of the conditions of communication. These power relations manifest themselves, among other instances, in a system of constraints which inscribes the colonial subject in a discourse that prevents its free development, and which therefore becomes the site of a struggle for the liberated articulation of an ethnic identity. In his analysis of Creole societies, the Caribbean writer and critic Edouard Glissant has introduced the concept of a "forced or constrained poetics" (95) to describe such struggles. Glissant defines a "forced poetics" as "any collective drive toward expression when it recognises in itself some lack which makes it impossible, not as a drive but as an expression" (95).

In a "forced poetics," the established power relations are primarily redefined in terms of a confrontation:

Forced poetics occur whenever a drive for expression confronts something impossible to express. Such a confrontation may occur between the expressible contents and the idiom which is suggested or imposed historically. (95)

As a strategy for the liberation of an ethnic subject, however, a "forced poetics" involves a process that Gayatri Spivak calls "negotiating the structures of violence," which consists in "transforming a condition of impossibility into a condition of possibility" ("Negotiating" 145). The term negotiation implies a strategic awareness that there is no pure indigenous position available from which an ethnic identity can be articulated; rather, such an articulation needs to proceed from the basis of the constraining discursive formations which the colonial subject is forced to inhabit, breaking them open and exploring new directions. At the same time negotiation aims at an identity which is not static but dynamic, or even processual, i.e. it avoids the reversal of existing power relations into the new, stable hierarchies that Greenland fears, by engaging in an ongoing process of the positioning of the subject. In Spivak's words this means

that one tries to change something that one is obliged to inhabit, since one is not working from the outside. In order to keep one's effectiveness, one must also preserve those structures – not cut them down completely. ("The Post-colonial Critic" 72)

Writing that is committed to such a notion of negotiation is therefore characterised by an awareness of the provisional nature of its effectiveness.

It seems to us that Spivak's remarks are particularly pertinent to Keri Hulme's writing. In the following sections of this paper, we will examine some of the texts in *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* and show how they can work as ethnic recollections if read in the light of certain (predominantly Pakeha) textual constructions of (pre-)colonial Maori culture and identity. In our readings, the texts will become places of interaction with, and strategic negotiations of, prevailing representations of "Maoriness," resulting in a dynamic vision of Maori identity which is future-oriented and bi-cultural.

Oscillation and Contact

Binary structures, frames, and pairings abound in *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* beginning with the title. They can be found everywhere in the book's texture: words, characters, cultural symbols, languages, and genres are yoked together or split in two. Indeed, the pairings most often seem to be the result of a forced marriage of disparate partners, or of a violent splitting asunder of a whole; a general sense of unease and menace emanates from both processes and may be the cause of critics' reservations about the book's ultimate effect on readers. This is how Susan Ash, for example, explains why she was led to revise her positive reading of *the bone people* after dealing with *The Windeater*: "I believe that Hulme's ambiguous attitude to individualism and to violence

accounts for both the critical dissent regarding *The Bone People* and the relative silence regarding *Te Kaihau*" (124). Though Ash concentrates mainly on characters and plots, her analysis of readers' anxieties when dealing with Hulme's stories could be extended to the author's use of language in general.

Indeed, as the penultimate (and title) story underlines,⁶ words, (not just beings) may be split like atoms in the process of nuclear fission, letting very sinister leftovers leak out as a fatal menace to the world. The narrator gives the following comment on her relationship with words: "That's when it's a whole unbroken word, but if you split it, a power leaks out and becomes a woman trying to make sense of her self and her living and her world" (*The Windeater* 232). She then ends the text with fragmentary statements that give the reader a sense of death and annihilation. But Hulme also demonstrates that if words are cracked open like mussels, what may be found inside is nourishment of a primeval kind that brings sheer delight and satisfaction. Yoking together unmatched elements achieves the same ambivalence of effect. An evaluation of Hulme's writing in *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* cannot, however, rely solely on the negative impression resulting from the ambiguity of these aesthetic processes. Splitting into, or joining together, unmatched parts is only one aspect of the binary principle that pervades the book: what animates the texts is what happens *between* the two parts or poles. The interaction between the parts tends to gain so much momentum in the course of reading that the oscillatory movement takes precedence over the existence of the poles — which then appear as necessary but provisional abstractions. In other words, a thorough perception of the parts and poles is possible only when we fully appreciate the oscillatory, dynamic relationship between them. Thus, the "Foreword" is rather programmatic: "it all happens in the gaps and windows" (11).

In the context of the whole book, the "Foreword" forms a pair with the "Afterword" (which is itself a "Headnote" to a tale yet to be told). But the "Foreword" is also a pair in itself. It firmly initiates the oscillatory movement and interaction in a multitude of textual dimensions. Wedde's quotation of Gass's remark about Gertrude Stein's *A BOX*, "We have a surface two words long and two texts wide" (35), seems appropriate indeed. Words are fused ("twoten," *Te Kaihau* 16) and split ("fret fully," 17), and the "Foreword" ends in a texture in which combinations of a number of words are woven together:

an owl-child/songlight/raining
 childsong/lightwing/rainshine
 owl-light: rainchild: nothing else (18)

As the title indicates, "Tara Diptych" is also an interaction between languages, Maori and English. Readers who, like Ian Wedde, have "a well-thumbed copy of the Williams dictionary" (35) by their side may find

themselves oscillating between the "Foreword" and the dictionary entry on *tara* (Williams 386-87). This interaction between languages is also an interaction between cultures and a reflection on the radical impossibility, but also the inebriating creative potential of, translation. Furthermore "The First Wing" and "The Other Wing" also engage in an interaction between genres: "The First Wing," written in what appears on the page as prose, is very lyrical, whereas "The Other Wing," which looks like poetry, contains narrative elements that hint at a plot and story. This, too, seems to be a deliberate way of bringing cultures into interaction. In fact, Keri Hulme has been quoted as saying, "I don't like distinctions between different kinds of writing. There aren't those distinctions in the Maori language, so I feel inclined just to ignore them" (O'Brien 25). In English, however, the distinction is hard to ignore since prose and poetry conventionally raise rather different expectations. The breaking of such conventions can thus become a stylistic marker of Maori writing in English.

