

Joe Gillayley: A Model of Cultural Hybridity in Keri Hulme's Novel

The Bone People

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Abstract

Born and raised at the confluence of two cultures, Western and Maori, the New Zealand author Keri Hulme crafts in her 1983 novel, *The Bone People*, a vigorous literary discourse whose integrity and realism often topple consecrated stereotyping colonial theories. Joe Gillayley displays complex mechanisms of cultural hybridity in major areas of his private and social life. His initially ambivalent attitude towards both his Western and his Maori heritage are evident in his personal, social and economic life - in his interactions with his family, his semi-adopted son Simon/ Himi, his friend Kerewin, his work, school authorities, and tribal figures such as the mysterious prophet Tiaki Mira. Post-colonial scholarship provides the context in which the analysis provided here is conducted, an analysis that highlights the futility of colonial theories that are based on distorted, stereotypical images of both Western and indigenous life and values.

Introduction

Any successful attempt to produce an in-depth interpretation of the intricate psychological and social patterns that converge in the character of Joe Gillayley in Keri Hulme's novel *The Bone People* should go beyond a universalistic concept of human nature. Such an approach might, in Herder's words, "allow us instinctively to recognize the 'other' as one of us", but it lacks the necessary depth to "make the particular life-ways of the other commensurable with our own" (cited in Pagden, 1995, p. 145). Joe's interest in his Maori roots is not, as Jennifer Daryl Slack (1992, p. 578) would have it, proof of his affiliation to a *subculture* (a term which implies secondary cultural status). Such has been the influence of globalization that being part of any culture whatsoever entails a cultural blend: "The location of culture today," points out Homi Bhabha, "is not in some pure core inherited from tradition, but at the edges of contact between civilizations where new, in-between, or hybrid identities are being forged" (1997, p. 1). Since "the very concepts of homogenous national cultures . . . or 'organic' ethnic communities . . . are in a profound process of redefinition" (Bhabha, 1997, p. 1), there is no longer the clear-cut distinction between the indigenous and the colonial which, for Diderot, characterized the eighteenth century for Joe, achieving peace and harmony involves accepting that being bicultural is being himself. He can be bicultural *and* authentically Maori.

Despite the fact that "Keri Hulme has chosen to be Maori [and] declared herself as such, although only one grandmother was Maori" (Bardolph, 1990, p. 5), she does not, in *The Bone People*, unthinkingly dismiss everything European.¹ Tiaki Mira (the mysterious Maori prophet) is pleased that Joe - who is destined to fulfill a special prophesy - is Maori, not because it *must* be so, but because it is easier: "I am glad you're Maori. It would be very hard to explain things if you were a European" (Hulme, 1983, p. 345). It is a European (Mira's solicitor) who is charged with the task of ensuring that Mira's wishes are honoured. It is he who stands with Joe at Mira's grave (p. 377). He and his wife offer Joe unconditional understanding and

respect (Hulme, 1983, pp. 377-378). Even so, neither Western nor Maori culture is accepted unquestioningly.

Aspects of both cultures (Western and Maori) impinge on the major areas of Joe Gillayley's life. He is not just a representative of humanity at large, but a culturally hybrid individual caught between Western economic and social structures and his Maori background, his "emotional and cultural commitment to tribal community" as Karen P. Sinclair puts it (1992, p. 250). Joe initially vacillates between Western values and his affiliation to Maori cultural values. We see this, for example, in his attitude toward the healing properties of the potions that are given to him by Tiaki Mira (Hulme, 1983, p. 349), in his approach to Mira's interpretation of his dreams (pp. 353-355), and, above all, in his attitude towards the *mauri* (life principle) of Aotearoa, and toward assuming guardianship of it (pp. 363-364).

Joe is "a sick man, a broken man" but, as Mira puts it towards the end of the novel, "now is the time for [him] to heal, to be whole". On a physical level, that healing involves both Maori and Western medicine: "You could call this bush lotion. Or Maori ointment. It heals well, whatever the name given to it" (Hulme, 1983, p. 349)/ "This is medicine Not a concoction of manuka bark or anything so interesting, e kare, but a modern medicine that brings sleep" (p. 350). Healing involves acceptance - acceptance of the task of guardianship ("I will look after it until it tells me otherwise" (p. 365)), acceptance of different ways of being ("[Now] I can see other . . . ways" (p. 381)), acceptance of his adopted son Simon (of European descent) as he is. At the end of the novel, Joe is no longer "ashamed of [Simon]". He no longer "[resents] his difference" (p. 381). Acceptance is, however, above all else, acceptance of self. What Joe learns is to accept himself and what he has done: "I am very sorry for it, but it's past. It's all over now" (p. 444). That final acceptance of himself in all his complex hybridity is prefigured in his response to Mira's question: "[What] is your name and who are your people?" Included in that response is not only Joe's Maori name, but also his Western one:

I am Joseph Ngakaukawa Gillayley, and I am Ngati Kahungunu" (p. 357).

