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**Neoliberalism and Social Patterns:
Constructions of Home and Community in
Contemporary New Zealand Fiction**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Masters of Arts in English
at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand.

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2007

Abstract

Constructions of home, family and community as ways of belonging have been ongoing discourses in New Zealand. This thesis examines constructions of home and family in works of fiction by four contemporary New Zealand authors: Alice Tawhai, Charlotte Grimshaw, Witi Ihimaera and Damien Wilkins. It asks how the main sociological characteristics of the period are presented and performed through fiction. Through these characters and their situations these authors expose the social fantasy of contemporary New Zealand society: that of individual reflexive opportunity.

The twentieth century has seen a changing social fabric with loosening of bonds and the increase of individualism. The New Zealand way of life is changing, with increasing interconnectedness of the world through globalisation. Neo-liberal ideology, itself a response to globalising effects, has exacerbated social fragmentation and income disparity. Neoliberalism, a retreat of the state from both financial control and support of individuals, presumes a logic of market-forces and rational choice based on the maximisation of opportunity. This has implications for the individual's sense of self and ways of belonging as the New Zealand subject is increasingly premised on personal responsibility. This thesis looks at the economic and sociological analyses of neoliberalism and asks if they are confirmed in the fiction.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Mary Paul and Jenny Lawn for their time, support and advice.

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Introduction

Fiction is ultimately about the human condition. I am interested in the social and economic subject in New Zealand today. It seems that the increasing fraying of social bonds and the rise of individualism (although in itself not new; rather the logical culmination of Western Enlightenment thinking) is exacerbated by what is called ‘globalisation’: the expansion of capital to world markets and the concomitant rise of consumerist culture. The rise of neo-liberalism in the 1980s, policies that figured the individual as a risk-taking financial opportunist *and* conserver of family and national values, has had an effect on how we think about ourselves and the ways in which we live.

I am interested in New Zealanders as subjects: how we define ourselves and are defined by others in our current socio-historic context. In particular I am interested in how this is shown through the representation of the family, still the basic grouping that underpins our social structure. Belonging is a psychological need that confirms both who one is (by being like the group) and who one is not (by others outside of the group). Belongings can be to place, family, community, ethnicity, gender or nation. The sense of security and comfort found by belonging is that usually called ‘home’. This thesis looks at constructions of belonging for subjects through contemporary New Zealand fiction.

Concepts of ‘home’ have changed from the provincial, parochial voices of mid-twentieth century literary nationalism, those such as Curnow, Mason and Glover. There is a theorising of people living in their minds elsewhere, belonging to an imagined British/European culture, society and place coupled with the tyranny of distance that separated the physical settlement of colonial settlers in New Zealand: that of Curnow’s “never a soul at home”. At the same time was the very real physical homelessness for many Maori through loss of land and a policy of urbanisation (as Ihimaera describes in *Whanau II*). The bicultural discourse appears more recently in New Zealand fiction, where being at home is sometimes a reach for an ‘authentic’ wholeness of identity based on an essentialised ethnicity. This occurs in such texts as Keri Hulme’s *The Bone People* where broken characters are healed by accepting both

Maori and Pakeha ways. This desire for a unified belonging is the homelessness that Michael King wishes to overcome in his concept of the 'indigenous pakeha'. Sheila Collingwood-Whittick calls this the 'pain of unbelonging'. It is the "white-settler communities of Australia and New Zealand [who] have a more difficult time achieving closure on the eternally debatable question of their identity" (xxxix).

I am not claiming that these were the only ways of thinking about home and belonging in New Zealand. But with the loosening of social bonds, as sociologists Giddens and Bauman state, the contemporary subject increasingly is active in their own fate. That said, the desire to belong and identify with a group is strong, at varying levels of family, community, ethnicity, culture and nation. Therefore there is a changing discourse on what it means to be 'at home' as society's historical conditions change.

Fiction gives us the lived everyday experience of subjects as characters. It is in these texts (rather than the empirical gathering of data that tells us, for example, that ninety percent of us say we have a positive overall quality of life or that sixty four percent belong to a family network [*Quality of Life '07 in Twelve of New Zealand's Cities*]) that problems and potentials of the social can be observed, considered, worried and imagined. Critiquing society through fiction is not a new thing. In the introduction to his study of mid-twentieth century prose, Lawrence Jones explains that the critical realism of 1930s and 1940s New Zealand literature was "the deflation of N.Z. myths of itself as a Pastoral Paradise and a Just City, realism as the deconstruction of Utopia" (11). Quoting James K Baxter, he states that the writer's function is "to purge himself 'out of a lie commonly held to be truth and begin to speak meaningfully'" (11). Or, as Roma Potiki writes more recently of Maori art: it "must have a political self-awareness and the deepest emotional overlay to it. The context must be truthful" (qtd. in Somerville 92).

Robert Chapman makes such a critique in his 1953 essay "Fiction and the Social Pattern". His is a wide-sweeping survey of mid-century New Zealand fiction as a reflection and commentary on the prevailing social pattern of the time. He uses thorough, extensive empirical data to support his socio-historic overview of mid-twentieth century New Zealand society as one rigidly constrained by a family model in which individual expression is denied. In this fiction "each author is driven to be his

own sociologist, patiently observing the unrecognized majority pattern as well as the minor variations of which there will be all too few. For the New Zealand pattern is all of a piece” (25). Although I find Chapman’s conclusions of a single, stultifying social pattern (a homogeneity of rising working class / lower middle-class white New Zealand) perhaps too inclusive, he does pinpoint those gaps in the social fantasy of the materialistic family unit which are outlined in “bold relief” in fiction, setting it against his sociological “sketch map of society” (28).

It is this intersection between fiction and social patterns that I too wish to examine. As Chapman writes: “However the writer goes about it, if he selects the right phenomena for his hero to experience in the action he will touch the nerve ends of life in this society.” It is the critic’s job “to give an analysis of cause and effect and thus to tie up the phenomena selected by one or several authors” (28). Chapman posits a socio-normative subject as part of the family which serves “as a centre of constrained conformity instead of willing cohesion, of discontent instead of content” (46-47). Just over fifty years later, changing economic forms and biculturalism mean different, more varied social patterns. Rather than surveying a wide range of New Zealand authors I shall be choosing just four; analysing more closely what Chapman calls the “inconsistent magnetic variations of society” (28) that these authors write of. But like Chapman’s method, the fictional illuminations of these texts will be supported by sociological explanation.

What is new is the social world context of the subject today. To ‘speak meaningfully’ about New Zealand of the present it is the myth of the market community that is revealed and refracted in the fiction of the present. This is not to say that absolute solutions are to be found in literature, just as much as answers to all society’s ills are elusive to other disciplines. To ‘speak meaningfully’ is not didactic; rather it is in what Bhabha calls “the sleight of hand with which literature conjures with historical specificity, using the medium of psychic uncertainty, aesthetic distancing, or the obscure signs of the spirit-world, the sublime and the subliminal” (“The World in the Home” 450). In this thesis I attempt to grasp those moments where the gaps between belonging and subjectivity are glimpsed. It is in these gaps that the lie is revealed; that of the economic, responsible subject as complete. Bhabha’s ‘house of fiction’, that which makes the presence of the historical past felt, is an apt metaphor for the

intersection of art and life. This concept of the house of fiction is helpful in exploring the problematic of home and family for the contemporary New Zealand subject.

I have selected four contemporary authors for my study: Alice Tawhai, Charlotte Grimshaw, Witi Ihimaera and Damien Wilkins. Obviously the authors chosen cannot be representative of all fiction in New Zealand today; constrained by space I have aimed to find a balance. Thus there are both Maori and Pakeha, male and female, short stories and novels. I have deliberately chosen authors who are established and of literary acclaim, whose work I enjoy and admire, and whose texts are concerned with variations of the individual, family and community social patterns. These texts are mainly set in New Zealand of the present, the social world of the fictions being analogous to aspects of contemporary society.

The first chapter begins with an overview of the processes and effects of globalisation and the impact of neoliberal policies on New Zealand. This is followed by an outline of the major theorists of the sociological conditions of the current period, concentrating on their ideas about ways of belonging, especially on the impact of individualism on family and community. This chapter concludes with a discussion of changing subjectivity and how such a subject can be 'at home' in New Zealand of today.

The following four chapters analyse different works of recent fiction with these aspects of the social in mind. First, in a chapter on Alice Tawhai's short story collections *Festival of Miracles* and *Luminous* I consider different ways of trying to find a sense of belonging amongst mainly (but not always) marginalised characters. I suggest that Tawhai's texts foreground the search for home as more than just place, and are ambivalent about family in a liquid modern¹ society.

Grimshaw's short story collection *Opportunity* is the focus of the following chapter. This concentrates on Giddens' ideas of risk, opportunity and looking at how these are driven through both family and home. Grimshaw's subjects are generally relationship-focused. These are thought about using Giddens' concept of the 'pure relationship' (a democratic ideal of emotional communication dependent on active trust and disclosure) in the New Zealand neoliberal present.

The chapter on Witi Ihimaera's three most recent novels: *The Uncle's Story*, *Whanau II* and *The Rope of Man*, looks at a changing construction of home as an intersection of place and culture. This is through Maori families as they search for new ways of belonging in a society colliding with both colonisation and neoliberalism.

Wilkins' latest novels *Chemistry* and *The Fainter* consider family as a foundation for a wider social solidarity. In these texts belonging is a reflexive project through engagement (and non-engagement) with community and place as home. It is through acceptance of the uncertainties of place, self, family and community – the uncertainty of home itself – that is itself a way of being at home for these subjects.

The final chapter concludes the findings of the previous five. It summarises what these writers have to say about contemporary families and communities, and their implications about the subject in a post-colonial, neoliberal New Zealand.

The Economic and Social Context

In this chapter I aim to present an overview and analysis of theory about the social context of New Zealand in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. This requires an outline of several aspects: the increasing and changing interconnectedness through economic globalisation and neoliberal hegemony, the sociological characteristics and the implications for a sense of self and belonging, and changing ideas of the subject and home. Jane Kelsey's critique of the social impact of neoliberal policies in New Zealand is renowned world-wide, and provides a clear, well-supported base for considering the impact of the economic on the other areas of life. I consider the ideas of sociologists Zygmunt Bauman and Anthony Giddens: both leading commentators of the social condition of the present. Both present clear, persuasive arguments of the changing world we live in: Bauman's of the confusing flux of modernity; Giddens more positively of the hope for social cohesion. The ideas of cultural theorists Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey and Homi Bhabha are also considered in this section.

In considering the idea of home in a contemporary New Zealand, I first wish to mark some of the international changes of the past fifty years that have significantly altered where and how individuals experience and think of the world and the place they live in.

Globalisation and neoliberalism: the rise of the market

The word 'globalisation' provides a signifier for the wide range and effects of processes that together make the contemporary way of life, for an increasingly growing number of people around the world, different from that before 1945.

Neil Lazarus' cogent political-economic analysis of the post World War Two recovery in the core capitalist countries provides an historic context. According to Lazarus the initial explosive economic growth brought with it a stabilisation of capital in the US and Western countries, based on Fordist mass production, the rise of the mass worker and welfare state that supported and reproduced an undifferentiated workforce. It also saw an exponential rise in world trade. At the same time the rise of socialism in places

such as China and USSR and the national liberation movements of peripheral countries created pressure on the West to engage in social democracy. In New Zealand our distance and strong agricultural economic base saw the country's living standards ranked third in the world (NZ Treasury 2002, qtd. in Perry 20).

This was followed by what Lazarus calls the second era of globalisation, the economic downturn of the late 1960s, early 1970s. He argues that political crisis and the instability of the welfare state caused growth to slow, bringing an increasing inability to reconcile social democracy and capitalist relations. This was followed by "global assertion and consolidation of US political hegemony" (21) as post-Fordist production was transferred to less developed countries. This involved de-regulation, new technologies and forms of production that broke up the power of organised labour held by the mass worker of earlier decades. This economic restructuring - Thatcherism, Reganomics and, in New Zealand, Rogernomics - led to a new flexibility of capital, with such social implications as reducing real wages for low-skilled and less collective provision for workers, and lowering of social welfare benefits. By 2002, New Zealand's standard of living had dropped to twentieth in the world (NZ Treasury 2002, qtd in Perry 20).

Lazarus' Marxist analysis ties the globalisation of capital "to the unfolding hegemony of neoliberal ideology" (25)². According to him, globalisation works in the interests of the "transnational capital class (Sklair 2001)", those CEOs, leaders of transnational businesses and financial corporations and politicians who are at the top end of the increasingly widening gap between rich and poor; the "new cosmopolitans (Brennan 1997)". Other critics, also often working in the field of postcolonialism, agree with Lazarus that globalisation is a new Western imperialism of capital: the "tyrannical and illegitimate rule of the marketplace" (Zhang 32). Zhang agrees with Lazarus on the underlying economic base of globalisation. Drawing on Fredric Jameson's discourse of the postmodern he argues that globalising capitalism is interpenetrated and supported by a consumerist culture which is historically new. Zhang's argument is that the global production of everyday life (an expression of the market through the medium of consumerism) is a homogenising one. The rhetoric of globalisation is "freedom, diversity, multiplicity, and universality" but it reproduces itself as "nothing more than [the] ubiquity, sameness, and standardization" (33). The effect of this

totally enclosed field of global reproduction is, for Zhang, neo-colonialism where consumption is performative.

Not all commentators, however, are pessimistic about the movement of the market into other areas of life. Coming from an economic perspective Tyler Cowen in *Creative Destruction* theorises contemporary culture and economic production through a gains-from-trade model. His work is perhaps most useful in providing a nuanced explanation of the interplay between the global marketplace and its effect on societies as both heterogeneous and homogeneous, as “cross-cultural exchange tends to favour diversity within society, but disfavour diversity across societies” (15). He gives world music and literature as examples, although is somewhat disingenuous about local practice, citing the Bible and Koran as examples of non-American best-sellers. He claims that the accentuation of the same differences in societies results in a free market hybridity of cross-cultural exchange, which “while it will alter and disrupt each society it touches, will support innovation and creative human energies” (17). The outcome is a benign “informed cosmopolitanism”, but with a “certain amount of cultural particularism and indeed provincialism, among both producers and consumers”, which “can be good for the arts” (18).

Interestingly, Cowen fails to address the significant power imbalances in economic trade that Lazarus makes very clear in his argument. Likewise, he sees culture as limiting, stating that cross-cultural trade “liberates difference from the constraints of place” (129) and that individuals restrict choice (and presumably success in a global economy) because they wish to maintain a cultural identity. Yet he states that artists’ “creative spirit is driven by identity” (132). Cowen’s is a neoliberalist usurpation of creativity as economic product, which can only incorporate culture as a marketable artefact. To “place intrinsic value on cultural distinctiveness” (132) is regarded as a constraint on the neoliberal freedom of choice.

As seen above, Lazarus links the processes of globalisation to that of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism’s key premises are that of the rule of the marketplace, the freedom of trade and capital, and a reduction of the size of the state. These features are underpinned with the idea of the individual as a rational economic operator in an open, efficient and self-regulating market. Risks and opportunities require decisions that are

made of the subject's 'free' choice, using a market rationality. In *The Third Way* Anthony Giddens criticises neoliberalism's paradoxical division between free market individualism and family and social collectivity. "Devotion to the free market on the one hand, and to the traditional family and nation on the other, is self-contradictory. Individualism and choice are supposed to stop abruptly at the boundaries of family and national identity, where tradition must stand intact" (15). In practice, neoliberalism applies the idea of the market into the social realm as well. Giddens states that "the dynamism of market societies undermines traditional structures of authority and fractures local communities; neoliberalism creates new risks and uncertainties which it asks citizens to ignore. Moreover, it neglects the social basis of markets themselves, which depend on the very communal forms that market fundamentalism indifferently casts to the winds" (15). Likewise, 'free' choice "assumes that each person in an 'economic' relation is an autonomous, self-directing actor and views freedom from the perspective of the person acting, not the person acted upon" (Waligorski, qtd. in Bargh 15). It devolves responsibility from the state and society onto the individual, and makes economic disenfranchisement and marginality a consequence of 'free' choice rather than a community, social or state concern. In New Zealand such an example is "Tomorrow's Schools" with its responsibility for management and resources given to communities under the rhetoric of 'empowerment' and 'local needs', yet the removal of school zoning split neighbourhoods as a source of community. Similarly, hospital reforms of the late 1980s meant a 'user pays' scheme for outpatient visits. It proved to be a financial disaster as those medical services users were often those who lacked access to other treatment providers and consequently became much sicker. The neoliberal purists were unable to dampen the public outcry over those patients whose 'free choice' was life-threatening illness or even death.

Jane Kelsey is a major critic of what she calls "The New Zealand Experiment" (1995); the embracing of neoliberal policies that saw huge changes not only to the economy but also in the way that rules of the market were transferred onto non-economic aspects of life. The 1984 Labour Government's privatisation and corporatisation of state institutions and free-market economic policies were followed up by the National Government's early 1990s policies of welfare reduction and the Employment Contracts Act. In *At the Crossroads* she states that the economic policies had huge social consequences, with rising inequality as "Maori, Pacific Islands and other

immigrant families were much more likely to live in poverty than Europeans” (40). Kelsey points to the increasing inequity as a result of these policies, as the “richest 5 per cent of New Zealanders had increased their share of national income since 1984 by 25 per cent, while that of the bottom four-fifths fell” (40).

More recently Kelsey has criticised New Zealand’s adoption of ‘Third Way’ policies (so-called by Giddens) as an “agenda of globalisation with a social face” (59). ‘Third Way’ policies assume a government role as a supporter of a free market with the providing of experts who provide individuals with knowledge to make choices. But this in itself is a problem, as Kelsey states. “Within this environment, citizens are expected to balance their rights and responsibilities, but the owners of capital face no corresponding obligations” (55). The proposed 1998 Code of Social and Family Responsibility is one such example of “a more deeply embedded form of neoliberalism” (50) where it is the individual and family who bear the responsibility of their situation with little corresponding obligation from the state through societal institutions. I agree with Kelsey that policies such as this Code, with its increasing drive to figure the subject as responsible and the family as the main social model, is an attempt to further embed the “structured inequality” that “gets reconstituted as a contingent risk, which people should be given the opportunity to avoid or mitigate” (114). Such an example is the Working for Families (2005) income support package. By being available only to families in low paid employment it reinforces the normative parental subject as a (paid) working one. In combination with benefit constrictions it serves to increase poverty amongst those who are not working, and reduces the responsibility of employers to pay viable wages. Grant Duncan’s discussion of this tension within neoliberal ideology makes the same point about Working for Families. “The underlying economic question that is *not* addressed by WFF concerns why many hard working New Zealanders are still unable to raise a family to the standard that we would wish *without* a complex system of tax credits and subsidies” (272). Kelsey perhaps points to the reason, stating that “the Third Way does not disturb any existing interests and has no enemies. Uncomfortable constructs such as class, colonisation, racism and patriarchy can be banished from the political lexicon” (55).