In addition to the oscillatory movements between words, languages, texts, and genres, similar movements can be found within and between personae. From the start we are made familiar with the permeability and transience of human consciousness. Oscillations occur between the inside and the outside of "your" mind, as well as between the moment "you are gull-watching, hill-watching, sea-watching, nothing more" (9) and "the afterthought period" (11). We, the narrator as well the reader, move easily from one to the other while the words move through our minds. This playful undulation ends abruptly in a (con)fusion of minds: "you have become a shadow in someone else's head and body" (11). Suddenly we are made aware of the interpenetration of minds that is inherent in literary communication. Realising that she (or he?) too has become a shadow in someone else's head, the narrator is anxious to quickly re-establish her/his separate and undivided identity: "and you're not me and you're not me and I am myself alone" (11).

It is interesting to read this short drama of contact and separation of consciousness(es) in terms of writing and reading as interlocking sense-making practices in literary communication. The conflict between fusion and separation can be seen as a conflict between two contradictory yet complementary desires for knowledge. On the one hand, there is the attempt to use language to establish contact and to enter into an intuitive and almost mystical communication with the other. The knowledge that is aimed at here is gained by fusion with the object desired. This may be the impulse behind the creative weaving together of words. The meaning or knowledge that results has the quality of a revelation, or of a "clink." It is a desire and knowledge that can be associated with the rather pervasive religious connotations in "The First Wing,"⁷ as well as with the sexual allusions that pervade "The Other Wing."

On the other hand, knowledge is sought through deciphering and discrimination; it does not aim at fusion but maintains a distance to its object. Language is used here for cognitive communication. This form of knowledge brings about an awareness of separate identities and holds the promise of a triumph: saying "where all the influences come from" (12). It is attained throughout the "Foreword" in the "21 meanings for *tara* grouped under everything from gossip to rays" (13); all of the denotations can be found in Williams' dictionary and happen to fit the wild array of events, feelings, objects, and relationships that constitute the body of the diptych; they can, indeed, all be (re)-covered by dissecting the text minutely.

While one might recognize in the two kinds of knowledge something like a division of labour between the writer and the reader or critic, with the writer weaving words into secrets and the reader or critic deciphering them, the confusion of pronouns on page 11 suggests that both impulses are at work in both writing and reading at the same time, and that it is in their interlocking that meaning is produced. Apart from the interplay between intuition and cognition reverberating on the relationship between writing and reading, another important source of what we could call interactive meaning arises from the mixture of languages and genres. It, too, contributes to the text's interculturality. To use Bill Manhire's words, the text "dirties the silence," it is "a monologue made up of conversations, a voice composed of many voices" (69-70).

To elaborate on an earlier suggestion, we would like to argue that the "Foreword" is also programmatic in the sense that this interplay and oscillation between conflicting elements can be found to animate, in one way or another, most texts in *The Windeater / Te Kaihau*, most conspicuously so in the translation of the oral into the written in "Kaibutsu-San" and "Swansong" ("Look, listen." [29]), in the movement between textual body and marginal notes in "A Tally of the Souls of Sheep," in the juxtaposition of, and oscillation between, worlds and world views in "One Whale, Singing," and in the structures of recollection in such stories as "He Tauware Kawa, He Kawa Tauware," "The Knife and the Stone," and "While My Guitar Gently Sings." Besides, it also provides the collection with strands of imagery which are the focus of ethnic memory: wind, breath, song, food, sexuality, and violence.

Wind / Hau

Song is one of the pervading strands of imagery in *The Windeater*. References to singing and song appear in the titles of four stories, and the image occupies a central place in a majority of the stories of the collection. The importance of this image allows us to relate *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* to the Maori tradition of poetry in which singing and songs play a dominant role. In

her essay "Mauri: An Introduction to Bicultural Poetry in New Zealand," Keri Hulme emphasizes this importance, quoting Barry Mitcalfe's book *Maori Poetry: The Singing Word*:

they were people who, simply as part of social living, made or adapted songs. Almost anyone could lightly turn a song for work or play One of the sources of *mana* was the skill to devise and have accepted a song appropriate to the occasion ... ("Mauri" 290)⁸

In another sense, too, singing is an important strand of Maori culture in *The Windeater*: in its association with breathing. In an interview with Shona Smith, Hulme points out the importance of breathing for the Maori: "You know what breath is to Maori — you are your breath" (Smith 29). Breathing is another central image in Hulme's collection, in particular of course in the title story where one of the meanings of the word "windeater" refers to the narrator's hunger for air. In the section that speaks most explicitly of the pleasure of breathing, "Never the Same Wind Twice," breathing is described as "alveoli singing away with joy" (221), and is compared to the song of birds:

You've heard skylarks duelling for space, each pegging his own sky-claim with frantic song, making a chestburst effort to keep every other dueller fenced out as they quest higher and higher into the blue yonder? Sometimes I'd feel like their song on ordinary everyday air. (221)

The awareness of breathing is a kind of knowledge of life, of being connected to the world, and of artistic power. Breathing is the physical interaction between inner and outer world. Similarly, singing emotionally establishes a connection between the inner and the outer world, and makes possible moments of great intimacy between people, as for instance in "A Drift in Dream," or even between species, as is suggested in "One Whale, Singing," where the whale hits the ship at the very moment the woman "begins to croon a song of comfort to herself" (70). The example of the skylarks, however, also points at another function of singing: that of enacting conflict and challenging potential rivals. Once more, Hulme fuses opposites within one image: connectedness and separation. It is tempting to relate this aspect of the example to the Maori *waiata patere*, or songs of abuse and war.

Of course none of the stories in *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* can be considered a traditional *waiata*. Nevertheless, reading these stories in the perspective of traditional Maori poetry makes it possible not only to perceive traditional patterns but also to recognize specific changes, transformations of

tradition which are significant in the context of contemporary urban Maori culture. A brief discussion of four stories will help to illustrate the point.