In this acceptance of hybrid selfhood lies the future not only of the characters, but also of the country: "The mauri [life principle], set down, sunk itself into the hard ground. Or maybe the earth turned willing water beneath its touch. It vanished completely. But we all came back to it . . . and each of us can feel where it is resting" (p. 445).²

Maori Roots: The Old Man, the Tainuis and the importance of land and family

Although *The Bone People* is not wholly dismissive of European culture or wholly uncritical of aspects of Maori culture, Joe's experience with the mysterious old man, Tiaki Mira, is one of several strands that weights the novel in favour of Maori culture, which Joe seems to be predestined to revive.³ Mira appears as a timeless figure, "the last of the cannibals" (Hulme, 1983, p. 379), who perfectly fits into Keri Hulme's patterns of "esoteric objects and signs" (Bardolph, 1990, p. 5). Levine's concept of 'sacred inarticulateness' - "people's inability to explain their most sacred institutions" (cited in Fiske, 1992, p. 158) - comes alive in the old man's struggle to explain the nature of the prophesy which Joe is destined to fulfill. However, Joe's hybridity is not a barrier to his acceptance *as* Maori by the old man. Affiliation and initiation give Joe

access to what Diderot sees as other “mental worlds” (Diderot cited in Pagden, 1995, p. 132).

Mira's encounter with Joe is a fulfillment of a Maori prophecy: “And yet, forty years after the death of my grandmother, I am visited by the person who bears in his heart two of the people my grandmother foretold. And he is the broken man . . .” (Hulme, 1983, p. 361).⁴ Like Hemi, the father figure in *Potiki*, Joe comes to believe that “Everything was meant . . . But if you missed the signs, or let yourself be side-tracked, you could lose out. Everything was meant but you had to do your bit too” (Grace, 1986, p. 61). In bequeathing to Joe the house, the land, the canoe, and the task of guardianship, Mira places in his hands the very spirit of a people and a country:

You will have to take the land . . . I was taught that it was the old people's belief that this country and our people are different and special. That something very great had allied itself with some of us, had given itself to us. But we changed. We ceased to nurture the land. We fought among ourselves. We were overcome by those white people in their hordes. We were broken and diminished. We forgot what we could have been, that Aotearoa was the shining land. Maybe it will be again . . . (Hulme, 1983, p. 364).

Land ownership will endorse Joe's acceptance of and into his tribal family while ensuring the clan's perpetuation. But Joe is no longer Maori only, and the evocation of Aotearoa implies the emergence of a hybrid nation made up of hybrid individuals like Joe. In his dissertation ‘Unsettling the empire: post-colonialism and the troubled identities of settler nations’, O'Neill acknowledges the hybrid identity of Aotearoa:

Hulme's text is not about New Zealand. It is about another object – Aotearoa. And Aotearoa is a strange object indeed: part Maori, part European, full of numerous discourses – Maori myths and traditions, akido, Eastern religions, fragments of stylistic debts to a range of Western literature (Tolkien and Joyce, for example), and fantastic cures for cancer. Aotearoa, as a postcolonial realm, is without a unified or progressive history because its narrative is one of fragmentation and violence (1993, pp. 231-232).

Joe accepts his inheritance but fears that he may be inadequate to the task of watcher (p. 377). In this, he is not so very different from so many others who have battled, often against almost impossible odds, to retain their continuity and spiritual connection with the land and their guardianship of it, and through these, their links with the past and the future. As Ihimaera notes in his novel *Whanau*, the land is a critical aspect of identity and family: “[It] is a way of holding them together. . . . It is their pride and livelihood and their heritage for the future” (1974, p. 110-11).

The solicitor explains that Joe's inheritance has little economic value: “You will . . . own 796 acres of pikihi and private sea beaches. The land itself is nearly worthless unless you care to develop it. If you spend a million dollars and half a century, for instance, you might make a farm out of it” (Hulme, 1983, p. 376). The land itself may be nearly worthless to Joe in economic terms, but it offers a potential home and the beginning of a belief in the future. Now “what he needs” is not just bedding, food and

clothing, but also creativity - a set of wood chisels [with which to carve] and a guitar [with which to make music] (p. 378).