In New Zealand of today, in spite of increasing numbers in paid employment, there is an increased and significant income disparity. The New Zealand Paediatric Society

report (2007) shows that nineteen percent of children lived in a household dependent on welfare benefits; down from twenty seven percent in 2000. In spite of this drop there has been no improvement in children's health, which is a significant poverty indicator (Booker and Kiong A3). Likewise, over half of the country's wealth is owned by ten percent of individuals. Fifty percent of the population own just over five percent of total net worth (*Quality of Life '07 in Twelve of New Zealand's Cities* 13). Such statistics confirm Kelsey's scepticism of neoliberal policies: what they show is simply a shift from benefits into low paid, part-time, contractual and uncertain employment which does nothing to alleviate family poverty. In his 1996 analysis of neoliberal economics and their impact on the social, Rose comments on the resulting rise of an 'underclass'. Neoliberal policies "have led to the rise of a 'two-thirds, one-third' society, producing a widening gap between the 'included' majority who are seeing their standard of living rising and impoverished minorities who are 'excluded'" (Rose 246). Certainly Kelsey's arguments against neoliberal policies of recent New Zealand governments make important points about the usually ignored links between the economic and social, and how such policies devolve responsibility onto the individual. However, her call for a return to a wider social democratic state is problematic with its assumption of a mainly homogeneous society. The exclusion of most Maori from the socio-economic expansion of mid-twentieth century New Zealand, the current increasing heterogeneity of the population through immigration and the rise of post-national subjectivities (such as ethnic, gender and sexual) requires something different than a return to policies of the past.

Nikolas Rose suggests that there has been a change from a social model to a community one, along with which comes the changing subjectivity of the individual as "active in their own government" (Rose 330). Rose also points out that no matter whether disparity is rationalised in terms of economic causation or personal responsibility, the "constant picture" is of an underclass who are "dispersed. They are no longer seen as part of a single group with common social characteristics, to be managed by a unified 'social service'... Yet, on the other hand, these abjected subjects are re-unified ethically and spatially" (Rose 346). Ethically, this is an "active relation to their status" as a self-managing subject. Either this is a refusal of "the bonds of civility and self-responsibility" or an aspiration to such but not yet "given the skills,

capacities and means". Spatially it is a relocation of the underclass "in both imagination and strategy, in 'marginalized' spaces" (Rose 347).

Perhaps in the more recent partnership model between communities and the state, as a "wider hybridisation process between market and societies, wherein market competition and contractual obligations are "re-embedded" in an "inclusive" post-neoliberal consensus" (Larner and Craig 2005) some solutions can be found. Larner and Craig's recent analysis of recent New Zealand partnerships programmes between state social organisations and community groups suggests a shift from earlier policies, stating that, while neoliberalism is a political-economic process, "paradoxically it could also constitute a rallying cry for various sites of community" as "new governmental spaces and subjects are emerging out of multiple and contested discourses and practices" (Larner and Craig 421). Yet this model continues to depend on the market mechanism. The *Quality of Life '07* report, in its analysis of New Zealand census and other data, comments on the problems of continued income inequality. Such inequality is associated with reduced "ability and willingness to participate in the community" (158) as those who live in "households with lower income tend to have lower rates of social connectedness" (123). It is the totalising of the reach of neoliberalism that fails to provide what individuals seem to need: a way to belong that not only sustains self but others as well.

This lack is expressed by Bargh in its effects on Maori. "The extension of the market mechanism seeks to override the ways that Maori have previously thought about and governed their lives and resources. Neoliberal practices threaten Maori world-views..."(Bargh 15). Maria Bargh points out the interchangeability of the terms globalisation and neoliberalism. In particular, some Maori commentators talk "about neoliberal practices as a new form of colonisation" (1).

Society: Family, Community and Ways of Belonging.

Although lives are constrained by political and economic policies, everyday experiences are largely thought of as being social, even though the latter is greatly shaped by the former. In this section I shall consider sociological ideas about the

present way we live. This centres on two major social thinkers of our time: Zygmunt Bauman and Anthony Giddens.

Bauman

Zygmunt Bauman labels the social effect of globalisation “liquid modernity”, a new “combination of ever more evident frailty of social bonds and the progressive individualization of life challenges.” He regards the resulting sociological and cultural changes as a “seminal shift”, with responsibility falling on the individual, rather than the community or family group. Bauman states that “the “global space” has become a frontier-land of sorts”...”without binding laws and rules of conduct, a battleground of undefined or shifting/drifted frontlines and floating coalitions” (“A Post-Modern Grid of the Worldmap?” n. pag.). Thus global subjects are part of an everchanging fluidity and flux of both locations and social relationships. “Liquid modern rationality recommends light cloaks and condemns steel casings” (*Liquid Love* 47). Likewise David Harvey claims that it is time-space compression; the “acceleration in the pace of economic processes and, hence, social life” (229) that distinguishes contemporary ways of being from those of previous ages. The result, says Harvey, is a change of sensibility about the world, with a blurring of place into space³ leading to “universal placelessness”. This results in people deciding to either take advantage "of all the divergent possibilities" or, oppositely, to reach out for "personal or collective identity, the search for secure moorings in a shifting world" (302). So whereas Harvey suggests differing possibilities of thinking about the social world, for Bauman, our current fate is a bleak one of “disembedded” individuals, in a society with no solid commitment to bonds of human relationships.

Disembedding is not a new process. “From the start, modernity deprived the web of human relationships of its past holding force.” What, Bauman claims, is new about the present is that “the disembedding goes on unabated, while the prospects of re-embedding are nowhere in sight and unlikely to appear“ (“A Post-Modern Grid of the Worldmap?” n. pag.). In *Postmodernity and its Discontents* (1997) he theorises societies of disembeddedness where uncertainty is no longer a temporary nuisance but now a permanent condition for individuals who live “in the atmosphere of ambient fear” (22). It is a fear that particularly undermines family relationships and the

permanence of the couple. “In lasting commitments, liquid modern reason spies out oppression; in durable engagement, it sees incapacitating dependency. That reason denies rights to bindings and bonds, spatial or temporal” (*Liquid Love* 47).

Bauman’s view of society today is a despairing one, where individualism triumphs. According to him, we “live ruthless times, times of competition and one-upmanship” (*Community* 3) with “community” unavailable to us: “‘Community’ is nowadays another name for paradise lost” (3). But surely there has never been a “paradise found”? Bauman posits what has always been an ideal as a certainty of belonging of the past. This idealised past of pre-given, non-negotiated roles within the social “steel casing” of community belonging is also voiced in a Maori context (Smith, 2007). This too is an imagined wholeness of past community where colonising and globalising curiosity, and certainly individualistic choice, has resulted in a loss of traditional collectivity. Bauman claims that there was an acceptance of the material conditions of the working classes in times past as they were “as a rule suffered meekly and prompted no resistance if they continued in the same form for a long time and came to be habitualized by the victims as ‘natural’” (*Community* 81). According to Bauman much of the fracturing of social cohesion comes from the “human-rights” model. This means that there “is no longer any point in measuring the justice of one’s own condition by reaching into memory – there is, however, every reason to compare one’s own plight with the pleasures currently on offer, in which other people indulge but which have been denied to oneself” (*Community* 82).

For Bauman, community is the “allegedly “natural home” or that circle that stays warm” (*Community* 15), but also an impossibility. As Eric Hobsbawm observes, “Men and women look for groups to which they can belong, certainly and forever, in a world in which all else is moving and shifting, in which nothing else is certain” (qtd. in Bauman, *Community* 15). For Bauman, the communities of today are a tension between security and freedom. This tension, like most of Bauman’s thinking, is a bifurcation; in this case the examples of the gated community and the ghetto are both symptoms of ambient fear. Bauman sees one prominent exception to this disintegration of community, however. This is the community of “the so-called ‘ethnic minorities’” (89), that of cultural identity politics. Yet these cannot be called communities as membership is not ascribed by choice; “indeed, such choices as mediate the

reproduction of ethnic minorities as communities are the product of enforcement rather than of freedom to choose” (89). Again, Bauman is perceptive about the problems that arise from exclusive boundaries, but his point does not permit any negotiation. Stuart Hall’s work “The Local and the Global” describes the local as a reach for a locatable place to speak from, a ground for identity, the reach of ethnicity. Like Bauman, Hall points to the changing and questioning of identities, pointing to the similarities between the two forms of globalisation and individual identity (what he calls ‘the local’). “Just as, when one looks at the global postmodern, one sees that it can go in either an expansive or a defensive way, in the same sense one sees that the local, the marginal, can also go in two different ways” (184). Hall theorises the space of the margins, where representation is made through the recovery of hidden histories. This is what he calls the reach for groundings through “the reconstruction of imaginary, knowable places” (184): ethnicity. Hall asks if those “on the margins become another exclusive set of local identities?” and answers “probably, but not necessarily so”(185). In the New Zealand context these various constructions of belonging through ethnicity, in particular Maori belonging, are more nuanced than Bauman seems to allow. Like other forms of belonging, cultural identifications also have various impacts on families and ideas of home.

So if belonging, or a “natural home”, cannot be assured through community (as it was in the past) then what are the implications for the contemporary subject? According to Bauman it is in the lifetime task of identity-searching that is “a *surrogate of community*” (*Community* 15), but neither “is available in our rapidly privatized and individualised” (*Community* 15) world. It results in what Bauman calls a “palimpsest identity” (*Postmodernity and its Discontents*). He claims that whereas identity formation in earlier times was one of steady, progressively-linked construction (the analogy is of building a house), now identity is a disconnected “collection of snapshots, each having to conjure up, carry and express its own meaning”. It is a palimpsest identity as it is a “series of new beginnings...painted one over the other” (25), where forgetting is coupled with incessant identity-building. “Homely cosiness is to be sought, day in day out, on the front line” (*Community* 18) where a search for belonging is really a battle of exclusion and defence of boundaries. Interestingly, Bauman quotes Fitoussi and Rosanvallon’s concept of the ambivalence of modern individualism: “It is, at the same time, a vector of the emancipation of individuals,

enhancing their autonomy and making them into the bearers of rights, and a factor of growing insecurity, making everybody accountable for the future and bound to give life a sense no longer being preshaped by anything outside” (qtd. in Bauman, *Community* 22). Bauman seems to rail against such ambivalence, nostalgically mourning the certainty of “communal warmth, homeliness and tranquillity” (15) in a pre-modern bounded community.

Doreen Massey’s work on place and space offers an interesting rejoinder to Bauman’s community of the past. Although working in cultural geography rather than sociology, Massey’s conceptualisation of places of belonging as spatial and social constructs provides an interesting intersection with Bauman’s and Giddens’ ideas. “A Place Called Home?” theorises the problematic association of place “with stasis and nostalgia” (12), which as a grounds for identity and sense of belonging, depends on notions “of a recourse to a past, a seamless coherence of character, of an apparently comforting bounded enclosure” (12). Massey states that “such understandings of the identity of places require them to be enclosures, to have boundaries and – therefore and most importantly – to establish their identity through negative counterposition with the Other beyond the boundaries” (13). Massey links this reach for the local (as a grounded place) as a response to claims (see Harvey and Bauman, above) made about identity loss through sameness and increasing lack of coherence in a globalised world. Massey recognises the effects of what we call globalisation: “spatial upheaval, worldwide communication, the break-up of what were once local coherencies, of a new and violent phase of ‘time-space compression’” (3), and that the economic world we live in now looks very different to that of fifty years ago. In the context of globalisation there is “a truly major re-shaping of the spatial organization of social relations at every level” (6), but Massey also questions how new our way of life actually is now, as the process of adaptation has gone on for a while, perhaps even forever. Place has, for a long time, been where different communities intersect. Communities do not need to be spatially concentrated. Also, most people still do not live in “skyscraper fortresses”; rather they are living in places like Timaru and Auckland. Massey states that “of course geography makes a difference...but ‘presence-availability’ does not somehow do away with issues of representation and interpretation. That place called home was never an unmediated experience” (8).

Massey's model of identity of a place has three attributes: first what she calls the "juxtaposition and co-presence" of sets of social inter-relations there; second, that it is not fixed (either in the past or present); third, in part it is "constructed out of positive interrelations with elsewhere". This last point is particularly important, as it calls into question the imagined security and boundedness of place as home. Certainly it emphasises the constructedness of familiarity of place and the intimacy of home and that identity of place, including home, is "in one sense for ever open to contestation" (13). Massey states that this openness of identity of place (including home), continually being produced, has seen a shift due to the effects of globalisation. This shift is in the balance between "internally focused and externally connected social relations...towards the latter" (14). Thus fear of a 'placelessness' of modernity is, argues Massey, produced by an imaginary of place which is bounded and singular rather than one that negotiates frontiers of difference.

Massey is sceptical of the "fear of placeless, dislocated identities in a globalised space" that Bauman posits, asking "to what extent...is this a predominantly white/first-world take on things" (9)? But in a New Zealand, Maori context, there does need an understanding of place as "turangawaewae", as a standing ground. In this there is a far more fixed view of place as home; of ancestry, history and cultural belonging.

Giddens

Anthony Giddens agrees with Bauman on how ways of life have changed as a result of (the processes and effects of) globalisation. "Taken as a whole, globalisation is transforming the institutions of the societies in which we live" and is linked to the "new individualism" (*The Third Way* 33) and that this individualism "is associated with the retreat of tradition and custom from our lives". Whereas Bauman sees that we are living in times of disengagement and fear, Giddens sees "an age of moral transition" (36). Giddens himself states that the "area of civil society, including the family and other non-economic institutions" is the "third sector of society, separate from the state and market-place" (*Runaway World* 77). He emphasises the need to make social cohesion and accept responsibilities in a much more active way than that of previous generations. With this comes the "concept of 'reflexive modernisation'; the stage of modernity in which the individual is paramount" (qtd. in Bryant and Jary

159). However, even though it is the individual who makes choices, this does not necessarily mean the disintegration of the social. This “genuinely new social universe of action and experience” is “one where social bonds have effectively to be made, rather than inherited from the past...It is decentred in terms of *authorities*, but recentred in terms of opportunities and dilemmas, because focused upon new forms of interdependence...To regard *narcissism*, or even *individualism*, as at the core of the post-traditional order is a mistake...In the domain of interpersonal life, opening out to the other is the condition of social solidarity” (*Reflexive Modernization* 107).

Reflexivity means the confrontation of risk, the nature of which, according to Giddens, in recent times has changed. External risk is the older form, coming “from the outside, from the fixities of tradition or nature” whereas manufactured risk is of those “situations which we have very little historical experience of confronting” (*The Runaway World* 26). These risks are not only economic, such as inflation, restructuring and job security, but also individual, for example, the impermanence of relationships. This does not mean that the world is a riskier place than it used to be. It means “the idea of risk has become more central to our lives than it ever was before” (qtd. in Bryant and Jary 247). Giddens states that such manufactured risks (which can lend themselves to a condition like the permanent uncertainty of Bauman’s “ambient fear”) effect social institutions such as marriage and family as for individuals “there is an important sense in which they don’t know what they are doing”. Indeed, this new ‘risk profile’ and a preoccupation with it has become “the defining parameter of modern culture and life, replacing the preoccupation with wealth” (qtd. in Poole 5). Again, unlike the despair that Bauman has of this new social condition which is a “frontier-land of sorts...a battleground of undefined or shifting/drifting frontlines and coalitions” (“A Post-Modern Grid of the Worldmap?” n. pag.), Giddens is far more positive. “Here individuals are striking out afresh, like pioneers... They have to confront personal futures that are much more open than in the past, with all the opportunities and hazards this brings” (*The Runaway World* 28).

Giddens places much emphasis on the family, which, along with marriage, is a “shell institution”: “still called the same, but inside their basic character has changed” (*Runaway World* 58). It has been transformed from a pre-modern economic kinship unit by “the rise of the *couple* and coupledness” (57). It is those changes that are

“happening in our personal lives – in sexuality, relationships, marriage and the family” (51) that are the most important. And the reason for this is, states Giddens, because although we can “tune out from the larger problems for much of the time... We can’t opt out, however, from the swirl of change reaching right into the heart of emotional lives” (51-52). This “swirl of change” is in what he calls the “pure relationship”. It is a relationship “based on emotional communication” that depends on “processes of active trust”, disclosure, and is “implicitly democratic” (61). It is also, as Giddens admits, an ideal. Like Bauman, who reinforces the constant choice-making facing individuals of today, Giddens’ “pure relationship” is an active one. But rather than the anxious, palimpsest identity-seeker of Bauman, Giddens’ concept of the self is as a reflexive project with a drive towards self-actualisation. This is “founded on basic trust, in which one individual self ‘opens out’ to another. This mutuality of self-disclosure results in the formation of personal and erotic ties in the form of ‘pure relationships’” (qtd. in Poole 4). It is “talk, or dialogue, [that] is the basis of making the relationship work”. And finally, a “good relationship is one free from arbitrary power, coercion or violence” (*Runaway World* 62). A parallel is clearly made between public and private spheres, with such qualities also those which Giddens states conform “to the values of democratic politics” (62). So the family is still vital in Giddens’ ‘reflexive modernity’, but has undergone considerable change. Other social commentators agree with Giddens that this is because of the decline of tradition with its forms of organisation and prescription of roles through gradually adapted rules and rituals.

Yet the optimism that Giddens conveys is not always so readily apparent in other critics. Fellow sociologist Gernsheim-Beck is more hesitant about the stability of the family as tradition recedes. “We now see a kind of stage management of everyday life, an acrobatics of discussion and finely balanced agreement. When this is unsuccessful, the family tie becomes fragile and threatens to collapse” (qtd. in Poole 5). Bauman, in his inimitable fashion, is doubtful of the usefulness of the very concept of ‘reflexive modernity’ as a term to describe the current period.

“‘Reflexive’? I smelled a rat here. I suspected that in coining this term we are projecting our own, the professional thinkers’, cognitive uncertainty upon the social world at large... Whereas that world out there is marked, on the contrary, by the fading and wilting of the art of reflection” (“A Post-Modern Grid of the Worldmap?” n.

pag.). And I think Bauman has a valid point here. There seems to be a significant gap in Giddens work, one that seems to ignore the limitations of individual agency, especially if met with a refusal to the “opening out to the other...of social solidarity”. Bourdieu’s notion of ‘habitus’ (“embodied history, internalized as second nature and so forgotten as history” (qtd. in Pocock 122)) is one of the wider intertwining of the social, cultural, economic context on the choices of the individual. This explains how such choice is constrained with the “attempt to bring our lives into alignment with established ‘expectations and institutions’” (Pocock 122). In Bauman’s expositions of the failings of the social present I find a gloomy dichotomising of a bounded, knowable place and self of the past with a frayed and despairing fractured individualism of the present. That said, however, Bauman does occasionally cut through with an awareness of the importance of power. Whereas in Giddens the differences made through power often seems ignored. Bauman states that it “does not matter whether single men and women have become genuinely more autonomous, more ‘on their own’, more determined by their own choices and actions as before; what does matter is that they are now charged with full responsibility for their false or ill-conceived steps, failures or defeats” (“A Post-Modern Grid of the Worldmap?” n. pag.).

Home and Subjectivity

Homi Bhabha uses the concept of ‘unhomely’, describing it as capturing “something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place” in reference to the “uncanny literary and social effects of enforced social accommodation or historical migrations and cultural relocations”. In his essay “The World and the Home” he argues that this is the recognition of the world-in-the-home and the home-in-the-world, where boundaries break down between public and private space, present and past. The concepts of homely and unhomely draw on Freud’s work on the uncanny. His terms heimlich/unheimlich (familiar and homely/unfamiliar and unhomely) are not oppositional binaries; rather “one seems always to inhabit the other” (Gelder and Jacobs 23). Thus the uncanny is the feeling of familiarity and belonging in the home but also that something is “out of place” at the same time.