Of all the stories, "He Tauware Kawa, He Kawa Tauware" raises most explicitly the topic of the practicability of traditional songs in an urban context. But as "He Tauware" relates to the tradition of action songs and dances, here performed at a newly opened *marae*, so "While My Guitar Gently Sings," "A Nightsong for the Shining Cuckoo," and "A Window Drunken in the Brain" seem to relate to other types of traditional Maori *waiata*, namely the death lament or *waiata tangi*, the *oriori* or lullaby, and the *waiata aroha* or love song. We could say of all four stories what Margaret Orbell says of Maori poetry in general: they "are concerned in various ways with themes of separation and loss, for Maori poetry is, in general, inspired not by success and happiness but by sorrow and defeat" (8). All of them, however, also present specific responses to failures or the pressures of inactivity. This, too, is in keeping with Orbell's observations about Maori poetry:

Since there was for them no gap between thought and action, they were most unhappy and gloomy if they found themselves inactive and unable to assert themselves. In such circumstances they turned to poetry, for words, which were a kind of action, provided them with an outlet and a means of asserting themselves, so that song became a form of self-vindication, a kind of triumph. (8)

We suggest that Hulme's stories can also be read as negotiations of failure and success, of sorrow and happiness, rather than as a mere statement, for example, of the debilitating effect of a cultural cleft. Furthermore the last three stories all feature female narrators; this allows for another analogy with Orbell's observations, namely "that women generally had fewer alternative means of action open to them" (9).

Ostensibly "He Tauware Kawa, He Kawa Tauware" is the story of the failure of a young Maori cultural group's attempt to perform the traditional ritual of encounter at a newly opened urban *marae*. The text portrays the difficulties that a cultural group which is not backed by a community encounters in legitimating their project and gaining the support and advice of Maori who are knowledgeable in traditional protocol. They are dismissed as a "stupid mongrel group" (94) because they do not speak Maori fluently and because they are not Maori enough: James is a "[g]reasy-haired Pakeha, forestry worker, big bike, drinker, trouble" (92), Steve is a "quiet Pakeha with the Maori sense of humour" (93), and Allison is "one of the blue-eyed white-blond kind of Maori" (92) who has to cling to her *whakapapa* that proves her Maori ancestry. On the day of the performance, they seem to have broken the protocol by arriving at the inviting *marae* at night and are left to wait in the cold. When

they are finally received, it is only by some children and a woman. Their performance has to end abruptly because the local people are unable to welcome them properly to their meeting house. The pride they have gained in ten weeks of practising the traditional chants, dances, and speeches is shattered and their expectations thwarted. Ironically, it is the unexpected arrival of "important people from Maori Affairs" (96) which is responsible for the failure.

The story presents a contrast between a dominant Maori ideology and the experience and feelings of a group of people who want to assert their Maori identity. Flashbacks contrast the reality of the performance night with the enthusiasm and expectations of the members of the cultural group. The story proceeds from uncertainty and ambiguity to definite contradiction and exclusion. Symbolically, this is represented by the door which is half open at the beginning and which is opened three or four times before it is finally shut at the end:

[We were] fired by an idea that said
In this Maori context you will be important and welcomed and accorded respect because anciently this is the way things have been done. You are no longer lonely individuals: you have become part of something great and deep-rooted and vital. Welcome! ...
Someone shuts the door again. One of the kids, after Bessie.
We can't see each other's tears in the dark. We can only feel them, swelling out of our hearts. (96)

What this juxtaposition shows above all is a contrast of (discursive) power and weakness. A proud assertion of Maoriness stands against the defeat of the cultural group which only finds expression in tears. Paradoxically, the dominant Maori ideology that guides the group and defines the conditions under which they are to succeed, ultimately also silences them. The failure of the group also questions the validity of the ideology, since acceptance in the Maori context seems to depend less on the successful performance than on the position one occupies in the discursive network: the "mongrel group" Ohaupai simply does not hold as much authority as the "important people from Maori Affairs."

However, the story also raises the question of how the results of cultural activities should be assessed. The failure of the group to be accepted in the Maori context is contrasted by the experience of cross-cultural learning that has taken place among its members. While the strong verbal assertion of Maoriness seems to constitute an ideological system that promotes discursive power and exclusion rather than fulfilling the promise of creating and sustaining a community, the story also hints at the possibility of retrieving genuine Maori values of community and the potential of cross-cultural understanding that lie in the practice of cultural traditions. The activities of the cultural group have

brought together people who would otherwise not have much in common: James, the noisy Pakeha, "has grown a surprising affection for Mrs Parker" (92), the oldest member of the group. The enthusiasm for their common project provides the foundation for real solidarity in the group, as the narrator notes after five weeks of practice: "just five weeks and already the aroha grows" (94). It is this process of "learning each other, helping each other" (96) that is ultimately more real than the promise of acceptance in the larger, hierarchized Maori community. Thus the story has the strong mood of sadness as well as the quality of negotiating failure and success which Orbell sees as typical traits of Maori *waiata*.

"While My Guitar Gently Sings" presents a similar negotiation of grief and happiness. It is the story of Hinewai who feels that she has failed her mother. Hinewai, who started a party after her mother's death instead of going home to the funeral, is sitting in the dark and remembers her mother. The guitar that she received from her mother provides the focus for her memory, and the "thick grey deadening dust" (107) that has gathered on the instrument is a painful reminder of her failure. Hinewai remembers how at the age of seventeen she wanted to escape the hardship and narrowness of rural Maori life and went to Wellington; how her mother, although hurt by her daughter's decision, put all her efforts and money into helping her realize her dreams; and how her life in the city failed. The estrangement between daughter and mother is summed up by the mother in the following words: "E hine, sometimes I think we live in different worlds. ... You in one world, me in quite another." (115).

The story oscillates between these two worlds, between past and present, rural and urban, the world of the dead and that of the living, as the daughter engages in an interior monologue addressing her mother. Out of this oscillation between two apparently incompatible worlds arises the mood of sorrow and regret which pervades the story, and which culminates in Hinewai's apology to her mother: "E Ma, I am sorry" (117). At the same time, however, the oscillation between past and present gradually leads to contact and communication between the two worlds. The relationship between the two women comes to life as Hinewai picks up her guitar, wipes off the dust, and tentatively begins to play. It is at this moment that the monologue turns into a dialogue since at the end of the story, the mother is actually sitting there in the dark with her daughter and tells her: "Be happy, Hinewai. Sing for me, my daughter. Play!" (117). Thus the story suggests that the sorrow and regret expressed by Hinewai in her music lead to the reconciliation of the two worlds, enabling her to overcome her alienation. From a psychological point of view, it is an instance of successful grieving.

