

Growth out of loss: The urban discourses of literatures of the Native American and Māori literary renaissance

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Abstract

The seeds of the Native American and Māori Renaissance eras germinated amid sweeping changes in the years immediately following World War II, a time when urbanization and the consequent separation of indigenous peoples from community networks represented a major threat to culturally embedded certainties and destabilized romanticized notions of the past. This article explores parallels between the ways in which Native American and Māori literatures reflect the impact of urbanization at the height of this era and the contribution the authors make to the positive cultural growth that defines their respective renaissance periods.

New voices

The Native American and Māori Literary Renaissance periods signify a new and unifying discourse of urbanization in indigenous literatures. N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968) and Witi Ihimaera's *Pounamu Pounamu* (1972) convey place-based narratives that underline the seminal relationship between the individual and the land in indigenous cultures. Throughout each text, the authors juxtapose this relationship against the debilitating aspects of urbanisation, which led their people away from the rural homelands and into the cities where they experienced the negative climate of Urban Life. *House Made of Dawn* and *Pounamu Pounamu* further define the discourse of the era by creating an indigenous perspective of the land, absent in pre-Renaissance literatures. Silvia Schultermandl (2005), writing of Native Americans in 'Fighting for the Mother/Land', has suggested that this shift in perspective indicates the beginning of literary "identity formations that entail negotiations between . . . [indigenous peoples] . . . and the impact of the dominant society" (p. 67).

Ihimaera, Momaday and the indigenous urban milieu

Pounamu Poumanu and *House Made of Dawn* both emanate from within the culture of indigenous urban migration. In New Zealand, Peter Beatson's (1989, p. 12) suggestion that "[all] contemporary Maori writing takes place against the backdrop of urbanization" emphasizes the impact of this history on the literary landscape. Ihimaera, for example, born in Gisborne in 1944 to Te Whānau-a-Kai, spent his early years amidst the poverty of the rural Māori community of Waituhi.¹ Thus Pearson (1982, p. 166) has suggested that the progress of the characters in Ihimaera's early work – many of them also calling Waituhi home – is "a variation on the writer himself" from this time onward. Educated at town schools, Ihimaera spent much of his adolescence in the urban world of the Pakeha before continuing his tertiary studies at Victoria University in Wellington. After the completion of his Bachelor of Arts in 1971, the city became the young man's permanent home away from home when he took a position as a journalist with the New Zealand Post Office (see Arvidson, 1993, p. 33). "[U]rbanized and sophisticated in pakeha ways", Ihimaera – much like the characters he would soon create – "sensed the disappointment in his lack of Maori understanding" and rued

“having been deprived of much of his spiritual heritage” (Pearson, 1982, p. 166). Without the direct link to his family and community, he straddled the borders so common to Māori in the post-World War II years. The writer acknowledges the pull of both worlds in an interview with Judy Zavos (1975, p. 23):

I'd like to think that I could go back...[to Waituhi]...to live; it's my dream; but I know I can't go back because that would negate everything my parents have hoped and worked for.

These sentiments followed Ihimaera's diplomatic postings under the auspices of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The sense of displacement and detachment associated with the duties that would take him as far away as Canberra, New York, and Washington D.C. are mirrored in the context of urbanization that germinates in *Pounamu Pounamu* and continues to grow in his subsequent works.

Momaday, like Ihimaera, was born on the rural homelands of his ancestors in 1934. At the age of thirteen, he left his home on the Kiowa reservation in Oklahoma and traveled west across the country with his parents to the Jemez Pueblo community in New Mexico. From there, his educational history begins to read like a general summary of Native American life in the mid-twentieth century. He attended a mission school, an Indian school, and an urban public high school before relocating to the fast growing city of Albuquerque. While there he attended the University of New Mexico in 1952 before matriculating into the University of Virginia's Law School in 1956-7; becoming one of a “generation of Native scholars who led the charge into the American academy in the 1950s and 1960s” (Warrior, 2005, p. 149). His educational track eventually culminated in a doctorate from Stanford in 1963 and a tenured position at the University of California at Santa Barbara ending in 1969: a unique position among Native Americans. It was in the Stanford and UC Santa Barbara years – the very years that define the concerns inherent in the milieu of Native American urbanization – that Momaday wrote *House Made of Dawn*.

