Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Anticolonial Ecofeminism and Indigenous Women's Fiction

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
English

at Massey University, New Zealand.

Danielle Duff

2023

Table of Contents

Abstract

Novels written by Indigenous women often portray an intimate relationship with the environment, shaped by an intersectional understanding of race, gender and class, while also examining how it is negatively impacted by colonialism and capitalism. Indigenous ecofeminism provides a means of exploring women's connections to the environment and recognising more specifically how Indigeneity affects this relationship. Drawing on theories of ecofeminism, postcolonialism and Indigenous studies, I analyse four novels written by women from different Indigenous cultures that also display considerable formal variety: Chantal T. Spitz's (Mā'ohi) *Island of Shattered Dreams* (2007); Patricia Grace's (Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Raukawa, and Te Āti Awa) *Potiki* (1986); Alexis Wright's (Waanyi) *The Swan Book* (2013)*;* and Linda Hogan's (Chickasaw) *Solar Storms* (1994). Through exploration of form, plot, themes, and characterisation I argue that each novelist articulates a unique narrative vision of anticolonial, Indigenous ecofeminism. My analysis of each novel is guided by the author's cultural background, with each chapter adopting a distinct methodology informed by that culture's mythologies, cultural specificities, and historiographies. Viewed collectively, I also argue that these novels reveal similarities that define an Indigenous ecofeminist literary tradition, including non-linear temporality, the privileging of oral storytelling and mythology, and imagining the sovereignty of land and mind. This thesis argues that literature written by Indigenous women presents a powerful means of transmitting vital cultural, ecological, and feminist insights.

Acknowledgements

To Indigenous women authors – including Chantal T. Spitz, Patricia Grace, Alexis Wright, and Linda Hogan – for bringing your stories into the world and sharing your knowledge with us.

To the Indigenous women scholars and scholars of colour who have come before me and paved the way for this research to come to fruition.

To Massey University, Sir Alan Stewart, and the Marsden Fund, thank you for the financial support that allowed me to pursue this research. I am eternally grateful.

To my co-workers and Rachel McRae, for your flexibility and graciousness that allowed me to complete this thesis while working.

To my supervisor Associate Professor Philip Steer for your encouragement, guidance, and patience. I am endlessly grateful for your feedback and how generous you are with your time and energy. This would not exist without you.

To my family and friends. Thank you to my mum, Trudy, for your steadfast and unwavering belief in me. Thank you to my dad, Chris, for instilling in me the drive to better understand our culture. I hope I've made you both proud. To Rebecca, Faith, Alex, Cheby, and Lola Glo – thank you for being an important part of my support system. To Ellen, for sending me memes that got me through long days. To my nana Alison Bowden and my koro Joe Duff.

To my extended whānau, hapū and iwi. In particular, the many strong wāhine Māori in my life. Thank you for inspiring me with your resilience and intelligence.

To Kenta, for absolutely everything.

A Note on the Use of Indigenous Languages

This thesis explores novels that employ a variety of Indigenous languages. While I have used translations where these are provided in the text, there are a variety of instances in which translations are not provided and I have respected that choice by not providing my own. For many Indigenous cultures, the act of mistranslation and/or anglicisation of Native words constitutes a form of colonisation. To translate Indigenous words into English, by nature, extracts them from their necessary cultural context. In te reo Māori, for example, it is difficult to translate terms into English as words can have multiple meanings dependent on the context in which they are used. As this research is firmly grounded within Indigenous contexts, a glossary is not provided.

Introduction

Ecofeminism is a theoretical field concerned with the connection between women and the natural environment that emerged out of an awareness of their shared domination by capitalist structures. French feminist scholar Françoise d'Eaubonne, widely considered to have coined the term ecofeminism, argues that women and nature "are connected by a unique matrix, that of dominion" (qtd. in Valera 10). The foundation of the woman-nature connection has been theorised by many more scholars, with most arguments grounded in the "ties of body, spirituality, fertility, and female reproduction" (Wilson 333). Noël Sturgeon expands upon d'Eaubonne's definition of ecofeminism, claiming that this matrix illuminates the "connections between environmentalisms and feminisms; more precisely, it articulates the theory that the ideologies that authorise injustices based on gender, race, and class are related to the ideologies that sanction the exploitation and degradation of the environment" (Sturgeon 23). This is now a contentious viewpoint, however, as many argue that this naturalises the subjugation of both women and the environment. A more positive framing is offered by Australian ecofeminist scholar Val Plumwood, who argues that "one essential feature of all ecological feminist positions is that they give positive value to a connection of women with nature which was previously, in the west, given negative cultural value and which was the main ground of women's devaluation and oppression" (*Feminism* 8). In this light, ecofeminism does not merely articulate how women and nature have been affected by their shared dominion by oppressive systems including patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism, but it is also dedicated to prescribing a positive value to these links.

Indigenous perspectives – particularly those of women – have historically been omitted from dominant ecofeminist theory. Indeed, "mainstream ecofeminism has a history of placing white middle-class women as the central object of concern, while excluding the experiences and voices of

Indigenous and Black communities, peoples of colour, and trans women" (Carrière 18). In 2014, prominent ecofeminist scholar Greta Gaard asked, "where do Indigenous women's perspectives appear in the environmental humanities?" (7). Ten years on, there now exists a plethora of Indigenous women's voices in the environmental humanities, and especially in the growing sub-field of Indigenous ecofeminism. As the field currently stands, "transnational and global perspectives [including those of Indigenous women] on feminist theory have … become widely accepted as a significant strand of feminist theory and politics" as the "concept of intersectionality has increasingly driven theoretical innovation" (McCann et al. 13). There are parallel epistemologies, including the field of feminist ecology, which have also appeared in recent years and "extend ecofeminism's scope" namely by "adopting intersectional analysis as a core practice" (Carrière 17). Many Indigenous scholars have adopted, adapted, and extended ecofeminist theory in their research. In many Indigenous cultures, there exist historical cultural connections between nature and women that cannot be adequately discussed from a western ecofeminist standpoint. Marie Carrière argues that "several Indigenous societies consider Indigenous women to be active pillars in their communities and ecological responsibilities – despite colonialism's disturbances of family and political structures" (18). This connection manifests in myriad ways – or not at all, in some cases – as each Indigenous culture is highly diverse and varied. In this thesis, I have chosen to focus on four Indigenous cultures: Māori, Mā'ohi, Aboriginal Australian, and First Nations Native American. These are broad, umbrella terms which encapsulate many different communities within a geographic region. There are iwi, tribes, and mobs who do not subscribe to the belief systems or cultural values being conveyed by the authors I have chosen to discuss. Even within a country, Indigenous peoples are not homogenous.

Palestinian scholar Edward Said argued in *Culture and Imperialism* that "because of the presence of the colonising outsider, the land is recoverable at first only through imagination" (66). For many Indigenous peoples living in settler states or previously colonised nations, this is one of

the many reasons why literature is an essential medium for articulating ideas related to colonialism and the environment. Across the globe, Indigenous peoples have offered anticolonial, ecofeminist visions through novelised narratives. These stories utilise cultural and environmental knowledge to imagine land sovereignty, environmental sustainability, and acts of resistance to achieve decolonisation. At the same time, Indigenous women also suffer from the compounding effects of gendered oppression. Consequently, literature written by Indigenous women not only examines the issues of colonialism and environmental degradation, but also the intersections between gender, race, culture, and class. An anticolonial ecofeminist framework is valuable for analysing these interconnected and inextricable issues.

As a Māori (Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Te Arawa) and Pākehā woman, intersectionality is a lived experience for me. For me, the exploration of how Indigenous and settler groups interact with one another is pertinent to my own identity. When this question of cultural identity aligns itself with my other scholarly interests in literature, feminism, and ecology, multiple questions arise. How do Indigenous women combat and navigate environmental crises? How are Indigenous women affected by the compounding effects of gendered, colonial, and environmental oppression? How do Indigenous authors seek to recover and repair their relationship to their lands through fiction? Upon researching the subject, it became clear there is an entire literary canon of Indigenous literature written by women across the globe that is actively answering these questions and asking more of their own. In this thesis, I analyse how four Indigenous women authors articulate their own unique ecofeminist vision through literature, taking their geographic and cultural context into account.

Literature written by Indigenous women is plentiful, rich, and highly pertinent to our current social and environmental climate. Women from a plethora of ethnic and cultural backgrounds have been writing works of fiction that explore a variety of social issues and contribute to the literary canon not only of Indigenous literature, but literature as a whole. However, Indigenous women are not a monolith. There are crucial specificities which must be considered when examining literature

written by any Indigenous person. My overall thesis uses the term Indigenous liberally throughout, as I seek to discover and interpret the similarities and differences within the literature written by different Indigenous women. On an international scale, I employ the term Indigenous to describe peoples who were the inhabitants of a territory before the arrival of settlers. In this sense, the term 'Indigenous' might nevertheless appear problematic, as "a category created by colonialism, and the term obscures the vast majority of the Indigenous peoples of the earth, suggesting a single homogenous culture which does not exist" (Kwaymullina 194). In each respective chapter, therefore, I have taken the utmost care to analyse each novel within its relevant cultural, social, geographic, and historical context and use the descriptors each author employs for themselves. For example, while it may be technically correct to refer to Patricia Grace as an Indigenous woman, she is a Māori woman first and foremost. While I do proudly identify as Indigenous, I do not identify with three of the four Indigenous cultures explored in this research. My aim is not to speak for any cultural group – Māori included – but to use this opportunity to "create space for other Indigenous people, a logic and ethics that is at the heart of all Indigenous activist and cultural connections" (Somerville "Backstage" 76).

The four novels I have chosen to analyse in this thesis comprise merely a small sample of the richness and diversity of ecofeminist literature written by Indigenous women. I have read widely to explore the questions in this thesis, undertaking in-depth consideration about which cultures to analyse, and considering numerous writers within those cultures. The novels I have chosen to explore have made significant contributions to the literary canon within their country of origin. I also considered how these narratives and cultures worked as a collective, and curated this particular group as each text contrasts with the others at the level of genre, form, and plot structure. Together, these novels present a useful example of the variety and depth of literature written by Indigenous women across the globe. These novels are products of the respective cultures of each author, but they should not be interpreted as fully representative of the writing a culture has to offer.

Alice Te Punga Somerville's warning that reading a "narrow range of Māori representations can lead people to think that *real* Māori people look or act or feel a narrow range of ways" applies to all representations of Indigenous peoples in this thesis ("English" 95). For example, Alexis Wright's novel *The Swan Book* (2013) is *an* Aboriginal novel, but it is not the only Aboriginal novel and is not presented here as the only way that Aboriginal peoples write fiction. I also acknowledge that all the women authors – and all the women characters – I am analysing in this thesis identify as cis-women, presenting a limited view of Indigenous womanhood that lacks the perspectives of trans, non-binary, and other takatāpui peoples. Through this research, I engage in the politics of listening in a way that creates space for the voices of Indigenous women to be heard. In addition to writing about Indigenous authors, I have endeavoured to include the theories of a multitude of Indigenous scholars, women scholars, and scholars of colour. As described by feminist scholar Sara Ahmed, feminism – and diversity more broadly – is at stake in "how we generate knowledge; in how we write; in how we cite" and thus, my citations act as "feminist bricks" through which I have created this intersectional, feminist dwelling (16). In all cases, I aim to write from – and towards – a "way of being that embodies respect for Indigenous women's sovereignty" (Kwaymullina 205). I echo the sentiment of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in that "I hope that what is written here provides space for further dialogue within a framework that privileges the Indigenous presence, that uses 'the words' (such as colonialism, decolonisation, self-determination), and that acknowledges our continuing existence" (6).

In the first chapter, I analyse Chantal T. Spitz's novel *Island of Shattered Dreams* (1991; trans. 2007) *(L'ile des rêves écrasés* in the original Mā'ohi). As the first novel published by a Tahitian Mā'ohi woman, *Island of Shattered Dreams* is essential reading within the Pacific literary canon. Following four generations of a Mā'ohi family living on the fictional island of Maeva, the novel explores how Emere, Tematua and their children Terii, Eritapeta, and Tetiare are affected when France occupies their homeland as a nuclear missile base and wreaks devastation on their

cultural sovereignty and environment through nuclear experimentation. Through her discussions of nuclear experimentation in Te Ao Mā'ohi, resistance, and orality – all of which are grounded in the history of Tahiti – Spitz's novel presents a strong example of Oceanic Ecofeminism.

In Chapter Two, I focus on Māori author Patricia Grace's (Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Raukawa, and Te Āti Awa) novel, *Potiki* (1986). The Tamihana whānau – including parents Roimata and Hemi, and their children Mary, James, Tangimoana, and the potiki of the family, Toko – have lived on their land for generations. When developers seek to buy their ancestral land, the community fights to assert its cultural significance and prevent the development which will degrade their land and the surrounding waterways. Grounded in Te Ao Māori, the foundation of *Potiki* relies on Māori mythology and cosmology to weave a narrative about the importance of the land to cultural survivance, whakapapa, and Māori culture at large. To contextualise ecofeminism within Te Ao Māori, I interpret the novel through the theoretical lens of Mana Wāhine. As such, I analyse *Potiki* as not only an anticolonial ecofeminist text, but as a novel guided by the principles of Mana Wāhine.

The third chapter interprets how Waanyi (Aboriginal Australian) author Alexis Wright's dystopian novel *The Swan Book* (2013) articulates its ecofeminist narrative. As Oblivia Finch navigates her dystopic world as an Aboriginal woman suffering from severe trauma, and with the unique ability to speak with animals and Country itself, she is kidnapped by Warren Finch who seeks to become Australia's first Aboriginal President. Traversing Country and city, this novel explores the climate crisis through a magical realist lens that has been recontextualised within an Aboriginal framework. From this perspective, *The Swan Book* explores ideas vital to anticolonialism and ecofeminism in Australia – including Country, and environmental and colonial trauma – but refuses to imagine a utopian ecofeminist future. Instead, Wright offers insight to the harrowing future ahead for all civilisation if the voices of Aboriginal people, native animals, and the land itself continue to go unheard.

In my final chapter, I turn to Native American literature by examining Linda Hogan's (Chickasaw) *Solar Storms* (1994). As a prolific and prominent writer, Hogan's work has contributed to the Native American Renaissance and to the American literary canon more broadly. This novel centres on Angel Jensen, who was abandoned by her mother as a young girl and forced into the foster system, but returns to her reservation to connect with her matrilineal ancestors, including Bush, Dora-Rouge, and Agnes. When the women hear about a hydroelectric dam being constructed on the ancestral land where Dora-Rouge was born, they embark upon a treacherous journey to halt the development so as to preserve the environment and their culture. By following young, Native protagonist Angel on her coming-of-age journey, Hogan proposes that through a return to nature, community involvement, and immersion in Native culture, healing can occur at an individual, community, and societal level. This healing includes the capability to heal the earth through the revival of traditional Native methods such as ceremony, and through cultivating innate Native gifts, including the power of land stewardship.

Each novel offers a unique ecofeminist vision, yet they also display thematic and formal similarities that cast light on the Indigenous ecofeminist literary canon. As Mā'ohi, Māori, Aboriginal, and Native American cultures all value nature and privilege the concepts of interdependence and reciprocity, there are threads of these themes evident in each text. Each culture also has a strong history of oral storytelling, a non-linear conception of temporality, and is guided by ancient cosmology and mythology. These cultural features translate to formal techniques woven throughout these texts: non-linear narrative structures are prevalent, the written word takes on the qualities of an oral tale, and boundaries between the realm of the mythological and the material are blurred. When analysed as a collective, it is clear that not only does an Indigenous ecofeminist literary canon exist, but that these texts offer vital insights for the act of decolonisation, environmental preservation and cultural survivance.

Chapter 1: Chantal T. Spitz's *Island of Shattered Dreams* and Oceanic Ecofeminism

Chantal T. Spitz is the first Mā'ohi, or Indigenous Tahitian, author to have published a novel with her politically charged debut, *L'ile des rêves écrasés* (1991), subsequently translated into English by Jean Anderson as *Island of Shattered Dreams* (2007). This feat – alongside her numerous other literary achievements that have taken place after this release – established Spitz within the Indigenous Pacific literary canon. Born in Pape'ete, Tahiti, Spitz is a political activist and prolific author who has written several fictive works since the publication of her debut novel, as well as co-founding the literary magazine *Littérama'ohi* to showcase Indigenous voices within French Polynesia. The themes of Spitz's works are largely centred around colonialism, environmentalism, and Indigenous rights. Yet, her works are not easily categorised as either anti-colonialist fiction, environmental fiction, or "Indigenous" fiction. Spitz also transgresses Western genre boundaries through her blending of poetry and prose, and through her implementation of linguistic innovations including unique grammatical structures (Anderson "Translating"). As described by Spitz herself, her work is "polyformed polylingual polycolored / so very polynesian" ("J'écris" 245).

Set in Tahiti from the Second World War through to the late twentieth century, *Island of Shattered Dreams* follows three generations of Mā'ohi and Papa'ā (Native Tahitian and European settler) characters as they experience love, and crises of cultural identity whilst in the throes of environmental and political turmoil, culminating in French nuclear experimentation on the islands. The novel begins on the small island of Ruahine with Tematua, son of Maevarua and Teuira, as he is sent to fight for the French "motherland" in the second world war (Spitz 26). Parallel to this storyline is that of *demi* (a Mā'ohi term referring to a mixed-race person of Mā'ohi and Papa'ā descent) Emily/Emere who is born on the island of Rāhiti to her Mā'ohi mother Toofa and her English father, Charles Williams. Tematua returns to Tahiti five years after his deployment, one of few Mā'ohi men to survive the war, and meets Emere while she is visiting her father's land. The

two fall in love and have three children: Terii, Eritapeta, and Tetiare. After many years of enjoying the simple life they built together on Ruahine, steeped in Mā'ohi custom and tradition, the French government announces plans to establish a nuclear missile launch site, the Pacific Experimentation Centre, on their island. The petitions and protests of the Mā'ohi community go unheard, and Charles Williams betrays his offspring by selling his expansive land on Ruahine to allow the nuclear base's construction. French scientist Laura Lebrun moves to Ruahine to work on the nuclear project and she and Terii fall in love, despite her role in the destruction of his homeland. Several years later, the first missile is launched, and Laura's assignment comes to an end. She moves back to France and leaves behind a bereft Terii and a changed Tahiti that has been ravaged by the introduction of capitalism, colonialism, and environmental degradation.