Hinewai's reconciliation with her mother is also a reconciliation with Maori values, such as the importance of the relationship between the living and the dead, "the bones," according to the mother, "dead in the cemetery and live

in every second house" (112). Similarly, although she does not go to the funeral, Hinewai's monologue does have some of the characteristics of the traditional *waiata tangi*, the funeral lament. The story is strikingly in keeping with the description of laments composed by women given by S. M. Mead:

1. The emphasis is usually upon how the composer feels and not upon the greatness of the deceased.
2. The imagery used tends to be simple but nevertheless effective.
3. The composition is a personal statement of grief and is not a statement on behalf of the tribe.
4. The composition is usually short. (387)

Of course the comparability of a traditional *waiata* and a short story is limited, in particular with regard to relative length or shortness. Nevertheless, the point of view, the mood, and the imagery of "While My Guitar Gently Sings" supports the comparison. Apart from the guitar, the darkness of the night and the "tears falling in tiny beads of sound" (117) contribute to provide important images in the story, images which, according to Mead, are most common in laments that otherwise show little imagery.

The association of the story with a tradition of compositions by women is interesting because it seems that the reinterpretation of the tradition is most relevant with respect to the situation of women in it. One of the reasons why Hinewai leaves her village is that she resents the position of inferiority that Maori tradition assigns to women: "I still hate all that shit, men being tapu, and women being noa. Don't eat here; don't put your head there. Don't hang your clothes higher than the men's: never get up and talk on the marae" (114). Reading the story in terms of a *waiata tangi* suggests that Maori traditions must, and can be, reinterpreted in ways that make them compatible with the modern awareness of women.

A feminist reading of "While My Guitar Gently Sings" is further supported by a comparison of the story with another, very recent, tradition of Maori culture: literature written in English. In important respects, Hulme's text seems to be a rewriting of Witi Ihimaera's short story "Tangi" (*Pounamu* 125-32), an early, short version of his famous first novel by the same title. While in Ihimaera's story, Tama, the eldest son, does not hesitate, but immediately returns home from Wellington after receiving the phone call that informs him of his father's death, and fulfils his duty by looking after his mother, brothers, and sisters after the tangi, the situation in Hulme's story is reversed and the text implicitly questions the practicability of Tama's exemplary way, especially for women. Hinewai is painfully aware of the expectations she is unable to fulfil:

If I had any of your strength and generosity I would be packing up now, getting ready to catch the train, the bus, getting ready to hike, anyway back to the tangi. Doing all the proper things as befits the eldest child, as befits the daughter of my mother. (117)

However, as the ending of the story suggests, Hinewai's personal way of expressing her grief leads to a moment of real communication with her mother and enables her to negotiate the apparently dichotomous structures she inhabits. The last sentence of the story, "And I am" (117), can be read both as an answer to her mother's invitation to be happy, and as an expression of self-liberation, of coming into being. Furthermore, by drawing on and reinterpreting Maori literary tradition, both oral and written, the story exemplifies the vitality of Maori tradition and its capacity to offer a vision of the future.

In different ways, the stories "A Nightsong for the Shining Cuckoo" and "A Window Drunken in the Brain" can also be read as reinterpretations of traditional *waiata*. "A Nightsong" can be related to the traditional *oriori* or lullaby which, according to Mead, was usually composed for "a child of high birth and more often than not, a boy who will one day become a chief" (391). Significantly, in "A Nightsong" this situation is again reversed, since Bird, for whom the song is sung here, is an illegitimate and handicapped child. For this reason, the aunt who looks after him calls him *Te Pipiwharauoa*, the shining cuckoo. But Bird is not the only one in the story who leads a cuckoo-like existence. Charlie, too, has left and somehow lost his parents, and come to live with his aunt Frances, the narrator. And Frances herself feels like a cuckoo in a foreign nest after she has moved from the bush to the city and opened a dairy as a way of coping with an accident that has maimed her. Rather than the proud descendants of chiefly rank, the story seems to address an uprooted generation of urban Maori who are struggling for a better, more promising future. The frame of the story with its implication of a new beginning, alludes to such a future. Frances, accompanied by her nephew, has returned to the bush and is listening to the rainbirds:

I hear them singing in the hills, *kui kui kui, whiti whiti ora*.
There's a young bird calling out, a shining cuckoo, calling continually,
for the father, the mother cuckoo. Rainbirds.
I used to think O hell. (133)

The shining cuckoo, too, is an ambiguous image of loss and hope. On the one hand it implies uprootedness and the loss of tradition. On the other hand, it is a symbol of spring and life returning. As Mead (393) points out, it is also an image that is firmly anchored in oral tradition. It thus paradoxically permits the loss of family and tradition to be expressed within the framework of traditional

symbolism. Hulme's story alludes to that tradition in various ways, by incorporating the song "Pipi manu e" by the Maori poet and singer Hirini Melbourne, and by echoing her own poem "Nightsong For Te Pipiwharauoa," quoted in her essay of 1981, where she relates it to a traditional *oriori* of the Aupouri people and points out the meaning of *Te Pipiwharauoa* as both "a child born out of wedlock, and also the bird that is the herald of spring, the shining cuckoo" ("Mauri" 308). Translated into a modern context, it seems that what S. M. Mead says of the traditional *oriori* could also be said of Hulme's story: "A great deal of mythological and traditional material could be taught not only to the child for whom the lullaby was composed but also to those who sang it and listened to it" (393).

"A Window Drunken in the Brain," finally, can be read as drawing on the tradition of the *waiata aroha* or love song. The refrain-like repetition of the phrase "man gone" gives this story the quality of a lament over the loss of a lover which, according to Mead, is most common in traditional love songs composed by women (Mead 394). The story proceeds by an oscillation between past and present similar to that in "While My Guitar Gently Sings," but here the past is associated with intimacy whereas the present is characterised by separation. Again, the story presents an interesting reinterpretation of the traditional imagery of love songs. While, as Mead points out, one of the "universal love song images occurring in Maori compositions" is "loss of appetite" (396), the most conspicuous feature of "A Window Drunken in the Brain" is probably its imagery of culinary pleasures. As in the story "While My Guitar Gently Sings," this modification in particular seems to imply a critique and reinterpretation of the position of women in Maori tradition, as we would like to show in our next section.