Ihimaera and Momaday's biographies serve as microcosmic examples of their respective cultural histories. Paul Katene's review of *Pounamu Pounamu* in turn speaks to the acute relevance of both authors' works in relation to the Māori and Native American Literary Renaissance eras. When Katene (1973, p. 61) states that “Witi is a young man, a city man, right in the midst of this great transplant of Māori manawa – heart – from the open hills to the concrete jungle”, he describes a pattern that easily accommodates Momaday's Kiowa identity and culture and *House Made of Dawn*:

He has seen the rejection of some tissues resulting in resentment and alienation. His message is spiritual, as a source of strength, a fibre strong enough to support a people in its adjustment.

In turn, when Tillet (2007, p. 1) remarks upon the content of the post-Renaissance literatures in *Contemporary Native American Literature* – including *House Made of Dawn* – she alludes to Katene's ‘open hills’ versus the ‘concrete jungle’ while also suggesting an indigenous history that is common to New Zealand:

Contemporary Native American literature emerges directly from this imperial relationship, and from the engagement of Native peoples with the legacy of the

federal-Indian relationship within a country that is, paradoxically, both colonial and post-colonial.

A close examination of the authors' literary reflection upon their experience in the cities thus sheds light on the discourse of urbanization that permeates *Pounamu Pounamu* and *House Made of Dawn*.

Urban and rural narratives

The negotiations addressed in Schultermandl's statement become clear when analyzing the manner in which the texts' configurations emphasize the dichotomy of urban and rural narratives. Richard Corballis (1993, p. 108), claiming that Ihimaera belongs to the category of authors "who give as much thought to the collection as to the individual stories within it", indirectly mentions an inherent purpose within *Pounamu Pounamu*. In a sense, the text is compartmentalized; highlighting distinct urban narratives in opposition to those that are derived from an indigenous perspective of their cultures' intrinsic relationship to the land. Prentice (2004, p. 89) builds on this notion, asserting that Ihimaera does not yearn for "a return to some mythically authentic past moment", but "engage[s] fully and unflinchingly with the new conditions [he] and [his] characters face in the contemporary urban contexts that shape their lives".

Katene (1973, p. 60) refers to 'The Other Side of the Fence', for example, as 'the odd ball' among *Pounamu Pounamu*'s ten selections; being the only story that does not take place in a rural setting, but in a city suburb. The fence in question separates two families: on one side, the Heremaias, a Māori family of eight, and on the other side the Simmons, an immigrant Pakeha family of four from England. The story tells of the ongoing "state of amicable warfare" existing between the two families, "each crisis separated by long periods of amity" (Ihimaera, 1972, p. 70). Complicating these matters is a unique narrative – the only one of its kind in the collection – that favours the Pakeha perspective. Specifically, Jack Simmons, the head of his household, feels besieged by the Heremaia children, whom he believes steal his prize goldfish from the pond, kill his unborn chicks, borrow bicycles without permission, cheat his children, and escape persecution by hiding behind a veil of lies.

Ihimaera's story and the image of the fence are thinly veiled analogies of The Treaty of Waitangi and its associative rhetoric. In Jack's mind, "[the] fence might as well not exist. The Heremaia children have ceded their territorial rights, but not their sovereignty (Ihimaera, 1972, pp. 65-66). The politics that govern this boundary are as disputed as those that forced the creation of – and define – The Waitangi Tribunal discourses. Jack "sighs ruefully" (p. 70) as he contemplates the series of 'raids' (p. 62) and the practice of 'borrowing' (p. 63) which describes the past and determines the future of the two families: "Right from the start it has been a series of escalations and de-escalations and treaties signed and treaties broken", he recalls (p. 71). He finds solace only in the fact that the "tribe has not invaded his house yet!" (p. 61). Furthermore, the narration leaves no doubt as to Jack's resolute and dogged stance on this matter (p. 65):

Things were different now. The land, its occupants and their possessions no longer belonged to them. It belonged to him, Jack Simmons. His land was like the land bought by settlers after the Treaty of Waitangi. The sooner they understood that, the better.