The swirl of change that Giddens writes of is very much a shifting of boundaries. Bhabha, in his introduction to *The Location of Culture*, emphasises that it is the boundary space between self/other, us/them, where differences can be articulated. He quotes Heidegger: “A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognised, the boundary is that from which *something begins its presencing*” (1). It is in what Bhabha labels the ‘in-between’ spaces, the “moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences” that begin to presence new identities, new ways of being. His argument is that through “the borderline engagements of cultural difference” (2) new, hybrid identities are produced performatively. It is in this in-between space “that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this ‘Third Space’, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves” (qtd. in Ashcroft et al. 8). Although Bhabha theorises the negotiation of community, national and cultural experiences as being both antagonistic and affiliative, he makes it clear that the process of articulation of difference can have no direct access to an ordinary identity or culture (*The Location of Culture* 3).

As our political and social world changes, how we think of ourselves and are thought of by others also changes. The first part of this section outlined the changes wrought by New Zealand’s neoliberal policies. The second part outlined how ideas about the subject have changed as society shifts. So what are the possibilities for the idea of home when seemingly everything is moving across frontiers, into new ways of being, starting afresh, yet must surely be experienced in a place (or a series of locations)? Contemporary ideas of home are like that of the idea of the subject: fragmented, multiple, fluid; but also endeavouring to achieve a coherence that will support stable forms of belonging.

For Bauman the idea of home is one of unity. Janet Zandy’s defines it as “an idea: an inner geography where the ache to belong finally quits, where there is no sense of ‘otherness’, where there is, at last, a community” (qtd. in Blunt and Dowling 50). Bauman’s ‘inner geography’ of home is at once necessary but impossible as community is lost. The idea of home for Giddens’ is through reflexive, responsible social solidarity and by striving for the ‘pure relationship’. This comes through communication and ongoing dialogue; a home as social belonging through negotiation.

Massey states that home is in communities, no matter how spatially distant they may be. This is usually in a place, but is made up of inter-relationships with others both in that place and with the outside. Likewise, an identity of place as home is not fixed; it shifts over time.

For Bhabha and Hall home as a physical place is not necessary. It is rather through the interaction and negotiation with history and others that the idea of home moves. This is the idea that sometimes “home is nowhere. At times one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and ever-changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference” (bell hooks, qtd. in Blunt and Dowling 20)

It is a consideration of such configurations of the subject through home, family and community that I now turn to. Bhabha states that “in the house of fiction you can hear today, the deep stirring of the unhomey” (“The World in the Home”). Through the concepts that Bhabha, Giddens, Bauman, Hall and Massey provide, I shall be looking for those stirrings in the house of New Zealand fiction.

¹ Zygmunt Bauman uses the term ‘liquid modern’ to describe the individual and societal flux of late modernity.

² ‘Hegemony’ (Antonio Gramsci, 1891-1937): “the power of the dominant group to persuade subordinate groups to accept its moral, political and cultural values as the ‘natural order’” (qtd. in Hubbard et al. 70).

³ By this Harvey suggests that ‘place’ is the identity of specific fixed location, whereas ‘space’ is an abstract of shifting relationships with elsewhere. However, see Doreen Massey’s “A Place Called Home?” for a refutation of these definitions.

Alice Tawhai: The Ambivalence of Belonging

Alice Tawhai has written two short story collections: *Festival of Miracles* (2005) and *Luminous* (2007). Often her characters are transient, families dysfunctional, and relationships and lives destroyed by individualistic desire. Tawhai's fictional world is one of 'disembeddedness', where characters are seemingly unable to control their situations, leading to the destruction of both self and others. Yet Tawhai still gives us glimpses of ways to construct belonging; of attempts to dwell in a fractured, globalised, often alienating society. For some the unhomey is violence, for others; it is empty consumerist individualism where belonging is (temporarily) affirmed by sexual appeal or financial wealth. The titles of both *Festival of Miracles* and *Luminous* refer to small glimpses of joy and hope in otherwise bleak lives. These small moments recur in Tawhai's stories. It is often (but not always) these moments that point to the possibility of constructing a new home.

Tawhai's literary vision is of characters living at the margins of society, and how (or how not) these characters try to construct and embed social belongings. She shows the difficulty of this negotiation, not universally but in a country where forces of globalisation and effects of colonisation emphasise disenfranchisement. I propose that Tawhai shows this as a search for a security of embeddedness that is always ambivalent. Coupled with a desire, a need to belong, her characters are often adrift in what Bauman calls "liquid modernity", with its frailty of social bonds and increasing individualisation. They have few foundations to ground this belonging on.

Simplicity of prose style is used to show the harshness of these characters' lives. But such a technique, in itself, is usually not enough to make a short story effective. Symbolism is the literary vehicle for Tawhai's vision of home and belonging. Her use of imagery is analogous to our contemporary social conditions; all around us but rarely discussed. Similarly, her characters often fail to make meaning of signs. It is those whose recognition reaches beyond concrete representation (especially through artistic expression) who are capable of an acceptance of ambivalence, a sort of home-in-onese. It is the symbolism which indicates that this movement is possible, but also very difficult. In the title story, "Luminous", for example, the darkness in which the

characters exist is multiple: it is almost all set at night and the characters are psychologically in the dark (she is described as swimming “underneath the ocean” where the “water is black and thick” [10]). It is a repeated darkness of unknowing, emphasised by the gaps in the narrative itself with the unnamed girlfriend, the couple’s absent pasts (and corresponding absent thoughts of the future). Yet against this darkness, light abounds in small objects: the glowing lei, the girlfriend’s white glowing skin, the small plants “like fragile ghosts” (10), the Farmers’ Building that “glowed like pale green ice” (11), the “neon cross on the Hawkins construction crane”, the tiny neons on the car dashboard that create an “unearthly glow”, her cell phone, with the message “glowing in the dark” and the luminous paint he sprays “I love you...” with on the wall. Even Joel’s excuses for not coming home are “strung together like a sparking necklace of his dark adventures” (14). If we regard the darkness these characters are immersed in as akin to Bauman’s frontier land of globalisation where there are no rules, where the way is not known, then these small lights help to point towards a way of being; a way to negotiate the darkness. Maybe they are even a guide towards a new home.

Yet all of these symbols are ambivalent. Tawhai deliberately uses imagery that points to a failure to negotiate the contemporary terrain of belonging as much as it shows the possibility of it. She, as one reviewer states, “maintains a knife-edge balance between describing the value of something, and how – in the setting in which she’s imagined it – that value is compromised” (White 46). The fluorescent lei which first attracts Joel to her later “made him think of rotting meat” (9) of her still-born baby’s placenta, the first suggestion of loosening family bonds (the child is not his) and Joel’s abhorrence of paternity (because of the restrictions it will place on his empty freedom and as a consequence of his own abused childhood). The cannabis he grows and smokes, like the pills his girlfriend is prescribed which take “her to somewhere cold and distant, like the outer atmosphere” (13), offer a temporary shelter from their homeless condition. But both only serve to distance the characters further from social engagement. Joel’s crop may be pale and ghostly, but by using it he increases his own displacement. Similarly the symbols of Christianity point to the meaningless of religion in creating belonging. The glowing Santa on the Farmers’ Building shows Christmas as merely a celebration of consumerism. Joel imagines clinging to the Easter cross on the crane, but he is a sacrifice of contemporary modernity rather than offering the certainty of

Christianity. He thinks that “it was fitting really, a symbol of death and resurrection on a crane that was used to rip down the old Auckland, and hoist up the new” (14). Likewise Joel’s love message in luminous paint does not resolve his girlfriend’s desire for him to remain at home at night, to “settle down” (13). Even though he writes “I love you, I love you, I love you” (14) on the wall opposite their place, he can neither say the words nor even be there. These pale and glowing symbols point to both ways of belonging (romantic love, religion, family) and the impossibility yet of constructing that belonging.

While the characters of “Luminous” seem the most disembedded in Tawhai’s collection of that name, similar imagery is used in “Like Japan”. In this story it is the older brother of the focalising character who has become totally disconnected from his family and culture. The eldest child of a Japanese family, he has been expected to gain excellent university grades to gain a well-paid job and support his parents in their retirement. Instead he gradually retreats to his bedroom. After not even attempting his exams he isolates himself entirely, only leaving his bedroom to eat late at night. He has not left it for three years. His younger sister, also overwhelmed and isolated by familial expectation, culture shock and pregnancy as a result of rape, imagines her brother in the complete darkness of his room. Feeling a bond through isolation Yuri hacks his computer via the internet. Using the webcam she sees her brother at the screen, his room lit up with “blow-up glow-in-the-dark alien toys” and “pages of Japanese manga” (50). This is not the darkness she imagined. Her brother is dwelling in a way that is dissociated from all aspects of social belonging, but “the room was filled to the brim with soft light”; the glow symbolising that he has found a way of being at home. However this is an eerie and fragile form of being if it means total social isolation. When her brother’s hand covers the screen “and then it went dark” (50), we realise that his new home is premised on a total retreat from all forms of community.

The symbols of light in both “Luminous” and “Like Japan” are thus ambivalent guides. These characters, while located somewhere, seem to have little belonging to place. The Auckland in “Luminous” has only two markers of identity, the old Santa on the Farmer’s Building and the construction cranes. There is no other reference to place, direction, or description of surroundings. Joel and his girlfriend seem to live in an

almost placeless Auckland where the old identity of place is no longer relevant to them, but a new way of living there as home is still under construction and open to interpretation. Yuri's Hamilton is constructed by her entirely through her place-identity of Tokyo, leaving her unable to make appropriate meanings. So although she finds a familiarity of place at the Hamilton lake that is very much like the artificial lake of her home town, neither location can offer a comfort of 'home'. Hamilton, in spite of a few physical similarities (for example the cherry blossoms and the orange carp are "like Japan"), imposes its differences upon her. Not only is the language different, the "muted words" (46) refusing to hold their meaning, but the rape itself seems to be a miscommunication. But Japan is also a place of alienation for Yuri and her brother, one of rigid family expectations and obligations in a rapidly changing society. Yuri's dream of home is that of the Tokyo World War Two cemetery, searching for her brother's grave. The crosses that turn into flocks of white seagulls in her dream are the escaping, dissolving bonds of tradition that seem dead but as yet have nothing to be replaced with. Like Joel's new Auckland, not yet hoisted up, "Like Japan's is places and relationships where old roles and rules are no longer intelligible but new ones are yet to be put in place.

Massey states that "of course geography makes a difference...but 'presence-availability' does not somehow do away with issues of representation and interpretation. That place called home was never an unmediated experience" (8). Tawhai's symbols show attempts at such mediation. For both sets of characters "presence-availability" is possible physically and through the global space of the internet. It is interpretation and representation that is problematic. Certainly they seem to inhabit something like Bauman's "global space" that is a "battleground of undefined or shifting/drifted frontlines and floating coalitions".

What Tawhai shows in "Luminous", "Like Japan" and other stories is the difficulty of negotiating belongings when of society has few clear boundaries. Bhabha emphasises that it is in the boundary space between self/other, us/them, where differences can be articulated. As Heidegger states, "the boundary is that from which *something begins its presencing*" (qtd. in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 1). Yet in Tawhai's fictional world these boundaries seem vague, and thus for some engagement with the in-between space is almost impossible. One example is the bonds of family and sexual

partnership which are undermined by a neoliberal ideology of individual freedom, diversity and multiplicity. When Joel first meets his girlfriend in a nightclub she is visibly pregnant, but this is no barrier to the formation of a sexual relationship. As with Ange of “Nasty Sex” and the characters in “Queen Bee”, sex is both another freedom *and* a signifier of belonging. This results in an ambiguity of boundaries and inability to articulate beyond them. Joel’s girlfriend is overwhelmed by jealousy, spending her nights longing for him to return, only believing his assurance that “I would never cheat on you” (12) while he is there. Joel’s nightly drives are searches for elusive freedom and meaning outside of paternity and family relationships. He is trapped by a search for something which does not exist, deluding himself that he sees “a dapple of grey, and a flash of silver” (14) of the horse that will carry him away. If “symbolic orderings of space and time provide a framework for experience through which we learn who or what we are in society” (Harvey 214), then Tawhai’s fictional world is one of symbolic ambiguity.

Likewise in the story “Queen Bee” Tawahi points to a society of individualism, where others are used to increase one’s own advantage and bolster self-esteem, through displays of material consumption and competitive physical beauty (or in Darcy’s case, manliness through sporting prowess) which is expressed as sexual attractiveness. Thus the Queen Bee of the title, Tanea, the beautiful elder sister of the narrator, is treated by her husband Darcy as a commodity. But this is how *all* of this social group treat each other; family and affiliative bonds of loyalty and fidelity are undermined by indiscriminate sexual activity. This lack of self-reflexivity is evident in Tanea and Darcy’s emphasis on displays of consumption: Darcy keeps receipts of “Von Dutch handbags, and a necklace with a dangling heart-shaped topaz” (29) “to skite the next day about how much he’d spent on her” (29). She is treated like a princess in public. Tanea is proud that in Darcy she has someone that other girls envy; she too has married him for his public image. This fixation on outward appearances is apparent when she comments about another girl whose boyfriend is sleeping around on her, saying, “Oh, I can see how she doesn’t care, as long as she’s the queen bee”(30). It is this blurring of boundaries of sexual behaviour between public and private which makes the social belonging of friendship amongst the narrator and her sister’s girl friends a fragile one. It is easily betrayed by desire for recognition/affirmation of self through sexual acts with men, even though those men may be the boyfriend or husband

of another. Giddens explains neo-liberal ideology as contradictory, where “individualism and choice are supposed to stop abruptly at the boundaries of family and national identity, where tradition must stand intact” (*The Third Way* 15). Tawhai exposes this fallacy. These characters’ identity affirmation is predicated on a private, individualistic denial of family boundaries, while maintaining a social belonging through public expression of them. The social fantasy here is of familial belonging; the fundamental split or antagonism being individualistic consumerism where all others are mere commodities.

Tawhai shows how her characters use language to conceal the inconsistencies of their society, at the same time as Tawhai herself reveals these inconsistencies through narrative. Tanea, her sister and their girlfriends try to articulate the boundaries of acceptable sexual behaviour when “us girls talked about sluts”. Defining a ‘slut’ not by frequent change of partners but as “someone who sleeps with people with no intention of looking for love” (32), they also label women who dress provocatively as ‘ho’s’. It is a construction of Otherness, of “them”, but also a failure to acknowledge the fluidity of these boundaries in their own behaviour. The most obvious of these is the narrator, who has an affair with her brother-in-law Darcy. She is ambivalent about it when it ends. “He got sick of me anyway. I didn’t care. I hated doing that to Tanea”(33). Her professed guilt is a denial of both her betrayal and continued desire to satisfy her lack (by having something that belonged to her sister who has always had everything). Their construction of the other, the ‘sluts’ and ‘ho’s’, is an expression of their own lack. The choice of the narrator, her family and friends is a refusal to acknowledge the lack in themselves which they project onto the ‘sluts’ and ‘ho’s’. By refusing to acknowledge their behaviour their sense of belonging is fragile, always undermined by lack of trust.

Tawhai does promulgate another negotiation of home: one which denies communication through language entirely. The brother in “Like Japan” and the narrator of “Merry-go-Round” both exemplify this almost reverse societal belonging, existing in almost complete social and physical isolation. These identities are premised on being the ‘Other’ of community; both have chosen this retreat. The unnamed, silent narrator of “Merry-go-Round” states that there is “something written on my forehead, something that I can’t see. I know what it says, though. It says, ‘Ugly,

doesn't belong, unable to be loved'" (154). Yet he has found a way of being in the world, albeit a very bleak one. Likewise the soft glowing light of Yuri's brother's room indicates that he too has created a new way of being. But surely what Tawhai depicts for us here is a subject constituted by non-belonging? For both their only contact with others is through the internet, but even this is limited: Yuri's brother switches off the connection she makes with him, the narrator of "Merry-go-Round" only uses it to sell his paintings. Croucher claims that globalisation brings with it "changes that are increasing the inter-connectedness of the world" (13); the creation and facilitation of new flows of networks. Yet neither character has any social bonds at all, their retreat being one of fear of the world. Certainly the narrator of "Merry-go-Round" is self-reflexive; but can one 'belong' if there is no dialogue at all? In spite of the lack of communality, there is an importance of place. For both characters, place, whether it is the hemmed in terrain of Taita or the pale-lit bedroom in a Tokyo apartment, reinforces an identity of tightly controlled enclosure. They are places of belonging, but that belonging is also a space of negation. So although Tawhai points to cyberspace as tool for new ways of belonging, these are not unembodied selves. Caren Kaplan, in her work on new subjectivities in an era of globalisation, makes this point clear. "The self is believed to have expanded capacities as soon as it is released from the fixed location of the body, built environment or nation. But the self is always somewhere, always located in some sense in some place, and cannot be totally unhoused. New technologies appear to promise ever-increasing degrees of disembodiment or detachment, yet they are as embedded in material relations as any other practices"(210). Place still matters.

The other way that belonging is negotiated in these texts is through culture. Hall's work on culture and identity is particularly helpful for placing ideas that Tawhai fictionalises into a theoretical framework. Hall claims that the local is a reach for a standpoint of identity. This reach he calls ethnicity. Tawhai shows that this reach can (as Hall states) move forward into new identities, or also become entrenched. Or, as Hall states, "just as, when one looks at the global postmodern, one sees that it can go in either an expansive or a defensive way, in the same sense one sees that the local, the marginal, can also go in two different ways" (184). This can be either a "rediscovery of identity" which retreats from modernity, or new identities which grasp a contradictory past through memory, desire and narrative; identities which speak from

the local moment across boundaries of place and ethnicity. Again, Tawhai presents the ambivalence of cultural belonging. We are presented with characters whose new forms of cultural identity are insular and destructive, characters who desperately wish to identify with a culture to cover their own lack, and also those whose culture is a form of security against a hostile world, even while recognising that this culture is reified, turned into heritage. Always there is tension. Sometimes the characters themselves are able to articulate the space between the boundaries of self/other, in speech, thought or action. Always Tawhai demonstrates how difficult this articulation is, the ambivalence of outcome, but most of all, the danger of not engaging in such a course at all.

Tawhai's characters pick their way through such negotiations and retreats in "Pale Flower", a story from the *Festival of Miracles* collection. The local, Ngaruawahia, is a place of belonging (one which reinforces a Maori identity of family, place and culture) but also a space of contradictory drives between contemporary individualism and traditional community. The place-identity of Ngaruawahia, with its "pa and poukai and rotting corn in the barrel full of water" (124), is one of a bounded cultural home; the narrator's best memories being of the "regatta down at Turangawaewae Marae, when the waka taua paddled past our Maori Queen" (126). Yet just as Massey warns that identity of place is derived from interactions with 'the outside', not some internalised history of a "recourse to the past...of an apparently comforting bounded enclosure" (12), this Ngaruawahia is also part of wider spatial networks. Tawhai's narrative clearly sites this Maori community within globalised social and political spaces of declining local employment, increasing welfare dependency and subsequent disenfranchisement. "Radio Tainui blasted on the car radios. I remember the Waipa and the Delta Taverns, and smoking joints outside. We were a small town, with two second-hand furniture shops that did good business on benefit day" (124). Here are the loosening bonds of affinity: Sal is the sometimes partner of the narrator and perhaps the father of her young daughter? Like in other Tawhai stories, parents are supportive of their adult children, but current family structures are undermined by individualistic behaviours. He demonstrates the defensive retreat to local identity that denies modernity. Sal's is a reach for a politicised Maori identity, one that affirms his ethnicity through learning of te reo and the adoption of his birth name: Herewini.