Karen P. Sinclair notes that although “traditional Maori society had been stratified according to principles of genealogical seniority, rank, and gender”, colonisation has resulted in a “departure from traditional sources of hierarchy” (1992, p. 241). Yet the undermining of hierarchical structures need not mean the loss of family values such as solidarity and mutual assistance. Joe is the beneficiary of the love and support of his Maori family who frequently offer to take care of his son and counsel him against parental violence. His family is appalled by the abuse Simon has to endure. At the same time, they try to understand Joe, try to discover the deep causes that drive him to violence:

And we couldn't do anything, because you feel sorry for Joe being alone and all . . . but that poor kid! God, sometimes, he could hardly walk . . . I'd never treat one of mine that way. . . . Sometimes I could have scratched that bastard's eyes out (Hulme, 1983, p. 286).

The novel deconstructs the myth that Maori families will adopt and care only for their own offspring (Harré, 1966, p. 131). Simon, of Irish and French ancestry, is accepted and loved by Joe's family and Joe proudly claims a strong physical bond to this adopted son, whose life he has saved by mouth-to-mouth respiration: “He has got that of me, I suppose. My breath . . .” (Hulme, 1983, p. 85). The process of hybridisation is under way. The boy is sometimes referred to as Simon, sometimes as Himi. He understands both English and Maori and is exposed to both Western influences (the educational and health systems) and Maori influences (Joe's family).

Family is at the very core of being Maori. It is also the very core of Joe's being. As he confesses to Kerewin, what he wants most of all is “a good big family group, to help me, for Himi to grow up straight in. With you” (Hulme, 1983, p. 262). He and his relations have difficulty in coming to terms with commitment that is not firmly located within the family. When Kerewin says that Joe is no longer alone, Lynn immediately makes an assumption: “[Did] you mean you and Joe're getting married soon” (p. 287). Kerewin's initial response is anger (“She goes from boast to being coldly angry in a second” (p. 287)). It is, paradoxically, only when Joe is capable of accepting different ways of being and relating (“I was trying to make her fit my idea of what a friend, a partner was. . . . Now I can see other ways, other possibilities . . . (p. 381)), that Kerewin is able to offer her name (“So she had offered them both that unlikely gift, her name. An umbrella as shelter, not as a binding” (p. 444)), and turn the tower where she seeks to escape from contact (“Perhaps I could hide and they'll go away” (p. 45 into a place where family, her own and Joes's, is welcome (pp. 441ff). First, however, she must accept the importance of community, as she does when she, with the help of others, restores a Maori hall into a place where people can be together (p. 431ff.). Only when she knows that she has options and that her right to choose is respected can she offer genuine commitment. Identity for the hybrid individual involves choice rather than cultural imperatives.

Relationship and cultural affiliation

Jacqueline Bardolph claims that there are many reasons for interracial marriages in New Zealand – “tactical, economic, religious, and even sheer mutual attraction” – and

that it is Maori who marry Europeans who are often eager to erase "traces of their own language and customs, which were obsolete in their own eyes" (1990, p. 2). It may be that there still are Maori who regard their own heritage language and culture as obsolete and it may also be that those who do are more likely to marry Europeans. Such general claims must, however, be treated with caution. What is clear is that there has been a resurgence of interest in Maori language and culture, an interest that is not confined to those who identify as Maori. What is also clear is that the relationship between Joe and Kerewin is not economic in nature: Joe is not in the least interested in climbing the socio-economic ladder through Kerewin. Nor is their relationship based on mutual attraction in any sexual sense: Kerewin sees herself as being essentially asexual, rejecting any form of physical contact. Emotionally, she is stereotypically the Western woman – jealously guarding her privacy as well as her virginity: "Berloody cheeky mate," grumbles Kerewin. "First send the kid here, and then expect tea again - there's limits to tribal affinities" (Hulme, 1983, p. 74). Furthermore, although Joe wants to provide a secure family environment for Simon, for Kerewin, Simon represents, initially at least, little more than an interesting detective-story and psychic case. What Joe and Kerewin *do* have in common, however, is the Maori language (which both speak) and an affinity with Maori cultural values. Both are hybrid – both live in a world that has been influenced by both Maori and European cultures and both have genealogical links to both cultures. Joe says: "My father's father was English so I'm not yer 100% pure. But I'm Maori. And that's the way I feel too, the way you said, that the Maoritanga has got lost in the way I live" (p. 62). However, whereas Joe looks Maori, Kerewin does not. Although she is "but an eighth Maori," she confesses that "by heart, spirit, and inclination, I feel all Maori. Or . . . I used to. Now it feels like the best part of me has got lost in the way I live" (Hulme, 1983, p. 62). Kerewin's dilemma is a common one in contemporary New Zealand where the right to identify as Maori – and to be accepted as Maori – is something for which people, particularly those who do not look Maori, have had to fight.