The significance of this perspective is underlined in the knowledge that the Simmons are only three years removed from England; further raising the spectre of the metaphorical colonizer with his intolerance of Māori cultural values, his drive to usurp Māori land, and his insistence that The Treaty of Waitangi “had become some kind of Universal Solvent” and “an unquestionable ‘truth’” (Evans, 2006, p. 15).

The text’s fence/treaty analogy segues into a commentary on cultural relationships within the urban contact zones. Although having extended ‘overtures of friendship’, the neighbors on both sides of the fence live under the shadow of ‘doubt and caution’ (Ihimaera, 1972, p. 70). Moreover, Jack’s assertion that “this city suburb was certainly not a Maori community” is succinctly historicized in Ranginui Walker’s (1990, p. 198) assessment of urbanization:

Ethnicity, cultural difference, and the experience of being colonized impelled the Maori to dwell in the dual world of biculturalism or surrender to the Pakeha imperative of assimilation.

Jack’s narrow-mindedness – “and he had known very well when he was told his neighbors were Maori, that he would have to expect the worst” (Ihimaera, 1972, p. 61) – reinforces the difficulty of reckoning with the juxtaposition of indigenous/non-indigenous cultural values inherent in Walker’s statement.

The text avoids subtleties in this conversation – like the fence/treaty analogy – and puts forth a demeaning, non-indigenous opinion of Māori immigrants to the city. Jack surmises (Ihimaera, 1972, p. 82):

If only the Heremaia weren’t so *large*, so obvious. They stick out like a sore thumb in the neighborhood. They have not yet learnt the art of living with European people who may not understand their ways nor like them.

Worse yet, Jack sees in the Heremaia children cultural traits that are defined by a wavering ‘sense of morality’ (Ihimaera, 1972, p.61) and their condition a ‘natural mishap of birth’ (p. 74). The list of slights continues, but is perhaps best summed up by Jack’s thoughts on Jimmy, the youngest of the Heremaia children (pp. 73 & 74):

Heavens, it wasn’t his fault that he was Maori . . . Hopefully, Jimmy would grow up without acquiring too many of the Maori habits and characteristics displayed by the rest of the children...The quicker the Maoris adjusted to European life the better.

On that note, the story suggests that for Māori neither assimilation nor biculturalism is possible in the city. Jack screams at the Heremaia: “And don’t *any of you* set foot over this side of the fence again” (Ihimaera, 1972, p. 78). Their response: “Why don’t you go back to where you came from, Jack Simmons? You don’t belong here, none of you. We never wanted you here in the first place” (p. 78). The conclusion: “On the other side of the fence, the lights go out in the Heremaia’s house” (p. 86).

House Made of Dawn, like *Pounamu Pounamu*, conveys the images of the disparate urban and rural settings through the separation of the novel into four distinct parts. After

having been plucked from the Jemez Pueblo/Walatowa community and thrust into the heart of a western war, for example, service as a soldier in WWII leaves Abel suffering from alcoholism and full of self-loathing when he returns to his tribal homelands in Part 1, 'The Longhair'.² Here the narrative is suffused with Abel's inability to function as a positive member of the tribe and his situation is compounded when he kills a sacred eagle and murders the albino man Juan Reyes Fragua. Part 4, 'The Dawn Runner', sees Abel return once again to the reservation in order to recover his sense of self within the tribe and the landscape. These parts are interrupted, however, by the urban narratives that traverse Part 2, 'The Priest Of The Sun', and Part 3, 'The Night Chanter'. In these two sections, "the Indian community in Los Angeles can be read as a social study of the various experiences of and strategies to overcome Native displacement" in the urban diaspora (Teuton, 2008, p. 70). Duly convicted of his crime, removed from the reservation, imprisoned, and funneled into the United States Government's relocation program, Abel meets two characters who highlight the plight of his urban experience: Ben Benally the Navajo Night Chanter and The Right Reverend John Big Bluff Tosamah, the novel's trickster figure. His failure to negotiate the trappings of urbanisation culminates in a near-death experience at the hands of Martinez the *culebra*/snake, a sadistic policeman. Both parts are composed of related yet disjointed memory fragments and overlapping, non-linear narratives that read like the scattered pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Thus, Abel's tenure in the city is best understood when a deductive line of reasoning is applied to Parts 2 and 3 as a whole.