In my analysis, I will be examining the translated version of *L'ile des rêves écrasés, Island of Shattered Dreams,* and will refer to the novel using its translated title from this point forward to maintain clarity. This is due to the limitations of my linguistic capabilities, as the original novel was written in the reo Mā'ohi francophone dialect. Yet, the colonialist implications of using an English title over the original Mā'ohi one should not be understated. A name is not arbitrary, and for Indigenous peoples, the anglicisation of traditional names is another tool in an oppressive, colonialist system. In this spirit, I will continue to refer to French Polynesia as Te Ao Mā'ohi, meaning the Mā'ohi world or Mā'ohi worldview, to avoid colonialist phrasing where possible. Dina El Dessouky explains the importance of replacing French Polynesia with this phrase: "Te Ao Mā'ohi conceptually accounts for Mā'ohi sovereign subjectivity, but challenges the notion that the islands are defined by an anthropocentric and geopolitically bounded nation" (255). Additionally, there is no doubt that the text loses some of its distinctive linguistic and structural peculiarities through the act of translation; indeed, "there is no substitute for writing about the subaltern in the subaltern's own language" (Subramani 159). Yet, the novel's translator Jean Anderson is acutely aware of the complexities involved in translating an Indigenous text into English, and has enacted

several strategies to enhance the novel's Mā'ohi values and respect the cultural intricacies embedded in the original text. These strategies include maintaining the capitalisation of words that have particular cultural significance, leaving several cultural references unchanged, and attempting to differentiate between the written and spoken word through italicisation in order to uphold and illustrate the value and prevalence of oral storytelling in Native Tahitian culture. In the original reo Mā'ohi, unique linguistic features are used to differentiate the written word, 'mot', from the spoken word, 'parole', utilised by the Mā'ohi characters as a form of ancient rhetoric; in the English translation, the Mā'ohi parole is written as verses with a poetic cadence, reminiscent of oral speech. These italicised verses are interspersed throughout the novel.

It is also pertinent to define my use of the term Mā'ohi, which I will be employing throughout my argument. French Polynesia encompasses 118 islands and atolls that comprise "five geologically, historically, and culturally distinct archipelagos" ("Te Ao Ma'ohi" 11). Although Indigenous Tahitian – also known as Mā'ohi – is the dominant ethnic group in French Polynesia, there are many ethnic groups that form the "exhaustive combinations of *métissage,* such as the ethnic/racial/cultural mixtures that can entail a combination of any other descents merged with Mā'ohi," including European, Chinese, Melanesian, or Asian (Mateata-Allain 3). Kareva Mateata-Allain warns against portraying French Polynesia as home to a singular homogenous and monological 'native'. Instead, she explains that due to the various *métissés* (referring to people born of mixed racial and cultural ancestry) found within Te Ao Mā'ohi, the designation of a Mā'ohi identity requires more than Indigenous ancestry, and instead necessitates cultural, political, spiritual, and physical involvement. To be Mā'ohi is to be engaged in a local consciousness and to share a sense of symbolic national identity which Mateata-Allain coins "*Mā'ohinété"* (4). Holding ancestral ties to the fenua (land), enacting "Mā'ohi values" such as speaking reo Mā'ohi, practicing ancient traditions and rites, and maintaining a connection to the land are all examples of participating in Mā'ohinété and establishing oneself as Mā'ohi (Mateata-Allain 4). In the context of

Island of Shattered Dreams, this distinction is inherent to a deeper understanding not only of the Mā'ohi characters and the significance of their engagement with their cultural practices and history, but also of Emere's struggle with her identity as a *demi* woman and the challenged faced by her children as *métissés.*

Julia L. Frengs argues that "for Indigenous Oceanic women, anticolonial struggles often take precedence over feminist struggles" (294). Yet, the inextricability of these issues for Indigenous women renders any precedence illusory. My argument is that *Island of Shattered Dreams* presents an Oceanic ecofeminist perspective in which people and land are innately linked, and therefore colonialist and environmental issues are bonded to feminist struggles. *Island of Shattered Dreams* advances these claims by asserting connections between women and nature, and exploring how environmental degradation caused by nuclear colonialism and capitalist systems catalyses myriad consequences for the corporeal health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples – particularly women – but also for their essential spiritual and cultural connections to their environment.

Representing women and the environment

The coalescence of anti-colonialist, feminist, and environmental struggles in *Island of Shattered Dreams* is based upon the affiliation it asserts between Indigenous women and the environment. The land itself is frequently personified throughout the novel as a womanly figure, but this is not presented as a simple essentialism but is grounded in the mythologies and cosmologies of Mā'ohi culture. The prologue of the novel opens with a traditional Mā'ohi creation myth in which the earth and sky are separated to create Te Ao Mārama – the world of light – featuring prominent women figures: "Tetuamarama, the moon, with her long silver hair, is spreading her sequined carpet above the world. Tetuamarama … offers the shining caress of her light to Ruahine, the Land sanctified by

the blood of her sons. Moanaurifa, the bountiful sea, stretches herself voluptuously over the sand" (14). By opening the novel with this creation story, the narrative is contextualised within Te Ao Mā'ohi – the Mā'ohi worldview – and can be interpreted as taking an anti-colonial position, particularly as this version takes precedence over the Christian story of creation.

Spitz furthers the link between Indigenous women and nature through use of figurative language. An unnamed narrator describes the arrival of early Christian settlers on Te Ao Mā'ohi and their initial perceptions of the Mā'ohi women:

> Vahine Mā'ohi …
>
> Daughter of the sun
>
> Daughter of the moon
>
> Your long black hair cascading down
>
> Like waterfalls cascading on the mountains
>
> Your great dark eyes
>
> Like the sea and its infinite depths. (15)

In Mā'ohi culture, Indigenous peoples are tied to nature genealogically through their lineage as sons and daughters of the many goddesses responsible for creating and presiding over their natural world. The physical likenesses asserted between women and nature are indicative of this heritage, bringing the reader's attention to their ancestry as daughters of Tetuamarama and Moanaurifa. As Mā'ohi women are likened to nature, so is nature likened to women. Early in the novel, Maevarua performs the sacred rites of burying the placenta of his newborn son, Tematua: "he opens up the belly of the bountiful mother, places the placenta gently within, putting a young tumu'uru on top of it … the placenta nourished Tematua inside Teuira, the tumu'uru will nourish him through his life as a man" (24). Both the personification of the land as a mother and the ancient practice of placing pu fenua (a newborn's umbilical cord and/or placenta) in the earth speak to the significant cultural connection between Mā'ohi, particularly women, and nature, that has been forged over centuries.

Figurative language is used to illustrate these vital connections between women and nature throughout the novel, fostered by the deep, ancestral links between Mā'ohi and their land. Yet, as we are grounded in Te Ao Mā'ohi from the novel's first passages, the novel's cultural context elucidates the fact that these are not merely metaphors.

Throughout history, women have been associated with nature due to their perceived naturality, maternal instincts, and biological ability to reproduce (Valera). This association frequently manifests itself as the Mother Nature or Mother Earth metaphor, which is widely considered problematic as this "may lead to an idealised figure of nature, reifying the position that women are … intended for reproductive purposes only" (Teodorescu 77). However, approaching this dualism from a Mā'ohi perspective problematises this common critique, as the affiliation present in *Island in Shattered Dreams* is grounded in an Indigenous cultural context often absent from the works of popular literature and the popular feminist and environmental theories which engender this position. Indeed, a plethora of Indigenous cultures – particularly those found in the Pacific – have associated women with nature for millennia. At the 1997 Pacific World Heritage Program, founded by the World Heritage Committee, the representatives of the Pacific Islands spoke of their "inseparable connection between the outstanding seascapes and landscapes in the Pacific Islands … woven together by rich histories, oral and life traditions of the Pacific Island peoples" (Jones and Smith 9). In Mā'ohi culture, this connection can be found as far back as the origin of the term Mā'ohi itself. Turo A. Raapoto describes the etymology of the word, and how this relates to the integral relationship between Indigenous peoples and nature:

> Ohi refers to a sprout which has already taken root, securing itself with a certain autonomy of life, all the while being linked to the mother stem. From a sprout, an ohi, tracing back its roots, one always gets to a trunk. Mā'ohi is the community of all those who claim to be of the same past, culture and language, which constitute the common trunk, and which still have the same destiny. (15)

Raapoto feminises the life-giving trunk, referring to it as the "mother," and through this asserts the depth of the connection between Indigenous women and nature.

The link between Mā'ohi and land is reflected and strengthened through the customary burial of the pu fenua on native soil. Mā'ohi political activist and poet Henri Hiro explains this connection between land and mother/woman in an interview: "the mother is the symbol of the direct link, the parental link; the land is the mother. That genealogical linkage is the umbilical cord, the *pu fenua*, the placenta" (Mai et al. 81). Pu fenua translates to "core/heart/essence of the earth," and "to return the placenta and umbilical cord to the earth is to recognise several essential connections: between child and family, between place of birth and place of planting, and between one's island and one's cultural knowledge" (Kahn 24). Upon examination, it becomes clear that while all Mā'ohi people are connected to their homelands, women and nature hold the strongest bond, as nature has been historically personified as a woman, and only women have the power to give birth and carry on the tradition of pu fenua burial; Kahn asserts that within Mā'ohi culture, "the land and the mother … are seen as so deeply intertwined that they are referred to as one and the same" (24). Through the integration of ancient rites, such as burying the pu fenua, incorporating stories of Mā'ohi woman deities and using figurative language to illuminate the connections between woman and nature, Spitz continues a longstanding cultural tradition that lies entirely outside of Western feminist ideas.

In her introduction to *Women and Nature?: Beyond Dualism in Gender, Body, and Environment,* Karen Ya-Chu Yang argues that for early supporters of the ecofeminist movement:

> the realignment between women and nature is not an essentialist return to feminisations of nature or naturalisations of women that previous feminist movements have fought hard to dismantle; on the contrary, ecofeminism argues for critical deconstructions of historical, cultural, and social dominions of women and nature for a favour of a more complex, diversified, and hybrid bridging of the relationship between women and nature (3)

According to Yang, these ideas are held in opposition. Yet, although *Island of Shattered Dreams* inarguably naturalises women and feminises nature, it does so to enable a more complex "bridging" of the relationship between women and nature. Indigenous ecofeminist literature requires a more nuanced perspective due to its additional cultural and historical contexts. Julia L. Frengs coined the term "Oceanic Ecofeminism" to describe the "somewhat paradoxical writings of [Oceanic Indigenous] authors who, while denouncing violence against women and nature, might also ostensibly essentialise women and nature in ways that feminists from other areas find problematic" (296). Indeed, while it is evident that strands of Western feminism might find the conflation of women and nature present in *Island of Shattered Dreams* problematic, this idea can only be considered paradoxical if viewed within the confines of Western feminist ideology. When viewed through an Indigenous lens, the idea is not self-contradictory at all, but an inevitable manifestation of the several aspects of Indigenous culture and history that inform this understanding of the material relationship between women and nature. When approached from an Indigenous position, it becomes clear that these two ideas do not have to be mutually exclusive and that the complex relationship between women and nature found in many Indigenous cultures has not been forged by shared domination – which for many communities is an alien phenomenon that has only recently been ushered in by colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy – but by cultural beliefs, practices, and ancient rites passed down for centuries.

Critiquing environmental damage

Spitz utilises the connection between Indigenous women and nature to critique the environmental devastation transpiring in Te Ao Mā'ohi. *Island of Shattered Dreams* spans several generations, each of which face their own colonialist and subsequent environmental challenges, but much of the

narrative takes place during the volatile period of nuclear experimentation on the Pacific atolls of Moruroa and Fangataufa at the behest of the French government. France detonated 193 nuclear and thermonuclear bombs in the thirty years between 1966 and 1996, with devastating ramifications for the islands and their inhabitants (Maurer). Although a fictionalised account, *Island of Shattered Dreams* features many historically accurate details of this period, including the presence of Charles de Gaulle – referred to only as the President-General throughout the text – at the first missile launch, protests against the nuclear experimentation, and the damage to the environment and health of the locals (Barrillot and Doom). The French government claimed that these experiments would beget economic prosperity for Mā'ohi brought about by what Teresa Teaiwa termed "militourism" – "a phenomenon by which military or paramilitary force ensures the smooth running of a tourist industry, and that same tourist industry masks the military force behind it" (251). Instead, these experiments poisoned the land through nuclear radiation, which is manifested in disproportionate levels of cancer among the local inhabitants, while many locals were also displaced through the building of resorts and hotels in preparation for the expected tourists. As a catalyst for so much harm, the military occupation of Te Ao Mā'ohi can be more aptly categorised as a form of "nuclear colonialism" in which "imperial countries militarily occupy and irreversibly pollute the lands and natural resources of communities, far away from their own economic and political centers, in order to further the development of their nuclear technologies" (Maurer 396).

In *Island of Shattered Dreams,* as the Mā'ohi people are linked to their environment, their struggles are also inextricably woven together with the surrounding environmental degradation caused by nuclear colonialism. Jean Anderson writes in the introduction of the English translation of the novel that "subtly yet clearly, the suffering of the characters is linked to the desecration of their Land" ("Introduction" 6). When it is announced that the missile launch site will be constructed on the island of Ruahine – their ancestral home – the novel's Mā'ohi protagonists are bereft. The narrator observes that "nothing has prepared the inhabitants of Ruahine for this sudden,

uncontrollable explosion" (76); a play on words describing both the outburst of emotional pain felt by the locals, and the physical eruptions set to irrevocably damage their island. Emere writes a lamenting poem that imagines the pain felt by the land itself:

> you who welcomed my roots
>
> allowing my soul to grow
>
> Maeva Land of my children
>
> we stood tall in the light
>
> now we are brought low in shame …
>
> losing the immortal Land of our Fathers. (69)

Anderson reflects the original text in choosing to capitalise "Land" throughout the novel. The capitalisation conveys the Mā'ohi understanding of their land as an entity and reflects the frequent personification of land as a woman. Emere laments the loss of their land, but she is also lamenting the loss of an important figure in her life who serves as the genealogical connection between her family and the land of her ancestors past. Her daughter Tetiare experiences a visceral reaction to the announcement, as the "words cut deep into her spirit, a bloody shard, tearing the flesh and ripping the soul … time passes, dredging inside her the sharp stones of suffering … fossilised" (70). The "tearing" and "ripping" of her soul serve as metaphors for the corporeal devastation that the missiles – in Tetiare's case, "sharp stones of suffering" – are set to wreak on her homeland. These feelings reflect the entanglement of nature and body, evidenced by the burial of her pito which inscribes the love of her land "in her belly" (70). As Tetiare feels stunted and "fossilised" by this news, so too will Maeva soon be fossilised by the impending nuclear fallout that will blanket the island.

The Mā'ohi concept of land as a life-giving mother is perverted to illustrate how nuclear experimentation will cleave the Mā'ohi connection to their land. French scientist Laura Lebrun finds "construction plans showing the placement of silos, the concrete wombs nurturing the

missiles, hideous objects implanted after the rape of the belly of the Land" (85). The rape of the island and the implantation of the nuclear missiles in the "concrete wombs" – once again personifying and feminising Mā'ohi land – can be perceived as the colonial converse to the ancient practice of pito burial which has connected Mā'ohi women, including Tetiare, to their land for generations. Instead of the pu fenua being placed within the belly of the land, the land is embedded with alien objects made from concrete; a foreign material of industry and colonialism which also evokes a sense of sterility and lifelessness antithetical to Tetiare's bountiful land which has nourished her. Emere and Tetiare share and reflect the pain felt by the land at the hands of nuclear colonialism, as not only are these Mā'ohi women losing their land in the material realm, but the theoretical umbilical cord which connects Mā'ohi to their land through pito burial is being irrevocably severed.

Yet, the introduction of nuclear colonialism is merely the latest manifestation of colonialism to affect the people and the environment of Te Ao Mā'ohi. Through its multi-generational narrative, *Island of Shattered Dreams* conveys how Indigenous people have been affected by colonialism since the first Papa'ā settlers arrived on Polynesian shores. The novel prefaces the main narrative with a history of colonialism on Te Ao Mā'ohi; Tematua – the divine voice of the Land and the protagonist Tematua's namesake – prophesies that the settlers will "take our Land for themselves, they will overturn our established order, and the sacred birds of land and sea will gather to mourn" (14). The introduction of monotheistic religion is conveyed as the most instrumental tool in the fulfilment of this prophecy as the settlers "proclaimed their Law on Ruahine … the Word of the One True God, their God" (17). The predominant catalyst for the implementation of these laws is the increase in lustfulness and sins committed by the Papa'ā, incited by the beauty and the perceived closeness to nature of the Mā'ohi people and way of life:

> Wild Mā'ohi Land …
>
> These men and these women

These splendid naked bodies

Making the others' pale bodies

Tremble with rising desire

These dances, an invitation to love …

Oh Lord God who art in Heaven

Lead me not into temptation

But deliver me from evil. (17)

Subsequently, the Mā'ohi community fractured into two parties: those who aligned themselves with the new religion and those who refused. Ultimately the Mā'ohi people "began to kill one another," leaving "white faces stand[ing] proud in [their] world in tatters" (19). Spitz's fictionalised account is an accurate representation of early colonialist and religious influence in French Polynesia. Miriam Kahn describes how early settlers on Tahiti sexualised Mā'ohi people and culture, creating an image of an exotic utopia filled with lascivious and beautiful savages. This exotic image was perceived by Papa'ā as immoral and "conflicted directly with Christian beliefs," leading to efforts by French Catholic and British Protestant missionaries to civilise Tahiti from 1797 onwards (Kahn 39). As a result, Mā'ohi customs were banned, including worshipping Tahitian deities on the marae, and attempts were made to convert communal land ownership to a Westernised land tenure system (Kahn). Indeed, Tematua's prophecy came true as the settlers became harbingers of destruction – both in fiction and reality – of the traditional Mā'ohi order and way of life.