At times, both Joe and Kerewin resist their entrapment in Western structures. Both have issues of identity to resolve before they can unite. In both cases, they come to terms with themselves through the intervention of mysterious and symbolic figures who not only save their lives in a literal sense, but also rescue them from spiritual breakdown. Healed, both Joe and Kerewin are free to be themselves. Although they live in a world of prejudice and suspicion ". . . they get round with bloody Mahries and behave worse than they do" (Hulme, 1983, p. 293), they both demonstrate what John Harré in *Maori and Pakeha: A Study of Mixed Marriages in New Zealand* describes as "the qualities of the individual [that] are able to override the prejudice which often prevails in a generalized form" (1966, p. 66). Their relationship is not, of course, in any strict sense, a relationship between members of two quite different ethnic groups. However, prejudice is a phenomenon that relates to surfaces: they *look* different. Furthermore, they *are* different in terms of educational background and economic status. Lurking in the background are the types of issue that are to the fore in Ihimaera's novel *Whanau*:

For Josephine is a Pakeha girl. To make things worse, she's brainier than Andrew and her father is rich. What possible chance has he got? His own dad is poor, and Andrew himself, though intelligent, is just not in the same class as Josephine. And of course, he's Maori. No matter that their aspirations and

outlook are the same, he is Maori. No matter that they both aim at university, he is Maori. Not much use even beginning a relationship when you considered it. No, not much use at all (Ihimaera, 1974, p. 66).

As Andrew struggles with his cultural identity, he faces challenges that are different from those faced by his father's generation: "But I don't know who I am, Andrew says. Sometimes I'm Maori, sometimes I'm Pakeha, sometimes I'm half and half. You just don't understand, Dad" (Ihimaera, 1974, p. 68). His father's advice prefigures an individual at peace with his cultural hybridity, very similar to Joe at the end of *The Bone People*: "You have to make your own decision about who and what you are. Maybe you'll be able to live in both worlds without feeling a stranger in any..." (p. 68).⁵

Although Kerewin exhibits characteristics such as emotional distance that could be said to be stereotypically Western, she behaves, at the end of the novel, in a way that fits a stereotype of the Maori woman. David Ausubel observes "Maori women generally constitute a more cohesive and responsible influence than Maori men in family and community life" (1961, p. 74). It is Kerewin who brings Joe's family and her own together. It is she who takes responsibility, offering her name as "umbrella, as shelter. . . . No sentiment about it, says Kerewin, just good legal sense" (Hulme, 1983, p. 444). It is Kerewin's emotional support that Joe seeks - not her money. She can finally provide that support precisely because she is able to understand the destabilising effects of the attempt to forge identity out of brokenness. As Bhabha notes, "[the] great connective narratives of capitalism and class may drive the engines of social reproduction, but they do not, in themselves, provide a foundational frame for those modes of cultural identification that form around issues of sexuality [and] race" (1997, p. 2).

Dating and sex

The relationship between Joe and Kerewin is not one that conforms to stereotypical dating patterns. Harré, writing in 1966, notes some of the ways in which the male typically assumes dominance during courtship: "[In] the summer months, a date is often centered round a visit to a beach for a swim or a picnic" for which the male is usually the owner of the jeep that takes the woman there or of the vacation home where they lodge (Harré, 1966, p. 60). It is, however, Kerewin who invites Joe and Simon to visit the beach. The visit takes place in winter. They travel in Kerewin's car and they stay on property belonging to Kerewin's family. Even so, Joe does not allow himself to be intimidated by Kerewin's economic superiority. It is often he who supplies food, drink, and transport.

Diderot has asserted that sex "is the only mode of understanding that can pass between distant and incommensurable cultures", and that intermarriage is "the only means to bring into being the new society that alone can resolve the conflicts that . . . misconceived empires have created" (as cited in Pagden, 1995, p. 146). For Joe and Kerewin, however, understanding must precede, not follow, sex and marriage. Hybridity may be part of the solution to the conflicts that misconceived empires have created, but it is also, in itself, a problem that requires resolution.