Central to the discussion of the city narratives is Abel's association with the various characters who impede his ability to ground himself in the city. In Part 3, for example, the relocated Navajo Ben Benally befriends the newly freed Abel and unwittingly assists in his downward spiral. It is through Ben's recollections of the dysfunctional relationship shared by himself, Abel and Milly (Abel's social worker/girlfriend) that we gain an overall picture of Abel's short history in Los Angeles (Momaday, 1968, p. 162):

He was drunk about half the time, and I couldn't keep up with him. I tried to get him to slow down, you know, but he just got mad whenever I said anything about it, and it made him worse. Right away his money ran out, and he started hitting me up for a loan every night, almost. Pretty soon I wouldn't give him any more, but you know what he did? He started asking Milly for money. He would tell her he needed some new clothes, or bus fare to look for a job or something, and she would give him two or three dollars, sometimes five, every time. And he would blow it on liquor right away. I told her what he was doing, but she said she knew it; she just felt sorry for him. The Relocation people got him a job with the schools, taking care of the grounds and all, but he showed up drunk a couple of times and they fired him after the first week and a half.

Teuton (2008, p. 72) suggests that the most noteworthy aspect of this passage is the idea that "Abel seems to suffer more from his displacement than do Benally" and the other indigenous characters in the novel. Michael Raymond (1983, p. 69) concurs when he proposes that the other characters "seem to have either overcome the sense of not belonging or at least come to grips with it". Thus, Ben's narration serves not only to reveal Abel's placelessness but also to exemplify an indigenous state of being in the city that Abel is unable to – or, more likely, unwilling to – achieve.

If Abel is to overcome his loss of self, he must engage with characters who are able to teach him to adjust to life in the city and accept the culture of the place in which he exists. Ben's continued narration in Part 3, however, suggests that the Navajo has also lost his indigenous way of knowing an indigenous place and therefore his way of knowing any place, in general. He reminisces on life in the city versus a rural existence (Momaday, 1968, p. 181):

Once you find your way around and get used to everything, you wonder how you ever got along out there where you came from. There's nothing there, you know, just the land, and land is empty and dead.

According to Owens (1992, p. 113), "Ben has bought into the metanarrative of Euramerica with its historic, entropic definition of time and indigenous culture as well as place". As a result of his passive acceptance of these confines, Ben is content living in the city (Momaday, 1968, pp. 180 & 182):

It's a good place to live. . . . Everything is here, everything you could ever want...The Relocation people are all right, too. . . . They know how it is when you first come, how scared you are and all, and they look out for you. They pay your way; they get you a job and a place to stay; I guess they even take care of you if you get sick. You don't have to worry about a thing.

Ben's complacency, although expressed with the honest intention to 'look out' for his friend, only serves to stifle Abel's progress (p. 162). His earlier thoughts on Abel's condition are in diametrical opposition to Abel's needs: "You know, you have to change. That's the only way you can live in a place like this. You have to forget about the way it was, how you grew up and all" (p. 148).

Abel's disintegration amid the setting of Los Angeles is further highlighted in his association with Tosamah. The Priest of the Sun, as he is first introduced in Part 2, preaches from the pulpit of the Los Angeles Holiness Pan-Indian Rescue Mission in the basement of the A.A. Kaul Office Supply Company. As the novel's trickster figure, Owens singles Tosamah out most notably for his 'subversive role' in regard to Abel's future (Owens, 1992, p. 108). In much the same manner as the 'traditional trickster' of Native American oral traditions and fictions, "Tosamah is in dialogue with himself, embodies contradictions, challenges authority, mocks and tricks us into self-knowledge" (p. 110). Also like the traditional trickster, his aim is to induce a self-knowledge that is both positive and negative within the members of his congregation.

Tosamah's actions, like Ben's, are born of placelessness. His preoccupation with Abel subsequently manifests as an envious demeanor. Owens (1992, p. 110) elaborates:

While Abel can go home again, and Benally at least retains the world of his Navajo people intact within his imagination and memory, Tosamah – like the peripatetic trickster/creator of Native American mythologies – has nothing except imagination and language out of which to fashion his world.