Various iterations of colonialist power are present in the storylines of each generation within *Island of Shattered Dreams,* illustrating the continuity of the colonialist presence in Te Ao Mā'ohi from the missionaries' arrival in 1797 until the novel's conclusion in the late twentieth century. Colonialist power is exerted upon young Tematua when he is called to defend France, the "motherland," against Germany in the Second World War (26). After being separated from his land, family, and culture, Tematua returns a traumatised man but begins to heal once he reconnects with

the land and realises why he never felt at home on foreign soil: “he spent the whole time wearing shoes, cramping his feet … into these coarse and heavy instruments of torture which prevent the land from communicating with those it carries” (33). This serves as a metaphor for his experience of alienation and discomfort fighting his coloniser’s war that is not his own, weakening his connection to his culture and sense of identity that is fostered by his relationship and proximity to his homeland. Tematua’s story is paralleled by that of Emily/Emere, born to a Mā’ohi mother and a wealthy Papa’ā father, Charles Williams. Driven by capitalist ideology, Charles Williams engages in colonialist activities: purchasing masses of Mā’ohi land that have previously been held as communal land owned by “several families” and are “inalienable family lands” according to ancestral law, and farming native crops for profit, therefore pushing forward the transition from Tahiti’s previous subsistence economy to a market economy (80). Yet, Charles Williams wreaks the most devastation when he agrees to sell his land to the French government, allowing them to build the Pacific Experimentation Centre. Charles Williams symbolises the compounding effects of colonialism and capitalism in Te Ao Mā’ohi and allegorises how the undermining of ancestral law and introduction of capitalism helped to usher in nuclear experimentation. Through Tematua and Emily/Emere’s storylines, *Island of Shattered Dreams* illustrates the history of colonialist presence in Te Ao Mā’ohi, allowing nuclear colonialism to be understood within context as a continuation and culmination of ongoing colonialist violence.

Nuclear colonialism and western feminism

The introduction of nuclear experimentation and the threat of environmental endangerment reveals the inherent incongruity of Mā’ohi life, culture, and traditions with the systems of capitalism and colonialism. For some of our Indigenous characters, the threat is an abstract force, unable to be

articulated in reo Mā'ohi. As Laura asks, "how can anyone explain the inexplicable, when there are no words for it in their language: base – launch – missile – laboratory – experiment – nuclear?" (78). These "inexplicable" terms are indicative of nuclear colonialism's innate incompatibility with Mā'ohi culture. As *Island of Shattered Dreams* demonstrates, the connection between person and land is actualised through the practice of pito burial, and the continuation of this process is integral to their cultural survival. At a meeting, an unnamed Mā'ohi character asks: "on what Land will we bury our children's pito? The Land does not belong to us, it belongs to the generations to come" (78). The question encompasses the essence of the irreconcilable nature of colonialism and Te Ao Mā'ohi – a future without access to their ancestral land is an impossible one, as it infringes upon their rights to cultural expression.

Nuclear colonialism permeates Mā'ohi society and hinders Indigenous land sovereignty. The Pacific Experimentation Centre ushered capitalism and industrialisation to Te Ao Mā'ohi, evident in the nation's new infrastructure which is depicted as unwanted and detrimental to the wellbeing of the local people: "sealed roads have invaded the island … multi-storied buildings rise higher and higher, replacing little houses and historic shops … the beaches, once the domain of tranquil fisherman, are now owned by those who have got rich on the back of the dazzling economic development" (129). The sacred land of the Mā'ohi is desecrated, and once again the personification of the land is used to convey the irreparable harm done to their home as the machines used to flatten the ground in preparation for the Pacific Experimentation Centre transform the land "into an immense open wound" (83). Laura looks on and "wonders whether the shiny leaves of the coconut palms also produce oxygen," highlighting how vital nature is to life – both scientifically and culturally – while she also contemplates her role in stripping the land of these resources (83). As the land is being destroyed, so too are the Mā'ohi people being slowly suffocated, as they are cut off from their land.

Yet, the incompatibility between colonialist values and Te Ao Mā'ohi is most clearly reflected through the relationship between Laura Lebrun and Spitz's Mā'ohi characters. Laura is brought to the island to work on the nuclear project and shortly falls in love with Terii, to the disapproval of Laura's French co-workers and Terii's family. In his review, Paul Sharrad argues that the characters of *Island of Shattered Dreams* serve as parts in an extended morality play, consistent with theatrical conventions found within the Pacific and emphasised by the narrator's emphasis on people's names (190). With Sharrad's insight in mind, it becomes clear that the relationship between Laura and Terii embodies the fraught relationship between France and Te Ao Mā'ohi.

France is directly aligned with Laura Lebrun to expose how western feminist values are as uncongenial to Mā'ohi values as those of colonialism and capitalism. Laura's body and spirit are shown to be incompatible with the land that nourishes the Indigenous characters. She feels as if she has arrived in a "strange world she doesn't understand, full of incomprehensible and inexplicable things" (90): "her pale, delicate skin is burned by the sun … her arms and legs are dotted with red lumps," and only her "passion for her work and her military discipline keep her from falling into a terrifying depression" (84). Although at times Laura expresses her disappointment in her colleagues, and sometimes in herself, for her colleagues' racism and their shared involvement in the destruction of the Tahitian ecosystem, she frequently perpetrates microaggressions against Indigenous characters. Upon her first visit to the village, she is unselfconscious about her surprise that the children attending church are so "clean, well-dressed and with their hair neatly combed," and that Terii can speak French so well despite being Mā'ohi (95). She fails to reject harmful stereotypes, including that of the "lascivious maidens in grass skirts" and "happy-go-lucky fisherman in his canoe," and although she does not fully endorse these, she refers to them as "the usual cliches" (90). Laura is representative of colonialist French values, and how antithetical these are to traditional Mā'ohi values.

Laura demonstrates values that she perceives as feminist which nevertheless align perfectly with the impositions of colonial capitalism and further speak to her embodiment of these oppressive systems. She prioritises her work over family and derives a sense of pride in "proving to men that women can succeed outside the home, and pride in showing women that they too are capable of great things" (83). Yet her pride is set in stark juxtaposition to the "vague unease" she feels once she touches down on Tahitian soil and begins to fully comprehend her role in the island's degradation (83). Indeed, Laura is not only instrumental in introducing nuclear colonialism and capitalism into French Polynesia – and is therefore used as a symbol of these systems – but she also exemplifies the type of harmful Western feminism that the novel's own Oceanic Ecofeminism sits in opposition to: her character tokenises or is wholly ignorant of Indigenous communities and cultures, and whose own fight for freedom on behalf of women actively harms women of colour.

Through use of figurative language and juxtaposition, Laura and Terii's relationship – as an allegory for the relationship between France and Tahiti – is proven to be incompatible. The love between Laura and Terii is conveyed as a burning passion multiple times throughout the text: "Laura burns with desire for Terii" (84); "you are there … and my body begins to burn" (103). Sharrad notes that "this imagery of explosively hot feeling serves as a link to … nuclear testing" (191). Their romance is tainted by the broader power imbalances of nuclear colonialism, and Spitz does not allow the intensity of their feelings to override the broader social and political forces that permeate their relationship. This is further explored when Laura and Terii separate, because "the day the first missile is launched, [Laura] will have lost Terii" (120). Ultimately, the doomed relationship between them highlights the impossibility of maintaining a relationship built on a legacy of colonialism and environmental degradation.

Island of Shattered Dreams also implements various dichotomies throughout the text which speak to their innate differences: where Laura is logical, urban, and French-speaking, Terii is passionate, earthy, and reserved. Paul Sharrad argues that through these dichotomies Spitz

"reprocesses colonial binaries," which have the harmful potential to "leave the Islander trapped in a discursive box that threatens to perpetuate racist stereotypes" (191). Indeed, the novel does rewrite harmful colonial and gender binaries, in addition to its unflinchingly unsympathetic view of Mā'ohi and Papa'ā mixed-race *demis* and *métissés* and their ability and willingness to claim Mā'ohi identity while reaping the benefits that their mixed Papa'ā heritage affords them. The novel utilises binary oppositions to critique those who benefit from the same colonialist system which oppresses their brothers and sisters. Thus, I would counter Paul Sharrad's argument, because although colonial binaries are inarguably reiterated in *Island of Shattered Dreams,* their purpose – to expose the incongruous nature of the two opposing cultures and belief systems through simplified allegory – justifies their use. Although Laura spends much time amongst Mā'ohi people, she ultimately fails to understand them: "in the end I had to admit that you are a mystery" (125). Yet, the novel does not wholly condemn Laura for her complicity and incompatibility, but rather, pities her for her role as a pawn in the colonialist system: "[Emere] takes pity on [Laura] whose country has sent her so far from home, in the name of its internal glory" (106). Teuira's thoughts enlighten the reader as to why the novel holds a sympathetic position by explaining that Papa'ā do not bring harm "on purpose … they act without thinking, or they think in their own way, that's all" (111). Laura also falls victim to the nuclear regime at the novel's conclusion, succumbing to an "unexplained cancer, like several of those who used to work on General de Gaulle's mad project" and like so many Mā'ohi living through the nuclear occupation (138). Laura and Terii's relationship signifies the broader, disparate conflict of values between the Mā'ohi and the Papa'ā, and Laura's death highlights that the oppressive systems of colonialism and capitalism are harmful for all.

Orality, writing, and Indigenous independence

While *Island of Shattered Dreams* deftly portrays the devastating impacts of colonialism on Indigenous people, the novel also proposes that writing is a powerful tool of protest and resistance. This view of writing stems from the status of pre-colonial orality, which was integral to the Mā'ohi worldview as words and sounds were considered to hold significant power. Kareva Mateata-Allain explains that in ancient Tahiti, certain vibrational frequencies could offend the gods and ancestors, resulting in calamitous devastation. As such, "speaking and oration were highly privileged in pre-colonial Tahitian society, and this privilege is still entrenched in ancestral memory" (6). However, orality extends beyond a form of ancient rhetoric. Writer and scholar Flora Devatine, co-founder alongside Chantal T. Spitz of *Littérama'ohi*, explains that orality is born from an "alive, dynamic, vibrant, singing, dancing, narrating, nurturing, fishing, cultivating, artistic and rhetorical human society," and therefore encompasses myriad aspects of life spanning from traditional storytelling and speeches to a person's individual mannerisms, ways of being, working, and preparing food. Orality is also embedded in "familial and mythic accounts of the land" (Devatine 12). The concept of orality is integral to Mā'ohi culture and this is reflected in its prevalence in Spitz's novel.

Discussions and examples of orality are embedded throughout the text that articulate its significance to Mā'ohi culture and the novel's Indigenous characters. As previously mentioned, the Mā'ohi accounting of the earth's formation opens the novel and contextualises the story in Te Ao Mā'ohi, and Jean Anderson notes that this also emphasises the significance of oral tradition from the forefront of the text ("Introduction"). The novel also exemplifies the living and breathing essence of orality, as explained by Devatine. Within the village of Maeva, prior to colonisation, ancient practices are taught to the children "by word and gesture, their knowledge of nature committed to memory," but they also spend time "reading in the sky and the stars the best time for fishing, planting, or harvesting. Sensing with their bodies the wind that makes the fish run into the nets" (24). This sentiment is repeated by Terii when he explains to Laura that his country "cannot be told. You have to live it" (97). His response can be interpreted more broadly as echoing

Devatine's definition of orality as a living and breathing aspect of a culture. Culture cannot be defined through the stagnant, written word of the coloniser, it can only be felt through lived experience. Having lived with this innate sense of orality, our Mā'ohi characters turn to spoken rhetoric frequently, often as a means of emotional expression in times of great distress. Although Anderson confesses her English translation is unable to replicate Spitz's differentiation between *parole*, the spoken word, and *mot*, the written word, she asserts that "'parole' . . . remains the domain of Mā'ohi, as part of the author's highlighting of the power of ancient rhetorical tradition" ("Translating" 180). With this additional context, alongside Anderson's implementation of italicisation and interpolations of verse, readers of the English translation can confidently deduce which passages are delivered in *mot* and see its consistent use by the Mā'ohi characters throughout the entirety of the text.

While *Island of Shattered Dreams* highlights orality as an ancient, traditional feature of Mā'ohi society, it also supports its adaptation and modernisation within Tahiti's rapidly changing environment through the character of Tetiare. Tetiare is the youngest daughter of Tematua and Emere and is a transgressive, mixed-race woman who embodies the bridge between the two cultures of her parents. She leaves home to wander the Pacific and meets "the cousins who came with them long ago in their big canoes … so similar in body and soul, yet made different by the various governments squatting on their Land" (131). Tetiare has a passion to write back against colonialism and perpetuate Mā'ohi narratives, a passion made stronger by seeing for herself the similar struggles of her Indigenous kin across the oceans. Alice Te Punga Somerville writes that Tetiare's travelling "ultimately fuels a regional-political consciousness and a creative sensibility" (*Once* 88). When Tetiare returns home, she asserts that "it's time to write our history as we see it ourselves [and] reverse the brain-washing" at the hands of their colonisers (110). Although Tetiare is apprehensive to publish her writing, as the written word has long been viewed as the realm of the Papa'ā, Terii urges her on: "the dream passed on by oral tradition is dying because we can't

remember, and we must bring it back to life through writing" (137). Tetiare is concerned that due to the impacts of colonialism and capitalism, Mā'ohi have become cut off from their past. She poses the question: "how can we have a viable future?" (123). Indeed, the novel answers this question by presenting her writing as a valuable and valid means of creating a viable future, as she revives the Mā'ohi dream for sovereignty through words reminiscent of ancient Mā'ohi stories and retells the story of her people, history, and culture in her own words.

Tetiare's entry into the previously uncharted realm of *parole* speaks to the adaptability of orality for Indigenous communities living through colonialism. The animated nature of orality negates its common misclassification as stagnant and incompatible with modernity: "orality is usually represented as 'frozen', when in fact it is not 'frozen' at all … it promotes creativity and adapts to modernity" (Devatine 11). As a result, there are countless examples of ancient Indigenous oral narratives, mythologies, or wisdoms being newly transcribed into the written word, creating what Guadeloupean poet Ernest Pépin terms "oraliture" (Mateata-Allain 4). Through Tetiare's journey to become a pioneer of oraliture, Spitz demonstrates how this hybridity can serve as a tool of anti-colonialism. There is a metafictional quality to Tetiare's sentiments, because Spitz has elsewhere described writing as a form of protest for Indigenous peoples with the power to create change:

> in our country as in every country is not the act of writing in and of itself the supreme act of protest resistance subversion dissidence does it not carry within itself all the ferment the protests that will sprout forth blossom open out multiply. ("J'écris")

Not only can orality be modernised, but it can also be a valuable anti-colonialist resource which mobilises a culture against oppressive systems. In the novel's epilogue, Tetiare uses her writing as a means of political activism. She writes the anthem for the "militant political party" Terii has joined which fights for "independence for their country and the recovered dignity of their brothers" (133).

Island of Shattered Dreams does not wish to return to an idealised and romanticised past but seeks to usher forward a future in which Mā'ohi adaptation is the key to their ongoing cultural survivance.

Terii also endeavours to revive Mā'ohi culture and ensure it persists into modernity, in this case through turning to archaeology. Having studied archaeology in France, Terii returns to work in Te Ao Mā'ohi in an effort to use his skills to "bring the two worlds together" (70). Throughout the novel Terii slowly uncovers ancestral marae across Ruahine. According to Anita Smith, in Mā'ohi culture marae are regarded as tapu, sacred spaces that "express the essence of traditional Polynesian culture, the relationships of people to each other, to their gods, and to the land and sea that are maintained through rituals associated with the marae" (107). Marae are vital to cultural expression and are an essential part of the "ancestral landscape" which Merata Kawharu describes as comprising "part of a network of places and areas that were created or used by gods, mythological heroes, ancestors and their descendants" (318). In *Island of Shattered Dreams,* the importance of marae is asserted at the beginning of the novel when the missionaries proclaim that "thou shalt pray on Sunday … in the holy Christian churches … for he is deaf to prayers on the marae" (18). The forced abandonment of the marae is presented as a key catalyst in the crumbling of traditional Mā'ohi customs.

As Terii slowly uncovers the ancient marae of his people, he goes "deeper and deeper into [his] understanding of the souls of the men and women from bygone days who made their descendants what they are" (110). His journey replicates that of his own ancestor, his grandfather Maevarua. Earlier in the novel, at the birth of Terii's father Tematua, Maevarua prays to the ancient Mā'ohi spirits on the "the majestic Manunu, marae of the old order" and to the "minister's God" so that his son is "doubly protected, by the old order and the new" (23). Unwittingly, Terii shares his ancestor's desire to bring the two worlds together for the protection of his family and people. The literal act of digging up his past allegorises his spiritual journey recovering his connection to his Mā'ohi ancestors, and by doing so, offers a deeper understanding of who he is. While Tetiare is

adapting Mā'ohi culture for the modern age through her oraliture, Terii is literally restoring marae – the heart of Mā'ohi culture and the ancestral landscape – and reasserting its significance in their modernised world. Through Tetiare and Terii, *Island of Shattered Dreams* proposes that restoring ancient traditions and adapting them are both valid methods of regaining cultural sovereignty for Indigenous communities.