Harré has noted that "Maoris, both men and women, tend to treat sex in a much freer way than do Pakehas" (Harré, 1966, p. 61). Whether or not this remains true today,

Joe and Kerewin appear to have attitudes to sex and sexuality that reflect cultural differences. Joe's attitude to sex is straightforward. It is "hell of an enjoyable but not the be-all and end-all of things" (Hulme, 1983, p. 266), and it has an important spiritual dimension: "I had it best in my life with Hana my wife . . . because we learned to know each other with more than our bodies, sharing more than our physical excitement" (p. 266). Joe practices what he preaches. As long as he feels that her mind and soul are not ready for a sexual union, he would rather not get sexually involved with Kerewin. On the first night he spends with her, he assures her: "I'm not intending to take advantage of you in any way" (Hulme, 1983, p. 83), and frequently insists that he is willing and able to wait for her, because "she is well worth waiting for" (p. 267).

Harré has claimed that the unpredictability of white girls, as opposed to the emotional openness of Maori girls, is considered "a positive incentive," and consequently, many Maori men claim "sexual curiosity as a motive in their affairs with Pakeha girls" (1966, p. 60). In Joe's case, there is certainly curiosity, but that curiosity seems to be more driven by the desire to understand than the desire to conquer. Joe does not dismiss Kerewin because of what she sees as her asexuality. He cannot, however, accept it as natural and assumes that she may have been a victim of abuse. Of his former wife he says: "Yet Hana was as ready as me, strong for love at any time, right to the night they took her away from me..." (Hulme, 1983, p. 174). He is certainly curious about the difference in this respect between Hana and Kerewin, but it is a curiosity that extends beyond sex:

God, what makes her tick? She must feel like this sometimes...but she never shows it. She's as distant as stone. I've never seen her excited by anything except odd colors and archaic words...and she hates touching. She even avoids Haimona's hugs and kisses, and as for mine...hai!" (Hulme, 1983, p. 174).

In the area of sex and sexuality, Joe is not the stereotypical Maori male described by Harré. Certainly he has a healthy and straightforward attitude to sex. Equally certainly, he is curious. However, he feels no need to assert his masculinity through sexual conquest. In this area, his own hybridity may be his strength.

Parenting and the economics of disadvantage

When Kerewin visits his home, Joe shows no sign of being embarrassed by the fact that it lacks those comforts that are associated with a Western sense of security. He does, after all, own his home and it is scrupulously clean. Joe's kitchen is "bare, almost institutional in its unadorned plainness" (Hulme, 1983, p. 76), the bedroom is "antiseptically clean" and "sparsely furnished", the bathroom displays a "spruce, clean tiled floor - hellishing cold on these winter mornings because there is not a bathmat in sight" (p. 79). Kerewin struggles to understand her own reaction: "What's strange? No pictures, no flowers, no knickknacks I can see? Maybe, but not all homes have that sort of thing. Is it the barren cleanliness, the look of almost poverty? Contrast that with the brandnew 750 c.c. bike he's got and this wine. . . liebfraumilch doesn't come cheap" (Hulme, 1983, p. 78). It is with a Western eye that she scrutinizes Joe's house although there is no evidence that she makes the same type of judgment as does Hana Walker, a character in Ihimaera's novel *Whanau*, who equates cleanliness with Western cultural values: "Clean. Perfect. Just like a Pakeha house"

(Ihimaera, 1974, p. 31). In this hybrid world where different values frequently collide, individuals must find their own way, must make their own choices. There are no certainties.

Ausubel, writing in the early 1960s, refers to a common prejudice against Maori - that they are only “fit for road work, tractor driving, shearing, fencing and freezing; any other work involving sustained effort, initiative or intellectual ability is thought to be beyond their capacity” (Ausubel, 1961, p. 43). Joe’s socio-economic status is best depicted in one of his confessions to Kerewin. He complains that the worst about his work is:

But I work in a factory, work in a factory, work in a factory. . . . being a puppet in someone else’s play. Not having any say. . . . It has its compensations, I suppose. I’ve paid off the house, and I’ve got some money in the bank. We’re clothed and we eat. All the good old pakeha standbys and justifications. Though it’s hard hours. I start at seven and I never get home before five. . . . Too long to be away from Haimona, eh”? (Hulme, 1983, p. 89).