“Sal’s just a fucking plastic name,’ he said. He was always on about Maori this and Maori that, especially when drunk” (125).

Just as Bauman writes of the incessant identity-building that is a frontline battle for belonging as home, Tawhai too frames these searches through violence, often physical. In “Pale Flower” Sal’s identity is affirmed by a Maori ethnicity based on bounded place. His power is asserted by beating up his girlfriend when she fails to make similar cultural identity claims (even though she too is Maori and Ngaruawahia as a place is part of that identity) and by his physical intimidation of Pale Flower, excluding him because of his Pakeha ‘otherness’. Ironically it is a searching for belonging that denies family, both in his abuse of his girlfriend and in a refusal to engage in the wider kinship of marae events. Tawhai makes it clear that Sal’s identity politics are what Hall would call the “struggle of the margins to come into representation” with “the means to speak for the first time” (183). This speaking is of the recovery of “hidden histories” (184); the moment when decolonisation begins. But Sal’s ethnicity is a defensive one that denies both globalising movements such as human rights and the community-centeredness of Maori traditions. Tawhai makes this point through the narrator’s father, who states that being Maori is more than an identification with historical grievances: “before you can get like a kamatua and start sounding off about things, first you’ve got to earn the right to be called a man. Sal should get off his arse and get a real job instead of just sitting around with the bottle” (125).

In her book *The New Imperial Order: Indigenous Responses to Globalisation*, Makere Stewart-Harawera makes a claim for a humanist traditional Maori ontology as a solution to the disparities that globalising capital generates and perpetuates. She calls for an “alternative model of social-political order based on traditional values and world views”(195); one where the tensions between individualism and collective will are dissipated by an indigenous framework that “rests on the principle of balance” (200). However Tawhai’s fiction shows how difficult it is to find this balance. Sal’s articulation of identity is an individualistic one that denies others, a creating of an exclusively bounded home by a defensive retreat to fundamentalism. At the same time this renders others physically homeless by enforcing a place identity bounded by a particular articulation of culture, forcing the narrator and her boyfriend Pale Flower to shift to Auckland. The narrator, like so many of Tawhai’s characters, is left in a

floating ambivalence of home, some of her heart staying with Sal in Ngaruawahia, some of her heart going to Auckland. While ambiguous (we are told that “which one I spend my life with...is a done deed...you’ve got to decide with your heart”[132]) it is also what Hall calls an ‘expansive’ local and marginal movement. It gives thought to new, more reflexive ways of belonging. As the narrator states, “it’s a done deal now” (132).

The story “Maori Art” can be regarded as a rejoinder to “Pale Flower”, with belonging accomplished through the home (although not explicitly by originary place-identity) as a site of cultural memory and as a space of renegotiation of family as kinship through time. Unlike the narrator in “Pale Flower”, whose reflexivity is in a reconsideration of home, the narrator in “Maori Art” has accomplished this through the photos on her nanny’s lounge walls: “...the room that reminds me of who I am and where I come from” (100). The “photos of tupuna, rubbing shoulders with years of Pixie photos” (100) enable her to chart her family’s interactions with colonialism, just as each ancestor is named after a star. The merging of Maori and Pakeha names, religions, art forms themselves, trace the encounters beyond the cultural boundaries. This articulation of history, rather than the defensive enclave of Sal’s separatism, is one which moves forward and across the frontiers. Ngawhetu’s (the narrator) story is titled “recovery”. It is a recovery of the past (through her articulation of her family history), of language (she learns Maori and her dad wants her “to teach him”) and of Maori as no longer ‘Other’ (whereas her father was dehumanised when he was called ‘raisin’ at school, Ngawhetu identifies with the Maori girl on the Robyn Kahukiwa poster from the youth health clinic). Tawhai’s first person narrator’s articulation of identity is performative and it also enables the reader to see the distance between this performance and the material conditions of being in a post-colonial context. Hall states that “identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (Hall, qtd. in Ronning 132). Ngawhetu’s story is indeed one of recovery of cultural belonging, but it is still one of on-going negotiation. One aspect of this is her contemporary social context, as a subject of a society with an official bi-cultural policy. The domestic objects that are markers of memory are a hybrid blend of traditional Maori “taiaha and a greenstone

mere on the mantelpiece” (100) and the contemporary Pixie photos. While Ngawhetu’s cousins feel the unhomely of “the old eyes” in this room, her own comfort is an acknowledgement of both worlds-in-the-home. But Tawhai shows that this is not an easy biculturalism. To paraphrase Bhabha, in this contemporary fictional house, we can hear the deep stirring of the unhomely. The traditional Maori weapons have been domiciled and reduced to decorations on a living room wall, just as Ngawhetu herself fears losing her colour through assimilation, a fear that she would “disappear, and turn into a ghost” (105).

Repeatedly it is in the family that Tawhai’s characters site ideas of how to belong. Like the stories “Maori Art” and “Pale Flower”, “Miss India” is that of the difficulty and necessity of making choices when lived everyday experience and family belongings are at odds. “Mis India” engages with the social construction and primordial originatory theories of identity and ethnicity, and also the agency of the subject. “Miss India” shows culture used as a knowable site of belonging, but also one that is a retreat from the reality of lived experience. Rani, bought up in Auckland by her Indian parents, is embarrassed by their cultural difference. She wants “to get away, to somewhere where she wouldn’t be known as ‘the Indian doctor’s daughter’”(145). But she finds life difficult at the polytech hostel, and in an effort to join in, is raped. Rani constructs a new sense of self and security of belonging by “retaining her heritage” (which she had previously rejected) through winning the Miss India title. This assuredness of who she is demonstrated when she passes the men who raped her: she “juted her Indian nose in the air, and flared one nostril in a sneer” (150). The men drop their eyes to the ground, and she knows she has shown that she has not been defeated, “knowing that some things can never be taken away from you” (150). This is a hybrid identity that is produced performatively. Bhabha states that this hybridity comes from an articulation of differences of the in-between spaces, articulations that can be antagonistic as well as affiliative. In “Miss India” it is the two encounters with the men which can be read as the “borderline engagements”. The tensions of boundary crossing, made physical through rape, presage the difficulties of doing so.

Always Tawhai posits identity and belonging as a self-reflexive construction, as a difficult negotiation of culture, ethnicity, family, community and contingency. Unlike Stewart-Harawira, who calls for indigenous women “in whom the genetic memory is

stored” to “reclaim our true reality” (256), Tawhai’s claims for identity are more ambivalent. In her fiction blood and skin colour are motifs of attempts to find belonging through ethnicity: always this is thwarted or confused. In “Born Wrong”, Pixie is “attracted to dark-skinned men”, gets pregnant to a pale man who “had bad genes”, and feels her resulting son isn’t “quite right”, that he had “bad blood” (24). Yet when the grown son confronts his father about “all the defective material that made up his body” it is obvious that it is just as much maternal neglect that makes him who he is, his father stating that “you’re like your mother” (26). This idea is developed most fully in “Is this the Promised Land?” with two characters paired as confusing binaries of pale/dark, Maori/Pakeha, while at the same time each has a mixed racial ancestry. Steph, who “had golden hair, like an angel, and her eyes were as blue as...” (127) identifies with her Maori ancestry, whereas Evangel, who is dark, identifies with his Pakeha side. Again, blood and DNA are referred to as a genetic inheritance of culture. Steph “had been a blue baby, born with bad blood, ugly blood” and had a blood transfusion at birth. “All her real, dusky blood had been flushed away and replaced” (128). Like Pixie, Steph’s desire and drive for genetic purity is a reach for unified belonging. This concern with blood is opposed by Evangel, who although he looks Maori, identifies with his Dunedin Presbyterian upbringing, and has no idea how “Maori feel” and what things “mean in Maori terms” (128) when asked by lecturers at University. When they fall in love they seem to be finding in the other a fullness which they lack (but as it turns out, their point of universality is in the recognition of each other’s lack which they themselves have): Steph reminds Evangel of his father’s sisters, and conversely, “Steph fell in love with Evangel. His skin was like the missing part of her, and she felt that he was her soul mate” (130). Tawhai makes it clear that Steph’s concept of a unified whole of self is a deception: whether it is Steph’s confusing “bad blood” that she is born with but regrets losing or her use of ‘bro’ and ‘cuz’ to make her sound more Maori. When Evangel breaks their relationship to be with Glenys he tells Steph that “She’s about who I am. You’re about who you want me to be” (132). Steph “cried hot wet tears that the hidden part of herself could do this to her, because that was what she considered Evangel to be. She wondered if she could ever love that part of herself again” (132). This ‘hidden part’ is her lack, which rather than acknowledge, she has covered with an essentialised Maori identity. Yet underpinning both Tawhai’s and Stewart-Harawira’s work is the concept of balance and the ongoing attempts to find it. In both it is the balance between self

and other, individual and community, which offers a coherent way of belonging; both write the struggle of this.

Through the form of her writing (limited narrative voice, symbolism, gaps/omissions in the short stories) Tawhai demonstrates the ambivalence (or even betrayal) of language itself in the construct of identity. Belonging and identity affirmation is sought by most characters, but repeatedly it is elusive. Wolfgang Kraus' work on the narrative negotiation of identity and belonging posits that the effects of modernity (increased mobility and social change, lack of social cohesion) have led to a change of shared stories. Stating that "storytelling is an important means of constructing social bonds" (109), he points to new constructions of belonging which are marked by hybridity and demand individual self-reflexive choices. Tawhai's own story-telling demonstrates this. By choosing characters that are often marginalised by the effects of modernity, whose stories usually go unheard, their stories too can be shared. At the same time language is shown to be a barrier to belonging, frequently being used to exclude others or construct non-reflexive identities that achieve only a momentary belonging.

These stories initially appear as a simple setting down of events by unreflexive characters, ones who lie to each other and themselves. Through simple sentence structures Tawhai conveys the plain facts of events and responses to them. This bald matter-of-factness of the prose is mimetic of an individualistic preoccupation with outward appearance, where appearance is reality. For example the initial paragraph of "Nasty Sex" bluntly expresses the effect of a society which treats others as commodities, in this case sexual attractiveness as the basis of a relationship. "Ange sat in the front with her father. She'd managed to have two children even though she was quite ugly, and they sat in the back. They were spoilt from the toes up, because Ange knew she was lucky to have them. She'd only had sex twice in her life" (62). Tawhai's prose confronts us with not only the social fragmentation caused by Ange being of little sexual value because of her looks, but also the hegemonic persuasiveness of this idea; Ange believes it. Thus throughout Tawhai's work there is a refrain of the unreliability of language itself. The blunt simplicity of vocabulary and sentence structures, coupled with the innocence, naivety or sometimes educationally limited voice of the narrator (or focalising character) is used to show life as a series of

episodic experiences, over which characters have little control. But I do think that this is the very point that Tawhai's art makes. It reveals that gap, it shows the difficulty (sometimes impossibility) of creating a sense of belonging in contemporary New Zealand if one is not self-reflexive. At the same time it shows that the experience of lived everyday life, for many, especially those on the margins, limits reflexivity.

Through a variety of narrative voices and points of view - immigrants, Maori, Pakeha, overseas students - Tawhai presents the 'out-of-joint' aspect of the human condition, what Žižek calls the universality of this state in which one can never feel blissfully at home. What is noticeably missing from her work is the domain of paid employment. Likewise, there is little description of poverty (Pixie's careful rationing of Super Wines and sanitary pads in "Born Wrong" being a notable exception). Yet although largely unsaid and unwritten, these large gaps are those of the tensions of neoliberalism. Tawhai's art is to show both the conditions of belonging in our market-driven, postcolonial society (where marginality is often accentuated by the combination of these two forces) and attempts at engaging with it, thus seeking ways of belonging; affirmation of identity as part of a group, with a standpoint for that identity (whether that be place, culture, community, ideas, values, nation, ethnicity or other points of difference).

Tawhai's twenty-first century New Zealand society is very much like that of Bauman's gloomy 'liquid modernity', where community togetherness is less important than individualism. Social bonds are loose and easily broken. Individual identity in the consumer-driven society of late capitalism is bolstered by consumption itself, where the body is a consumer product, its worth determined by its sexual attractiveness and availability. When these desires cannot be fulfilled the subject retreats into drugs, alcohol or violence. Identities are what Bauman calls 'palimpsest': a contingent self that is constantly being remade, with past selves written over, history forgotten. It is a disembedded state, one where home is constantly being sought. Most stories give us characters who fail to find ways of belonging, or rather, are unable to find their way out of belongings that are restrictive and damaging to a coherence of self. Repeatedly in Tawhai's texts it is the family that is both the hope and despair of escape from a cycle of ever-presentism. Joel's elusive night-time search in "Luminous" is an attempt to escape his childhood abuse by his father. Babies are much wanted by women, but

either die (“Festival of Miracles”) or are miscarried (“Luminous”). Even as the product of rape (“Like Japan”) babies are still desired. The promise of birth means a sense of purpose for the future that offers a new possibility for establishing both belonging and identity. The nameless woman in “Luminous” wishes for her baby so “I wouldn’t be alone” (13).

Tawhai writes a grim picture of society, one where subjects are often doubly displaced, firstly by difference, secondly by the fragmenting effects of neoliberalism and a consumer culture. This society is New Zealand, where the discourses of sovereignty, postcolonialism and bi-culturalism circulate. Tawhai’s work engages in this discourse. Yet it is not all bleak. There are some negotiations with the question of belonging in this world. Tawhai shows this as occurring often through art or visual symbolism. Above all, she seems to saying that all identities, all ways of belonging are contingent and ultimately ambivalent, or as Heidegger states, we “must ever learn to dwell” (n. pag.). The difference is that this is increasingly difficult in the flux of late modernity, when often there is little embedding of community values. Tawhai also seems to be making a claim for responsibility in her work, especially in the devastating portrayal of the effects of drugs and alcohol, and of individualistic behaviour that damages social bonds and children’s lives. Her work recognises the ambivalence of identity, the concomitant escalation of a need to belong in today’s society, and the homelessness of an inability or refusal to engage in a dialogue with these things. It also calls for responsibility, whether through self-reflexivity or reinforcing social bonds through care, respect and recognition of difference. In spite of the bleakness of the characters’ lives there is an underlying hopefulness of being able to negotiate new ways of belonging. In the positive attitudes towards birth and children there are signs of new hope, the end of loneliness and renewed social belonging.

Tawhai’s characters are those most at risk in a New Zealand society where market forces prevail. Their opportunities are constrained and choices limited. Tawhai’s fictional world stands in contrast to that of the next chapter: Grimshaw’s Auckland of the comfortably affluent.

Charlotte Grimshaw: Security and Freedom

Unlike Tawhai's fictional world of New Zealand marginality, Charlotte Grimshaw's 2007 collection *Opportunity* is that of an upper and middle class, mainly pakeha, Auckland. Rather than Tawhai's world of liquid modern ambiguity exacerbated by the marginalisation of neoliberalism, in this chapter the fiction world is one of 'free' choice that is unobstructed by material conditions of poverty or physical abuse. The central concept of the collection is that of opportunity; to use Giddens' terminology: the risks and opportunities of contemporary life and the reflexive (or otherwise) choices characters make. Each story considers ways of living, of belonging, of being at home, in a contemporary New Zealand urban society where the family is the predominant social unit. Grimshaw's fictional Auckland is a location of repeated physical fluidity: storms sweep across the landscape, people shift from house to house, an actual transported house reappears in several stories. The similarities to Bauman's 'liquid modernity' are clear as relationships are undermined by individualism, religion is no longer a relevant social bond and there is little recourse to cultural, ethnic or national collectivities. These characters are subjects in a neoliberal New Zealand of the present day and as such, they are often torn between individual actualisation and finding belonging through social bonds. These social bonds, however, are often established in terms of the market, through individual's production or capital contribution. Certainly the tensions between security and freedom that Bauman states underpin the desire for community are writ large in this collection. Grimshaw seems to be presenting us with society as a dilemma, where opportunities are presented frequently and it is up to the individual to make choices; that same focus that is found in Giddens' ideas of the social of the present. Of course, as the sociologists make clear, individualistic choice often undermines the fabric of community belonging.

In Grimshaw's fictional world the context is one of neoliberal ideology where identity is performed through consumption. Stories such as "Daughters", "Pity" and "Parallel Universe" serve to reveal the discrepancy between the individualisation of a culture of capital and the psychological desire to belong to a community. The paradox is of embeddedness in a life-world where the central ideology is of a disembeddedness of social, community, locality and familial bonds while at the same time yearning to

belong. Anthony Giddens writes of globalised society as ‘reflexive modernity’, where knowledgeable individuals take risks and accept responsibilities that enable them to make choices to lead their lives as they wish. Bauman points out that the concept of reflexivity can be deceptive one, as “ours is a culture of forgetting and short-termism – of the two arch-enemies of reflection” (“A Post-Modern Grid of the Worldmap?” n. pag). This same difficulty of risk, responsibility and choice is presented in Grimshaw’s writing: how reflexive are we? How can we know to make informed choices? This is what Grimshaw’s collection does. It presents characters, Aucklanders, with risks and opportunities, then we as readers may judge them (and by comparison, ourselves) on choices made.

The insecurity of the family is, in Grimshaw’s fictional Auckland, an inevitability when choices are rationalised by individualistic fulfilment alone. It is a place where neoliberal capitalism creates immense wealth for the few, with no attendant social responsibilities. While the new economy bolsters older class distinctions (private school attendance being an important divider) it seems to be an abstract space of capitalism which has no fixed locality. Not only are lifestyles supported by the abstract production of capital but relationships, including family, are also thought of in market terms. Grimshaw demonstrates how much the insecurity of such a way of life is destructive to social bonds. In “Daughters” family relationships are constituent on individuals as producers of capital. Here is what Zhang terms the “tyrannical and illegitimate rule of the marketplace” (32) where consumption is performative. Rania, the surgically beautiful Egyptian step-mother, regards her step-daughter Claudine as both sexual and economic competition. None of the characters come across as particularly attractive, empathetic or even likeable subjects. Rania’s capital worth is as a housekeeper and an object of beauty, which once Claudine finishes school and is set up by her father in a job with Mr Ling, is a commodity no longer required. Claudine’s father leaves “only once he’d worked out what to do with his money” (54) and she has not “seen him or heard from him since” (55). Claudine’s is a lifestyle of empty freedom. Living in an apartment “with two St. Cuthbert’s old girls”, she is “out every night drinking and clubbing”, spending the “staggering sum I was being paid for doing practically nothing” (55). When it all comes “crashing down” she is left outside the apartment but instead of breaking in, hits the stranger who approaches her. Claudine returns ‘home’ to an unsympathetic Rania, who gives her a job in her new business:

The Land of Opportunity brothel. There she suspects that prostitutes Diana and Darlene are actually mother and daughter. Diana comforts Darlene when she breaks down, “then she forced a couple of pills down the girl, mopped her makeup and booted her back to work” (62). Rania and Claudine dress sombrely for Darlene’s funeral only because that is what the girls expect them to do. These characters live in a world where belonging is dependent on capital production, not embedded community, social or familial bonds. The final image of the reconstructed family unit of Mr Long, (Mr Ling’s new identity), Rania the Egyptian brothelkeeper, and Claudine, is telling of disconnection and disembeddedness. They present an empty freedom which is achieved in a moral vacuum and they have no sense of responsibility to others. This is made clear when Claudine actually kills the stranger who appeals to her for help. The “snaky question mark” Claudine has about his death, the “something missing”(57), is quickly dismissed with a laugh; a denial of ambiguity just as her life-world is a denial of any affect, belonging or solidarity outside or other than that constrained by a market ideology. The attendant ambient fear that comes with disembeddedness results in an individualism that treat all others as strangers (often dangerous) while also misrecognising one’s self.