Conclusion

Grounded in Oceanic Ecofeminism, *Island of Shattered Dreams* conveys the reality for Mā'ohi – and many other Pacific cultures – in which their culture, livelihood, cosmologies, and corporeal selves are bound to their environment. Utilising the woman/nature association to illustrate the complex relationship between Mā'ohi and their land, Spitz then deftly weaponises this dualism to highlight the uniquely devastating effects of environmental degradation and nuclear colonialism on Indigenous people. Some critics have argued that the novel ends "inconclusively, even pessimistically", but I disagree (Sharrad 192). Terii's uncovering of marae and Tetiare's turn to anti-colonialist oraliture are beacons of hope for the Mā'ohi of *Island of Shattered Dreams*, just as Spitz's work of anti-colonialist oraliture paved the way for Indigenous peoples of the Pacific to take up their pens. *Island of Shattered Dreams,* while acknowledging the harsh realities of the impact of the ongoing colonialist presence in Te Ao Mā'ohi, illustrates practical methods for cultural reinvigoration and dares to hope for a viable future for Mā'ohi in this new world, as ventured by Tetiare in her oraliture:

> The tearing apart of our orphaned people
>
> Banished from our eternal Land …
>
> But here a new day is dawning

Where our children stand tall,

Stronger, worthier than their parents

Carrying deep within them pride in what they are,

Different from one another,

Beautiful and proud, forever Mā'ohi. (135)

Chapter 2: Patricia Grace's *Potiki* and Mana Wāhine

Patricia Grace (Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Raukawa, and Te Āti Awa) is heralded as one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most influential and pioneering authors. Grace's extensive backlist boasts twenty-two published works of fiction and non-fiction across a variety of genres and age ranges, two of which have won the top award for fiction at the New Zealand Book Awards. She is the first Māori woman to have published a collection of short stories in English – *Waiariki* (1975) – as well as the first Māori woman to publish a novel in English, *Mutuwhenua: The Moon Sleeps* (1978). These were pivotal achievements in the Māori Renaissance, a period of political and cultural self-assertion that included an explosion of Māori cultural production. Her most commercially successful and acclaimed work is her 1986 novel, *Potiki.* Grace is a recipient of countless prestigious accolades, including a Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement and an Icon Award for Lifetime Achievement, and was appointed a Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for her services to literature. For Māori, her success demonstrates what wāhine Māori can achieve within a field historically dominated by Pākehā men, fewer Pākehā women, and even fewer Māori men. She is affectionately regarded by Māori as kaiwhakahaere – a leader and one of the "great navigators" – through her work guiding the way for generations of Māori writers and readers (Brown).

While *Potiki* is a work of fiction, Grace notes in her memoir that the writing took place amidst a politically significant time period for Māori. The protests at Takaparawhau/Bastion Point and the Raglan Golf Course were illuminating the ongoing and intensifying battle for land sovereignty to the general New Zealand public like never before (*Centre* 198). Closer to home, Grace also details how the landscape within *Potiki* is "almost entirely Hongoeka Bay" – her own ancestral land – and that the plot was inspired by a proposal to "build a marina on the coastal blocks" of this land (*Centre* 194, 196). *Potiki* thus reflects Grace's personal experiences with issues

of land sovereignty, colonialism, and capitalism and is considered a pioneering book within the New Zealand literary canon due to its political, historical, and cultural relevance for both Māori and Pākehā.

Potiki follows several generations of the Tamihana whānau who live on their ancestral, coastal land in rural New Zealand. The novel centres on the matriarch of the family, Granny Tamihana; her son, Hemi, and his wife, Roimata; Hemi's intellectually disabled sister, Mary; and their children James, Tangimoana, Manu, and the potiki of the whānau, Tokowaru-i-te-Marama (Toko). The novel opens with the story of an unnamed master carver who breaks tapu by carving his final – yet purposefully unfinished – poupou in the image of someone from his own living memory. This poupou is carved for their wharenui, a traditional meeting house central to the Tamihanas' cultural expression, ancestry, and whānau, and which is the symbolic site of many crucial events within *Potiki. Potiki* is framed within the wharenui's walls as the novel both begins and ends in the confines of the meeting house. In part one, Hemi and Roimata resolve to distance themselves from capitalist work and imperialist state education by seeking to live once more off their communal land. Their homeland and way of life are threatened, however, when developers—embodied by a developer named Dolman, and nicknamed Dollarman—propose buying their ancestral land and converting it into an extensive, luxurious oceanfront resort. Tensions between the developers and the protagonists comprise part two of the novel as violent measures are taken in attempts to acquire the land when the iwi refuse to sell, eventually flooding their urupa and burning down their wharenui. In part three, it is revealed that Toko was killed in the fire and his rebellious sister Tangimoana has sought revenge on the developers. The Tamihanas and the neighbouring people of Te Ope uncover their shared ancestry and work together to salvage their urupa and rebuild their wharenui. Toko's elder brother James completes the carver's unfinished poupou, salvaged from the fire, by carving his brother Toko in honour of his life, gifts, and impact on their small

community. These events are recounted through multiple voices and a non-linear plot structure that are integrally linked to the Tamihana whānau's attempt to restore their ability to live as Māori.

By using a research focus and methodology grounded in the principles of Kaupapa Māori research, and especially the tenets of mana wāhine, I interpret *Potiki* as a mana wāhine text. Some critics consider *Potiki* to be a simplistic story perpetuating a narrative of a small community resisting colonialist influences, and some reduce the narrative even further and deem it an essentialist Māori versus Pākehā plotline (Deloughrey). While the arrival of the Dollarman and the encroaching forces of colonialism and capitalism on the Tamihana ancestral land is, undeniably, an important part of *Potiki,* interpreting the novel through a mana wāhine perspective allows for more nuanced exploration of the novel's engagements with the environment, Indigenous sovereignty, and Indigenous feminist ideals. Briar Wood argues that literature that engages with themes of mana wāhine often "foreground[s] symbolic and imaginary versions of gods, demigods, and ancestors … within oral narratives and performances, waiata, moteatea, and whakairo" and inscribes them into literary texts, such as novels (107). Through its deft use of Māori spiral temporality and whaikōrero as narrative structure, its incorporation and adaptation of Māori mythologies, and its focus on issues of the environment and kaitiakitanga, *Potiki* positions itself as a mana wāhine novel and articulates its unique ecofeminist vision through this framework.

Mana wāhine as method

For the past few decades, there has been a burgeoning movement by Māori scholars to decolonise and reclaim research for Māori and create a methodology that privileges, validates, and respects mātauranga and tikanga Māori. This is commonly referred to as Kaupapa Māori research, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith – author of the pioneering book *Decolonizing Methodologies* – argues that the

development of this kaupapa is one method of "researching back," in the same way that Indigenous scholars have been 'writing' and 'talking' back for many years (Smith). The exact criteria for conducting Kaupapa Māori research differs, with some scholars asserting that only Māori can rightfully engage in Kaupapa Māori research, whereas other scholars are proponents of a more collaborative approach in which anybody can participate on the condition that there is equal involvement from a Māori party. Nevertheless, there are some essential aspects of Kaupapa Māori research that are non-negotiable. It must be connected to Māori philosophy and principles; respect, collaborate with, and benefit the Māori community to some degree; privilege the significance of Māori language and culture; be concerned with issues of sovereignty and self-determination; and be guided by the concept of whānau (Smith). As a Māori and Pākehā researcher born and raised in Rotorua, it is important to me that my analysis of *Potiki* – a novel that has contributed much to the Māori community and is intricately woven with themes of Māori sovereignty, culture, land rights, and more – is guided by these principles.

Mana wāhine as theory and method extends the reach of Kaupapa Māori research by "explicitly exploring the intersection of being Māori and female and all of the diverse and complex things being located in this intersecting space can mean" (Simmonds "Mana" 15). In this chapter, I argue that a mana wāhine epistemology provides a theoretical framework for considering the intersection of feminist, ecocritical, and Indigenous concerns in *Potiki*. Briar Wood also reads *Potiki* as a mana wāhine text due to its engagements with Papatūānuku and environmentalism, political activism, and its use of spiral time which connects Māori to their ancestors (Wood). Mana wāhine encompasses both a type of Indigenous feminism as it pertains to the unique concerns of Māori women and an activist movement, and its name derives from an understanding of the "mana that is inherent in our lives as hine, as wahine, in its many forms" (Pihama et al. 5). As asserted by the editors of the *Mana Wahine Reader*, mana wāhine extends the limitations of Western conceptions of feminism: "mana wahine is not, and should never be considered only about gender relations …

Mana wahine is always located within our wider relationships as Māori" (Pihama et al. 5). A mana wāhine kaupapa enables an intersectional analysis of the ecofeminist aspects of *Potiki*, grounded in the concept of whakapapa, that connects people to their environment.

Whakapapa encompasses the connections that Māori have to all living beings, including our tīpuna, tūpuna, and the natural world around us. Māori are intricately connected to the whenua through our genealogy, which originates with the gods and goddesses of the natural elements, and this relationship necessitates guardianship and the practice of kaitiakitanga over the land, sky, and sea. This genealogical link is referenced throughout *Potiki*. As Hemi asserts, "our whānau is the land and sea. Destroy the land and sea, we destroy ourselves" (113). In Māori cosmogony, the universe was formed from Te Kore – the great void of nothingness, the great expanse of unlimited potential – and from Te Kore came the realm of darkness, Te Pō (which symbolises the womb in many iterations of the myth), and finally from Te Pō emerged Te Ao Mārama, the realm of light and the world in which we live. The unnamed narrator in *Potiki* refers to this cosmology: "the story came … from the time when there was only darkness … there was no living but only the potential – which became the conception" (203). Within Te Ao Mārama, Papatūānuku rose from the life-giving waters, and she and Ranginui fell in love and birthed seventy sons within their perpetual embrace. Roimata describes the life-giving qualities of Papatūānuku when she explains that "it was land who, in the beginning, held the secret, who contained our very beginnings within herself" (127). As their children struggled to grow within the darkness of their tight embrace, the parents were violently forced apart and Ranginui was pushed into the sky – becoming known as the sky father – while Papatūānuku remained on earth and became affectionately known as the earth mother. Papatūānuku and Ranginui's sons became guardians of the natural world, some of the most revered including the god of forests and birds, Tāne Mahuta; god of the oceans and sea life, Tangaroa; and Tāwhirimātea, the god of weather. There are many differing accounts of the creation of Te Ao Māori, varying by iwi and hapū across Aotearoa, but these foundational elements are consistently woven throughout.

In *Potiki,* these pūrākau are referenced on several occasions by the Tamihanas, including discussions about Rona, Tūmatauenga, Tāne Mahuta, Papatūānuku, Ranginui, Tangaroa, and Mahuika.

Through analyses of Māori mythology and the atua wāhine within them, it becomes evident that wāhine Māori in particular share a special connection to the natural world. Transliterated, the word 'whakapapa' itself can mean "to turn towards Papa," which is a common moniker for Papatūānuku (Wood 113). Māori scholar Aroha Te Pareake Mead (Ngāti Awa) describes how this relationship – her whakapapa – informs her contemporary relationship to the natural world: "my heritage teaches me about concepts such as the integrity and inter-dependency of living things … it predetermines that the relationship I have with nature is based on kinship and respect" (201). For many Māori, our whakapapa fosters an innate bond with nature that guides Māori towards the principle of kaitiakitanga: to care for the land and all those who inhabit it. Within the Tamihana whānau, kaitiakitanga is exhibited through sustainable farming and fishing practices and waste management practices. For example, Mary regularly cleans detritus from the shore: "every now and then she would pick something up. If it was something that either lived or could love … she threw it into the sea. If it was something that did not live and could not – paper, plastic, or tin – she put it in her bucket to take home" (19). In addition to being affectionately regarded as the earth mother, however, Papatūānuku is also the direct ancestress of all Māori through her role in the creation of the first mortal woman. As she and Ranginui gave birth only to sons, a female element was still needed to create new human life on earth (Jahnke). The solution to this was to craft a female form from the clay at Kurawaka – Papatūānuku's sexual organs – which was then brought to life by Tāne after breathing life into her. Thus, the first woman, Hineahuone, was born and ira tangata – the principle of life – was created (Jahnke). The first mortal wahine Māori and the ancestress of all Māori women was not only born from the pubic region of Papatūānuku, but she was literally formed from the clay of the earth, creating a corporeal connection to the land for all Māori. To

mana wāhine theorists, this pūrākau illustrates the necessity of female sexuality, reproduction, and the female element – the uha – to create ira tangata*,* the essence of life itself, and can therefore be read as a metaphor for the importance of wāhine Māori in Māori society (Jahnke).

Thus, mana wāhine is "an identity, philosophy and value system based on whakapapa and the origins of the world and [is] grounded in the mountains, rivers and lands of Aotearoa" (Jahnke 194). *Potiki* emphasises this holistic understanding of our lineage throughout the text, as when the Tamihana whānau consider which ancestors they wanted to be carved in their wharenui: "they wished to include all the famous ancestors to which they were linked, and also to include the ancestors which linked all people to the earth and the heavens from ancient to future times, and which told people of their relationships to light and growth, and to each other" (11). When Hemi and Mary's mother passes away, her death is described as a "return to the Homeland" to reconnect with her ancestors and be at one with the land once more: "now let there be joining – the dead to the dead, the living to the living … this hill calls to that mountain, this sea calls to that river, hear the calling" (29). Referring to the land, sea, ancestors, and living descendants, the unnamed whānau member leading the tangihanga exclaims that "we are one" (29). Woven with the principles of Kaupapa Māori research, a mana wāhine approach allows for a more intersectional examination of *Potiki* in all its complexity and lends itself well to analyses not only of the anticolonial aspects of the novel, but also of the essential relationships between the Māori characters and the environment.

Reclaiming mana wāhine through mythology

It might at first glance appear counterintuitive to argue that *Potiki* adapts Māori mythologies to reclaim the mana of our atua wāhine and wāhine Māori. The novel's central character is arguably Toko, and he has been recognised by many critics as sharing many similarities with that of the

Māori demi-god Maui: he was born into the sea with physical deformities, was raised by adoptive parents, and shares a special affinity with the moana. Yet despite Toko's prominence, the women of *Potiki* play an equally important role in sustaining the narrative and their portrayals also draw on ancient atua wāhine. Prior to colonisation, Māori society held equal regard for both men and women and this social equilibrium was reflected in Māori mythology and the stories of our atua tāne and atua wāhine (Yates-Smith "Te Ukaipo"). The retelling of Māori mythologies by Māori men to Pākehā ethnographers after the arrival of Christian missionaries effectively erased mana wāhine from the ancient pūrākau and omitted the potent sexual power of our atua wāhine. Ani Mikaere notes that "the colonisation of Māori cosmogony rendered the sexual power of women, so evident in Māori cosmogony, secondary to the supreme creative power of a male being" (10). This has led to the marginalisation of mātauranga Māori, particularly knowledge pertaining to atua wāhine and the whare tangata – the house of humanity that also encompasses the womb (Sharman). Since Māori pūrākau and mātauranga have historically been rewritten within a Christian, colonialist, patriarchal context, *Potiki* reinscribes Christian and Māori mythology within Te Ao Māori in an anti-colonialist, feminist act to reclaim the mana wāhine that has been lost. The centring of Toko within the various pūrākau in *Potiki* could be interpreted as antithetical to an ecofeminist position as many mana wāhine theorists have documented the elevation of the role of male mythological figures – particularly Maui – over that of atua wāhine who held equally significant roles in the ancient versions of many myths (Murphy; Sharman; Yates-Smith "Te Ukaipo"). Yet, *Potiki* does incorporate many feminine evocations of ancient atua: Roimata as a gender-reversed Ranginui, Tangimoana as a gender-reversed Tangaroa through her connections to the moana, and Granny Tamihana as a Mahuika-figure. Toko may be the central figure in many of the mythological parallels in *Potiki,* but, just as in the ancient tales of Maui and other atua tāne, he is guided and shaped by the powerful wāhine Māori in his life.

The tapu power of female sexuality and femininity is a thread woven throughout Māori mythology. Aroha Yates-Smith asserts that "our Māori ancestors considered the creative, fertile element to be the most important gift and, therefore, to be cherished" (77). Wāhine Māori, like Papatūānuku and Hineahuone, hold the ancient power and the essential element to bring life into the world. This connection can also be found within the roots of the Māori language itself. In different contexts, the word 'whenua' can denote either land or placenta, and this semantic connection is deepened by the practice of whenua burial in the land – returning it to the womb of Papatūānuku – to cement the infant's connection to their ancestral land (Yates-Smith "Te Ukaipo"). Huia Tomlins Jahnke shares a whakataukī to describe this corporeal correlation between Māori women and the land: "ko te whenua te wai-u mō ngā uri whakatipu," which likens the land to "a woman who sustains her young with milk from her breast" (190). As we carry the same uha as our ancestresses, which allowed the creation of ira tangata as we know it, wāhine Māori share the same power as the atua wāhine who came before us and the natural environment around us to create and sustain life. Yet, rather than reducing women to their ability to procreate (and thereby excluding women who cannot), the significance of the feminine principle can and should be more broadly interpreted as a metaphor for and reflection of the necessity of wāhine Māori within Te Ao Māori. Through direct ancestry, our feminine essence, and our corporeal connection to the land we inhabit, wāhine Māori and the land share a familial and sacred bond.

In *Potiki,* the echo of a mythological pūrākau in Toko's pito burial works to strengthen and reaffirm this feminine connection between Māori and the environment. When Toko – like Maui – is birthed into the moana, his pito is lost at sea and unable to be buried on his ancestral whenua, hindering his corporeal connection to the land through the fulfilment of this tikanga. As Toko laments, "they searched but they could not find my old shell to bring home and bury. My old self went to the stomach of a fish" (47). Five years later, Toko experiences the first instance of his special knowing which calls him to the sea to catch a big fish. The belly of this fish holds his pito,

swallowed long ago, and when his whānau bury its insides under a passionfruit vine, the plant "began to grow and grow. The branches began to swim everywhere like a multiplication of eels" (65). Toko's experience is reminiscent of Maui catching the legendary great fish, Hāhau-whenua, which forms the North Island of Aotearoa, as well as the rarer tale of Maui as the original creator of all eel-like fish (White). The adaptation of this pūrākau serves several purposes. Firstly, it reaffirms the significance of tikanga Māori in strengthening the connection between Māori and the whenua. Secondly, although this story centres around Toko/Maui, it highlights the uniquely feminine connection to the environment, as Toko's pito is placed back in Papatūānuku's womb to nourish new life, exemplified by the growing plant. In doing so, this Māori myth reaffirms the feminine connection of Māori women and the environment and acknowledges the connection between Māori and the earth.