Even now, Maori are seriously under-represented in higher education: “Maori continue to have lower levels of educational attainment [and] higher school dropout rates . . . than their Pakeha counterparts” (Sinclair, 1992, p. 239). In the 1970s, even fewer Maori were involved in higher education than is the case now. However, Joe has been to college – it was there that he learned to play chess before he quit (Hulme, 1983, p. 58). He is clearly capable of intellectually challenging work and the frustration he experiences in the face of monotony and long hours of work is no doubt exacerbated by the lack of intellectual satisfaction, something for which “pakeha standbys and justifications” can offer little compensation. Joe works hard and keeps his home spotless. He does not fit the stereotypical representation of Maori that was so common in the 1960s and 1970s and still stubbornly persists in some quarters even now – the “lazy, shiftless, unreliable, improvident, happy-go-lucky individual with no other ambition than to booze, sit in the sun and sponge off the Government” (Ausubel, 1961, p. 43). He drinks, and his drinking represents a serious danger to himself and to his child, but his drinking may be a reflection of his despair, a despair that is characteristic of a no-win situation that is similar to that of those urban Maori to whom Ihimaera refers in *Whanau*:

And it seems you need more money to live on these days. There is security in having and keeping one job, in having permanent employment. And living in the cities is nothing but an attractive trap. It binds you to itself with contracts: with high mortgages or steep rents, with hire purchase payments and threats of repossession. And it asks more of you: more of your money and more and more things for things you did not really want. A Venus flytrap. And once you’re caught, you can never escape. You must keep working and keep working to keep up the next payment. You can’t afford to take a week or two off for something as ridiculous as the family planting (1974, p. 53).

Joe does not live in a city, he has paid off his home and even succeeded in saving some money, and he is clearly able to resist the attractions of consumerism. In the context of the time when Hulme was writing, Joe is, in comparative economic terms, a

success. He lives in a decent, though modest house - "the pattern typical older State house" (Hulme, 1983, p. 79) - at a time when, in general terms, "only relatively few [Maori] families - those fortunate enough to have obtained a Maori Affairs Department housing loan - [lived] in homes that could be described as reasonably satisfactory or on a par with homes occupied by Europeans in similar economic circumstances" (Ausubel, 1961, p. 42).

Given the limitations on the type of work that were available to Maori in the past - and, to lesser but significant extent, even now - Austubel's claim that Maori regarded work as simply a means to "supply the necessities of life", not necessarily as "a badge of respectability or as a means of getting on in the world" (1961, p. 71) seems unsurprising. The only possible satisfaction that Joe's employment can offer him is the ability to meet his expenses and provide some security for his son. When, therefore, Simon's actions not only threaten his friendship with Kerewin but also threaten to destroy that financial security for which he has had to sacrifice so much, the outcome seems almost inevitable. This time, he cannot even attempt to conceal his beating of his son. This time, he must face the consequences.

Fiske observes that relationships are dependent on social structures (1992, p. 162) and Malchiodi argues that "societal violence . . . cannot be viewed in isolation from society" (1997, p. 2). It may be, therefore, that the physical violence that Joe inflicts on his son can be attributed, in part, to his circumstances. However, even in the early stages of the novel, Joe resists the possible justifications that are open to him: "hassles with Himi aren't because of lack of sex. I was celibate for that year before I met Hana, and anyway, I can get it now when I like . . . not that enjoyable, just bodymeeting, but it shouldn't make me cruel. I was never cruel to anyone then" (Hulme, 1983, p. 174). Later, Kerewin asks Joe whether he has explained the "real background" to his lawyer: "Being both parents to him, helping him over his bad dreams, picking him up from all round the countryside, going along to school to find out what the matter is *this* time . . .". Joe's response is simply: "I told him a bit" (p. 325). Even so, he does come to understand that the so-called compensations of working 'pakeha fashion' can be worth almost nothing:

If I could start from the beginning - not my beginning, but from the time we became just me and him, when Hana and Timoti died - you know what I'd do? I'd stop work. Stay home most of the time. I was thinking yesterday, what a waste it all was. . . . I'd worked hard, pakeha fashion, for nearly six solid years, making money to make a home. And the one thing I never made was a home (Hulme, 1983, p. 324).

Joe's parenting is certainly not all bad. He has a strong sense of love for Simon. He frequently appears ruffling his hair, holding, hugging and kissing him, giving him a bath, and watching him sleep. Kerewin observes: "I've been fascinated by you two these past few months. You've got, you had genuine love between you. You've given him a solid base of love to grow from" (Hulme, 1983, p. 325). At the end of the novel, Joe is seen again hugging and holding his son - "aching with love to give, smothered by love in return" (p. 443). In the end, this mutual love outweighs for Simon the fact that Joe has "taken away his music" (p. 443), leaving him even more disabled than before, and denying to him of a major means of expressing himself (Malchiodi, 1997, p. 9).