On the other hand Grimshaw is more sympathetic to the family she portrays in “Values”. Whereas in “Daughters” the values are empty freedom, individualism and capital accumulation, in “Values” it is family solidarity that is shown as being something different from the past, but also something that has meaning. Giddens’ “age of moral transition” brings with it a greater need to actively make social cohesion and accept responsibilities; an argument that Grimshaw too seems to be presenting in *Opportunity*. Individualism, according to Giddens, “defines social relationships in their purest forms and is destructive of contrived forms connected with non-individualist principles such as loyalty, duty and responsibility. The latter require personal forbearance whereas individualism demands equality and dialogue” (qtd. in Bryant 165). The narrator of “Values” lives with her newsreader husband and two young children in a house designed and built by her architect father. “We were lucky, privileged. I thought of it as my fortress”(235). It is home not only as place but as security and receptacle of values, especially that of the solidarity of family. Certainly the narrator and her husband are under siege by the demands of the everyday that include sleepless and sick children with constant headlice infestations, the nasty

neighbour who reports them for child abuse, their own fiery arguments. As her husband says, “It’s a war zone” (246). But the husband and wife also take responsibility, compromise, and engage in dialogue, unlike their irrational neighbour. Rather than a defensive shutting down of boundaries Grimshaw gives us a family who negotiate differences (and as Bhabha states, this negotiation of in-between spaces can be antagonistic as well as consensual) but also an awareness of the limitations of social solidarity. The final image is of husband Scott, smashing the neighbour’s letterbox at three in the morning in the pouring rain. It is a gesture that makes evident the limitations of tolerance but at the same time reinforces, through action, his choice of affiliation and family.

Likewise is the difference of values between Dan and Kim in the story “Him”. Whereas the sociologists describe the contemporary subject as one who is now fully responsible for choices, as needing to actively confront an open personal future, Grimshaw shows the everyday experience of this subjectivity through her characters. Dan disciplines other children because “they need boundaries” and in a desire to make Kim’s son “a decent citizen” (74). Yet this is regarded as an intrusion on other parents’ responsibilities. When he tells Kim that “I think we’re all entitled to set appropriate standards” (74), she realises that Dan’s dominance over the children is the only way he has of asserting his status. His constant change of address is an indication of his inability to belong in the upper-middle class society he tries to enter. But it is also symptomatic of the wider social shifts taking place. Just as New Zealanders are increasingly physically mobile (just under half of New Zealand’s urban population shifted address in the last five years [*Quality of Life ’07 in Twelve of New Zealand’s Cities* 11]) there is a corresponding movement away from tradition and rules of social organisation.

These are not the characters of Tawhai’s marginal status. These characters are affluent, not ground down by poverty. They have the material conditions for reflexive choice. But with the movement away from tradition there is the necessity for the subject to actively make choices and then accept responsibility for the outcome. As Grimshaw shows, the freedom of individualism can also be an active refusal of reflexivity. For instance in the short story “Home” Sam has spent his young adult years overseas, drinking, drug taking and avoiding any permanent relationship. His is

an individualism of short-termism, an “unchanging happiness” (191) based on forgetting and denial of social solidarity, even that of family. Eventually he feels a lack of belonging and wants to go home. He returns to find that his Auckland home is that of his teenage years and he is “left behind in an empty city” (191). As his friend Lisa reminds him of the friends he once had there; “they’ve grown up. Like me. They’ve got kids, families” (193). Sam does eventually make his escape, going up North with a stolen dog and car to try to find some sort of path to belonging, away from the temptations of drugs, but also away from his own family’s expectations that he had so rebelled against. This character, like the characters in “Daughters”, makes choices without attendant responsibility. But at least at the end Sam has seen that choices must be made, beginning by promising the dog that “I’ll take care of you”(197). Home for him is neither place nor family, but in the road trip with the dog, it makes a tentative movement towards a home of reflexivity beyond an ever-present individualism.

In Grimshaw’s writing there is not nearly as much of a sense of identity of place as there is in Tawhai’s or Ihimaera’s. This is perhaps to do with the range of characters Grimshaw presents: pakeha, middle and upper class Aucklanders. Auckland certainly comes across as a location with a knowable, comfortable identity, but within that it is the house itself which is the ‘home’, rather than the wider location. The house is also performative for many of these characters, being an outward expression of the self as consumer. Françoise Kral points out that many postcolonial writers suggest that “belonging is not to be understood in terms of a place and a set locus but in terms of articulation and posture – what Bhabha calls negotiation” (179). For the characters of *Opportunity*, moving is a way of life. Like the transience of their homes, so characters’ identities are contingent, moving towards what Bauman calls “palimpsest identities”. Similarly like Bauman, Grimshaw’s characters seem to have little time for community based on ethnic identity, regarding it as an irrelevance in market-forces society. The only exception is when ethnicity itself becomes a product in a niche market. Momentarily Claudine is horrified at her step-mother’s refusal to employ Maori prostitutes in her brothel. This however is not so much a cultural as an economic decision. Rania herself is Egyptian and employs Darlene and Diana, both of whom are clearly Maori. This complete disregard for cultural particularity (even a denial of culture entirely) can be likened to Tyler Cowen’s argument on the consequences of

economic globalisation. He claims that consumer choice is restricted when “individuals place intrinsic value on cultural distinctiveness” (132), while completely disregarding the homogenising effects and power disparities of globalising culture. What Grimshaw shows us in “Daughters” is not only a family for whom all cultural difference is denied by economic production but also one whose own lives lack any belongings beyond the economic.

Of course, as Giddens, Bauman and other sociologists tell us, the world we live in has changed significantly over the last fifty years. The seminal shift to the “shifting/drifted frontlines and floating coalitions” seems appalling in its emptiness when totalised through a neoliberal, market rationale. What of those who want to be embedded by social roles of the past those who desire the “steel casings” of the traditional family structure? In the title story “Opportunity” Lisa Green is almost a caricature of urban, middle class, pakeha values, with her rigid belief in God, law and order, and “a fair go”. But not quite. Her brief appearance in “Home”, as the old school friend of the dissolute Sam, is as a sensible young mother, someone who “always wanted to beanchored”(193). She is able to make it clear to Sam that his is a failure to grow up, to be responsible. Likewise Lisa’s mother-in-law Jean’s liberalism seems condescending and ineffectual. She looks down on all religious beliefs as “just rituals” and “mumbo jumbo”. “It was interesting that some of the Reihana grandchildren were studying at university” (145), but she is only able to giggle helplessly when the family are stranded on the Maori-owned beach. Compared to Sam and Jean’s seeming lack of substance, Lisa seems ordinary and practical. What Grimshaw shows is Lisa’s inability to move from her rigid boundaries and into the margins, to begin what Bhabha calls an articulation of the in-between spaces. Instead, hers is what Harvey calls a reaching out for “personal or collective identity, the search for secure moorings in a shifting world” (302). This is evidenced in her refusal to engage in dialogue about her Christian beliefs, in shutting down, retaliating by losing her temper and throwing things: a cushion, the flat keys out the window. Instead of confronting her flatmates she retreats, or waits until they are absent before taking the action she thinks is correct.

Lisa’s is a search for community through attempts to repeat the belonging of family that she remembers as a child. Home means family to her, and flatting is an interlude

as she knows that “one day I’d find a boyfriend and move in with him” (137). She desires her flatmate Reid because as a policeman he represents law and traditional values. Yet Lisa’s very sense of self is in question by the incongruity between her expectations and experiences. Law student Sean has a blatant disregard for firearm regulations, her friends abandon her as a flatmate to go overseas. Each time Lisa is confronted by difficulty she retreats rather than attempting to overcome or negotiate difference, regarding it as a personal flaw. So “everything about the house was spoiled for me” (138) when her friends make plans to go without her. She “pray[s] to God to help me: let them not know that I am wrong and bad” (143) when Reid literally shoves her out of the second flat. When she meets her future husband she “wanted my self to disappear, and in a way it did” (143). Lisa struggles for a balance between her flexible and fragmented self (a condition of the liquid modern world) and a coherent, stable subjectivity. When the opportunity presents itself she makes the choice to reveal both Reid’s identity (and as an undercover cop the consequences will probably be deadly) and her own: as a self fractured by an inability to reconcile a value system enclosed by rigid boundaries with a contemporary world where many of those values are in flux. Her anchoring only comes at a shutting down of border encounters. If “Opportunity” is read as an inability to negotiate social boundaries, it can be read as reaffirming the need to negotiate cultural boundaries as well.

While there is little awareness of New Zealand as a bicultural country amongst Grimshaw’s characters, this is addressed as problematic (and symptomatic of a fear of all strangers/others) in “Opportunity”. The story ends with the seizing of an opportunity to exact revenge, but it is the social fantasy of Lisa’s worldview which is both interesting and chilling. Through Lisa, Grimshaw takes the social fantasy of egalitarianism, showing how it covers up the inconsistency of racism, and presents it as incompatible to a wider sense of belonging in contemporary New Zealand. Lisa’s English parents, after exploring in the Far North, made friends with local Maori land owners and built a bach there. Lisa’s father was even given a tangi on the marae. This scenario is almost a parody of the settler assimilation myth of Maori as benevolent and knowable, while still being inferior (there is no mention of payment for use of the land; beliefs such as tapu are quaint). However, on a later holiday with her own family, the Maori settlement they drive past is a “secret, dark, lonely place” (147). These Maori, the “bad side” (146), are definitely Other: primitive, criminal and sinister. Lisa

structures her world in this way: as a dichotomy of inside/outside, self/other, friend/stranger, law/crime.

In this fictional world there is mistrust and suspicion of others (and otherness). As one character warns another, “everyone’s a stranger” (87). Repeatedly Grimshaw’s characters are faced with the unhomely through home invasion. This is literally Bhabha’s intrusion of “the world-in-the-home”. For a group of characters who are transient, there is both a desire for permanence, security and embeddedness and conversely a desire to intrude in other people’s homes. So Claudine breaks into her friend’s elderly neighbour’s house, stealing something she doesn’t need. The clock she steals is later on her only possession: perhaps reminding her of her lack of affiliation? Later she compares the lack the male clientele at the Land of Opportunity feel with her own afternoons spent breaking and entering. “What did the men want? What did I want? What I stole I threw away. I didn’t want it. Not really. What was the thing we looked for, and couldn’t find?” (63). Giddens writes about the area of civil society, including that of family, as being separate from the state and marketplace. This seems to be what these characters are looking for – in brothels, in other people’s homes, in relationships – a way of belonging that is affective. The short story “Terrorism” reminds us of the tension between security and freedom, the young girl making a fake bomb that undermines the public’s security as a response to her mother’s emotional disintegration has undermined her own security of family. This is the threat of the disruptive stranger from unknown places, never identified, just as the young bombmaker is never found out. But it is not the faceless stranger who causes fear: it is someone within, in this case Marie, with “her curly hair, her baby face...the unlikeliest terrorist” (168). This fear of the violation of security and home is replicated by the narrator’s desire for a permanent relationship. She regards getting pregnant as an act of terrorism, or “is it opportunism?” (169). Grimshaw shows us, over and over, this tightrope between belonging (in this case though the permanence of the family unit) and individualism. Such negotiation is difficult and constant; in a fluid society where all are strangers, trust is risky. However, without trust there can be little sense of commonality, and hence a feeling of belonging. What belonging there is for such characters seems nebulous and contingent on economic risk.

The recognition and articulation of the “things hidden below the surface, terrible things” (176) is of the gap between a desire for embeddedness through familial or community belongings and neoliberal freedom of choice. Yet seeing the fissure in their world-view is what Grimshaw’s characters find so difficult. In “Thin Earth” the narrating character Kim is fascinated with the murder of a young woman, her search for clues masking doubts about the state of her marriage. The same character in “Him” begins her narrative by confidently claiming knowledge of a string of recent crimes and who the killer is. “How do I know this? It’s just instinct” (65). Yet nothing ever comes of her suspicions. Instead her self-claimed skill in “noticing what people are really like”(66) means that she analyses, suspects and finally rejects Dan, while remaining totally unaware of her husband’s affair and increasing distance from her. Through her obsession with the nameless victim and repeated return to the crime site she places herself in a parental role in “Thin Earth”. She wants to find clues, solve the murder; thinking about the “devastated” parents and the “angry desolate funeral” (174). Yet later she realises that she treated the murder as a “special entertainment” (171): its horror and finality diminished by being so distant from her own home and social circle. It is a displacement of what Bauman terms “ambient fear”, letting her avoid her concerns about her husband’s fidelity.

The image of death in “Thin Earth” can be read as a reluctance to engage in reflexivity. For Max, life is episodic. He refuses to engage in dialogue with Kim about their marriage breakdown, as he sees “no need for post-mortems” (171). His is very much an individualistic forgetting of Bauman’s postmodern identity. However, Kim’s is an engagement with difference, rather than the exclusive boundaries of her husband. Kim is made uncomfortable by the appearance of the driver of the ‘Sinister Urge’ van. He is an obvious stranger, an ‘Other’ who generates fear, his van with “its blacked out windows” (175) hiding the unknown. Her fear is manifest as a need to protect her children: “imagine him parked outside a school!” (175). But she also questions her assumptions of the stranger as a physical threat, translating it into an example of a more ambient fear of difference, acknowledging that the van driver is not “genuinely sinister” but unable to understand his appearance. This is not Kim’s first encounter with the stranger as “Other”. The hooded stranger she sees near the crime scene has “his face hidden” (174). Kim thinks of his movements as “something smooth and furtive” (174). This suspicion of the stranger as “Other” and as a threat is repeated

through Grimshaw's collection. In "Daughters" for example, Claudine is approached by a man outside her apartment; he "attacked" (57) her. Yet how much of their own fear is projected onto the Other? Kim is the one who stares at the hooded man walking past; she thinks of him as the murderer returning to the scene of his crime. Claudine's narrative is similarly unreliable. Even at the time of the "attack" she questions her own judgement, wondering "was something else said?"..."Had he told me he was hurt?" (57). Both women have been betrayed by family: Kim's husband's affairs, Claudine's abandonment by her father. Both refuse to acknowledge it in their narrative. If we consider them reflexive, it is a reflexivity that is ineffective: it does not alter their future actions and neither can it undo the hurts of the past. Claudine, in spite of her doubts of the stranger's intentions, still killed him. Reflexivity will not bring him back from the dead.

Grimshaw uses such encounters with strangers as a search for community. The gated communities that Bauman criticises as a contemporary form of exclusive belonging that disengages with the social are rare (but do exist) in New Zealand. But Grimshaw's fiction does show that these ideas about ideal community are recognisably present. Characters such as Max demonstrate this in his repeated statements about death. In "Thin Earth" Grimshaw uses encounters with the gothic to demonstrate this. So whereas Max is repulsed by the difference of the three boys in the band 'Subhuman', seeing them as just that, as a "fucking nightmare" (175), Kim says that they could be "Collegiate old boys", and that one has "quite a nice little face" (176). Her awareness of the ambiguity of appearance is contrasted to Max's absolute denial ("over my dead body" ([176]) that they could be like their own sons. Kim's is a fear *and* awareness of ambiguity. It is a fear that everyone is an absolute stranger. The moment of Kim's recognition of this is when she states: "I don't know if Max loves me. I don't know. *How can I know?*" (178). This is a desire for certainty, for an embeddedness in a marital relationship that is repeated in *Opportunity*. A desire to know is always thwarted, or becomes worthless knowledge as soon as it is found out.

Grimshaw uses nature as a motif throughout her work as being a physical representation of the uncertainty of the social world. Storms lash the boat on the trip to Kawau Island, the dentist and her patient watch the lightning storm and the break in the blue sky, Mt. Taranaki is immovable, the rain sweeps over the city. Rather than

functioning as markers of place, these references to the natural world allow the characters to see opportunity. But of course with opportunity comes risk. For example Mt Taranaki in “The Mountain” becomes “clear, something ancient, savage, unforgiving” (159) as Andrew Newgate feels increasingly resentful about being mistaken for his mentor’s gay lover. The mountain represents an aspect of self, his anger, which he hides so well. Likewise the storm in “Storms” is both literal and an opportunity for the narrator to negotiate with herself about the collapse of her marriage and exactly what the relationship was between herself and her ex-husband. The narrator’s own sense of who she is, as defined by her marriage, is destroyed both by the intruder who violated her husband and by her husband’s own deception and lies which are subsequently revealed. The narrator, whose own sense of security of home has been damaged, is placed in the situation of having to break into someone else’s house: a bach on Kawau Island. She comes to recognise the necessity of this, when she returns and invites her new boyfriend into her house. There is a new-found acceptance that risks need to be taken, that everything is not immediately, or always, knowable. Like Giddens’ ‘pure relationship’ of dialogue, communication and reciprocal trust, the storm is risky, exhilarating and liberating for the narrator.

The elemental force of nature as an intrusion in the characters’ thoughts and lives can be read as a fissure, an opening-up point of negotiation of what it means to belong. It is also a fissure created by the fanatical neighbour such as in “Values”, those individuals of the local community who refuse an opening out of social solidarity. The child abuse accusation reaches right into the sanctuary of the home. The husband’s late-night vandalism of his neighbour’s letterbox is a retaliation of this violation, he too making an attack on the house next door. In a similar way the dentist’s door in “Plane Sailing” is not secure, but she doesn’t mind. Unlike Claudine, who denies ambiguity through violence (choosing to see the stranger as a threat and killing him, rather than as someone in need of help), this woman accommodates it. Her acceptance of her sleep-deprived visions of ships in the sky, the blurry edges of reality, suggests that she accepts that home is not just the house she lives in, but the certainty of belonging through motherhood. This is further signified as she watches the transported house as it passes in the night, it too is ship-like with its “struts creaking, planks groaning; crewed by torch-lit men, it sailed by in the drifting dark”(104). Her lack of concern when the policeman presses the glass panel on her front door and tells

her “That’s not secure at all” (104) is telling of her recognition that her home includes an acceptance of the possibilities of encounters with the outside, rather than a fear of them. The image of the transported house (it appears in several stories in the collection) suggests a way of imagining home that requires mobility. This is not necessarily a physical mobility of place; rather it is a flexibility of thinking on family and belonging. After all, one must live somewhere.

The important dynamic in *Opportunity* is that of the family. These characters all seem to have family around. Those who do not seem to flounder without them. The main character in “Parallel Universe” worries that he will disappear. However, Grimshaw does explore the discrepancies or the incompatibilities of values between compromising for the sake of family bonds and the demands of individualism. In “Pity” a lawyer and his ex-wife are so uncompromising that they each consider hiring hit men to eliminate each other. This tension between individualism and family is played across the stories. This is part of the questioning of neo-liberal ideology that Grimshaw makes. So the undermining tensions of family dynamics are most explicit in “Thin Earth”. The physical undermining of Max’s walking over the treacherously thin geothermal area with his sons to see the geyser matches the subsequent standoff between Kim and Max. Here they reveal to each other for the first time what Kim already suspects: that she has little value as a wife and that for both of them the best assets of the marriage are the children. What Grimshaw does is constantly deflect this tension within families onto outside strangers. Is this a self-reflexive preserving on the part of these characters, a bolstering of familial belonging by ignoring the fragility of the marriage bond? Bauman seems useful here when he points to ties of affinity that are born of choice: “unless the choice is restated daily and ever new actions are taken to confirm it, affinity will wilt, fade and decay until it falls or crawls apart” (*Liquid Love*, 29). The resulting ambient fear for their marriage is barely acknowledged. Kim “caught Trish eyeing him and giving Karen a look” (177), but rather than this, Kim’s focus and expression of fear is of the outsider, the strangers.