The link between atua wāhine, life, and death is reinvigorated in *Potiki* through the death of Toko, which retells the myth of Maui's death. As Ngāhuia Murphy retells in her book, *Te Awa Atua: Menstruation in the Pre-Colonial Māori World*, Maui seeks to gain immortality and continuity after becoming envious of the way that the moon goddess Hineteiwaiwa controls the lunar cycles. To achieve this, he seeks to reverse the birth process by entering his mother Hinenuitepō's tooth-lined vagina, travelling through her womb, and out of her mouth. However, his mother awakes and crushes him between her legs, transforming him into the world's first menstruation (Murphy). This pūrākau implies that Maui is afforded immortality so long as wāhine Māori menstruate during the lunar cycle. Due to the links between Papatūānuku, Hinenuitepō, Maui, Mahuika, and the wharenui, as well as the centrality of the wharenui to the process of tangihanga, passage into the wharenui can be interpreted as a physical embodiment of the passage to Te Kore through the womb of Hinenuitepō herself. As Toko approaches the wharenui which has been set on fire by the developers, he sees that "the doorway, suddenly, had become the toothed aperture … through which all must pass" and perishes in the fire (211). In Tangimoana's story

about Toko's death, she refers to the wharenui as a "wombed house" and also describes the "fire-toothed aperture" (205). Toko's interment in the wharenui also signifies this connection as he continues to live within its walls – a child perpetually held within the body of Hinenuitepō. He describes the way he continues to watch his whanau "from the wall … this place of now, behind, and in, and beyond the tree, from where I have eversight" (208). In many ways, the feminine connection between Māori and nature is illustrated in this pūrākau, evident in Toko's spiritual passing through Hinenuitepō's womb, his physical internment into the womb of Papatūānuku through his burial, and through being carved into wood of the wharenui where his spirit continues to live on – a corporeal manifestation of the relationship between life, death, nature, and atua wāhine.

Through the portrayals of Roimata and her daughter Tangimoana, *Potiki* asserts a connection between ancient atua wāhine and modern wāhine Māori characters who are repositories of environmental and cultural knowledge and power. Roimata describes herself as "a waiter, a patient watcher of the skies" (26). Due to her affinity with the skies, she is often interpreted as a figure of Ranginui – the sky-father (Deloughrey; Wood). When Roimata describes herself and Hemi, who is dedicated to the land, the similarities to Papatūānuku and Ranginui cannot be ignored: "in being turned another way we have turned to each other, the one looking to the sky, the other to earth – the mother to the father, the father to the mother" (201). Her connection with the skies is also illustrated through her affinity with seagulls, and her divine nature is revealed towards the novel's end when she tells the story of how she came to land "being flown on the backs of gulls" (201). In addition to her role as a mother, sister, and wife within her community, Roimata is a narrator and storyteller, continuing the oral traditions of her people. Tangimoana is similarly connected to an ancient atua through her evocation of the god of the seas, Tangaroa. From birth, Tangimoana is connected to the awa: "[she] is as sharp-edged as the sea rocks, and hears every whisper of the tide. On the night she was born [Roimata] woke to the pained crying of the sea. We took her name from the sounds the sea made" (14). Although it could be argued that these gender-

reversals are antithetical to an ecofeminist perspective, I would argue that they negate claims of essentialism and ensure that the wāhine are viewed as women and not merely as metaphors. Instead, Roimata and Tangimoana's connections to the environment and the atua are ancestral and contextualised through whakapapa. Through these characters and their associations, *Potiki* reclaims the innate divinity within wāhine Māori and their connection to their ancestors and the environment.

Potiki also illustrates the importance of wāhine Māori as sources of insight and knowledge through characters who appear less central to the plot. Granny Tamihana shares many similarities with Mahuika – a fire deity, and grandmother of Maui – who appears to Toko like a "magic fire woman" and who "gave [Toko] magic by her ear" (62, 47). As a Mahuika figure, Granny Tamihana's role as a kaumātua and source of traditional knowledge is reinforced and strengthened. Kuia to Toko and his siblings, Granny Tamihana instructs them in tikanga and mātauranga Māori, offering them "instructions on what was allowed and what was not allowed, and instructions on what needed to be done" (141). She also frequently weaves kete for Toko and her whanau, which aligns her in a mythological context with the "three baskets of knowledge" – Te Kete Tuauri, Te Kete Aronui, and Te Kete Tuatea – that signify different aspects of mātauranga Māori (Waitoki). By affiliating Granny Tamihana with Mahuika and evoking these pūrākau, *Potiki* solidifies her position as a kaumatua and repository of traditional knowledge essential for cultural survival. Similarly, Mary can be viewed as a repository of spiritual and environmental knowledge in addition to having a link to an ancient atua wahine. Her connection to the loving-man in the poupou – implied to be the father of Toko through an immaculate conception – and the other spirits in the wharenui speak to her spiritual capabilities. She is reminiscent of Taranga, Maui's mother, in the way that she births Toko into the sea before his seaweed-wrapped body is recovered by Roimata. Her actions echo Taranga's throwing of Maui's premature body to the waves after wrapping him with her hair (Kahukiwa and Grace). Taranga's guardianship of the underworld is also evoked through Mary's connection with her tīpuna (Kahukiwa and Grace). Mary also has an instinct to

protect and preserve the environment, picking up rubbish and detritus on her walks along the shore to keep the shoreline looking "pretty and nice" (214). While Mary is not closely associated with a specific atua, her environmental guardianship and spirituality connects her to those who came before her. Granny Tamihana and Mary exemplify how Indigenous women carry the ancestral knowledge necessary for a culture and environment to flourish.

Throughout the novel's varying depictions of modern Māori womanhood, *Potiki* reaffirms the inherent mana that lives within each woman. Roimata, Mary, Tangimoana, and Granny Tamihana all share a variety of domestic roles within the community, from teaching, to cooking, to cleaning, to gardening, to mothering in addition to performing tikanga on the marae often reserved for women such as karanga, waiata, and other tangihanga rites. Mary visits the wharenui to "converse with the tīpuna, and to sing in the house of the people," while Granny Tamihana helps in the wharekai daily not out of necessity but because that is what she chooses to do (121). Just as the stories of atua wāhine in mythology were marginalised through European colonisation, the inherent mana of Māori women's roles in traditional society was also erased through colonisation as Christian moral codes were imposed at the expense of Māori women's authority (Simmonds "Mana"). From a mana wāhine perspective, these tasks exhibit manaakitanga – care and hospitality – that were also enacted by our tīpuna of the past and were held in high regard (Yates-Smith "Te Ukaipo"). Moreover, their roles as mothers, grandmothers, and caregivers also connect them to their ancestresses through their sexual power and uha, allowing them to reframe and reclaim whānau, which Naomi Simmonds cites as an essential aspect of mana wāhine in response to the disintegration of the whānau unit through colonisation ("Mana"). Through these characters and their affiliations to ancient atua wāhine, *Potiki* affirms Aroha Yates-Smith's argument that "modern Māori women have inherited mana wāhine from ancient times, retaining some roles of Hine in their everyday life: in the home, on the marae, as well as in places of employment and recreation" ("Reclaiming" 12). Through the depiction of modern wāhine Māori engaging in everyday, domestic

tasks while sharing their precious taonga – spiritual gifts, sacred mātauranga Māori, and environmental awareness – *Potiki* highlights the innately feminine, divine wisdom that has been passed down to them from ancient atua wāhine and translates it into a contemporary context.

Kaitiakitanga as climate, colonial, capitalist resistance

Potiki presents a strong argument for the Māori practice of kaitiakitanga – stewardship and guardianship over the land – as a viable means of protecting and restoring our most precious taonga, the environment. Kaitiakitanga is catalysed by our genealogical, ancestral relationships to the land as well as the corporeal connection we have to the land on which we, our ancestors, and our mokopuna walk. As evidenced by the fight of the Te Ope people to rightfully reclaim their stolen land in the name of the Crown, the land is the heart and soul of the community and essential for Māori sovereignty and cultural survivance: "there's no lack of foresight, as you put it. It's because we have foresight that we will not ever, not ever, let the land go. Take away the heart, the soul, and the body crumbles" (111). The destruction wrought by the Dollarman and the contrasting roles of Hemi and Tangimoana as kaitiaki work to illustrate the important role Māori have as tangata whenua to protect the land against colonialist, capitalist influences.

The inextricability of the environment and Māori is depicted through metaphor and other figurative language in *Potiki.* Hemi speaks to the familial bond shared with the land when he asserts that their "whānau is the land and sea. Destroy the land and sea, we destroy ourselves" (113). This connection is referred to through similes such as Roimata's likening of her children and their cousins to "cicadas, kihikihi, chittering in the sun," a positive comparison to the natural world that reinforces the idea of the Tamihanas being an integral part of the ecosystem (48). Roimata, as a watcher of the skies, also frequently muses about the seagulls which serve as a metaphor for her and

her whānau and their position as shore-dwellers: “seagulls are the inheritors of the shore … they inhabit the space, they find their place also in and on the sea, and have land as a refuge” (24). This analogy is furthered by Tangimoana, who writes a poem that employs seagull imagery to describe the family: “seagulls walk close together / but one looks at the sky / seagulls walk with flamy eyes / but one steps in the fire” (146). When their land is vandalised by the developers, the seagulls shared the Tamihanas’ devastation and “cried above the land” (148). The women’s grief at this event is likened to the sounds of the sea and the wind, once again illustrating their feminine connection to the world around them: “there was no sound except for the wailing of women that swells and recedes the way the sea does, the way the wind does, the way the heart does at certain times” (134). For the Tamihanas, the environment is inextricable from their own sense of self.

The arrival of the Dollarman, his proposal to turn the Tamihana land into a luxury oceanside resort, and the vandalism of their property all demonstrate the ongoing threat posed by capitalism and colonialism to Māori communities and the environment. The Tamihanas’ refusal of the Dollarman’s proposal is separated into two parts, as explained by Toko: “there was one part where we were objectors because we were anxious about the land and sea … we did not want the company to make zoos and circuses in the sea, or to put noise and pollution there … then next there was our own land with our own carved house built by people long before … and behind the house is where the dead are buried” (113). Although Toko acknowledges that “the hills and sea did not belong to [them],” due to past losses of their land, they nevertheless wish to keep them “clean and free” and fulfil their responsibility as tangata whenua (113). As the land and sea are essential to Māoritanga, the true devastation of the developers’ flooding their gardens and urupa equally threatens their right to cultural expression, their ancestral connection to the land, and their livelihood: “‘the urupa and the gardens,’ someone said, ‘they’re trying to kill us’” (149). However, the community work to restore the urupa and the gardens, and Tangimoana helms a mission to vandalise the developers’ tools that succeeds in halting construction and ultimately forcing their retreat. The Dollarman

narrative illustrates the threat posed by colonialism and capitalism to both Māori and the environment, and how inextricable these are from one another.

In *Potiki,* Hemi Tamihana's journey to becoming a kaitiaki for his ancestral land and his revival of ahuwhenua, or gardening for food production, demonstrates the value of kaitiakitanga for Māori. After being made redundant, Hemi returns to working on his own land with the understanding that "the land and sea could care for [them] … everything [they] need is here" (46). The Tamihana whānau find they have enough kai from the land and sea to feed themselves, illustrating how kaitiakitanga directly supports their physical health and wellbeing and enables them to become self-sufficient and turn away from capitalism. Even after their land is flooded, their gardens continue to flourish, speaking to the resiliency of the land: "there were the rows of carrots and peppers, silverbeet, beetroot and onions. In the water channels the watercress has grown thick and tall" (172). Ultimately, the revitalisation of kaitiakitanga in *Potiki* illustrates self-determination and allows for self-sufficiency. Hemi reflects that "people were looking more to their land. Not only to their land, but to their own things as well … there was more determination now – determination which had created hope, and hope in turn had created confidence, and energy" (68). Hemi's revival of kaitiakitanga nourishes an ancient, ancestral connection to the land and sea in addition to enhancing the livelihoods and spiritual hauora of his people.

However, Hemi is not the only kaitiaki within the Tamihana whanau, as his daughter Tangimoana follows a parallel, yet modernised, path as a contemporary wāhine Māori kaitiaki. While Hemi returns to the traditional agrarian roots of his ancestors, Tangimoana transgresses cultural, societal, and gender norms and forges a modern route to environmental revitalisation. Her decision to undertake higher education contrasts with the educational ethos held by the rest of her whānau, who identify Western teaching as a colonialist tool and instead develop an educational system rooted in mātauranga Māori with a focus on the environment. As Roimata notes, "it is rare for us to find ourselves in books, but in our books we were able to find and define our lives. Our

main book was the wharenui … the land and sea and the shores are a book too … they were our science and sustenance" (120). Although Tangimoana initially defies expectations by attending university, she ultimately does so "because the whanau had asked her to go there and study law" (122). When the Dollarman arrives, Tangimoana is the most vocal protestor against the development proposal, bringing her friends from university to "make a lot of noise" despite some members of the community arguing that "this was not a right thing for her to do in the house of Rongo" (111). Her transgressive nature becomes integral to the plot as she is ultimately the person to rid the community of the developers' tyranny, mobilising members of her community and taking drastic, illegal action to sabotage their machinery and permanently halt construction. Elizabeth Deloughrey notes that Tangimoana's actions continue a "Māori history of resistance and a code of *utu* (reciprocity)" but claims that this code of action has historically been associated with men (Deloughrey 77). Tangimoana's actions mirror mana wāhine environmental activism happening concurrently in Aotearoa at the time *Potiki* was written – including the occupations of Takaparawhau/Bastion Point and the Raglan golf course, and the ongoing anti-nuclear movement – so that she can be seen in a longstanding tradition of Māori women warriors, activists, and kaitiaki (Wood). *Potiki* presents a case that environmental activism and kaitiakitanga can and should be achieved by any means and does not only endorse a return to ancient methods, but also an appropriation of Pākehā methods where they will help protect the environment against colonialism and capitalism. As Roimata puts it, Tangimoana "saw the strength of a bending branch to be not in its resilience, but in its ability to spring back and strike" (177).

Potiki demonstrates that the whenua and moana are inextricable from Maoritanga, and environmental degradation of either is undeniably harmful to Māori communities. However, the novel serves as more than a cautionary tale against colonialism and capitalism by also imagining an optimistic future in which Māori successfully protect and preserve their culture and the environment from impending hindrances. After the developers abandon their mission, Roimata prophesies that

the land and waters will flourish once again: “the hills will be scarred for some time, and the beach front spoiled. But the scars will heal and growth returns … we will put boats out into the clear water again and go for kahawai, moki and shark” (194). This speaks to the reciprocal relationship that tangata whenua and the environment share, as the Tamihanas fought to protect the environment and the environment repays them by providing sustenance, shelter, and tūrangawaewae – a place to stand, a home. The Tamihana whānau – including Roimata, Tangimoana, and Hemi – engage in kaitiakitanga as a means of anticolonial resistance with the aim of achieving sovereignty. Tangimoana’s transgressions position her as a modern kaitiaki, while Hemi’s return to agrarianism allows for deeper connection to the land and his ancestors. Embodying the spirits of their ancient atua and caring for the corporeal bodies of their ancestors, the community implicitly understands that to care for the environment is to care for your community, your hauora, your tīpuna, and your future descendants.

Spiral temporality and whaikōrero for mana motuhake

Potiki inhabits a uniquely Māori narrative structure and temporality which serves to amplify its themes and solidify its status as a mana wāhine text. Grace describes her aim to craft *Potiki* in the “shape of a traditional whaikōrero – that is, though written, and though in English, it would be an oration that began with a chant, opened out into the main body of the ‘story,’ which could have many directions, and end with a waiata” (*Centre* 198). The novel opens with a chant describing the creation of the universe, beginning with the bursting of life from Te Kore – the great void:

> From the centre,
>
> From the nothing,
>
> Of not seen,

And not heard,

… There comes

An intake

Of breath

Tihe Mauriora. (6)

As Grace details in her memoir, this introduction not only replicates a traditional chant but also evokes the sense that the reader themselves might have come from a limited understanding, a sense of nothingness, and will emerge into Te Ao Māori through reading a story shaped profoundly by mātauranga Māori and pūrākau. Although *Potiki* is a written text, Grace sought to acknowledge the traditional orality of Māori storytelling through her cadence: "it is important for me that my work has an oral 'feel' to it" (*Centre* 199). Yet, as pointed out by Miriam Fuchs, the non-linear temporality and structure of the novel ensures the entire plot in *Potiki* is also "controlled and directed by voice," as the story is relayed to the reader and re-experienced by the narrators, with many of the major events taking place before or beyond the physical temporality that they inhabit (174). The final words of *Potiki* are an invitation for the reader to directly engage with the novel's spiral temporality and to carry on the story: "ka huri" meaning both 'the end' and 'over to you' (Fuchs; Grace *Potiki*). *Potiki* asserts itself as a mana wāhine text through its engagement with Māori traditional storytelling even as it carries the essence of that tradition into new contexts through a primarily English language written whaikōrero (Wood).

The most significant aspect of *Potiki's* form is its spiral temporality, which is founded in Māoritanga and has a strong correlation to the principles of mana wāhine. In Māori culture, our construction of time is conceptualised within a broader understanding of Māoritanga and whakapapa. For Māori, our relationships with our tūpuna are ongoing and reciprocal, and this is partly informed by our ancestors' correlation to nature: Papatūānuku's presence is felt when we walk across the earth, just as Ranginui's presence is felt when we look to the skies. Naomi

Simmonds describes deftly this perpetual corporeal connection between our ancestors, time, and the environment: “it is through the land that time (and the spiral) collapses in on itself as we place our feet on the same lands where our ancestors have walked, and our descendants will walk” (“Never-Ending“ 161). Moreover, just as our physical bodies can be traced through our ancestors all the way back to Hineahuone, so that they live on in us, we will live on in our mokopuna and generations to come in the referential cycle of our whakapapa. Christine Winter describes this as our “basket of ancestry” that encompasses the myriad aspects that inform the spiral temporality of whakapapa, including biological, mythological, ontological, physical, and genetic qualities (283). For Winter, these links between past, present, and future inform her understanding of whakapapa: “I am, I embody, at once, ancestors, future generations, this now living and ancestor. Rather than a notion of time as forward movement through space, it becomes instead spirally bound and emplaced/embodied” (283). With this understanding, it becomes clear that spiral temporality is founded in the same concepts which inform our understanding of mana wāhine and the two concepts are inherently interconnected.