Joe's parental relationship to Simon is complicated by Simon's disability. The child exhibits from the beginning all the symptoms of an autistic child - poor social skills, strange fixations, screaming, anger and aggressive acts (Freedman, 1996). The fact that the school reacts to this behaviour in an inappropriate way intensifies the boy's problems - and Joe's:

So, this year, they shoved him in the special class to begin with, all the slow learners and near nuts and that. Patently ridiculous, because he can read and write as competently as kids twice his age. . . . he's bright. He can understand anything you put to him, Kerewin. He doesn't need special care and attention. He just needs people to accept him (Hulme, 1983, p. 50)

Joe's own response to Simon's failure to speak and his erratic behaviour is, like so many other aspects of his life, marked by inconsistency and uncertainty. He not only lacks experience in dealing with a child with serious disabilities, but is also lacking in experience of basic child care. He allows Simon to smoke and to drink alcohol. His way of coping with Simon's nightmares is to give him an aggressive drug (richloral). He is unable to coax him to have his hair cut. However, apart from the help his family offers, there is little sign of any other source of help. Pakeha structures, such as Joe's school, impose requirements without apparently offering any assistance in meeting these requirements. It is often precisely because of his failure to get Simon to conform to the expectations of the Pakeha world - when he steals, skips school, visits a pederast, runs away from home and breaks plates - that Joe feels impelled to punish him. Joe resists Simon's tendency to skip school although he is not so convinced of the value of Western-style education as is, for example, Hepa Walker in Ihimaera's novel, *Whanau*, who believes that the salvation of the whole Maori race "is in education" (1974, p. 36), or Maori parents like Huia who places her children "nearer to the schools, nearer to the library and away from the no-hopers of the village" because "[she] wasn't going to see *her* kids going to the pack and growing wild, not on your life! No, her kids were going to get the best - whatever that was - and be nearer to civilization" (1974, p. 48). Seven years after the publication of *The Bone People*, Beth Heke in Alan Duff's novel *Once Were Warriors* ponders on Maori educational disadvantage: "Why are Maoris not interested in books? Well, they didn't have a written language before the white man arrived, maybe that was it. . . . [A] bookless society didn't stand a show in this modern world, not a damn show" (1990, p. 4).

Joe's response to Simon, including the fact that he values but does not appear to over-value Western-style education, is in many ways enlightened. He concludes that Simon's stealing is a way of asserting his own personality and emotional needs rather than a type of play or the desire to take from others: "disregarding his background, his handicap, he's had reason to go round pinching stuff to show people, 'Hey, here I am, I want you to help me.' But that doesn't tie in with no playing, and not owning stuff. I don't think so, anyway" (Hulme, 1983, p. 206).

Acceptance that children such as Simon have the same rights as others and should, wherever possible, be integrated into society did not happen until comparatively recently in the West. In the United States of America, for example, it was not until the 1970s that the disability rights movement began to be taken seriously. However, the option of 'hiding away' children or adults with disabilities is not one that is

available in traditional, community-centred cultures. Just three years after the *The Bone People* appeared, Patricia Grace published *Potiki* in which readers are introduced to a Maori community which surrounds the wheelchair-bound child Toko with love, care and protection (Grace, 1986). Like the community surrounding Toko, Joe's family offers love and assistance. What is absent, however, is the constant and ongoing care that a traditionally structured Maori community – one centred on communal living and working – could have supplied.

Both Joe and Kerewin respect traditional ways of healing. Joe, in particular, has good reason in that he was cured of polio as a child by traditional methods. When he considers possible alternatives to trichloral for Simon, he immediately thinks of traditional healing, regretting his own lack of understanding of it: “. . . if I was proper Maori I'd. . . . Maybe take him to people who'd know what to do, to keep off ghosts in dreams” (Hulme, 1983, p. 61). The ambiguities and confusion that underlie much of Joe's behaviour are again evident here. On the one hand, he inflicts pain on Simon. On the other, he is anxious to heal Simon's pain. Joe's ambivalent attitude to Simon is reflected in the figure of Simon himself. He is, in spite of all that he has suffered, a survivor, a constant reminder of both the power of violence and the power of forgiveness. Joe has mutilated Simon's body through repeated beatings – particularly the last ferocious attack that leaves him with a “crooked face” (p. 443). Whereas the village carver in *Potiki* devotes his life to “seeking out and exposing the figures that were hidden” in the wood (Grace, 1986, p. 7), Joe carves out his son's face with strokes of violence in what could be considered a grotesque parody of a traditional moko (a tattoo that conveys aspects of the wearer's genealogy and identity). In Duff's novel, *Once Were Warriors*, Nig Heke has his face tattooed as an initiation ritual into his ghetto gang. The old fighting virtues have been there converted into nothing more than a “show [of] toughness” (Duff, 1990, p. 176). In both cases, we could be said to have a postcolonial distorted version of a native custom. However, Simon's crooked face *does* represent something of the truth of his past and of his identity. Furthermore, he is, in a sense, a true warrior who carries his triumph over adversity in his own face. This is, in one sense, the hybrid face of post-colonial New Zealand.