Grimshaw’s fictional world is one where to be at home means working towards belongings that are beyond the reach of market forces. Such a home requires a negotiation of the social, not just the demands and desires of the individual opportunism. In this world it is men especially who treat marriage as a commercial

contract. Repeatedly the neoliberal rule of the market rides over the non-individualist requirements of family. Claudine's father in "Daughters" bides his time as his second marriage loses its appeal, but "he would be the one to go first. And only once he'd worked out what to do with his money" (54). Just as Claudine's father disappears to roam the world, so Max of "Him" and "Thin Earth" leaves his "impossible" first wife and two sons, then abandons his pregnant girlfriend. In "Plane Sailing" it is this girlfriend who realises that "he was forcing me into a parody of what he knew I wanted: domestic bliss"(93-94); Max was not interested in family but only individualistic opportunism. He ends up, divorced and alone, in a nameless apartment with no-one to iron his shirts. Similarly the young man in "Home" returns to find the Auckland he left as a teenager has grown up without him. He is left driving North in a stolen car, with a stolen dog, searching for some way to belong. In "Parallel Universe" Terry lives in a free-floating world of individualistic opportunity, embedded only in his own risktaking. His nightmare is of "an infinite number of universes. And therefore you do not exist" (124). His is an appalling relativism that denies any responsibility to family (having left his wife and children but still taking money from her), community or society. "Life was a series of chances and it was up to Terry Carstone to grab them when they came along" (136). In the end story Celia Myers' swim out to the buoy is a statement of accepting of a compromise needed between security and freedom. Her house had become her fortress, violated by burglars just as earlier she had her clock stolen by Claudine. Similarly, the couple in "Values" had their family unity undermined by their mad neighbour when he made a false complaint of child abuse. This house as a fortress, of home as safety that excludes the outside, is a searching for an anchoring, an embeddedness. But Celia finally recognises that there must be a letting go, although this realisation is complicated by its association with death.

Grimshaw's narrative style reinforces the idea of the self as one of narrated coherence, but not entirely knowable. All stories in her 2007 collection *Opportunity* are in the first person, with a predominance of simple sentence structures. As one reviewer states, they are narrated "in voices that sometimes sound deliberately flat and naïve, like someone earnestly relating a long anecdote" (Wilton, n.pag.). The purpose of this style, while sometimes detracting from the characterisation, does serve as an indicator of the superficiality of the society in which the characters live and the deceptiveness of

appearances. These narratives also emphasise the impossibility of knowing others; of the other as a stranger. Grimshaw threads the characters through different stories, each time depicting them from a different angle, just as communities themselves are a series of inter-relationships, connections and departures. The naïve, sheltered Viola who remembers her summer holiday with her cousin in “Gratitude” is also the conniving, intense, medical secretary of “The Doctor”. The glittering social organiser Karen, adored by her husband (again, in “The Doctor”), is also a bitchy friend in “Him” and “Thin Earth”, and the money-loving, irritating younger sister of “Animals”. The overall effect suggests the vulnerability of self to context and therefore the instability of the subject.

Grimshaw does come up with a statement about what belonging in New Zealand could be. I think she shows this as a set of values that reach beyond the market and take into account the need for what Giddens calls social solidarity, one that usually stems from family. Her fiction focuses on the moment, that turning point when opportunities arise and a choice is made. Her fiction gives us a society at this point, one where reflexivity is necessary for belonging, but also difficult.

Grimshaw’s work is a representation of a recognisable Pakeha, urban society. The next chapter considers the work of Witi Ihimaera and asks how his fiction represents and considers the question of belonging for Maori.

Witi Ihimaera: Home as Place and Blood?

The Uncle's Story (2000), *Whanau II* (2004) and *The Rope of Man* (2005) are three recent Ihimaera texts in which I wish to consider home, belonging and family in a postcolonial context. Ihimaera's work is avowedly political, commenting not only on Maori disenfranchisement through colonisation, but also positing new identities based not only on ethnicity but also on sexuality. These identities are part of a globalisation of communities of difference, and also a participation in culture as a market commodity. Through these three novels there is a clear tension between defensive and expansive identities which is driven through the Maori family. Ihimaera goes over the same ground of ethnicity, identity and community, presenting them in different ways and asking difficult questions about belonging as Maori in New Zealand. This is not a repetition: rather it emphasises the importance of the questions he asks and reflects the differing discourses of bi-cultural belonging that are going on in our society.

The Uncle's Story is that of a young, urban Maori man – Michael Mahana – who on breaking up with his Pakeha boyfriend works to establish a new Maori belonging through negotiating difference of both ethnicity and sexuality. This is plotted by conflicts with his own family and through the device of the journal which offers a parallel journey of sexual discovery: his Uncle Sam's diary as a soldier in Vietnam. Uncle Sam's writings, supplemented by narratives from a Vietnam buddy and Sam's younger sister, Michael's Auntie Pat, tells of Sam's love for Cliff, an American pilot. After the war Cliff visits Sam at his family home, where Sam's father Arapata is horrified to find out the truth of the relationship. Sam chooses to stay with his family, but Arapata denounces him: "in traditional times, son, people like you never existed" (257). Cliff returns to the States while Arapata brutally punishes Sam. Trying to catch up with Cliff at Auckland airport, Sam dies in an encounter with a truck (which emphasises the exclusionary, defensive bounds of Arapata's Maori fundamentalism while also absolving him of the actual murder of his child). Sam is buried by his father in an unmarked, unknown grave, excluded from whanau and whakapapa by the denial of a tangi and customary burial in the Waituhi urupa. Michael, one generation later, asserts his own sexuality by starting a new relationship with a Maori man, and also affirms his belonging through Maori culture. This is through a trip to an indigenous

people's conference in Canada, where he and fellow delegate Roimata challenge the group to assert their own cultural (and along with that, sexual) identity. During this trip Michael is finally able to meet Cliff, affirming his uncle's life. At the end of the novel Michael balances this previous banishment by returning to a welcome from Waituhi elders and leading a tangi for a tribal boy who has died of AIDS.

The second text, *Whanau II*, is a reworking and a politicisation of Ihimaera's 1974 novel *Whanau*. The lack of dates in *Whanau II* give it a sense of mythic despair, that of Maori disconnection from tradition. Within the wider framework of Ihimaera's fiction that centres on the Rongopai marae and the people of Waituhi, *Whanau II* is set in the late 1960s to early 1970s. A lonely Arapata is visited by ghosts of those he has wronged, the Mahana children are the siblings and cousins of *The Uncle's Story's* Michael and *The Rope of Man's* Tom. The story itself covers one day in the village of Waituhi. The day opens as a group of villagers return from a wedding. As the day progresses the lives of the families are revealed in a series of incidents, interspersed with a reflection on the socio-political-historical importance of the land by an unnamed, third-person omniscient narrator. One storyline followed during the day is that of elderly Tamati Kota and his grandnephew Pene. Their walk around the village is a link between past and present as the history of their land, especially the conflict between Te Kooti and colonial soldiers, is experienced as a reality. The changing way of Maori life is also followed through the character of the Matua, Miro Mananui, who is concerned with maintaining socio-political and spiritual traditional ways where place-identity and fixity is an absolute for Maori. The novel ends with an acknowledgement of the need to look towards the future of Maori, and the possibility of doing so. The whole community gather at the Rongopai marae where Miro brings Pene and Tamati Kota safely back to the present. Miro realises that, although her son George has refused to take over as leader, there may be others who can. In spite of this *Whanau II* is still very much a narrative of Maori despair: impoverishment through colonial disenfranchisement, coupled with loss of tradition and history due to the attractions of Western consumer society that pulls younger Maori away from the village. In *Whanau II* most characters think of such change as damaging the possibility for continued Maori belonging which requires a physical presence and belonging to one's turangawaewae – ancestral homeland. While *Whanau II* stands as an independent text (especially as a politicising of the earlier version) its message is

fuller when read in conjunction with *The Uncle's Story* and *The Rope of Man*. In this way it can be read as the death knell of Maori traditions and ways of belonging, with the other two novels suggesting recovery and a movement forward one generation on.

The third text, *The Rope of Man*, promulgates a new-found confidence and way of being for Maori in the New Zealand of today. Taking the ambitious young Maori man from his novel *Tangi* (1974) (itself reworked and published as a companion piece to this text), *The Rope of Man* revisits him at the height of his success, thirty years later. It is Tom Mahana's reflections on his ascent from rural shearer's son through the newspaper and television news industry, and what this means in a contemporary Maori context. Ihimaera uses the character of Tom to present a successful model of what he calls a 'laminated' way of being and belonging in a New Zealand that is very much part of the globalised world. He takes different aspects of Western and Maori cultures and worldviews and layers them. This laminating of different ways of being (what Ihimaera has called the "two treasures"¹ of New Zealand culture: Maori and Pakeha) incorporates both as a layering of separate cultures, without entailing the loss of either. So Tom, (from "Tama") is now the successful host of an award-winning BBC documentary programme, *Spaceship Earth*. The premise of this programme is gathering, observing and reporting on communities all around the world in a humanistic universality of mankind of which Tom, "The Dude", and still retaining the particularity of Maori culture, is at the helm. Tom journeys back to New Zealand at his elderly mother's request. She is dying and needs Tom's help to reconcile her family, including the incorporation of the son she bore years ago (a consequence of rape). The story of the Mahana's family's anger, rejection and final conciliation with their half-brother Eric Amundsen is resolved when Eric is welcomed on the marae, finally cured of his mental illness by returning to his turangawaewae and embracing the 'rope of man' that signifies wholeness and belonging. It represents the idea of a twining of cultures and ways of being, embracing all things good about humanity, originating from Maori bloodlines and traditional Maori culture. This line of narrative is interspersed with Tom's own story of his life; his early career and the consequences it had on his family, abandoning his newly widowed mother and later on his wife and children, in order to fulfil his ambitions. The novel finishes with the successful broadcasting of *Spaceship Earth's* millennium show and Tom leaving New Zealand knowing that his family have reconciled.

In these three texts Ihimaera seems to be worrying the same ideas about identity, culture and the idea of kinship. This seems somewhat problematic because of ethnicity and blood ties. Perhaps what I find the most unconvincing about *The Rope of Man* is that repeatedly there are references to blood, DNA and heredity as essential for Maori identity, yet there are also numerous examples of identity cohesion and belonging based on affinity and understanding. Tom Mahana recalls that as a young boy he doodled the formula “Maui + Mauri = Maori”. This he explains as: “From the questing spirit of our ancestor Maui would come the mauri, the life force which would compel me to achieve a place in the world as a Maori” (203). Remembrance of this and its importance, especially in the context of the dilemma his half-brother is causing the family, tells us that to be Maori one must have: a) some blood relation as a descendant of Maui; and, b) have an affinity to the spirituality/life spirit of Maori ontology. However the blond South African leader of the Gisborne Boys High team is also part of the Rope of Man, because “the songs of the people can still be sung through one or two strands as they are through many” (191), even though he has *no* Maori blood. Likewise Carlos, Michael’s new boyfriend in *The Uncle’s Story*, is attractive because of his Pakeha appearance (Michael tells Roimata that “I like white boys” [131]) but is suitable as a partner because of his Maori blood and knowledge of his whakapapa: his “grandmother was Parehuia Te Ariki” (279). It is this construction of Maori identity that is reiterated by the contemporary focalising characters of both *The Rope of Man* and *The Uncle’s Story*, and with an unspoken taken-for-grantedness by the previous generation in *Whanau II*. In *Whanau II* being Maori is still an either/or, not an and/both, equation. Yet while Dinah Walker, as Pakeha, accepts that she is not a member of Te Whanau a Kai and cannot be buried there when she dies, her daughter Hana dreams “not Waituhi dreams but white-girl dreams” (69). Her pakeha blood is denied by the narrative (and community) that posits her as entirely Maori. Although Bauman promulgates communities of ‘ethnic minorities’ as problematic because they deny choice and lead to the erecting of exclusive boundaries, his solution or hope for the future is in fact very similar to Ihimaera’s. The difference is that Bauman’s humanism is suffused with assumption of overarching, universalising ethics, presumably his own. Ihimaera, on the other hand, favours a tempered Maori one.

In all texts there are also frequent references to the concept of home. This is the indigenous importance of place, not just to Maori, but a concept which has central place to all indigenous peoples. Certainly this is what underpins community belonging in *Whanau II*; not identification with ethnicity but a sitedness in place as turangawaewae. This importance and identity of place (and as Massey comments, the link between place-identity and self-identity) is emphasised in several New Zealand critical writings. Stephen Turner's article "Being Colonial/Colonial Being" comments on the deceptiveness of Michael King's concept of the 'indigenous pakeha'. This is the idea that place can have equal significance to all who, regardless of ethnicity or origin, consider New Zealand as the 'place called home'. Likewise Patrick Evans, in "Pakeha-style Biculturalism' and the Maori Writer", writes of Ihimaera's refusal to engage in a biculturalism which appeases "predominantly –Pakeha culture's own yearning for indigeneity" (19). Evans also points out that Ihimaera is writing with a focus on Maori identity, not that of Pakeha. This comes through in the three texts repeatedly. In *The Uncle's Story* the character Jason, Michael's pakeha lover, is perhaps a metonymy of white settler / pakeha homelessness. His breakdown stems from a desire to be able to claim "who I am really"; a reversal of the pakeha, gay double-colonisation that Roimata accuses Michael of being complicit in. So whereas Michael's search for belonging is found through a knowledge of history and wider discourse between Maori culture and sexuality, but always firmly embedded in place, the turangawaewae or standing ground and home of his ethnicity, Jason's has been an identity-searching that tries to fulfil a desire for belonging and home as indigenous by embracing the other, Michael as Maori, as authentic by reducing his difference, his Maoriness, to a managed culturalism. It is the falsity of such a move that causes tension between both partners. In Jason's breakdown and what seems to be a trauma of loss, Ihimaera seems to be positing that a more honest biculturalism needs a pakeha acknowledgement and acceptance of what is called the 'pain of unbelonging'. So the counselling and therapy that Jason undergoes provides an access to the question of what it means to be at home as a pakeha New Zealander.

It is family that obstructs and renders problematic the problem with this easy reconciliation of both cultures. If identity is based on the rock of one's self, how can one then make self-sacrifices needed for family cohesiveness and continue to produce the bloodlines of Maori kinship which are so important in Ihimaera's fiction? In *The*

Uncle's Story the concept of a new gay Maori tribe, as espoused by the character Tane Mahuta, is problematic. It is a political idea that Ihimaera himself seems to posit through his characters, but without being able to fully work it through. But it does show a hybridity of the Maori and Westernised models of the family, articulating a new way of belonging, of negotiating the homelessness of gay Maori caused by more traditional Maori constructions of identity. This problematic of family is, in Ihimaera's fictional world (mirroring that of the actual), more widespread than just that of the Maori cultural model. In *The Rope of Man* the young New Zealanders that Tom meets just before he flies out from London are characterised as successful future leaders of the world. Stephanie talks of her yearning to return to New Zealand, both to see her own parents and to begin her own role as a parent. In this text family is axiomatic of the national identity: New Zealand is 'a good place to bring up kids'. Yet she feels that she belongs in London as well; the colonial returning back to the metropolis that is 'home'. And even more so the present day London, as a 'world-city' where the spatial interconnections of globalisation meet in one location, offers the greatest opportunities for individualised success.

Ihimaera's work, apart from *Whanau II* (and maybe not even some aspects of that), seems to deny the very conditions of globalising marginality which come across in Tawhai's work, for example. Ihimaera's fictional world is one of empowerment for Maori through both reconciliation of gender identity and inclusion of difference, and here we see characters such as Arapata and Monty both cast very much in the mould of rigidly exclusive, traditional cultural ways. These texts do show culture as always undergoing change; this is not just a present condition of globalisation. As Massey states, this is a process that has been going on forever. In *Whanau II* Te Kooti's Ringatu faith is an amalgam of Old Testament Christianity and Maori spiritual beliefs. This is adopted as being appropriate for the condition of history which the Maori find themselves in at that time. It is the same of the tradition of the East Coast painted meeting houses, such as Rongopai, whereas in *Whanau II* this is shown as being both a new but also necessary adoption - the old meeting houses having been burnt and not enough time left to build and decorate new ones in the more traditional ways - the culture changes as required by history and contingency. These become accepted and incorporated as part of the cultural identity of those East Coast tribes. Ihimaera is not standing for culturalism, the reification of culture as fixed and out of tune with the

lived reality of experienced lives, although he does present characters who present the danger of exclusionary retreat. In *Whanau II* it is the Matua who seems to be living in the past holding the group together and attempting to encourage community of identity through bringing back the games. Ihimaera's depiction of her, her husband and Mattie Jones, standing in the front room awaiting George's arrival, as a sepia photograph surrounded by objects from the past, presents these characters as relics of the past themselves. We read of them as outdated; their ways have passed. There is a mourning of this through the novel, but a resigned acknowledgement that these ways are no longer useful to the tribe.

The identity politics of Ihimaera's contemporary characters, Tom and Michael Mahana, is a postcolonial reconciliation with globalising society, almost of being able to have everything. Certainly Tom, in *The Rope of Man*, fuses over any rifts between traditional Maori identity expectations and Western ideas of the individualised self. Tom emphasises the importance of standing "on the rock of yourself" (233), remembering his editor's advice to "hold to your own truth" (233), taking pride in his individualism (his family reminding him that he "is a law unto himself and conducts his relationships exactly as he wants to" [239]) and revelling in being called "a buccaneer" (173). Similarly Michael's visit to the Indigenous People's Conference in Canada introduces him to the idea of the Canadian Indian berdache identity. This identity indicates a self not only able to operate between two different worlds of spiritual and social reality, but also to shift between male and female sexuality. It is homosexuality that is the differentiating factor in this identity; while being gay is not normative it is a recognised way of being that allows access into both worlds, not just one of either spiritual religion or heteronormative society. Again, here is Ihimaera's concept of the lamination of cultures and peoples: it is a layering rather than a fusion. However, these two characters seem over-determined. Michael's is a struggle for acceptance of his homosexuality; but this seems only to be with his father, not the whole weight of the tribe as in his Uncle Sam's case. Whereas Sam's father Arapata, as tribal leader, effectively denied his son his Maori identity by forcing him to chose either "black and white", "right or wrong" (257), Monty (Arapata's youngest son and bearer of his father's traditions and mana) seems to stand alone in his denial of gay Maori. Likewise, Michael's contemporary Wellington is a society that accepts, even embraces (for example the gay nightclub is a place where "lots of people come just to

dance and have a good time” [32]), homosexuality. These characters are at home in the world, having reconciled their laminated identities. Michael accepts being Maori and gay. For Tom there is the layering of both the postcolonial and the globalised in a heterogeneous Maori identity; moreover, an identity that is successfully coherent and finds belonging in Maori culture and that of Westernised individualism. And unlike Michael, who is left with the question of how to reproduce the Maori kinship lines, Tom also has children, meaning that the double spiral of past/present/future is unbroken.