In *Potiki,* these connections between whakapapa, the natural environment, and a Māori understanding of space and time are exhibited through the recurring motif of kowhaiwhai. The kowhaiwhai or double spiral, a prominent feature within wharenui, is representative of the “cyclical nature of time, spiralling through the realms of Te Kore, Te Po, and Te Ao Mārama, and alongside this, our pasts, presents and futures” (Toko King et al.). My argument reaffirms Elizabeth Deloughrey’s assertion that *Potiki*’s use of kowhaiwhai signifies “repetition with a difference,” which “gesture[s] towards genealogical and cultural origins” (68). Deloughrey argues that *Potiki* employs the kowhaiwhai motif not to simply reflect the conception of spiral temporality, but to signify how the novel embraces transgression and change. *Potiki* embodies a temporal structure in which there is no “past or future, [and] that all time is a now-time, centred in the being” (43). Roimata describes how her knowledge and experience within the now-time “reaches out in any

direction towards the outer circles" to form "the wheel, the spiral" through which she conceptualises time (43). The novel opens with the pūrākau of 'the carver' whom we later discover to be an ancestor of the Tamihana whānau. The carver breaks tapu when he gives his final breath to carve a being from living memory that resembles our spiritually-gifted, physically-disfigured protagonist, Toko: "his head is wide so that it may contain the histories and sciences of the people, and the chants and patterns, and knowledge concerning the plants and trees … he has come to us with six fingers on each hand as a sign of the giftedness of his hands" (11). Later, Toko's brother completes the carving after Toko's death: "the large heart was patterned over the chest in a spiral that covered it completely … it was a spiral heart that had no breaking – no breaking and no end" (199). The carver's prophetic anticipation of Toko demonstrates a spiral time informed by whakapapa and its power to transcend linear space-time boundaries through genealogy and spiritual ways of knowing.

In addition to their connection to the cyclical nature of time, kowhaiwhai also represent life, growth, decay, death, and rebirth. Manuka Henare likens it to "the unfolding of the fern frond, leading to the process of decay and returning to the soil with the emergence of new growth, in a continuous cycle" (4). This cycle is first reflected through Roimata's journey home. She decides to return to her homeland after moving away and feeling unmoored, and happens upon the tangi of Hemi and Mary's mother. Her arrival catalyses her relationship with Hemi and the eventual births of their children. The death of Hemi and Mary's mother brings the life of her mokopuna, and Roimata and Toko's journeys within the realms of life and death exemplify the spirality of life and death through kowhaiwhai and whakairo. Similar imagery associates the spiral with continuities between life and death in the description of the poupou after it survives the fire: "this poupou … was the link from old to new … it was the piece that showed that there had been no real death, or showed perhaps that death is a coiled spring" (180). Through this evocation of kowhaiwhai, *Potiki* illustrates the convergence of whakapapa, the natural world, and temporality, as Toko returns to the

realm of the dead and is inscribed within the poupou, physically embodying his relationship with nature and return to the womb of the earth. His spirit lives on within the whakairo that his ancestor gave his breath of life to craft, demonstrating the circle/spiral of life: “ka mete he tete, ka tupu he tete … as one frond dies, another frond grows” (Henare 7).

The spiral time of *Potiki* also reaffirms mana wāhine through its linguistic correlations to wāhine Māori and its reclamation of time and space for women. Wāhine Māori share a connection with time that can be traced through Māori etymology. The Māori word for women – wāhine – is comprised of two parts: wā and hine. Although there is no singular word for time in Māori, ‘wā’ is commonly used to denote “intervals, periods or areas of time and space as well as locations within space and time” (Toko King et al. 8). In this, the inextricability of temporality and spatiality within Māoritanga is evidenced. The word ‘hine’ denotes ‘girl’ which derives from our connection to our ancestress Hineahuone and can be broadly conceptualised as the female essence (Simmonds “Geographies“). Thus, Leonia Pihama explains that “wāhine” signifies a “certain time and space for Māori women … there are many times and spaces Māori women move through, in our lives, Wāhine is one of those“ (261). Granny Tamihana experiences time this way in *Potiki* as she sings of a “time gone ahead, and of those already walking ahead of her on the pathways … and her songs, like the pathways, were interweavings of times and places and of all that breathed between earth and sky” (207). The use of spiral temporality therefore not only demonstrates a mana wāhine epistemology through privileging mātauranga Māori, but can be further interpreted as the manifestation of a highly literal translation of mana wāhine, providing ‘a powerful time and space for women’ or a ‘time and space for women’s power.’

For Māori communities and Māori women to flourish, an adequate amount of time is required to fulfil responsibilities to your whānau, for tikanga Māori such as tangihanga or marae responsibilities, and to “realise aspirations for hauora Māori” like the necessary time required to access healthcare for the community (Toko King et al. 10). Therefore, time was often structured in

ancient Māori society around events and daily tasks. Capitalist and colonialist conceptions of time are antithetical to this event-based time, and the temporal restructure and introduction of the financial economy in Aotearoa has been detrimental to the Māori way of life (Toko King et al.). For Māori women in particular, the imposition of colonialist time is particularly devastating as it devalues the time-intensive domestic labour that has historically been the responsibility of wāhine Māori. Through its reclamation of spiral time grounded in mana wāhine, *Potiki* reclaims time and space for Māori women and allows them to grow into their power and enact "control over one's own destiny" – also referred to as mana motuhake – in a colonised environment (Moorfield). When the Dollarman offers the Tamihanas jobs as part of his development proposal on the assumption that most community members are unemployed, Hemi asserts that they are "working the land … everything [they] need is here. This is where [their] work is" (102). In this intrinsically anti-colonialist act, members of the community engage in horticultural and domestic labour as well as other tasks for their collective benefit. Roimata "would work in the gardens with [her whanau], or go to get seafood, or help in the wharekai. Sometimes [she] would sit on the verandah of this house and talk and sing" (17). After Hemi refuses the Dollarman's proposal and explains the significance of their work on the marae, he argues that if they would return to working within a Western capitalist system, his community would become "slaves again" (108). The renaissance of spiral temporality allows the Tamihanas "to be free" (108).

Conclusion

Mana wāhine is embedded in every aspect of *Potiki,* through its form, the permeation of its plot with mātauranga Māori and mythology, and engagements with kaitiakitanga and themes of environmental protection. *Potiki* argues that returning to Hine, practicing kaitiakitanga and

manaakitanga, privileging mātauranga Māori and whakapapa, and aiming for the fulfilment of mana motuhake are valid, achievable means of resisting and dismantling colonialist, patriarchal oppression which begets environmental degradation and the devaluing of Māori women in contemporary Aotearoa. Woven throughout these sections is an integral aspect of mana wāhine, the importance of our most precious taonga, the land, and the belief in an ineffable connection between Māori – particularly wāhine Māori – and the environment. *Potiki* explores what Māori have to lose if their connection to the whenua is severed, but more importantly, *Potiki* conveys what Māori have to *gain* when commitments to kaitiakitanga, whakapapa, and mātauranga Māori are honoured and imagines how Māori can contribute to cultural and environmental revitalisation in a modern, colonised environment.

> *"He wahine, he whenua ka ngaro ai te tangata".*
> *Without women or land, humanity is lost.* (Pere)

Chapter 3: Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book* and Country

Alexis Wright's novel *The Swan Book* (2013) has received international critical acclaim for its dystopic exploration of colonialism, climate change, and Aboriginal culture in Australia. Wright is a Waanyi woman who grew up in the tropical, monsoonal environment of Northern Australia on the Gulf of Carpentaria, and her novels draw extensively on this locality, culture, and climate. She began working in the mid-1970s "within local activism and social policy for Aboriginal self-determination and land rights," before turning towards fiction as a creative pursuit (Mead 534). Her identity and her experiences as a land rights activist permeate her work through prevalent themes focused on the environment, Aboriginal sovereignty, and Australian culture and history. These themes are evident in *The Swan Book* – the first dystopian novel written by an Indigenous Australian author – as well as her most best-known novel, *Carpentaria* (2006), which won the coveted Miles Franklin Award (Sefton-Rowston). While these novels share thematic concerns, Jane Gleeson-White points out that *Carpentaria* offers a glimmer of hope for the future whereas *The Swan Book* foreshadows a despairing world "irrevocably altered by climate change" (29). As a dystopian, magical realist novel, *The Swan Book* is a glaring exploration of the effects on Aboriginal Australians of settler colonialism and the climate crisis.

The Swan Book is set three hundred years after Australia's colonisation, during a military-scale operation, the "Intervention," and at a time when the environment has been irrevocably altered by a human-induced climate catastrophe. The novel's protagonist, Oblivia Ethylene, is an Aboriginal girl living in the swamps of Northern Australia who is being looked after by her adopted caregiver, Aunty Bella Donna of the Champions, a European climate refugee. Traumatised after being gang-raped as a child and getting lost in the swamp, Oblivia is mute and feels that there is a "virus" in her brain that addles her thoughts, but she finds kinship with the thousands of swans that have migrated to the swamp after their natural environments were ravaged by climate change, and

guide her throughout her life. *The Swan Book* therefore continues a tradition of Australian Indigenous literature which "rejects colonial denigrations of gender and landscape and asserts a kinship, reciprocity, and connection with Country" (Duckworth 57). Years after Bella Donna's death, Oblivia is kidnapped and taken to the capital by Warren Finch, a mixed-race aboriginal man with political ambitions, after their families arranged their betrothal many years ago. In the big city, Oblivia is locked away in her apartment and we see the effect of climate change on urban environments through her eyes: people living in poverty in dilapidated buildings and surrounded by garbage After Finch fulfils his political aspirations and becoming the first Aboriginal President of Australia, it is inferred that Oblivia assassinates him to escape her urban prison, before she treks across Country with fellow climate refugees to live the rest of her days on Aboriginal land with her adopted black swan. However, while she does reunify with Country, the land is unrecognisable due to its degradation, and she spends her final days in a barren wasteland until she eventually succumbs to the elements.

The Swan Book's explorations of Country and climate change, Aboriginal sovereignty, capitalism and imperialism, and colonial trauma are all key ecofeminist concerns. Told predominantly from Oblivia's perspective as a victim of different acts of violence, Wright offers a surreal insight into the future of climate change from the perspective of an Indigenous woman who is subject to the ramifications of these ecological changes. The novel explores how access to Country and Dreaming Law are affected by the climate crisis and highlights the role of settler colonialism and capitalism as contributors to this new dystopic world. *The Swan Book* also utilises the mode of magical realism as a means of exploring this colonial and environmental trauma, offering an ecofeminist standpoint by articulating the political voicelessness of Indigenous Australians, animals, and the land itself within the settler state. Unlike other novels discussed in this thesis, the searing ecofeminism of *The Swan Book* is not bound by "a framework of 'hope' because there first needs to be acknowledgement of a nation's suffering" (Sefton-Rowston 356).

Country, dreaming and climate change

The Swan Book envisions a dystopic, hellish future wrought by anthropogenic climate change. Playing with the common metaphor for the environment, the narrator describes how Mother Earth has been transformed to "Mother Catastrophe of flood, fire, drought and blizzard," which have become the new four seasons (5). In Australia, the nation is now "shrouded in days of dust … or, all the time in heavy cyclonic rain," with ecosystems which were previously desert now perpetually flooded, and ancient wetlands now dusty and bone-dry (15). Oblivia lives in an overpopulated detention camp for displaced Aboriginal peoples, where dust, garbage, and a flotilla of abandoned boats have polluted the lake, turning the once-clear water to "bleeding-heart, rust-staining yellow water" that is "contaminated by radioactivity" (50). While based in Australia, *The Swan Book* also offers a terrifying glimpse of how the rest of the world has been affected by climate catastrophe, with entire nations "lost to climate change wars" leaving "millions of sea gypsies" to take to the water in search of refuge (20). However, as the novel follows an Aboriginal protagonist and is written from an Aboriginal perspective, *The Swan Book* does not simply imagine catastrophe but poses the question: how does irrevocable environmental destruction impact the essential relationship between Indigenous Australians and the natural world, and influence understandings of identity?

The Aboriginal Australian concepts of Country and Dreaming are integral to understanding *The Swan Book.* Country is more than an Aboriginal conceptualisation of the natural environment; for Indigenous Australians, Country is not one undifferentiated place but rather a "living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life" (Rose 7). As a living entity, First Nations peoples do not exert dominion over an inanimate landmass but share a

relationship to their environment: “Countries are places where everything lives and everything connects in an ever-moving web of relationships, and it is through these connections that everything continues” (Kwaymullina 199). These connections are reinforced through spiritual, ancestral stories related to the Aboriginal cosmogony commonly referred to as Dreamings or The Dreaming, in which the Dreaming Ancestors created the Aboriginal homelands and continuously create the present reality for Aboriginal Australians (Kwaymullina). While stories related to The Dreaming have localised names due to differences in language and culture across mobs (tribes), these have commonly been translated as “‘Dreaming/Dreaming Law’ or ‘songlines’” (Robin et al. 44). Dreaming Law and Country are inherently linked, as Mussolini Harvey (Yanyuwa) describes: Dreamings are “ancestors, no matter if they are fish, birds, men, women, animals, wind or rain. It was these Dreamings that made our Law” (qtd in Rose 27). Dreaming stories often describe responsibilities to Country: an understanding that “any right to territory is intertwined with a responsibility to care for it” is vital to Indigenous understandings of cultural and environmental sovereignty (Kwaymullina 199). Discussing her novels in an interview, Wright has said that “the land is … one of or even the central character. Most of the images and ideas relate to the land being alive and having important meaning, which is tied to the ancient roots of our continent” (Vernay). When discussing *The Swan Book,* engaging with the concepts of Country and Dreaming is essential as the land holds both narrative and cultural significance.

The way these environmental changes have impacted the land and the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and their access to their Dreaming and Countries is articulated through the experiences of Oblivia and her kin living at Swan Lake. In *The Swan Book,* the ancestors of the Indigenous peoples living at Swan Lake were guardians of a sacred tree which held all the “stories of the swamp,” and the act of caring for the tree spoke to a “reciprocal bond of responsibility that existed between themselves and the ancestors [which] had always strengthened them” (69). When the tree is vandalised, the connection to their Dreaming Ancestors and Country is severed, leaving

them "unmoored, vulnerable, separated from eternity," and living like "strangers walking around on their Country" (69). At the novel's conclusion, Oblivia's Country calls out to her and she passes on and returns to the earth. Her Country's call is merely a "whisper from the scrub ancestor" as the landscape has become a deadened place because of the environmental degradation:

> *Kayi, kayi kala-wurru nganyi, your country is calling out for you …* although nothing that could truly be heard – just a sensation of straining to hear something, which understandably, was how anyone should whisper on this spirit-broken place, from seeing their old homes scattered to kingdom come, of being where the Army owned everything, every centimetre of their traditional land, every line of buried song, stories, feelings, the sound of their voices. (296)

Like Oblivia, Country itself has been silenced and the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and their Countries has been damaged beyond repair. By illustrating how access to Dreaming and Country has been hindered, *The Swan Book* articulates the environmental and cultural devastation of climate change through an Indigenous lens.

Yet, *The Swan Book* does not yearn for a return to an untouched past in which the relationship between Indigenous Australians and the environment was uncomplicated by these oppressive systems. This utopic idea is not only portrayed as being impossible, but as actively harmful. For the people of Swan Lake, losing their land is an experience they have been familiar with since the arrival of British settlers on Australian soil in the 1700s and they "already knew what it was like to lose Country" (34): "the traditional land was snatched again. The real owners … could not count the number of times their land has been ripped from under their feet" (45). After the Intervention, the military's illegal occupation of their ancestral homeland, Oblivia's mob finally returns to the now-polluted lake but choose ignorance and pretend that "the lake was still the same tranquil place that it had always been from time *immemorial"* (9). The italicisation of 'immemorial' highlights the irony of the statement as there is no returning to an untouched, pastoral world from

time *immemorial* – this possibility has been permanently erased by the climate crisis, if it was every truly there to begin with: "there was not much choice about pure and pristine anymore" (9). At the novel's end, Oblivia treks with other refugees to an Aboriginal community that is regarded as a "real sacred place," with people "living in the ruins of concrete-block buildings and rusted car bodies" and void of arable flora or fauna or any useful natural materials. Oblivia muses that there is "nothing to build a door with," meaning that there is nothing within the barren landscape that can help them to rebuild their community, rebuild their lives, or repair the connection to their homelands (282). Oblivia has never known a flourishing Australia untouched by colonial influences and environmental destruction, and *The Swan Book*'s refusal to romanticise Australia's past as a pastoral utopia is grounded in her unique perspective as an Aboriginal woman whose access to Country has been impeded since time *immemorial*.

Colonialism and capitalism

The world imagined by *The Swan Book*, where the destruction caused by anthropogenic climate change is intensified by colonialism and capitalism, draws on real examples from Australia's history. As described by Sefton-Rowson, "the natural climate is intrinsically linked to the social climate in Wright's literary world" (361). The novel describes the role of capitalism in catalysing these environmental changes when Oblivia exclaims that "modern man had become the new face of God, and simply sacrificed the whole earth" (10). In Australia, the effects of this capitalistic greed are compounded by settler colonialism and militarisation. Oblivia is living through the Intervention, a military invasion of Aboriginal communities in order to "save babies from their parents" (41). This parallels events in 2007 when then Prime Minister John Howard enlisted the Australian Defence Force to enter Aboriginal communities in response to the *Report of the Northern Territory*

Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse. Casting its gaze further back in time, the novel also directly references the invasion of Australia: "[settlers] could steal a whole country, kill your people, and still not pay all those centuries' worth of rent" (50). Ironically, hordes of people whose nations colonised Australia three hundred years ago are now shown returning to its shores as climate refugees desperate for shelter. Being informed and inspired by real Australian history, *The Swan Book* depicts how these oppressive systems are key contributors to this dystopian world and harm all people, not only Indigenous peoples.