Conclusion

In all of the major areas of his life, Joe Gillayley displays evidences of cultural hybridization. Finally, however, through a painful process that leads him to reach understanding and acceptance of himself and others, Joe is able to achieve a sense of authentic selfhood. So it is that “the mauri waits, and spins its magic in deep silence” (p. 441) and what might, for Joe and for his country, have simply been *the end is the end or the beginning*:

“TE MUTUNGA – RANEI TE TAKE” (p. 445)⁶.

Endnotes

1. In 1985, C. K. Stead objected to the fact that the 1984 Pegassus Award for Maori Literature was conferred on an author who had only one Maori great-grandparent and whose native language was not Maori (Fee, 1989, p. 11). Margery Fee, however, argued that Maori affiliation could be claimed not so much on the basis of genetic heritage or linguistic background, but by spiritual affiliation. Like her heroine, Kerewin Holmes, Keri Hulme absorbs Maoriness and is accepted by the Maori community (1989, p. 16). Due to the prevailing socio-political circumstances in New Zealand, many acknowledged Maori writers, such as Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace, also grew up speaking English, but they, like Hulme, celebrate their Maori heritage, often incorporating untranslated Maori words into their novels (1989, p. 17).
2. When analyzing the positive ending of Joe's struggles with his Maori and Pakeha identities into a peaceful, balanced hybrid self, it is essential to consider Hulme's vision of a possible cultural cohesion for New Zealand as M. Williams noted in his book 'The novel as national epic: Wilson Harris, Salman Rushdie, Keri Hulme'. According to Williams, *The Bone People* belongs to "a species of epic that has emerged in the period since 1945 out of the colonial legacy of brokenness and of the desire for a reconstituted sense of cultural and national belonging. . . . Hulme seeks compulsively and self-consciously to find some means of countering that brokenness. . . . [*The Bone People*] contains a journey to the heart of the country by a protagonist in search of a desirable national identity. It totalizes the society and teaches desirable values. Hulme's novel is a national epic, with the inclusiveness and the didactic, celebratory purpose that goes with the genre" (1991, pp. 187-189).
3. As Keown observes, "it is impossible to for any colonized culture to return to a pure 'pre-colonial' identity (1996, p. 66). Unlike Patricia Grace, for instance, Hulme does not advocate a return to a pure pre-colonial identity, but envisions a hybrid identity - but one that takes full account of Maori culture.
4. Images of Maori as "a broken race" reappear in Patricia Grace's 1986 novel, *Potiki*, as a Pakeha perception of Maori (p. 102).
5. In 1975, Witi Ihimaera had already acknowledged the unavailability of hybrid cultural patterns in post-colonial New Zealand: "There are two cultural maps of my country, the Maori and the Pakeha. The Pakeha map is dominant, its contours so firmly established that all New Zealanders including Maori are shaped by it. The Maori map has eroded and, although its emotional landscape is still to all intents and purposes intact, has been unable to shape all New Zealanders including Pakeha. Although the situation is improving, the erosion lessening, most New Zealanders remain unaware that they have a dual cultural heritage and not a single one. Their attitude is still predominantly separatist, which is surprising for a country which prides itself for its amicable record of race relations" (cited in Lee & Johnston, 1990, p. 18).
6. According to Mark Williams (1991), "Hulme sees the evils of the present, but discovers a wholeness and healing in the past which she offers as a positive and achievable model for the future. . . . Thus reshaped in Maori terms, the 'Pakeha' . . . and modern Maori themselves are pointed towards a reformulated, purged and spiritualized version of their being as New Zealanders. The novel's deliberate blending of past and present and of various cultural elements is intended as a metaphor for national regeneration" (p. 190). In 1986, three years after *The Bone People*, Patricia Grace chose to end her novel *Potiki* with a similar confidence in the regeneration powers of the Maori race: "Good can come from what is not good, good can come from sorrow, new life from old," contemplates Roimata in the end of *Potiki* (Grace, p. 159).

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