Underlying *The Rope of Man* and *The Uncle's Story* it is the family, continuing Maori community and kinship, that offers both problems and solutions for the characters. Ihimaera posits, as Wilkins does even more so, this being ‘at home’ in the contemporary New Zealand (and wider world) through continued dialogue about identity. In *The Uncle's Story* there is the unsatisfactory proposal of a new ‘gay tribe’, where Michael sees that the demands of fidelity and childrearing would compromise each partner’s hard-won sexual freedoms. Tom, even though he has children, has not been a good father by his own admission. While as adults he is proud of them as representatives of “new New Zealand” (319), Tom’s drive for success as a war correspondent meant that he all but abandoned them as children. Instead they were raised by Sandra, their pakeha mother, first of all in Sydney and then in Hong Kong. Sandra’s ultimatum to Tom, family or career, results in divorce and Sandra’s return to New Zealand with their children, and subsequently for the children a pakeha lawyer stepfather. This is the problem of individualism versus community/family bonds which is neatly overcome by Tom’s narrative. By narrating his story in retrospect, Tom has the advantage of an already happy ending with both children as successful global citizens. Not only that, but the individualism, the search for the ‘rock of the self’ that fuels his ambition, is also tempered by a concern with community on a far larger scale. His is a globalising view of community, using the technologies of mass communication to tell the world about man’s inhumanity to man. It reworks the neoliberal contradiction with an individualistic freedom of capital coupled with conservative, traditional family and spiritual values. This becomes an individualistic actualisation of self through freedom of capital coupled with humanistic concern for community as a global village. However, what gets lost in Tom’s globalising humanism is the particularity of others: his wife and children are abandoned. Also one

must ask, if blood lines and spirituality are equally as important to be Maori, how will the new New Zealanders fare if, like Tom's own children, they have very little exposure to Maori culture or even place? Tom knows that Rongopai is his imagined home, having been raised locally as a child, amongst the culture. Likewise, looking out of the plane window he can marvel at the sunrise as both the benefit of time/space compression that modern transport enables, and in terms of the Maori myths of Earth and Sky, Rangi and Papa. His voice is broadcast around the world in English and he is equally comfortable giving a Maori karakia. Are his children as secure in their Maori identities, having presumably none of these cultural foundations? So although Ihimaera argues for the two treasures of Maori and Pakeha culture, with a lamination of both, his texts present new New Zealanders of the next generation who are what Bhabha terms hybrid: theirs is a blending and fusion of ethnicities, localities and bloodlines².

In the introduction to *Global Fissures: Postcolonial Fusions* Joseph and Wilson comment that gradually these two theoretic views (identity politics and hybridity) are merging together. Žižek however makes the point that identity politics are really an ideological dead end, that they might hide the effects of capital, but there is no way of overcoming it³. This observation is relevant to the omissions in Ihimaera's work: the major source of despair in *Whanau II* is disenfranchisement from land. The physical conditions of living, the material poverty and its social consequences, make clear the dispossession of colonisation. In *The Rope of Man* and *The Uncle's Story* this poverty has been overcome, and financial success has led to the next generation's entry into a cosmopolitanism (see Tom and Michael, both on a global scale, the former in broadcasting, the latter in indigenous rights). The ability to compete and be successful in a globalising capital context has been because of the return of the land. Whereas in *Whanau II* land (as part of colonisation) had been forcibly divided into individual title, causing judicial, and thus community, conflict, in the next generation the infighting has ceased as now land (still in individual title) is profitable once it is used in a globalised market economy: wine-making. In *The Rope of Man* and *The Uncle's Story* material poverty has all but disappeared. There is a resounding gap. Where are the dispossessed and poor Maori of *Whanau II*? They have either disappeared or subsequently become successful. There is some acknowledgement at the end of *The Uncle's Story* when Michael gathers up the dispossessed youth of the tribe: petty

criminals, transvestites, drug users; and returns with them to the marae for a tangi. Their dispossession seems to be because of sexuality rather than being the colonising disenfranchisement that leads to poverty.

Ihimaera states that the new versions of his earlier works “may not be better aesthetically, but they are better politically” (“Writing ‘*Whanau II*’” 23). Certainly the mythic style of *Whanau II* is interspersed with didactic explanation of the history of Waituhi. Yet rather than detracting from the close-up scenes of everyday life these explanations serve to provide an overarching political and cultural context. *The Rope of Man* and *The Uncle’s Story* differ from the narrative style of *Whanau II*. The piecing together of diary entries, letters, recounts from different sources by the focalising character Michael in *The Uncle’s Story* can be read as a piecing together of his own identity. Like *The Uncle’s Story*, *The Rope of Man* is also a first person narrative. But rather than the unravelling of hidden histories of the previous generation, Tom as first person narrator presents and justifies his own past from the vantage point of a resolved present.

Ihimaera’s is a ‘writing back’ of postcolonialism; indeed this is the strength of these three texts. In them he does posit a way of reconciling not only individual but also national belonging, drawing on both Maori and Pakeha cultures with a humanist tolerance and pluralism. This is a humanism in which the acceptance of difference is underpinned by shared core values. This is occasionally a problem in itself as culture sometimes seems little more than a regional inflection: for example Sam’s encounters with the Vietnamese at the village and the temple show a common understanding even though they speak different languages. But at least, even if read as a whole these texts seem utopian, they do reflect ways of thinking that are relevant to New Zealand society, and acknowledge the changing ways of belonging.

From *Whanau II* to *The Rope of Man* marks a movement from a place-bound home to that of an imagined one for its characters. In the next chapter these shifts will also be considered through the work of Damien Wilkins, along with the question of social and community belonging.

¹ Watkin, Tim. "The Homecoming." *New Zealand Listener* 26 June 2004: 22

² In "The Homecoming" (ibid.) Ihimaera is also quoted as being confident about the cultures which are "crossing over".

³ "It is in fact as if, since the horizon of social imagination no longer allows us to entertain the idea of an eventual demise of capitalism – since, as we might put it, everybody tacitly accepts that capitalism is here to stay – critical energy has found a substitute outlet in fighting for cultural differences which leave the basic homogeneity of the capitalist world-system intact." Žizek, Slavoj. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London: Verso, 1999. 218.

Damien Wilkins: Community and Choices

Damien Wilkins' most recent novels, *Chemistry* (2002) and *The Fainter* (2006), are set in a contemporary New Zealand where neoliberal processes are a social and economic reality. Wilkins' Timaru, South Canterbury and Wellington are imagined places very much like those many New Zealanders now live in. His central characters (all pakeha and mainly, but not all, middle class) are concerned about the fracturing of relationships by individual desire and lack of responsibility, and feel uncertain as a result of economic, societal and familial structural changes over which they have little control. Wilkins' focus is on family and community. The complexity of the social issues in his text - social and family responsibility, community cohesion, crime, drug use - are those same issues debated by politicians, media and the public today. "This world exists, probably in the next suburban street behind the curtains", notes one reviewer (Bourke 92). It is "Timaru as a New Zealand state of mind" (Eggleton 59). In this chapter I also want to consider the subject as an agent: as one both acted upon by habitus, and as an actor who creates their own 'personal biography'. Certainly the neoliberal idea of 'free' choice figures the subject as active and operating within a market that is "natural and orderly" (Bhargh 8).

In *Chemistry* Wilkins explores family connections, responsibilities and choices (or lack of them). It begins with Jamie Webb, a forty one year old drug addict who returns, after an operation, to his home town of Timaru. This is not out of nostalgia for family but for access to brother and sister's connections to drugs. All of the characters have problems with home and family: their mother Ruth lives in a daze in the old family home, abandoning appliances and rooms as they cease to function. Penny, a doctor, is shameful about her ex-husband's abuse, and worried that he will contest for custody of their three year old. Don, a well-meaning chemist, becomes the link between the characters and plot lines. He is blackmailed by Sally, one of his methadone patients. Sally herself is caught between her new responsibilities as a parent, her history as a petty criminal and drug addict, and her relationship with her partner Shane, who is still using. Excluded by most of the community, Sally and Shane are casualties of neoliberalism: the underclass. The clumsy sexual favour Sally performs on Don is a 'market opportunity'. Videod by Shane, the tape is at first an object, and gradually

just an idea, that connects their lives. While the middle-class Webb family's narrative path is one of reconnection and reconciliation driven by the crisis of Jamie's illness, Sally and Shane's is disintegration. Shane's almost incidental murder of the local police sergeant is the banal climax of his disconnectedness with society. The novel ends with Sally in the courtroom, her hand raised out to Shane (but also as an affirmation of self) as he is taken down after the guilty verdict is given.

Whereas *Chemistry* deals with the impact of the economic on the social *The Fainter* is a consideration of the New Zealand subject through changing family constructions. The plot is structured around Luke, first as a young New Zealand diplomat recovering at his sister's South Canterbury farm after witnessing a murder in New York. *The Fainter* opens as Luke prepares for his first evening meal with older sister Catherine, her farmer husband Phil, and their three young children. His youngest nephew, watching him ironing shirts, wonders "What was his uncle made of, or not made of?" (11). Luke is disturbed by recurring fainting episodes triggered by the murder. That very first evening he faints after witnessing farmhand Hamish's tractor accident. Alec Moore, the gruff, practical neighbour, takes charge while his wife Sheila looks after the children. Over the next few weeks Alec puzzles over what exactly ails Luke and Luke himself is increasingly attracted to Sheila. Her enrolment at university throws her family into crisis with Alec's refusal to negotiate their relationship. Ten years later the characters are reunited in a weekend Wellington visit. Not only are families displaced physically (Alec and Phil especially hesitant in the city surrounds) but Sheila and Alec have divorced and both have new partners. Luke, previously an observer, takes charge when Alec collapses at Te Papa. A romantic interlude between Sheila and Luke (who came out several years earlier) leaves Sheila asking him "What are you?" (216). This question of the contingency of self is considered through such episodic encounters. Luke's decision to end his relationship with his partner Bayden is a resolution: Luke no longer feels faint. But the final scene is of the swirling crowds at Wellington's airport departure lounge, that of the flux of contemporary life.

Wilkins' Timaru and rural South Canterbury are of course fictional, but they are also recognisably New Zealand locales dealing with the effects of the market reshuffles of the 1980s and 1990s at the levels of community and family. The Timaru of *Chemistry* is a commentary on neoliberalism, where the consequences of choice and the varying

abilities to make those choices, are far-reaching. Disenfranchised characters, such as Sally and Shane, struggle with reflexivity. In the fictional world of *Chemistry* there seems to be little political or state involvement, apart from the methadone programme, the hospitals Jamie visits, and the justice system Shane becomes involved in when he murders a local police officer. Sally and Shane's precarious financial position is that of the increasingly marginalised low-skilled worker. Sally goes through a series of dead end jobs, employed for a few hours under the table on below-award wages at the café. Her efforts to make money include collecting golf balls which is physically exploitive as well, having to provide sexual favours to the golf pro so that he will pay her. Likewise the employees at the cheese factory take pills to dull the monotony of their work. The cooler where Shane works is a place of alienation; headphones are worn because "speech wasn't really possible anyway because of the noise of the generators" (112), his brother-in-law already having gone deaf in one ear because of it.

Likewise rural Canterbury of *The Fainter* is undergoing economic changes. Alec's battle with the large cheese factory (either the same one as in *Chemistry*, or one very much like it) shows the displacement of lives as the agricultural economy undergoes corporatisation. Alec rightly notes the resulting disempowerment this has on employees, as "all of them up at the factory just take orders, that's the whole point" (106). And while Alec seems to enjoy his court wrangles with the cheese company, he is astutely aware that farm land is not just a market commodity. "The prices, Alec observed, were good if it was only the land that was counted in the sale. 'What these fellows have given up amounts to a great deal more'" (160). That 'great deal more' is 'home' through identity of place through ownership, and 'home' as belonging to a community, in this case, farming. It is this tension between capital and community that is the purpose of Phil's narrative in the section "The Hare". Starting with "the day Simon was born" (124), Phil recounts the family story of the day of his youngest son's birth, which was memorable because of the huge crop fire on Alec's farm caused by a burning hare. Alec suffered thousands of dollars of damage, and Phil suffered Alec's disgruntlement because he remained with his labouring wife instead of helping to fight the fire. Phil's choice to do what Catherine wanted is not understood by his son; it does not follow either an individualist or market rationale (even though Alec's sense of belonging to his farm is one of bounded place over time rather than a market rationale). Yet it is through such choices, and the reinforcement of them over time

through narrative, that a sense of home as familial belonging is created and continued. Phil concludes his story with the words “It’s a precarious lifestyle all right” (125). This attests not only to the economic risks of farming, but to those manufactured risks of relationship choices as well.

A difference between the rural farming community of *The Fainter* and those workers at the cheese factory (and Sally in *Chemistry*) is not just of income. There is also a huge difference in the control they have over their situations. Here is the economic aspect that seems to be overlooked in Giddens’ social reflexivity: how are informed choices made when opportunity is diminished? In his fiction Wilkins does challenge the doctrine of market forces. *Chemistry*, states David Eggleton, “explores life in the “new” New Zealand...” This is a place where “today, we do not leave home; it is home that leaves us. Old certainties evaporate, and the turbo-economics of market forces rock our world” (59). Shane, Sally, even Jamie, are characters who have succumbed to the ever-presentism of market opportunities in a system of capital where their power is increasingly diminished and marginalised. For them (and similarly so in Tawhai’s myriad of economically marginalised characters) drugs offer an allure of paradoxical escape from conditions of the present and an inability to escape from that present. Achieving home and belonging involves recognising and thinking on the gap between the social and the individual, thinking of risks, responsibilities and choices that either widen or bridge the tensions of that gap. Shane’s contingent ever-presentism of drug usage both disconnects him from his feelings of unbelonging and emphasises it. When Sally leaves him the message about breaking into the church house it “choked her that she had made a horrible mistake, and that it was one in a series” (182). She has the opportunity to undo it: “it was within her power” (182). It is at such moments that Sally thinks of what home could be. While with Shane she is locked in an ever-present contingency of social alienation and economic marginalisation, but at such a moment she can see that a choice may be made. Opportunities are also risks, and in economically and socially constrained situations such choices can be dangerous. Sally’s “horrible mistake”, the plans to blackmail the chemist and to rob the church, “must be a market opportunity” (191) according to Shane. Sally’s choice does rid her of Shane but at the devastating cost of Shane’s freedom and Sergeant Burrell’s life.

For the characters of *Chemistry*, there is an engagement with the tenuous social web (as spun through the plot centred by the Webb family) of interconnected relationships. There is a discrepancy between desire to belong, which a priori necessitates identification with a group, family or community, and existential individualism. The novel opens with Jamie's visit to Wellington Hospital. The first contact he has there is with an orderly in the lift, who fails "to recognise himself for a moment in the other man's eyes" (8). This initial incident resonates through the novel as a trope of misbelonging: of place, of self, of familial and social connection. Jamie, who "has no feel for the social" (8), is the character who emphasises the unhomeliness of place as home (he is the intruder in his mother's home when he breaks into the pool) in his visit to Timaru that frames the structure of the novel. Twice in his Wellington Hospital visit he corrects the hospital staff for their use of the collective pronoun 'we' when discussing his surgery. He denies the claiming of shared experience. "It was his experience, after all; and he had no other belongings except it" (17). These events, focalised through an intelligent and somewhat cynical character, seem to function as a statement of existential difference; a relativism that denies common values. The problem with this is twofold. If belonging requires identification, and identity is reciprocal, then how can one belong if recognition of the other is denied? And if any sort of social contract is denied, along with a refusal to belong, then the subject remains embedded in only the context of contingency, of the liquidity of daily experience as a 'palimpsest identity'. Jamie's lack of belongings extends to his physical self in that he even lacks control over his own body. His drug addiction, the removal of his kidney stone, the post-operative vomiting and lack of control of organs, his failure to eat, are examples of disconnection with his physical self. Surely Jamie can be read as an example of the fractured, disconnected self in the contemporary neoliberal world? Nothing is perhaps so revealing of this state as the "not known here" written on the hospital reminder notice. Yet this is an assumption that is rather too glib, one that overlooks Jamie's return to Timaru. When in Wellington Hospital "he registered a feeling of loss" (19) when the dietician tells him that she has "a home to go to" (19), but at the same time he deliberately makes her uncomfortable. Certainly Jamie does not participate in the 'thin ties' of society through consideration. It is Timaru that is whatever 'home' means to Jamie. It is an imagined home of loose familial ties; Timaru is the physical location of those ties.

The community-based model of belonging that Don and Tina facilitate is based on “a social contract” (241) that they both believe in. This is not simply Timaru as a place-bound, static identity, but one that acknowledges the differing subjectivities and inter-relationships with the outside. Tina is angered and frustrated by Jamie’s irresponsibility, by the neediness of Don’s methadone patients, by Penny’s parental submission in yielding to daughter Anna’s demands for a bottle. She regrets the conflict caused by confronting Penny about her problems, but “she did not regret attempting these conversations” (241). Tina’s is an engagement with others that engenders social belonging through a community of care, while at the same time recognising the limitations of it. This social contract “meant that you were involved with others no matter what, no matter who – the terms retained some of hope’s animating force, some of its efficacy” (241). It is this critical engagement with social interconnectedness that produces their sense of home. In the model of community-based humanism presented through Don and Tina there are many similarities with what Said calls “the mind in its double aspect of active conation (or will) and reflective intellect, the mind both acting and observing itself acting” (qtd. in Spencer 36). Spencer agrees with Said’s wide humanism, regarding human intelligence as creative, agentic in light of experience and knowledge, but constrained by “human sympathy and community” (36).

However, Wilkins gives us fictional worlds where such humanism is reduced, even at times denied, by social and economic forces. Tim Corballis asks, “Aren’t artists and writers...exactly the sort of people to be challenging the doctrine of economic necessity (identified with technocratic elitism), and etching out a new place in society’s structure of feelings for contingency, possibility, and agency – in short, for the new? Can’t one project of writers, artists and intellectuals be that of forging a new view of humanity to replace the tired, nihilistic belief in *Homo economicus*?” (55). Wilkins ironises and relativises neoliberalism through critical introspection and its limitations: the failure to choose responsibly, the constraints of circumstance such as Tina’s recurring miscarriages and Simon’s abuse of Penny, and the limitations of a free-market economy on income and opportunity. Characters in *Chemistry* find such reflexivity difficult, with feelings of tiredness, disturbed sleep, headaches, or the effects of drugs overwhelming them at times of crisis. Yet there is still the possibility of agency. Don’s kindness to Sally, helping her to overcome material restrictions by

providing her baby with new clothes, is such a leap of faith without certainty. He accepts not knowing of the tape she made with Shane to blackmail him, choosing to help her anyway. Likewise Tina accepts the discomfort between her and Janet when they meet regularly for lunch dates. She tells Don that this is because “we also remind each other...that what we think is unique to us is actually everyone’s and so widespread that our suffering is common and rather everyday” (201). The Timaru of *Chemistry* offers an often ill-at-ease, uncomfortable, but hedged optimism of a belonging as place-based community, although still one largely constrained within a market ideology.

Rather than the place-based humanism of *Chemistry*, the fictional world of *The Fainter* offers several differing possibilities. These range from the restrictive but coherent wholeness of place-bound identity associated with Alec’s family farm, belonging based around a place-based community with reasonably homogeneous economic and social values yet with some reflexivity as Catherine, Phil and her family seem to have, to something much newer and far more fluid. Luke himself can be read as “etching out a new place in society’s structure of feelings for contingency, possibility, and agency”, to return to Corballis’ phrasing, but as yet in a very faint way.