Climate change is presented as a consequence of colonialist and capitalist influences, and these systems continue to actively harm Oblivia and hinder her access to Country. After her traumatic sexual assault, Oblivia was found hidden in the "bowels of an old eucalyptus tree" and she believes herself to be "directly descended from [this] ancestral tree" (10). The tree was considered sacred by her mob, a place where "all the stories of the swamp were stored like doctrines of Law left by the spiritual ancestors"; yet, when Oblivia is found in the tree, it is nothing more than a blackened stump because the Army has burned it in an attempt to "close the gap between Aboriginal people and white people" by hindering their ability to engage in cultural practices (68). Oblivia attempts to find solace in her Country, but the scorched hollow is emblematic of this link being severed and destroyed by the military, representative of the settler state's oppressive systems. Within the urban environments in Australia, however, communities of predominantly settler Australians are also shown to be experiencing harm. Oblivia describes the capital, Canberra, as having "rubbish everywhere. Power shortages. Infrastructure collapse. The sewerage system backing up and becoming clogged with nowhere to go" (261). While the novel argues against settler colonialism and the ongoing presence of British settlers, it is suggesting that these colonialist ideologies oppress all peoples in Australia, and not only Indigenous ones. In *The Swan Book,* no person or area of Australia is unscathed by the ramifications of these systems.

The role of settler colonialism and its effects on Aboriginal identity are further explored through the relationship between European Bella Donna and Oblivia. Aunty Bella Donna's name holds figurative significance. Bella Donna – also known as nightshade – in Italian means 'beautiful woman' yet the plant itself is poisonous and deadly. Bella Donna holds these dissonant ideas simultaneously as she considers herself all at once to be the saviour and carer for Oblivia but also feels "like a thief, even a kidnapper … if she had saved the girl or not – what did it matter?" (43). She also struggles with the intruding idea that she should have "left [Oblivia] where she was" (44). It is my belief that Bella Donna is experiencing this guilt from engaging in colonising behaviours, most notably the colonisation of Oblivia's mind. Throughout Oblivia's upbringing, Bella Donna shares European fairy tales with Oblivia and reminisces about her home country. Due to these behaviours, Barras argues, "Bella Donna functions as a figuration of Western narrativity, and her nostalgia lays bare the loss of socio-ecological systems brought about by modernity" (59). The loss of Aboriginal peoples' connection to their culture is evidenced as Bella Donna's narratives embed themselves in Oblivia's consciousness, to the point where she remarks that "it was a foreigner's *Dreaming* she had" (14). Her Dreaming – an essential connection to her identity, culture, and her Country – has been tinged with colonial ideologies.

Yet, if *The Swan Book* may appear initially to be simplistic in its analysis of Aboriginal Australian/settler Australian power dynamics, it complicates this discussion through the presence of its antagonist, Warren Finch. Warren Finch is a mixed-race Aboriginal Australian and settler Australian, whose mob are the Nation of Brolga People, perceived as "rich sell-out Aboriginal people with mining royalties and a treaty" (106). Under traditional native Law, the elders of Warren's and Oblivia's countries arranged their marriage years ago, and Warren eventually comes to Swan Lake to claim Oblivia as his bride, kidnapping her and taking her to live with him in the capital city. While he is ethnically Indigenous, he considers himself to be "post-racial. Possibly even post-Indigenous … Internationally Warren" (109). In a lecture, Alexis Wright argues that if

Indigenous Australians begin to believe that "knowing ourselves through our legacy of ancestral and historical stories and attachment to the land doesn't really matter to us in the so-called modern world of Australia in the twenty-first century, then we will simply lose our identity and relationship to Country" ("Mabo"). As a post-Indigenous, post-racial man, Warren Finch embodies Wright's fear. *The Swan Book* imagines what the future of Indigeneity in modern Australia could look like if Indigenous Australians fail to nurture their stories and connections to their Dreaming Ancestors and Countries.

Warren Finch engages in capitalism and colonialist practices, and his being Indigenous complicates a reading of *The Swan Book* as asserting that Indigenous Australians are innately natural. Val Plumwood argues that when nature, Indigenous people, and women are defined as 'nature' in an Australian context they are also wrongly "defined as terra nullius, a resource empty of its own purposes or meanings" (qtd in Duckworth 58). Warren Finch adopts the role of the coloniser and engages in colonialist practices which lead to his eventual downfall, exploiting natural resources himself and also benefiting financially from their exploitation by his associates. Brolga Nation – Finch's mob – have made their fortune from allowing mining on their ancestral land, which the novel assesses as a betrayal against their own sovereignty and self-determination, constituting "a bit of assimilation, a bit of integration, a bit of giving up your own sovereignty, a bit of closing the gap" (104). The wealth of Finch's political financers is also derived from "the laundered profits of exploiting natural resources" (146). By these associations, it is clear that Finch feels no natural affinity to the pastoral environment. But his apathy reaches a climax when he orders the destruction of Swan Lake. He argues that the people of Swan Lake were "doing nothing to change things by themselves for the future so they had given up the right of sovereignty over their lives" (208). Warren Finch has adopted the role of the coloniser by destroying the natural environment and profiting off its exploitation, infringing on the Swan Lake inhabitants' right to life and kidnapping Oblivia who is the "sole custodian of traditional Law" (Holgate *Crises* 61).

Eventually, it is implied, Oblivia assassinates Warren Finch, which can be interpreted allegorically as an act of Indigenous self-determination and defence against settler colonialism. Through Warren Finch's alignment with colonialism and capitalism, *The Swan Book* refuses to engage in an ecofeminism which assumes an automatic allegiance between Indigenous peoples and the natural environment.

Petro-fiction and the urban environment

Due to its critical engagements with the themes of urbanisation, anthropogenic climate change, and capitalism, *The Swan Book* can also be described as a petro-fiction. Heather Sullivan explains that "our current geological epoch, provisionally called the Anthropocene, has come into being with the increasingly intensive extraction and utilisation of fossil fuels by human beings" (414). As a result, she argues, a sub-genre of literary narratives have emerged which are predominantly concerned with analysing "our petroculture in terms of the ecological impacts of 'peak-oil' and 'post-oil' culture," and exploring the reality that the modern age of urbanisation has occurred "not alongside, but rather because of the capitalist consumption of oil and other fossil fuels" (416). These ideas are prevalent in *The Swan Book* as it explores Australia as a post-oil culture whose people and environments are victims of anthropogenic climate change and rapid urbanisation.

The petro-fictive elements of *The Swan Book* strengthen its ecofeminist position against capitalism and colonialism. Remnants of Australia's past dependence on fossil fuels are scattered throughout Wright's dystopic world. In Swan Lake, the abandoned boats strewn across the waters indicate the obsolete nature of fuel-powered vehicles in this new society, while the polluted water gleams with "purple and blue oxidising colours" and trails of rainbows reminiscent of an oil spill (51). This example illustrates how the over-use of fossil fuels has negatively impacted the natural

environment. With no need for fossil fuels as a source of power in this dilapidated community, petrol is now used as a drug to dull the harsh, miserable atmosphere of the detention camp: "[Swan Lake was] a small place where sometimes things got so bad when the swamp's little gang of brain-damaged, toxic-fume-sniffing addicted kids ruled" (27). The perpetrators of Oblivia's sexual assault are similarly described as "petrol-sniffing youths." Just as fossil fuels have permeated and damaged the environment, so have they permeated the identities of Indigenous Australians. Oblivia's name even illuminates a connection to fossil fuels as her given name is short for Oblivion and her last name is Ethylene, "a hydrocarbon found in crude oil, which is used for petrol sniffing" (Gleeson-White 34). Paired together, her name denotes 'the end of fossil fuels' or the 'forgetting of fossil fuels.'

The novel's urban environments are also informed by their cultural context within a post-oil society, where the earth is beginning to reclaim these once-natural spaces. Australia's cities are described as "power-starved" and undergo frequent power shortages, with reliable electricity now viewed as a luxury from a bygone era: "they remembered a time when you could leave the lights burning all night without anyone batting an eyelid" (192). Oblivia also notices high levels of pollution, homelessness, and poverty in the city streets: "she pretended not to notice how wet the people were who slept against walls, some standing, and others lying under cardboard while styrofoam and plastic rolled over them in the wind" (211). The infrastructure of the cities is beginning to crumble, and the natural environment is starting to reclaim them. Oblivia observes that the city of Brisbane is "breaking up, as though the land beneath has collapsed under its weight … the natural landscape was quietly returning and reclaiming its original habitat" (188). The city is constantly flooding, and Oblivia listens to the "waters flooding in the laneway, the old drought-buster spirit when tidal surges flooded through the sewers" (215). The presence of old spirits, and the returning of nature are glimpses of hope in this decrepit urban landscape. Yet perhaps the most meaningful sign of a natural renaissance is the transformation of Machine – the lift-man in Finch's

building who is tasked with guarding Oblivia. His name invokes the mechanical, electrical, and other modern aspects of Wright's dystopia, and this negative impression is solidified through his role as Oblivia's jailor who keeps her "locked inside [the] guts" of a building which is like a "cage" (211). But shortly after Oblivia asks Machine for help finding some of the city's lost swans, she returns to find him transformed into another species: "instinctively, she knew … that Machine has become the owl" (231). He then guides her through the city helping her recover the lost swans and leads her to the "World of Magicians and Genies" which was "alive with the city's lizards and skinks," genies, owls, and more (233). Machine becomes a conduit between Oblivia and the natural world, and his transformation serves to strengthen the novel's argument that petroculture and urban spaces are actively harmful to our natureculture, but that the earth is resilient and has the capability to reclaim what has been taken.

Oblivia and swans: The human/animal connection

Oblivia's affinity to the swans is central to *The Swan Book*'s ecofeminist concerns. When Oblivia first encounters one of the black swans that migrate to Swan Lake, she and the swan stare directly at each other, its eyes making her feel "exposed, hunted and *found*" (12; emphasis added). Immediately, she knows that the swan was "searching for its soul in her" (13). From this point on, the swans guide and follow Oblivia throughout her life and are prevalent throughout the text. Within the fields of feminism and ecofeminism, there are studies concerned with the "new animal geography" in which "agency, subjectivity, feelings, and symbolic communications are not the preserve of only humans" (Instone 455). According to prominent Australian ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood, humans need to engage in "communicative models of relationships with nature and animals" as their unique insights "offer us a better chance of survival in the difficult

times ahead" (*Environmental* 190). In *The Swan Book,* Oblivia's relationship with animals deconstructs anthropocentric understandings of animals as voiceless creatures, and even as that voicelessness is used as an analogy for the ways in which Aboriginal peoples have been politically voiceless within settler Australia.

Oblivia and the swans share a defining attribute of non-human speech. Their shared muteness negates the conception of animal 'voicelessness' and affirms the novel's ecofeminist concerns. Many ecofeminist and animal rights scholars write against the idea of animal muteness, shifting away from an anthropocentric understanding of animals as objects to one of animals as subjects that communicate through non-human speech (Probyn-Rapsey). Oblivia's selective mutism is a choice derived from her trauma, yet even so she is not without a voice. Throughout the novel, Oblivia uses non-verbal cues such as hand gestures, lip movements, and expressions to communicate with others when she chooses to. These physical means of communication are the same kind of embodied actions and expressions that animals use to communicate with, and comprise the "common language of all embodied beings" (Plumwood *Environmental* 192). Bella Donna is one such person Oblivia attempts to communicate with in this manner, by moving her lips, but although Bella Donna "recognises the girl's clumsy attempts to communicate with her" she refuses to listen (17). This refusal suggests the manner in which Indigenous Australians have gone unheard by settler Australians throughout history, including a refusal to listen to their 'political voice,' which can be described as "the ability to define and assert one's subjectivity" (Corman 484). Through highlighting Oblivia's embodied actions and illustrating her lack of a political 'voice', *The Swan Book* illuminates how Oblivia – and therefore all Indigenous peoples – are politically voiceless within their own nation.

Oblivia and the land both 'speak' throughout the novel, despite their lack of verbal expression, and their 'voices' are conveyed as being one and the same, reaffirming the idea that Indigenous Australians and Country are intrinsically interconnected. Just as Oblivia has a 'voice'

although she is physically mute, there are instances in which Country communicates without using spoken language: “the swamp’s natural sounds of protest were often mixed with lamenting ceremonies. Haunting chants rose and fell on the water like a beating drum … this is the world itself, disassembling its thoughts” (47). The land has agency as a living being and protests against its treatment and degradation caused by the climate crisis. There are instances in which Oblivia ‘speaks’ back to the land, by literally inscribing her knowledge upon the earth: “the little girl’s fingers were constantly moving, in slow swirls like music,” and what she was writing was either “the oldest language coming to birth again instinctively, or through some strange coincidence … words that resembled the twittering of bird song speaking about the daylight” (6). She and the land can essentially speak the same ‘language’ because Oblivia’s identity as a Waanyi woman means that she and her Country are kin. This shared language also reflects Oblivia’s status as a guardian of traditional Waanyi knowledge as this “knowledge stored in the environment is conveyed from one person to another through song, a pedagogical method that is sometimes referred to as songlines” (Holgate *Crises* 42). This shared language is also highlighted through Oblivia’s attempts to communicate with Bella Donna, who only hears non-human sounds indistinguishable from “bushland humming, such as leaves caught up in the gusts of wind, or the rustling of the *wiyarr* spinifex grasses in the surrounding landscape as the wind flew over them, or sometimes the flattened whine of distant bird song, or a raging bush-fire crackling and hissing from *juju jungku bayungu*” (17). From an Indigenous ecofeminist perspective, it is not that the land is speaking through Oblivia, but that Oblivia and her Country speak the same language which privileges the stewardship of nature, is grounded in Indigenous knowledge, and understands the interconnectedness of all living beings.

Similarly, the animals of *The Swan Book* are acknowledged as subjects capable of communicating environmental knowledge and wisdom. In her discussion of the role of animals in the climate crisis, Fiona Probyn-Rapsey cites a video that went viral in Australia in which a magpie

has learnt to mimic an emergency vehicle siren: a "'swansong' for Australia's 'black summer' bushfires" (319). This is a haunting example of the ways in which animals communicate with humans during the climate crisis, and this idea is prominent in *The Swan Book.* Rigoletto is a talking monkey who is an old friend of the Harbour Master's, and Oblivia communicates with his spirit when she reaches the capital city. The Harbour Master misses his old friend and regrets abandoning him "after the monkey kept making a nuisance of itself by predicting colossal wars … sorry he thought the monkey was mad" (35). In this instance, Rigoletto has a literal voice yet his political voice continues to go unheard. The novel acknowledges animals as an integral part of our ecosystem and implores the people of Australia to engage in the politics of listening. Of the swans' calls, the narrator observes that "you had to hear these soothsaying creatures creating glimpses of a new internationally dimensional language about global warming and changing climates for this land. Really listen hard to what they were saying" (295). Grounded in an Indigenous perspective which conceives of all living beings as interconnected, *The Swan Book* acknowledges animals as guardians of environmental knowledge and warns that humans ignore the voices of animals only to our own detriment.

The Swan Book also combats dominant Western epistemology through Oblivia's affinity to black swans. When the first black swan arrives on Swan Lake, Oblivia declares that she knows "as a fact" that the swan "had been banished from wherever it should be singing its stories" and that they had become "gypsies" and "nomads," searching the deserts "when their own habitats had dried from prolonged drought" (13). In this sense, the black swans can be interpreted as a symbol for the Indigenous peoples and their own displacement and loss of culture: "black swans have their own ancestral spirits and Law stories, but nobody can remember what the swans' stories are, signifying a loss of cultural memory" (Holgate *Crises* 45). Throughout her life, Bella Donna has missed the white swans native to her European homeland and has imparted myriad stories about them to Oblivia, including Tchaikovsky's ballet *Swan Lake* and poems by John Keats, Pablo Neruda,

Seamus Heaney and more (Holgate *Crises*). These Western narratives have infiltrated Oblivia's mind, reflecting how Western ideologies have infiltrated Aboriginal land and culture. However, the black swans combat these Western epistemologies when they reassert their own names in various Aboriginal Australian languages: "hundreds of black swans … dream their own names, Goolyen, Connewerre, Kungorong, Muru-kutchi, Kuluin, Mulgoa, Kungari, Koonwarra, Byahmul, and the recital continues" (66). After all, "the swamp people were not interested in being conquered by other peoples' stories" (29). Through Oblivia's affinity to the black swans, *The Swan Book* symbolically rejects Western epistemologies and reasserts an Indigenous worldview.

The connection between Oblivia and the animals throughout *The Swan Book* seeks to highlight the shared domination of all native beings in Australia – including the earth itself – under settler colonial rule. Yet, the novel does not merely draw attention to their lack of political agency within their own country. Mackey argues that "by deprivileging human voice, the novel instead orients the reader toward nature" (536). I would extend this argument by adding that this "deprivileging" orients the reader towards nature and towards an Aboriginal Australian epistemology which values all life and perceives the interconnectedness of all living beings.