Bernard Hirsch (1983, p. 113) continues the conversation:

Seeing Abel through Indian eyes, Tosamah cannot help but admire him as a kind of modern-day warrior who refuses to give in meekly to the torment and tribulations of urban Indian life.

Thus, in Part 3, Tosamah unveils his malevolent nature in an impromptu sermon intended to wound the already helpless Abel. Ben recalls Tosamah's spiteful words (Momaday, 1968, pp. 148 - 149):

"You take that poor cat," he said. "They gave him every advantage. They gave him a pair of shoes and told him to go to school. They deloused him and gave him a lot of free haircuts and let him fight on their side. But was he grateful? Hell, no, man. He was too dumb to be civilized. So what happened? They let him alone at last. They thought he was harmless. They thought he was going to plant some beans, man, and live off the fat of the land. Oh, he was going to make his way all right. He would get some fat little squaw all knocked up, and they would lie around all day and get drunk and raise a lot of little government wards. They would make some pottery, man, and boost the economy. But it didn't turn out that way. He turned out to be a real primitive sonuvabitch, and the first time he got hold of a knife he killed a man. That must have embarrassed the hell out of them."

Other Destinies asserts that Tosamah's sermon "mocks and taunts Abel into self-knowledge", and is a "painful process" for the protagonist (Owens, 1992, p. 111). Although the priest's means achieve his primary ends, the very nature of this act elicits multiple responses; another trait common to the trickster tales. Tosamah's words, for example, represent the negative self-knowledge that drives Abel further into his disintegration. The realization, however, is one that will help prepare Abel for his return to the reservation and regain a positive identity in Part 4.

In Part 2, Abel's final fall is read in light of the running metaphor of the grunion fish and the following question: 'Why should Abel think of the fishes?' (Momaday, 1968, p. 98). The text provides an image of the grunion run that is both a fair description of the fish's actual behavior and an answer to the question (p. 89):

There is a small silversided fish that is found along the coast of southern California. In the spring and summer it spawns on the beach during the first three hours after each of the three high tides following the highest tide. These fishes come by the hundreds from the sea.

The sheer number by which the grunion fish approach the shores of the beach is an overt allusion to the thousands of Native Americans expanding the populations of west coast cities in the post-WWII era. Central to the metaphor, however, is the poetic interpretation of the grunions' desperation; the fish struggling to survive in this foreign setting. As they "hurl themselves upon the land", separated from their natural habitat, the grunion "writhe in the light of the moon, the moon, the moon; they writhe in the light of the moon" (p. 89). "They are", like Abel and many of his fellow Native Americans in the cities, "the most helpless creatures on the face of the earth" (p. 89). In this passive and exposed condition, they are subject to the whims of "Fisherman, lovers, passers-by" – and in the case of Abel, fellow relocated Native Americans and malevolent policeman – who will "catch them up in their bare hands" (p. 89).

When Abel wakes up on the beach in the opening of ‘The Priest of the Sun’, “his body . . . mangled and wracked with pain” (Momaday, 1968, p. 101) from the encounter with Martinez, his condition mirrors that of the vulnerable grunions. Abel senses that “his whole body was shaking violently, tossing and whipping, flopping like a fish”; writhing (p. 115). The “physical disintegration” he feels “parallel[s] his psychic disintegration” (Owens, 1992, p. 113). Specifically, *Red Land, Red Power* emphasizes that six years in a jail cell have “distorted his understanding of his body in relation to place” (Teuton, 2008, p. 68). Thus (Momaday, 1968, p. 104):

The walls of his cell were white, or perhaps they were gray or green; he could not remember. After a while he could not imagine anything beyond the walls except the yard outside, the lavatory and the dining hall – or even the walls, really.

For a man who “had loved his body”, the enormity of the moment settles upon him as he realizes that the same body is no longer “quickly and surely responsive to his mind and will” (p. 100). Lying on the beach, he felt (p. 104):

. . . the world was open at his back. He had lost his place. He had been long ago at the center, had known where he was, had lost his way, had wandered to the end of the earth, was even now reeling on the edge of the void.

In the city, Abel is a fish out of water; sick and helplessly exposed to the elements of urbanization.