Considerations of home and belonging in *The Fainter* are set up almost as a dichotomy between the characterisation of Luke and his brother-in-law’s friend and neighbouring Canterbury farmer, Alec Moore. Alec - practical, gruff, bullying; is rigid in his place-based identity as the rural farmer - an identity that denies fragmentation. This is “an illusion of transparency” where “within the spatial realm the known and the transparent are one and the same thing” (Lefebvre qtd. in Blunt and Rose 5), a bounded empiricist assertion of self as unified and whole, based on the idea that seeing/vision is reality. Alec has the self-confidence of the “autonomous subject”, someone whose bounded self is based on the assumption that things are as they seem to be, an exclusive identity tied to place. “Hadn’t he provided the globe upon which they could both travel, this globe being the farms and the outlying districts?” (108). So although *The Fainter* is framed through Luke’s time on the farm and subsequently in Wellington, the main protagonist seems to be Alec. Alec’s is a fixed, place-bound, rigid, restrictive identity that denies other subjectivities that compromise his own perception of a unified and whole self. This place-bound “Moor(e)-ing” is one without

irony, where certain histories of national identity are reified; the Christchurch Show which memorialises and mythologises the Pakeha pioneering past and those who fell in war in order to serve the nation as part of the Commonwealth. But at the same time others are denied. This is particularly so when he looks on the statue of the wartime mother and children at the Wellington War Memorial. Here Alec projects his feeling of betrayal by his wife Sheila onto the statue, horrifying Luke and Phil by reading it as women's refusal to remain loyal to their husbands, and by extension, to the nation. Likewise is Alec's apparent rigidity of cultural boundaries, questioning the ethnic authenticity of the guide at Te Papa, and telling her about the "real, old-fashioned Maoris" who are "rough as guts" (266).

Luke, by comparison, is in many senses of the word, 'faint'. Whereas Alec's belonging is tied to place, his farm and surrounding locale, as his globe, Luke's (initially) is in the world itself as bounded and knowable: "He saw himself out there, amid the world... He wanted to smell the world's breath as the world leaned forward towards him" (15). The retrospective narrative of his first diplomatic appointment at The Hague functions structurally as an introduction to characters that reappear at the end of the novel, and as an illustration of Luke's limited cosmopolitanism. Such cosmopolitanism "is theorized as a set of predispositions and practices predicated on extensive mobility, including corporeal, imaginative and virtual travel, which allow for a comprehension of local specificity while fostering an openness to the 'globalising world'. However, the emergence of seemingly open and flexible cosmopolitan cultures or civil societies still depends on the constraints of particular articulations of power, hierarchy, inequality and positioning" (Ahmed et al. 4). That is, it is the privilege of the few in a world where capital is the economic equation. So when he "did The Hague, acquitting himself well" (17), Luke's is both a "feeling of wonder and happiness" and "a sense of entitlement" (23).

The diplomatic community to which Luke belongs seems to offer both freedom and security, without the apparent tension that Bauman states is always present. Certainly in The Hague Luke has the experience of the freedom of individualism and security of safety. His time in The Hague asserts the illusion of place as knowable and controllable. The deer he sees when sitting on the bench is at home, belonging there in "the only non man-made urban" forest (23) yet to Luke it had "the quality of an

ornament”(24). This same knowledge as power over environment is observed in the historical reconstructions of the “street lamp – old-fashioned or just old?” (21). History and nature become cultural product. New York is similarly bounded and knowable at first. Even though “it was standard to be at a distance from anything resembling the homely state that marked one’s previous existence” (26), Luke achieves belonging through a community of ideas: “He was a flier, a mover, a face” (27), his sense of home an abstract. Almost an abstract: it is in the physicality of place and experience when “literally, he turned a corner” (28) and witnesses the murder of a delivery boy by a homeless man, that Luke is prompted to question his construction of belonging, and indeed his construction of self. Suddenly Luke’s ideal of the cosmopolitan community of both security and freedom is violated. It happens when “he’d been walking home”, in “his street” at “his local deli...Luke’s deli” (29), shocking him into the realisation that location is necessary and cannot always be controlled.

Luke’s behaviours after the shock of experiencing what Bauman calls the “really existing community” (*Community* 4) are described by his counsellor as “an obliteration of self” (37). These behaviours: fainting, crying, fear of being alone at night, and “getting into bed with those people who were looking after him”(34), represent a physical lack of control mirroring his inability to fix his memory of the details of the murder incident. Luke himself denies the counsellor’s explanation, but it is this lack of control over his physical self (his tiredness, lack of appetite, crying, and of course fainting) that manifests itself most obviously when he first arrives at his sister’s South Canterbury farm. Luke’s time at the farm (the first half of the novel) can be read as his reconstruction of ways to belong, as in a similar way can the second half be read as Alec’s. Luke tells the local doctor that he has come to “get away from it all” (65), but instead of sympathy is told that he should be in the thick of life “like a terrier” (65). And although Luke gently mocks the doctor’s rural pragmatism, there is a certain truth to the message. The accident with the tractor on Luke’s very first day shows that life cannot be ‘got away from’.

The consequence of the murder is the disembedding of Luke’s ideal unified cosmopolitan community by the intrusion of random, meaningless violence. It is of this that he tells Catherine and Phil, Alec and Sheila. Alec comments that “you saw the true side of the place” but for Luke, “nothing had moved ‘off his chest’”(120). Luke

certainly is a subject marked by constant reflections, reversals, ambiguities and an acceptance of fragmentations which occasionally veer into incoherence. His casual sexual pickup in the beer tent at the Christchurch Show, for example, comes as a shock to the reader who hitherto seemed to have been privy to all of his ruminations. However in this encounter there is no consideration either of its immediate significance or of its links to similar prior encounters. It is not simply that Luke's behaviour in previous episodes seems incongruous with his practised ease at a gay pickup. Rather the narrative seems to have betrayed the reader by its silence about this. Paula Morris, in her review of the novel, remarks of this incident that "we're blindsided. Luke's mind, usually busy dissecting every sentence, every gesture and every silence, is conveniently blank". Wilkins' himself comments that "there's a lot of chewing in my books"¹ (Radio NZ, 2007). Certainly *The Fainter*, focalised through Luke, chews over questions about a knowable, coherent self. This incident makes obvious the large gap in what the narrative has revealed to the reader and Luke's differing selves.

It is not until the end of the first section of the novel that the reason for Luke's withdrawal from New York is made clear. Perhaps, because the incident is the very last part of the first section, only then does he acknowledge it himself. Luke's final action of his time in South Canterbury is to visit Sheila and Alec's house. It is on the opening of the large package that Sheila has left for Alec that Luke realises about others what he has not been able to admit to himself (not able to get 'off his chest'): the inability to really know either self or other. The large rat that Sheila has carefully packaged triggers his final faint. It is only after this, after Luke tells himself "I am better" (196) that his final New York encounter with the homeless man is given. In this, his failure to identify the murderer, admitting that "I'm just not sure" (204), is the shattering of his ideal of community. Although now "he was free" it is the empty freedom of uncertainty, where if he is not able to recognise others he also cannot recognise himself. It is only in acceptance of this contingency of self, of the ambiguity of both self and others, that Luke can begin to re-embed a new way to belong.

Luke's nebulousness of character, in contrast to Alec's domination, is a contrast of old and newer subjectivities. The intersections of their narratives offer ideas of what and where a New Zealand subject could consider 'home' to be. If Luke and Alec represent

opposing ends of a subjectivity spectrum, with Alec as a recognisably larger-than-life Kiwi bloke from a historical moment that has largely passed on, and Luke as a cosmopolitan, global subject who is yet to fully come into being, what of the middle, of the here-and-now, of the local contingencies? Sheila Croucher states in *Globalisation and Belonging* that it is in “how individuals think and live their daily lives” (195) that cosmopolitanism is enacted. However, it is just as easily noted that such everyday experience also performs other ways of being, such as nationalism and patriotism. For the characters of *Chemistry* and *The Fainter* much of their thought of and lived daily lives is through family.

For most of Wilkins’ characters, home as a physical place is still very important. Don and Tina’s home is a place of comfort, with furniture that “was all irreparably dated. It was also reassuringly mute and satisfyingly fixed” (150). Catherine and Phil’s farm is both a place of economic production and affective belonging. Alec and Sheila’s farm is this as well, but is very much a place-bound, static identity. Alec’s place-bound identity is one that denies the articulation of others. His denial of Sheila as a subject (outside of her role as wife and mother) is manifested in the unhomeliness of their house. Their spotless but ruined dwelling that used to belong to Alec’s parents, deteriorates in spite of Sheila’s continuous domesticity, and becomes a gothic parody.

Obviously in both of these texts the family is an important social unit. Giddens tells us that marriage and family are ‘shell institutions’; that is that they have changed significantly over time. Is the subject in Wilkins’ families and the family itself, reflecting such social change? Giddens writes of the swirl of change that reaches into our emotional lives, that of the ‘pure relationship’ based on implicitly democratic, emotional communication. Certainly in Wilkins’ texts those characters whose relationships most fit this description are those who can be considered successful, not only in terms of their relationships, but also as parents, members of a community, and as subjects active in their own coherence of self through reflexivity. In couples such as Don and Tina, Phil and Catherine, we can recognise the contemporary marriage of negotiation, compromise and affirmation of choice. Certainly there is no “incapacitating dependency” (Bauman), but there is a recognition that family life, certainly the demands of parenting, is a commitment that once made, cannot be easily gone back on. While Catherine is sympathetic towards Sheila, who struggles to escape

the rigid boundaries of her identity as a mother, as defined by Alec, Catherine does not agree with the choice Sheila makes. Sheila's decision to go to university during the week and return to her husband and three young children at the weekend, as much as it is an individualised success for Sheila, is a failure for her family. Luke rails against the idea of such compromise (in the second part of the novel he has deliberately chosen not to be a parent), asking whether "you've got to stay in your box?" Catherine's reply is of choices that must be lived with: "She helped make that box. That box, as you call it, is her home, her children" (172).

These are families that are supportive of children, although again it is those families that are not as economically constrained who have better opportunities. Sally in Wilkins' *Chemistry* finds a way of defining herself through her role as a mother, physically bound to her son by carrying him in a baby backpack. She recognises that "everyone at some time or other wanted her baby but only for a little while to make themselves feel better, to fill a hole" (296), but remains unaware that her son fills this purpose for herself as well. Her destruction of Shane is because he is an obstacle to the belonging she finds in the mothers' group, claiming her new identity as a single parent when she rejoins the group and moves to a new flat. While Sally is an attentive mother, there are doubts about her ability as a parent in the long term, especially as she has little support. Even Shane doubts his son's development: "he was some dopey baby, probably stupid, Shane thought, but he didn't say this to Sally. She'd been using through most of the pregnancy and drinking" (284).

But there are characters able to incorporate both individual desire and family belonging into a coherent self. Wilkins' Catherine in *The Fainter*, like Don and Tina in *Chemistry*, are reflexive as they think on their families: Catherine as a wife and mother whose life is wrapped up in caring and nurturing, Don and Tina coming to terms with their childlessness. Their belonging is not merely contingent on present experience but a reflection of the past and consideration of the future as well. This gives them an ethical embeddedness that strengthens ties of family and community. Luke is initially surprised at who his elder sister has become: "Just because she was the Catholic wife of a farmer didn't mean the end to everything" (46). Even Catherine admits that it is "hardly what was prescribed for my generation!" (78). But she makes it clear that her life and family is a choice, telling Luke that "sometimes I think, if I hadn't met Phil, if

I met someone else, what would that be like? What would my life be like this instant? But I did meet Phil” (79). Likewise Tina grieves when she miscarries again, wanting to “remember them individually” (222). Don and Tina’s is a relationship of dialogue, one in which they have come to terms with their desire for children and their inability to do so.

The narrative style of Wilkins’ novels works to suggest the contemporary subject as actively constructing and reconstructing embeddings, belongings, as a reflexive project of the self. This is a fragmented subject, uncertain in a fluid society. His focus is on the everyday, what Jennifer Lawn calls “the immediate moment, without an evident ulterior purpose, perpending fate, or authorial scheme” (213). Always in the third person, each novel unfolds a series of incidents, and is an unfolding of the focalising character’s thoughts. *Chemistry* weaves through seven characters, while *The Fainter* is mainly focalised through Luke, but for both the effect is of life as a series of small moments, not knowing their significance or otherwise. And if the subject is not a knowing one, the characters also cannot be entirely known to us. Wilkins’ management of point of view serves also to show that the significance or consequence of everyday experience is not always immediately knowable either. In a world where risk-taking is based on informed ‘free’ choice, Wilkins’ narrative structure frequently points to the impossibility of having sufficient knowledge at that time to make these choices. Such a stylistic manoeuvre is evident in the ‘flashback’ at the end of the first section of *The Fainter*. Unfolding the rat in the package gives his failure to identify the murderer significance and meaning which up until that point he had not been able to make.

Wilkins’ texts do not offer an alternative vision of the social; rather his fictional world highlights the tensions that run through neoliberalism. What he does offer though is a tempering of market forces with those of what Tina calls the ‘social contract’, what Giddens terms ‘social solidarity’; aware that reflexivity is necessary for success but is constrained not only by material conditions but also by what Bauman calls ‘presentism’. It is not only that active choice can become short-term gratification or escape (as in Jamie and Shane’s drug use), but also the risk of such choices cannot always be known. I think Wilkins would agree with Bauman’s observation that it is not so much that individuals are now “more ‘on their own’ ... what does matter is that

they are now charged with full responsibility for their false or ill-conceived steps, failures or defeats” (“A Post-Modern Grid of the Worldmap?” n. pag.). But Wilkins also suggests that social solidarity requires individual agency that attempts to work within and be aware of these constraints. Thus Don’s response to those in need is an agentic caring that is also fully aware of his, and others’, shortcomings. He considers it “a total commitment to dishonesty. And still he could think: I am doing a good” (270). It is through awareness of, and working with, such ambiguities and constraints that these texts suggest a home where the subject is never quite at ease.

¹ This is in reference to Henry James, of whom it was said “that he chewed more than he bit off.” (Radio NZ interview, 24 June 2007).

Conclusion

So do these authors confirm and expand the complexities and dichotomies of the social and cultural theories about the present day condition? Do globalisation and neoliberalism impact in ways that are specific to New Zealand? Have we not only learned the art of standing upright here but also found a way to “belong to the world” (319), as Ihimaera’s Tom Mahana states triumphantly? In the recent New Zealand fiction that I have studied there is a consideration and figuration of changing New Zealand subjectivities, including voices from usually silent margins. What these texts have in common is an articulation of a shift of the concept of ‘home’ in contemporary New Zealand.

The theorists state that the subject is an increasingly active one, expected to take charge and responsibility for their own fate. Giddens uses the terminology of choice, opportunity, responsibility and risk, rhetoric that is increasingly part of the language of social policies in contemporary New Zealand. Likewise one of Bauman’s central premises is that identity-searching is a result of a lost community of belonging. Certainly these concepts are well represented in present-day political and social rhetoric of the family. One such example is the Family Services National Advisory Council, whose “Family Outcomes Hierarchy” (2004) posits the future whanau/family in these same terms. It states that the future family has: a cultural identity (speaking “their own language”, “knowledge of their whakapapa” and “history/taonga”); makes active choices (“spiritual aspects...where they wish them”, “able to make decisions”); is actively responsible (“able to provide” by “sufficient access to resources”); takes opportunities (“participate in all aspects of life”) and takes risks (“entrepreneurial” and “own their own homes should they wish to”) (Gander and Shephard 10-11). This is but one example of the changing discourse on what it means to be ‘at home’ and part of a family as society’s historical conditions change.

Robert Chapman, in his study of mid-twentieth century fiction as a flashpoint of New Zealand society, concludes his essay with the truths that the fiction of the times reveals. He claims that there was one main social pattern at that time: that of the rigid family model and “irrelevant puritanism” (51) as a constraint on individual expression.

He observes a desperate need for “greatly extended psychological services” (50) to enable women to accommodate stress and thus reinforcing the existing patterns and roles of society. These services would release the burden on the wife and mother and allow a greater Christian understanding, meaning that all subjects within the family could be happier.

It is interesting to compare Chapman’s analysis of a rigidly homogeneous social structure in the mid-twentieth century to the fiction of the present. His argument seems circular, in that he states that literature shows that the social pattern is restrictive, yet the answer he comes up with is a repetition of that same pattern (tempered by understanding for women but no actual change in their role). That said however, his call for a liberal humanitarianism of understanding and communication is similar to that which Giddens, Bauman and Hall appeal. Fifty years after Chapman’s survey the picture of society that fiction presents is one of heterogeneity, of belonging through community rather than nation. Now it is not that social services are lacking; it is that underpinning characters’ plight is a social disembeddedness. This study of four contemporary New Zealand authors gives not a singular social pattern, but a diversity of patterns exacerbated by widening economic disparity as neoliberalism extends the reach of the market into the social and state realms. It is the desire to belong (which in Chapman is assumed to be a national and community belonging through expected and rigid social roles), the affect of the social, which cannot be satisfied by the market.

An analysis of the fiction confirms to a large extent what Bauman, Giddens, Hall, Massey and Bhabha claim about society of the present day, although to varying degrees. What is most interesting is that while all cultural theorists emphasise the increasing importance of identity as belonging in today’s world, what comes through in the fiction is that it is largely the economic condition of poverty that denies the subject access to the resources for such identity building. Hall makes this point throughout his work, making it clear that economic marginalisation provides the base for globalising capital expansion. So while it is no longer popular to make class divisions (apart from the abject underclass), as according to neoliberalism and Third Way policies subjects make free and informed rational choice, such class divisions are clearly present in the characters in New Zealand fiction, and have a strong bearing on the opportunities available and the risks those opportunities carry.

It is still the crucible of family that cuts across the fictional worlds of these texts. Ihimaera's Tom Mahana asks "what shape was the New Zealand family taking, as new pressures, new challenges, new blood took us all beyond traditional kinships?" (*Rope of Man* 314). These pressures and challenges include those of the articulation, recognition and negotiation of difference. They also include the social consequences of what Jane Kelsey has called "The New Zealand Experiment" of neo-liberal economic policies that have significantly widened the income gap. Giddens points to the paradox of neo-liberalism with its financial and individual freedoms bound to family and national conservatism; in New Zealand as elsewhere this results in tensions that devolve responsibility onto individuals and communities while at the same time undercut their collective cohesion and power. This can be seen in Tawhai's economic underclass and their inability to make rational market choices, Grimshaw's wealthy whose individualism results in a empty freedom without family, Ihimaera's tensions between traditional family and culture and that of identity through community of sexuality, and Wilkins' families who struggle to find a balance between social cohesion and individual actualisation.

Although the social patterns in the worlds of the fiction studied vary significantly, what is common is the positing of the successful, actualising subject as actively reflexive, aware and tolerant of ambivalence. This is an ambivalence that allows for fluid constructions of self and belonging, but is also tempered with the social need for collectivity to support family and community structures over time. What is also common is the difficulty of this position when a market-force rationale increasingly encroaches on the social, and its contingency on material conditions. There is also a shared desire to belong by characters in these texts, but shifting constructions of what such belonging might be. For all it is the concept of 'home' that provides an embedding and security of belonging; something that can be imagined, something that can shift, something that at times even disappears.

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