Food / Kai

In an essay published in 1985, the American anthropologist Marshall Sahlins writes that "throughout Polynesia sexual intercourse is 'eating'" (29). This generalising statement — made in the context of the discussion of social relationships in Hawaii, where, according to Sahlins, sexual attraction is the foundation of a specific economic, political, and spiritual order — calls for explanation if it is to apply to the tradition of the Maori in New Zealand, where sexuality was strongly associated with death, constituted a potential threat to social order, and was therefore controlled by an intricate symbolical network, relating sexuality with warfare and possibly cannibalism. As Berys Heuer points out in her discussion of the status and role of women in traditional Maori society, although both women and men enjoyed considerable sexual freedom until marriage, "[a]dultery involving a married woman was an extremely serious offence and, if detected, frequently precipitated retaliatory warfare" (460). The

association of sex with death in Maori tradition is closely related to the *noa* status of women and their destructive effect on *tapu*. "The presence of women, or more precisely of the female organs, was deemed destructive to sacredness, as was the presence of cooked food" (477). Both women and cooked food, being *noa*, were employed in rituals to lift the excessive *tapu* from men who had been involved in the construction of a new house or a canoe, or from a party of warriors.

Anthropologists generally trace this destructive character of women back to the mythological origin of women, in particular to Hine-nui-te-Po who, as Hine-Titama, was the daughter of the first woman by Tane, and became the first victim of incest since Tane had sexual intercourse with her as well. When she realized this, Hine-Titama "fled horrified to the underworld to take a position at the doorway through which all of her earthly descendants would eventually pass" (Heuer 449). Having thus become the death goddess, Hine-nui-te-Po's most prominent victim was Maui whose challenge to her was meant to grant immortality to mankind, but whose defeat made human death irreversible.

The myth of Maui's last feat and eventual defeat provides the Maori conception of sexuality with an elaborate symbolism. Maui's plan to conquer the death goddess by entering through her vagina has clear sexual connotations. According to some versions of the myth, Maui assumed the shape of a worm for the task, a form which suggests the phallic symbolism associated with Maui (see Hanson and Hanson 91). Maui's death (he was crushed between the thighs of the awakening Hine-nui-te-Po), is caused by the laughter of his friends the fantails, prompted by the spectacle of the demi-god wriggling into the goddess's vagina. Laughter, as the Hansons also point out, "seems to have been the Maori male's way of indicating sexual arousal" (90). They quote several incidents where laughter, induced by sexual excitement, led to a man's demise. The manner of Maui's death also hints at the association of sexual intercourse with eating, which provided prudish anthropologists and collectors of Maori myths and legends with (welcome) confusions. Maureen Johnston points out that Grey "appears to have removed the *vagina dentata* motif" in his account of Maui's end (35). The Hansons quote White's mistranslation of the description of Maui's death as "sucked into the mouth of Hine-nui-te-Po" where the Maori text "refers specifically to her genitals, not her mouth" (207; see also Reed 47).

Furthermore, the myth of Maui's death presents a view of sexual intercourse as a struggle between life and death. According to Elsdon Best, Maui is a personification of light, "and light perished in the womb of darkness" (*Maori Religion* 329). The Hansons relate Maui's battle with Hine-nui-te-Po to a general representation of sexual intercourse "as a battle between the male and female organs, Tiki and Karihi. Tiki attacks bravely, but Karihi draws him further and further into herself and there overcomes him" (91). The (erect)

penis here seems to symbolise creativity and vitality, whereas "the female sex organ was known as *te whare o te mate o Aituuuaa* (the house of death and disaster)" (Johnston 35). In a more general way, this view of sexual intercourse as struggle or battle seems to find its expression in the Maori view of love — and other emotions — as an attack on a person's mental state, requiring counter-attack, as Jean Smith points out:

Strife was not just a way of life for the Maori, it was also a way of thought; the most characteristic method whereby the Maori dealt with the attack of violent emotions upon him was through violent counter-attack. The underlying principle of this was *utu* meaning "to make return" — to return either a gift with a gift or an insult with vengeance. (150)

This sketch of the Maori concept of sexual relationships as represented by anthropologists and collectors of Maori myths, allows us to discuss some of the ways in which we believe Keri Hulme transforms traditional conceptions in her short stories. While using traditional symbolism, she tends to reverse the evaluations it relies on for social signification, and thereby explores the possibility of alternative relationships.

Thus in "Te Kaihau / The Windeater," the connotations of vitality and creativity associated with the phallus are reversed in the tube-like object the young rasta leaves behind in the narrator's van. The thing with its impossible (or implausible) physical characteristics carries connotations of both pen and penis. It is also "a good little bomb" (236), threatening to destroy New Zealand. Furthermore, in the penultimate section of the story, it is associated with Maui, where, in an ironical twist of the tale, it serves as a sinker that reverts Maui's act of fishing the North Island out of the ocean. What is traditionally seen as a symbol of vitality and creativity is here turned into a token of death and destruction. The effect of this reinterpretation is a symbol which accommodates two contradictory movements or impulses, both creative and destructive. In the context of the cultural criticism which prevails in these final pages of the title story, this strange artefact becomes an image of cultural processes in general. The bomb is a symbol of both human ingenuity and destructiveness, catapulting humanity into a realm of god-like power which paradoxically manifests itself in the capacity to wipe out the entire species. This view of culture as interplay of creation and destruction is related here to both writing and sexuality.

The ambiguity of sexual relationships is most strongly expressed in a complex symbol of eating in which various strands of meaning are woven together, multiple points of view fused. In "A Window Drunken in the Brain" the sensual pleasures of a sexual relationship are conveyed in terms of culinary

feasts which the narrator and her lover indulge in. Much of the story lists recipes and descriptions of the things that the two prepare and eat:

... menus that are transports of lust/to love
Eye to eye while the mouth swallows oysters and the minds envisage
other swallows wallowings lushness. (186)

The evocation of the sensual pleasures of sexuality through an imagery of eating works through puns and *double entendres* that suggest the intimacy between the narrator and her lover, as in the description of the eating of the peach (186) which echoes the similar passage in the "Foreword" (13), or in the description of the man's testicles as nuts:

I said I had never touched such things before, those sly
teeming nuts in their wrinkled cosy pouch, and you grinned said softly
'Balls.'

Touching another body. Touching another being. (188)

The man's grinning here may be induced by the pun and the intimacy implied in it, but it is also a sign of his sexual arousal. In a similar way the repeated intrusion of the phrase "the laughter of" in the "Other Wing" of the "Foreword" seems to have erotic implications, hinting at the seductive character of writing that uses the language of riddles, an ironical comment on the apparent promise of intimacy with, and knowledge of, the writer; the narrator of "A Window Drunken in the Brain" is also aware of such a desire when she addresses the reader: "Do I pander to your imagination?" (187).