Breaking the grandparent/grandchild bond

Abel’s sickness, his inability to realize his self in relationship to a place, further resonates as a symptom of his separation from the community at Jemez Pueblo. In particular, the bond between grandparent and grandchild – in this case Abel and his grandfather, Francisco – carries the same weight as the grunion metaphor in these urban narratives. Chadwick Allen (2005, p. 212) explains the significance of the relationship in ‘N. Scott Momaday: becoming the bear’:

The bond [...] becomes a running theme in the novel, emblematic of the increasingly tenuous link between generations that are separated not only by time but also by dramatic demographic and socio-cultural changes, including those specific changes brought by World War II and the era of Indian Relocation that followed in its immediate aftermath.

Abel, Tosamah, and Ben, for instance, all recount identity-forming experiences that are framed within the memory of grandparents. The significance of this bond in *House Made of Dawn* becomes more apparent in light of the fact that Francisco, who exists for Abel as “the voice of tradition, the living embodiment of the ancestors who trust the present generation to ensure the continued flourishing of the people” (Teuton, 2008, p. 64), is his only biological link to Walatowa.

Bernard Selinger (1999, p. 54), remarking on this theme in ‘*House Made of Dawn: A Positively Ambivalent Bildungsroman*’, notes that the text is “fairly heavy-handed” in its attempt to establish Francisco as “the model *par excellence* for Abel”. In Part I, the

narrator speaks to the strength of Francisco's position – and that of the old man's peers – in the face of European encroachment upon Walatowa ancestral lands (Momaday, 1968, p.58):

Their invaders were a long time in conquering them; and now, after four centuries of Christianity, they still pray in Tanoan to the old deities of the earth and sky and make their living from the things that are and have always been within their reach; while in the discrimination of pride they acquire from their conquerors only the luxury of example. They have assumed the names and gestures of their enemies, but have held on to their own, secret souls; and in this there is a resistance and an overcoming, a long outwaiting.

This ability to maintain a cultural identity under such circumstances establishes Francisco, in Owens' opinion, as "the syncretic 'balanced man' of the novel, he who has successfully fused the two worlds he inhabits" (Owens, 1992, p. 103). In Abel's time of need, the essence of Francisco's experience, wisdom, and sense of knowing what will come – everything the grandchild needs from a grandparent – is captured in his voice when he tells Abel: "You ought to do this and that" (Momaday, 1968, p. 22). But Allen (2005, p. 212) reminds us that two removals from the community have broken this link to "the power of tradition and continuity". Consequently, when Abel first returns from the war and meets Francisco: "He was drunk, and he fell against his grandfather and did not know him" (Momaday, 1968, p. 9). Urbanization denies Abel another seven years of knowing Francisco. Furthermore, when Abel returns to Walatowa in Part 4, Francisco – the man "whom, the text insists, Abel must model himself" (Selinger, 1999, p. 58) – dies.

Blood Narrative reveals that the grandparent-grandchild bond 'also figures prominently' in *Pounamu Pounamu* (Allen, 2002, p. 133). Allen's critique then makes a direct link between the two writing cultures and the inherent theme when he states that the connection represents "the Maori community – those members living, those passed on, and those yet to arrive" (p. 129). For instance, the various images of this bond, although "seemingly nostalgic" when presented in the short stories, recall the role of Francisco in that "they place at their center the scene of instruction through which young Maori may lay claim to their cultural inheritance and indigeneity"(p. 134). In the first story in the collection, 'A Game of Cards' (Ihimaera, 1972), Nanny Miro is seminal in conveying these lessons to her urbanized grandson, Tama. Upon his return from Wellington, Tama remembers her teachings against the backdrop of her card-playing antics and her impending death. More importantly, he refers to her as both his *kuia* (p. 9) and his *whaea* (p. 15) throughout the story. By themselves the terms are very different; *kuia* being an elderly grandmother figure and a female of high respect on the *marae* whilst *whaea* denotes a mother or aunt. However, both words also invoke the idea of a teacher. Linking the two terms thus gives broader meaning to Nanny Miro's role and her close relationship with Tama when she asks (p. 12):

How are you going to do good things for your people if you can't concentrate?
. . . Here I am, counting on you to get a good education so that you can get the
rest of our land back and you're just hopeless . . .

The potential loss of the value and benefits of these lessons are highlighted in Nanny's allusion to Tama's city education as well as her own death at the end of the story.

Bluntly admitting negligence in regard to his future and his obligations to Nanny, Tama's following statement succinctly reflects the deteriorating effects of urbanization on the grandparent-grandchild bond and the impact that the separation may have on the tribe: "I couldn't see you last time I was home", I explained. "I was too busy" (Ihimaera, 1972, p. 14). For Tama, the time constraints associated with the distance and travel between Wellington and Waituhi allow him to justify his own diffusion of responsibility in an offhand manner. Nanny's responses to Tama's lackadaisical attitude – "Don't let me down" (p. 12) – suggest that she is well aware of this link being severed. It is for this reason also that she exudes desperation in her voice when she reverts to a card player's perspective in one of her signature remarks that speaks directly to the urban crisis: "If you can't beat the Pakeha one way remember that all's fair in love – or cards . . ." (p. 12).

Desperation in these circumstances also influences the voice of Koro in 'The Whale'. Sitting in the decaying meeting house on his marae, the state of the building itself a symbolic reminder of urbanization, he is "the last of his generation" and a solitary holdout against the lure of the city (Ihimaera, 1972, p. 152). In a last ditch attempt to balance the "pull of the Pakeha world" on those who are "like fish too eager to grab at a dangling hook", he imparts all of his knowledge to his niece Hera; "one of the few of his mokopuna who'd been interested in the Maori of the past" (p. 153). But even Koro's "fierce and passionate" voice (p. 156), his drive to instill in her the importance of her whakapapa (genealogy), her ancestry – "And don't you ever forget who you are. You're Maori, understand? You're Maori." (p. 155) – is lost on the girl as she also moves to the city. Her words paint a picture of a losing battle and stifle his voice: "Don't, Koro! The world isn't Maori anymore. But it's the world I have to live in. I know you want me to stay. But I can't" (p. 155).

In another story from *Poumanu Pounamu* (Ihimaera, 1972), 'In Search of the Emerald City', the text extends the discussion of urbanization and the loss of community, although with less emphasis on the grandparent-grandchild bond and more on the family, in general. Images are invoked of *The Wizard of Oz* when Matiu's parents prepare to leave Waituhi in order to find work and schooling for himself and his siblings in the city; a place that is symbolic of hope and prosperity for them. Matiu's father captures the spirit of the moment: 'Wellington's the place. Plenty jobs, plenty money' (p. 90). But the urban milieu, like *Oz*, holds uncertainties. For those who stay in Waituhi, the lure of the city is directly linked to European assimilation and the dissolution of Māori culture. Matiu's uncle, in a remark that addresses urbanization as well as counters his brother's excitement, cries, "The Pakeha way, the Pakeha way. . . . And next thing you know, everybody is leaving" (p. 91). As the small group packs the family car and exchanges farewells with extended family members and friends, Matiu expresses all of the emotions inherent in these urban narratives thus far: "Those are my relatives, my whanau, my home. Now I am leaving them all and I am sad" (p. 92).

Asserting the indigenous consciousness

In spite of the losses conveyed in these texts, both authors create stories that begin to assert indigenous perspectives and themes – or indigenism – as counter-narratives to urban discourse. Annette Jaimes (1995, p. 224), in 'Native American Identity and Survival: Indigenism and Environmental Ethics', outlines some of the basic principles of indigenism as it relates to 'differences in world view' and the literatures in this article: "Native peoples are polytheistic, derive an understanding of the world from the

natural order's rhythms and cycles of life, and include animals and plants as well as other natural features in their conceptions of spirituality". However, when we consider the debilitating aspects of urbanisation, as it occurs in the literary texts of the period we find that the experience appears as a form of resistance and laid the seeds for a growth of new ethnic consciousness within both the Native American Renaissance and its counterpart, the New Zealand Māori Renaissance.

Endnotes

1. Te Whānau-a-Kai is a sub-tribe of Rongowhakaata.
2. Walatowa is the indigenous name for the Jemez Pueblo community.

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