In "A Window," the imagery of eating, used by a female narrator, provides a view of sexuality which is characterised by sensuality, intimacy, and union, and which stands as an alternative in explicit contrast to the "mere insertion, weary reception, lifeless and little spilling of seed" (189) which the narrator seems to experience in her current relationship. But the association of sex and eating has further implications, for, if human relationships are rendered in terms of eating, human beings (at least potentially) are described as food. In "A Window," the food the two lovers mostly indulge in is shellfish, in particular paua, and the two, people and paua, are symbolically associated in a way which complicates the symbolism of eating.

The pauas are represented in anthropomorphic terms. Put in the fridge, they seem to experience pain and anticipate death:

Wincing. They curled upon one another's shells for comfort of a kind
.... The cold kills the pauas' love, shell for humping shell. (184-85)

As food, the pauas also add another aspect to the notion of eating, qualifying the implication of intimacy and sharing in negative terms, since their killing and preparation is described in rather violent detail:

He slits each one quickly out of its glory and gropes out the
pewa a fat green bow of an organ and slices out the thin toothy radula
and beats hell out of the maimed shrinking fish with the back of a
butcher's cleaver.

Then he dips each mutilation into egg, renders it steak, flings
it into crackling oil. Half a minute this side, half a minute that side,
and then whip it out and leave it to drain a little while. And then eat
love the fruit of the reef. And it is sweet and succulent and tender
beyond meat. And I trust, dead now. (185)

Here eating implies killing, castration (since *pewa* is also the roe of a fish, containing either eggs or sperm), mutilation, and extraction. The image of eating thus seems to accommodate two rather contradictory strands of meaning: trust and threat, intimacy and detachment, caresses and violence.

Eating also seems to denote two kinds of knowledge or consciousness. Indeed, the anthropomorphic description of the pauas hints at a partial identification of the narrator with the shellfish. The duality of shell and flesh of which the pauas are made, seems to be an adequate symbol for the narrator herself, who is confronting her past, her lost love. With the help of drink and writing she attempts to gain insight into herself. While the drink seems to support her introspection, providing her with a "clear lens that has grown slowly, tumourlike, a third eye such as the tuatara owns, becoming clearer the more drink I down, an inwardlooking secret hole" (193), in writing she hopes to recover the loss of her love. Looking into herself, the narrator divides herself into outside and inside. While her outer vision blurs, her inner vision becomes sharper. The purpose of her "self-dissection" is to come to grips with her past, to extract the secret of her emotional turmoil.

Her attempt, however, does not succeed. Her introspection only leads her to face her hollowness, a shell with no flesh inside. The narrator does not recognise herself in what she has written: "The words sit dumbly on this page. I cannot read their meaning. I do not believe I have written them. Who else would have written them, in my hand?" (184).

This failure is the result of an incompatibility of two kinds of (self) knowledge. The narrator is not able to combine her love affair with the pursuit of her academic interests and career. The conflict between the two kinds of self-knowledge, through detached self-analysis and through intimate relationship, as well as the contrast between the two experiences of sexuality, is reinforced by two conflicting views of animated nature. The narrator's identification with the

pauas is contrasted with the detached killing and preparation of the food. Eating seems to provide a precarious balance between detachment and identification by incorporation, a promise of wholeness and nourishment. For the narrator, therefore, the image of eating becomes the dominant metaphor for her experience of love and completeness. When forced to make a choice between her lover and her thesis on a species of lampreys, however, the decision leaves her amputated and unable to recover her wholeness. Longing to re-establish this lost wholeness by writing, the narrator helplessly confuses detached observation with identification: "I do not write bluesy drivel/I write treatises, theses, I know all about *Geotria australis*, from ammocoetes to macrophthalmia to velasia to pouchy sexually mature adults" (187). Again and again, her writing struggles to recover the past, to bring together her private and her academic ambitions, and the writing in her diary merges with the writing of her thesis, producing a text in which she only recognises traces of her own unsuccessful struggle:

all I want is a tall man and a randy man a handy man and me
I look and I do not believe I write this.

Consider.

The supra-oval laminae in the velasia stage vary in number and may be used as an identification when
identify identify identify
indemnify the past. Sheer utu. (192)

While the image of eating thus enacts the tension and conflict between alternative desires and kinds of knowledge as experienced by the female narrator of "A Window," in the context of the collection as a whole it is nevertheless possible to read the various strands accommodated within this image as a conflict between the sexes, with the woman's desire going more in the direction of identification and wholeness and the man's pointing towards detachment and differentiation. In "A Window" itself, it is the woman who longs for wholeness whereas the man seems to bear separation more easily. Significantly, it is also he who does the job of killing and cooking the pauas. Other stories, also using the image of shellfish (mussels and cockles) for human relationships, make this division of roles even clearer.⁹ It is equally significant that the image occurs in "Kiteflying Party at Doctors' Point," another story dealing with a woman trying to come to terms with her past by introspection and self-analysis, where it lends itself to the expression of the narrator's yearning for company and wholeness:

There is the occasional stranger mussel in their midst, pale green, like a wraith of a mussel. Pallid, obvious, vulnerable. There is never another palegreen mussel closeby for company.

The different, the abnormal, the alien, the malformed.

Who — or what — selects a person for the torment of difference?
(154)

It is in "Te Kaihau / The Windeater," however, that the association of human beings with cockles is pushed to its extreme: the threat of cannibalism. It is made by the old man in the section "Never Trust a Dreamer Who Can Also Tell Stories," when he confronts his guest from "Cityrace" with the prospect of ending up just like the cockles he is so fond of eating:

Look, when you walk round in your metal skin someone sooner or later is going to think, Ah hah! Flesh *and* cooking pan. That's the way we are round here, and you've been on expeditions enough to learn that. We don't think your armour protection or superiority. We skewer.
(234)

And when the visitor takes off his armour in an attempt to win the old man's trust, the latter, although he does not change his mind, cannot conceal his disappointment: "I think we're just the same as we always were, humans, cockles. A pity you're bare. It's so nice, cracking shells" (234).

Finally, in its own way, "A Tally of the Souls of Sheep" also weaves together the different threads of the image of eating (food, sexuality, knowledge, death) into a story haunted by an impending threat of cannibalism. The story mischievously subverts the touristy stereotype used to promote New Zealand's South Island: the romantic ideal of being at one with nature. For the family in Hulme's story, the holiday on the West Coast, 'away from it all,' turns into a nightmare as the two children suddenly disappear. The image of teeth and jaws that pervades the story structures the relationships between the characters and with the natural environment: the law of eating and being eaten, a particular form of *utu*, governs this world. The man, a freezing worker, is haunted by images of flocks of sheep seemingly pursuing him and seeking revenge. From the ocean, personified as "the boisterous Tasman, which is casual about snatching people with a swift fist" (43), to the Southern Alps that "are jagged fangs" (43), the whole environment at Kaitangata Bay (a name referring to a site of cannibalism) is described as animated and hostile. The relationship between the man and the woman seems to be similarly threatened by mutual consumption. Behind the peaceful appearance of a middle-class family lurks violence: "The woman is knitting viciously ..., stabbing the needles through the wool" (46-47), while the man is obsessed with images of killing. In the margins of the text, their relationship is anagrammatically represented as two rows of teeth:

WWWWWWWWW
 MMMMMMMMM
 The fanged equation (47).

The story runs out in loose ends, leaving open the question of how and why the children disappeared: have they become victims of the father's neurosis? Or of the enigmatic pirate figure who, as the story insinuates, may be a cannibal? Or have they simply been claimed as sacrifices by nature in compensation for the thousands of slaughtered sheep? Indeed the story seems preoccupied with justice, guilt, and revenge. In a god-like posture the narrator of this fictitious film-script directs our reading and makes us envisage the fate of the characters. The story becomes an ironical parable of human guilt and nature's revenge as, with cosmic irony, the record is set straight: the last shot shows "Kaitangata Bay in bright broad daylight [as] a pleasant busy sort of place" (60). The holiday stereotype is re-established again, and the one-eyed, pirate-like fisherman "licks his lips" (60).¹⁰

Eating thus appears as a very complex metaphor for human relationships and the relationships between people and their environment, the ambivalent symbol of an uneasy union, of wholeness and disruption, of trust and anxiety, comforting and threatening. Given its importance for the characters and narrators of various stories, it is not surprising that the image also seems to affect the relationship between writer and reader. On the one hand the literary communication may be characterized by conflicting desires and processes of identification, absorption, and differentiation, "a feud in understanding," or metaphorical cannibalism, as we have seen in the "Foreword" (16). On the other hand, it may be seen as a co-operation between writer and reader, a common project aiming towards the production of meaning which requires the participation of both. In this context, the recipes which are included in various stories are more than hints of Keri Hulme's culinary taste. Read by themselves, they may literally whet the reader's appetite and lead to enjoyable dinners. Read within the context of the collection as a whole, they may become metaphors for the kind of literary communication in which *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* engages us. The recipe, we would argue, thus becomes the prototype of a narrative of seduction and co-operation. As in a recipe, the wholesome meal/meaning that is produced in a reading of *The Windeater* cannot be extracted from the text but is only a future potentiality which, when realized, can be truly nourishing.

Because they draw on both Pakeha and Maori cultures, the symbols of song and eating in *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* thus appear as sites of ethnic recollection and cross-cultural inter-reference. They provide the collection with focuses for the reinterpretation and redirection of traditional symbolic values of Maori culture in order to gain a vision of the future, as well as for the

exploration of inter-cultural relationships and communication. By encouraging the participation of the reader in the production of meaning, Keri Hulme's texts share an important characteristic with the ethnic narratives that Fischer analyses, a characteristic which

is not merely descriptive of how ethnicity is experienced, but more importantly is an ethical device attempting to activate in the reader a desire for *communitas* with others, while preserving rather than effacing differences. (Fischer 232-33)

The Windeater / Te Kaihau achieves this in two ways. On the one hand, the stories appeal repeatedly to the readers' curiosity, awaken their interest in another culture, and urge some to refer to dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and standard anthropological texts. As we have seen, the recourse to standard texts on Maori anthropology provides fruitful approaches to Keri Hulme's texts, making the reading of *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* a stimulating process of learning about another culture. On the other hand, the stories in this collection never allow these standard texts to have the last word, to serve as the ultimate authority on that culture. The reference to Williams' dictionary or to Mead's study of the traditional symbolism of Maori songs, for instance, does not allow us to inscribe the stories in a closed system, to talk of Maori culture solely in the past tense. As we recognize the relevance of such reference works to Keri Hulme's stories, we also realize that she subverts them; and we delight in finding out how she does it. Thus it appears that *The Windeater* is powerfully written against those accounts of Maori culture which would have it a thing of the past, as exemplified in the closing statements of Best's famous book, *The Maori as He Was*.

The value of these reference books with regard to *The Windeater / Te Kaihau*, then, lies in their function as a bridge to another culture, a bridge that tends to dissolve once contact has been made. It is here that we find the other aspect of the process of inter-cultural learning in which the reading of Hulme's collection engages us, for the stories enact inter-cultural communication in a way which at times leads to moments of revelation that have the character of an epiphany, a coming to consciousness. The stories thus share that quality of "alchemy" which Wilson Harris praises in the cross-cultural imagination:

a variable bridge ... between human cultures and human cultures, multi-faceted, multi-dimensional, heterogeneous. In that variable bridge arises the conception of alchemy as a dialogue of grace between the heights and the depths, in which each variable bridge dissolves to reappear. (72)

Read in this light, *The Windeater* can be seen as exemplifying that "poetics of relatedness," aiming at the "synthesis of diversified, sometimes opposite, cultural elements," described by Edouard Glissant (100). It is the task of the critic to enable this synthesis to take place, for, according to Glissant, the "forced poetics will most certainly dry up unless it is allowed to flow into a natural, free, open poetics of relatedness" (100). The synthesising work of the critic, however, is never more than a particular intervention, the account of a specific reading, which, having traced its relatedness to the text, reasserts its difference from it. Criticism should thus ideally be open-ended, making room for further interventions, and enabling the interplay between cultures to go beyond the framework of bi-culturalism towards a true multi-culturalism, the relatedness of various cultures while preserving their differences. *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* undoubtedly situates itself at the horizon of such a multi-culturalism, for now that we have let ourselves be drawn into its poetics of relatedness, we also know that the word *kaibutsu* in Japanese can mean something similar to *taniwha* in Maori, and that the word *kai* in Japanese may have almost as many, apparently unrelated meanings as *tara* in Maori:

- A shell; a conch
- An oar; a paddle
- A storey; a floor; stairs; steps; a staircase; a flight of stairs
- A community; a world; circles; a republic; a domain; a commonwealth; a kingdom
- A commandment
- A sea; waters
- Explanation; comment; notes; solution; a key
- A mass; a lump
- Pleasure; delight; enjoyment
- A mystery; a wonder; an apparition; a spectre; a phantom; a ghost
- 1. A meeting; an assembly; a gathering; a party; a conference;
- 2. A society; a club; an association; a league
- A time; a round; a game; a bout; a heat; innings
- A low rank; a subordinate position
- Effect; fruit; result; success; worth; avail; use; benefit; advantage

(Yoshitaro 759-60)

Endnotes

The present paper has a two-year history; it is the result of an ongoing fascination with Keri Hulme's rather neglected book, coupled with many sessions during which we worked together on diverse but related topics such as postcolonial theory and practice, anthropology of the Maori, cultural studies —

and spiced with the delight of interpreting Hulme's texts and discovering a world that was new to us both: that of new Zealand literature. Anne Zimmermann gratefully acknowledges the support of the Swiss National Foundation for the Sciences and Humanities for a year's doctoral research in New Zealand, during which she had the opportunity to collect material that proved an invaluable basis for some of the ideas in this article.

1 The term is defined by Mudrooroo Narogin: "literature of the Fourth World, that is, of the indigenous minorities submerged in a surrounding majority and governed by them" (Fee 11).

2 Susan Ash discusses this aspect of the reception of Hulme's two books (see the next section of the present paper). Reviewers have generally found it difficult to enjoy *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* as a whole, and have tended to prefer the more "realistic" texts over the more "experimental" and metafictional pieces like the frame texts and the penultimate "title" story. Noteworthy exceptions are Renée's enthusiastic review in *Broadsheet*, Ian Wedde's review concentrating entirely on a detailed discussion of "Tara Diptych" in *The NZ Listener*, and Suzann Olsson's review in *Landfall*. Apart from Ash's article, Olsson's review is the most thorough critical discussion of *The Windeater / Te Kaihau* to date. At the end she predicts a continuation of the debate about "whether Hulme's work is modernist or postmodernist" and suggests that for "those who seek to categorize *Te Kaihau*, Simon During's discussion of postcolonialism (*Landfall* 155) may provide a more apposite approach" (222).

3 His more recent article dealing with the relationship between both "posts" is a confirmation of his preference for post-modernism over post-colonialism (see During, "Waiting for the Post").

4 Margery Fee (1989) criticises During's apparent assumption that a valid post-colonial identity can only be shaped by drawing on "a 'pure' Maori precolonial convention" and points out that the "Maori have been living within the Pakeha discursive formation for generations," and therefore have to construct a practicable identity from that basis. Consequently, Fee characterises Hulme "as a postcolonial writer who uses postmodernist techniques only to help her undermine the powerful discursive formations she is of necessity writing within" (22). Compared to During's, Fee's article is a far more convincing illustration of why and how a critical awareness of the political implications of readings can and should inform critical practice.

5 The concept of ethnicity has recently become important in sociological analysis and debate in New Zealand. While for the Maori, ethnicity in the sense presented in this paper can be said to have become the inevitable basis from which to articulate their resistance to Pakeha domination since the middle of the last century, it is as a response to the vigorous assertion of Maori sovereignty, and out of a commitment to a politics of biculturalism, that a

preoccupation with a concept of Pakeha ethnicity has emerged since the mid-1980s (see Spoonley 1991; also King 1985 and 1991).

6 Strictly speaking, the title of the penultimate story is an inversion of the title of the book: the Maori term comes before the English "translation" instead of the contrary. Together with other subtle inversions (e.g. the "Afterword" is called a "Headnote to a Maui Tale" with a pun on *tail*), this detail further disrupts the sequentiality and causality we are used to when we think of what is before and after in translations, in anthropological documents, in history, etc. Its significance for our argument regarding the negotiation of ethnic identity is evident: in the very suggestion of origins, the notion of origin itself is subverted.

7 Seen from a religious perspective, the first text in the book also triggers oscillations between Christian and Maori myths of the creation of the first human being: the first word of the "Foreword," "You," literally brings the reader into being. The description of the figure lying on the hillside, arms under its head, body angling, is in keeping with the traditional Christian iconography of the creation of the first man, such as can be seen on diptychs or traditional two-winged painted alter-pieces. The Maori myth of the creation of the first woman may be alluded to in the sneeze (mentioned three times on page 11), for, according to Maori belief, when the first human shape was created from clay, the male god Tane "breathed into its nostrils, the figure drew a breath, sneezed, and came to life" (Te Rangi Hiroa 451). The interaction between the two religious traditions is symbolically enacted in the "clink" produced when the "dagger of pounamu" touches the "silver cross," both of which the figure on the hill wears round his or her neck (10).

8 A similar point was made by Elsdon Best in the second volume of *The Maori*. It would be interesting to analyse Hulme's stories in the light of the stylistic features of Maori songs which he mentions: "the partiality ... for metaphor, allegorical expressions, mystic and mythopoetic phrases, and aphorisms ... innumerable personifications" (136). Even Hulme's innovative way of weaving words seems in keeping with Best's remarks on Maori songmakers, who frequently employed "alteration of word forms for the sake of euphony. Thus vowels may be inserted, elided, or altered, or an extra syllable may be added to a word. Again, not only do songmakers employ archaic expressions and resurrect obsolete words, but they also sometimes coin a word" (139). Again it seems that what on the one hand looks like post-modernist language games and parody may on the other be seen as specific recuperations of facets of an ethnic identity.

9 In a more recent story, "The Pluperfect Pa-Wa," published in *Sport 1*, Keri Hulme further explores the idea of "you are what you eat" (11) The science fiction story, in which by some mutation the pauas have developed something

like human intelligence, also deals with the conflict between the sexes in their different reactions to this strange situation.

10 In an interview with Harry Ricketts, Keri Hulme comments on the romantic ideal of oneness with nature: "you can only be so romantic about New Zealand landscape. After a while you see the teeth of it and then romance takes a back seat" (Ricketts 18).

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