Magical realism, Dreamtime, and trauma

The Swan Book has also been described as a magical realist text due to its supernatural elements. The genre designation of magical realism has been criticised within postcolonial discourses for its tendency to be used to label cultural experiences, mythologies, and worldviews as non-realist without necessary cultural context. Some critics argue that claiming Indigenous works are 'magical realist' texts imposes a Western framework upon them, and constitutes a form of literary colonialism (Holgate "Unsettling"). From an Aboriginal perspective, *The Swan Book* illustrates the

reciprocity and kinship of Indigenous peoples, Country, and animals through Oblivia and her interactions with various figures including swans, talking monkeys, and ancestral ghosts. These interactions are cultural expressions of real-world phenomena, not of magic. Wright herself has clarified that her "stories could be called supernatural or fantastic" but they are more accurately described as "stories of spiritual beliefs as much as the beliefs of the everyday" ("Carpentaria"). However, while the name of the narrative mode has proven to be contentious, elements of magical realism are often prominent features of anticolonial, Indigenous, ecofeminist texts, including *The Swan Book.*

Magical realism has long been associated with postcolonialism, but its distinguishing formal qualities also align with key concerns of ecological writing which have more recently been brought into literary discourse. Ben Holgate illustrates these connections, citing similarities which include: a postcolonial perspective which reacts against colonial legacies; a desire to "counter dominant ontologies and epistemologies," including that which separates humans and the environment into a binary structure; a "focus on the interconnectedness of all things in the universe"; and "a transgressive nature that dismantles binaries, such as human and non-human, and animate and inanimate" (*Crises* 3). Many Indigenous texts naturally fulfil these criteria due to their transgressive nature and their privileging of Indigenous worldviews that value reciprocity and stewardship of the environment, and are fundamentally anti-anthropocentric, anti-colonial, and anti-capitalist. Within a localised Australian context, the magical realist qualities of Indigenous writing have been described as a "Dreamtime narrative," encompassing stories that privilege Aboriginal epistemologies, including the eponymous Dreamtime – the first formation of life on earth, and a "constant which exists outside of" chronological and geological time (Holgate *Crises* 43). Moving forward, I am going to use the term 'Dreamtime' to denote any supernatural or fantastical elements that might otherwise be called magical realist to avoid colonialist phrasing and instead privilege Aboriginal ideologies. In *The Swan Book,* the majority of the novel's Dreamtime elements directly relate to

Oblivia and call to mind Maria Takolander's argument that magical realism is "not the organic expression of a precolonial or hybrid consciousness, but of colonial or other kinds of trauma" (Takolander 95). I argue that *The Swan Book* utilises Dreamtime elements to naturalise and privilege Aboriginal Australian epistemologies and as a method of exploring colonial and environmental trauma.

The Swan Book employs Dreamtime elements as a means of exploring Oblivia's trauma – particularly the virus in Oblivia's mind – as well as acting as a synecdoche for the environmental destruction of her homeland. She describes this virus as a "lover living in some lolly pink prairie house in her brain – that made the world seem too large and jittery for her" (296). Her sexual assault is the progenitor of this virus. Reflecting on her rape, she convinces herself that "what had happened to her, or perhaps whatever it was, it just happened to some other little girl that everyone was talking about and maybe it was not her either, or herself neither, but all girls" (72). We can interpret Oblivia's rape as also a rape of the environment, because she is held to be synonymous with Country. Considering Oblivia's claim that her rape has happened to 'all girls' we can view its impact even more broadly as suggesting that the damaged environment harms all its inhabitants, and especially that all Indigenous women have been harmed in some way. The assault splits her sense of identity and catalyses her dissociative tendencies which manifest in non-realist ways. Later in the novel, when she has been kidnapped by Finch, she sees "those boys from long ago [emerge] from the ground … she knew them instantly … she crawled away towards her memory of the tree" (179). The virus and the apparition of the assailants exemplify how the novel's Dreamtime elements are employed to enable an examination of Oblivia's traumas.

Oblivia's virus also enables an exploration of how the climate crises hinders the concept of mental sovereignty. As she finds her homeland destroyed, her physical displacement directly translates to a sense of feeling lost within her own mind, becoming "a gypsy, addicted to journeys into these illusory homelands" (3). She has become both physically and mentally displaced and

embarks on a quest to "regain sovereignty over [her] own brain" (3). Because the novel is mostly narrated from Oblivia's virus-addled perspective, the site of her mind is given equal importance to the material environment, suggesting parallels between land sovereignty and sovereignty of the mind. For Mead, the transposition of the concept of sovereignty from the physical world into the aesthetic realm constitutes "a more expansive and holistic understanding of Indigenous self-determination, and not just a mentally isolationist or abstract one" (528). Oblivia's loss of Country has caused her to become a refugee within her own mind, and in many ways, the novel's depiction of Oblivia's virus brings to light how Indigenous peoples' sovereignty – material and immaterial – is impeded by environmental catastrophe. In Wright's dystopic world, Aboriginal people are denied sovereignty over their land and culture, but the long-term effects of this oppression also manifests itself in Oblivia's loss of sovereignty over her own mind.

Ghostly apparitions, genies, talking monkeys, and ancestral spirits are other Dreamtime elements that speak to Oblivia's colonial and environmental trauma. Throughout her journey, Oblivia often sees, hears, and interacts with people and animals that are not physically present. Some of these interactions are with Indigenous peoples, native animals, and even the natural world itself. These interactions naturalise an Aboriginal worldview in which ancestral spirits commune with their descendants. However, the spectral presence of European Bella Donna and the Harbour Master complicates this reading, instead indicating of Oblivia's colonial trauma as these people are not her Indigenous kin. Early in the novel, Bella Donna passes away and Oblivia is left to fend for herself, but when she is kidnapped by Warren Finch and wishes to escape, she "install[s] the spirit of Aunty Bella Donna of the Champions, but the loud-mouthed Harbour Master returned too" (140). Oblivia invokes Bella Donna's spirit as a means of protecting herself from the unknown, seeking the comfort of the European fables told by her aunt that parallel her entrapment. Oblivia recites Bella Donna's "many maiden swan fantasies that have vanquished men who hunt swans … of their capturing swan women that always eventually escape" (140). Her instinctive identification with the

European swans and maidens of Bella Donna's stories, instead of communing with her ancestors, speaks to her colonial trauma. Another Dreamtime aspect which conveys Oblivia's mind as a site of colonisation is her reference to the virus in her head as a "prairie house" (296). According to Sheridan, "the reference to the little house on the prairie (that classic American fable of pioneer settlers) links this malevolent virus with colonialism's myths of white ownership of superiority" (209). Oblivia is haunted by settler spectres, and these Dreamtime elements illustrate how settler colonialism has permeated all aspects of her life, and therefore the lives of all Aboriginal Australians.

Conclusion

The Swan Book differs from other novels explored in this thesis, as it refuses to imagine a utopic future in which settlers, Indigenous peoples, and Country exist harmoniously. Indeed, Wright's "vision of future society resists colonial articulations of hope, preferring oblivion to harmony, exclusion to inclusion, polarisation to absorption, and economic hopelessness to cultural extinction through assimilation" (Sefton-Rowston 356). This could not be clearer than at the novel's conclusion. Oblivia has lived out her final days on Country with her swan, but she is emaciated, hostile, and eventually left behind by the caravan of other illegal refugees she has been living amongst. She is miraculously joined by a flock of swans in her final days, until the ever-increasing temperatures disorient them and they eventually all die in a futile search for water. Oblivia and her swan companion pass on too, and swans never return to the dry, hot climate where they once lived with the swan girl. This reaffirms that the "interdependence of all life within Country constitutes a hard but essential lesson – those who destroy Country ultimately destroy themselves" (Rose 10).

The Swan Book extends this idea further by arguing that the destruction of Country means the eventual destruction of all life on earth – regardless of ethnicity or culpability.

When approached from an Indigenous ecofeminist perspective, it becomes clear that all elements of *The Swan Book* are imbued with Wright's identity and culture as a Waanyi woman. For many Aboriginal peoples, the questions of Indigenous sovereignty and the right to political voice are pertinent ones, and these are questions that have not yet been sufficiently answered. Through this petrofiction, Wright explores what it means to be an Indigenous woman living in a settler state that is undergoing an environmental crisis, and how that impacts your access to Country and your cultural identity. By implementing Dreamtime elements, the novel explores these colonial and environmental traumas and introduces the concept of the mind as a site of colonisation and cultural erasure. Oblivia's affinity for swans and other animals works to privilege non-human voice and highlights the lack of political voice in Australia for Aboriginal peoples, animals, and nature. Although a haunting tale of genies, swans, ghosts, and talking monkeys, *The Swan Book* is firmly rooted in the reality of Aboriginal experience living through settler occupation, and it is this disheartening experience that begets the novel's tone. Ultimately, the novel explores the question: will the voices of nature and Aboriginal peoples ever be heard in Australia?

> There was no such thing as the dying swan call. It died without sound. [Oblivia] had no sound either, and knew what it was like to be without sound. This country would never hear her voice, or the language she spoke. (156)

Chapter 4: Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* and Native Ecofeminism

Linda Hogan is a Native American author of Oklahoma Chickasaw heritage, whose literary engagements with Native American experience, ecology, and politics, have been recognised as an essential part not only of the Native American Renaissance but of the broader United States contemporary literary canon (Cook). Hogan's texts draw on her mixed Chickasaw and Anglo ancestry, and especially her "traditional, Indigenous perspective of the land and human relationship with the land" (Cook 3). Author of four novels and numerous other works of poetry and non-fiction, all of Hogan's work is informed by her personal engagements with environmental and political activism, which are inseparable from her identity as a Native woman, and she considers herself to be "primarily an environmental writer" (Cook 2). Her accolades throughout her literary career speak to her impact as an author, having received the Colorado Book Award twice and the Oklahoma Book Award for Fiction, as well as being a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Literature in 1991, and she now sits as the current Writer in Residence for the Chickasaw Nation. With her environmental focus and her intersectional perspective, Linda Hogan has been heralded as an ecofeminist author, and these concerns are to the fore in her novel *Solar Storms* (2005).

Solar Storms follows Angel Jensen, a young, damaged Native woman on a journey of self-discovery as she returns to her reservation in the borderlands between Canada and Minnesota, seeking to connect with her family and heritage after being abandoned by her mother at an early age. Arriving at the remote, harsh, and cold wilderness of Fur Island, off the coast of Adam's Rib, Angel reunites with her ancestors and slowly begins to feel at home among her female relatives, including her great-great-grandmother Dora-Rouge, great-grandmother Agnes, and Bush, who adopted Angel's mother, Hannah, and raised Angel as a very young girl. The women of Adam's Rib are determined to stop a hydroelectric dam project which is set to destroy their homeland of Two-Town, its surrounding waterways, and Indigenous communities – including their ancestral

community of peoples, the Fat Eaters. Based on historical events surrounding construction of the James Bay hydroelectric project in the 1970s, which caused unprecedented environmental and social damage to Native communities, the novel conveys an anticolonial stance against corporate developments. Angel joins her relatives on a treacherous canoe trip to try and save their land and their people, and on this journey she uncovers the violent secrets of her past. She learns that her matrilineal ancestors have long been victims of colonial, sexual, and political violence, and Angel's mother's experience left her possessed by evil spirits that caused her to attack Angel as a baby. But Angel also discovers the beautiful hidden secrets of her land and cultivates the ancient spiritual power to dream of plants and communicate with the natural world around her. Through political activism, Angel and her family successfully delay the hydroelectric dam project but are unable to definitively stop its progress, and ultimately return to Adam's Rib. As a result of the ongoing environmental damage caused by corporate developments, Angel and Bush must flee Fur Island as it now rests predominantly underwater. Although her future is jeopardised, Angel ultimately feels hopeful about the future and secure in her identity as a Native woman connected to the people and the world around her.

Solar Storms engages directly with the Native American understanding that all living things are connected, and therefore, the environment is inextricable from the Native concept of self. This sense of interdependence is derived from a cultural and spiritual understanding that the land and the people are "one and the same essential matter of Existence … if anything is most vital, essential, and absolutely important in Native cultural philosophy, it is this concept of interdependence" (Ortiz 12). In Native cosmology, all living beings emerged into being at the same time from the Mother Creator, the entity responsible for all Creation (Silko). This concept of interdependence therefore fosters a sense of reciprocity and responsibility to preserve the natural world and begets a uniquely Native environmentalism. The idea that land and Native peoples share an ancestral, familial connection is prevalent in *Solar Storms*, which "articulate[s] a critical Indigenous understanding of

identity grounded in place" (Castor 164). Upon arriving at her reservation, Angel learns that her community "believed everything was alive" and thus privileges nature as a living being deserving of protection and respect (94). Eventually, the community helps Angel awaken her previously dormant understanding of the interdependencies between people and the land, even in the negative terms of colonialism, and she realises that "my beginning was . . . one of broken lives, gone animals, trees felled and kindled. Our beginnings were intricately bound up in the history of the land" (114). Indeed, "through the development of Angel's history of physical abuse, abandonment, and dislocation we see the individual effects of those events and a breaking of the 'linked cells in a larger communal body' through the exploitation of the land, animals, and people" (Vernon 34). As Angel learns how inextricable she is from the environment and her kin, she learns to heal herself through reconnecting with her family and tending to the earth.

Through Angel and her journey towards self-discovery, *Solar Storms* articulates a Native ecofeminist approach which illustrates an "intimate intertwining of human and non-human ways of being" central to First Nations cultural beliefs and practices (Mickey 3). The women of the Jensen and Wing families are all deeply connected with nature bodily and spiritually, and commune with the environment in various ways, reaffirming the unique relationship begotten by their identities as Native women. Informed by cosmologies and mythologies, colonial and environmental traumas manifest as evil spirits and monsters which take possession of the Native characters. However, the novel also depicts the possibility of healing through connecting with nature and community. Ceremony and oral storytelling – integral aspects of Native American culture – are also a prevalent part of the novel and are used to illustrate the power of interdependence and the concept of reciprocity. These themes are focalised through the transformation of Angel who re-indigenises herself through connection with land, kin, and culture.

Material ecofeminism: The body and the earth

In *Solar Storms,* the novel presents a material ecofeminism grounded in Indigeneity. Hogan's text reaffirms the "core ecofeminist philosophy" which is to make explicit the "affinity between Women and Nature, between the feminine and the natural universe" (Valera 12). However, as a First Nations novel, these ideas are contextualised within a rich cultural background to create a work of Native ecofeminism that privileges the interdependence between Native peoples and their environment. The connection between Native women and the environment manifests itself in multiple ways in *Solar Storms*, but especially through the physical body. Just as humankind has wrought damage upon the earth, so too damage to the earth inscribes itself upon the body. This relationship reaffirms the concept of reciprocity and the significance of the connection between Native peoples and the earth to identity, culture, and survival while also demonstrating the uniquely feminine connection that women share with the land.

Environmental devastation is paralleled by the damaged bodies of Native women in *Solar Storms.* Angel, her mother Hannah, and her half-sister Henriet all bear physical scars alongside their mental and emotional ones. Hannah's scars are "burns and incisions … the signatures of torturers," whereas Angel's are a result of Hannah's brutal, animalistic attack against her (118). Henriet's scars are self-inflicted: "she cut herself, cut her own skin, every chance she had" (142). Similarly, because of the ongoing developments of dams and other commercial projects, their ancestral land is also described as a "raw and scarred place" (198). The women's scars – resulting from very real physical abuse – are also metaphors for the environmental destruction responsible for their traumas, and just like the land, their bodies are "under siege, a battleground" (118). In this sense, "the specific history of the dam projects, then, is magnified in the specific 'geography' of Hannah" and her two daughters, Angel and Henriet (Castor 163). This connection is made evident when Hannah passes away and Angel covers her body with a nearby newspaper that reads "'Dam Construction

Begins at St. Bleu Falls'" (384). The headline superimposed over Hannah highlights the distinct parallel between the scars on her deceased body and the scars on the land. However, although "both the land and the Natives bear the scars of destruction," the novel is careful not to portray these women as broken and without hope (Vernon 37). Bush's insights into the scarred complexions of the Wing women summarise this hopeful outlook on their futures: "some see scars and it is wounding they remember. To her they are proof of the fact that there is healing" (150). This perspective complicates a simplistic reading of these women as irreparably damaged and reframes them as resilient and in the process of healing, just like the earth they are so entangled with. In doing so, "Hogan … rewrite[s] the body, not as a mute, passive, abject space that signifies the debased or inferior part of our natures, but as a place of liminality, connection, and knowledge" (Alaimo 213). Native women's bodies are sites which represent the inherent connection between the self and the earth, but like the earth, these bodies have the capability to heal and repair in the face of decimation.

Angel and her female Native ancestors not only share a corporeal bond with the earth but are frequently seen as synonymous with it, in keeping with the Native concept of interdependence. Figurative language and metaphor are used throughout the novel to liken women to non-human beings. Bush is described as being like a "deer, thin and brown, smelling the direction of the wind" (77). Her mother Hannah is "like the wind. Sometimes she was the winter wind and she chilled our bones and snapped frozen branches off the trees" (89). As a holder of traditional knowledge and wisdom, Angel's great-grandmother Dora-Rouge is likened to a wise owl: "[she] had an owl beak of a nose like mine," as well as "the same eyebrows, white and longer, though hers turned up a little at the edges, winglike" (33). In each of these instances, these metaphors speak to an aspect of their personalities: Bush is attentive and attuned like the deer, Hannah is cold and harsh like the wind, and Dora-Rouge is wise like the owl. However, these metaphors also urge the reader to interpret each woman as being a part of the broader ecosystem. Eventually, Angel comes to understand this

"older world that was lost to [her]," in which she is "part of the same equation as birds and rain" (92). Their connection is more than metaphorical, it is ancestral and cultural, and like the animals and the nature around them, these women are an essential part of the ecosystem.

Solar Storms correlates Native women with the environment not only due to their cultural affiliation with the earth but also because of their feminine link to it. As the matriarch of their family, Dora-Rouge is the female progenitor of Angel and her kin, and Angel comes to understand this relationship through the use of metaphor likening her great-grandmother to the root of a tree: "Dora-Rouge … was a root and we were like a tree family … the older trees feeding the young, sending off shoots, growing" (54). The novel draws connections between the root and Dora-Rouge for their shared ability to create life. Further, the earth itself and the creation of life on earth is conceptualised in terms of pregnancy and birth, as when Angel claims that she sees "earth as a seed, with some great life stored inside it, waiting, the way a blood spot waits inside an egg for the next division of cells. And gradually I saw this world as that which gave birth to fish, the great natal waters parting to make way" (94). While the 'Mother Earth' metaphor has been critiqued within ecocritical scholarship, within First Nations cultures, the earth has historically been interpreted as a type of mother figure and used to convey the qualities of guardianship, reciprocity, and preservation: "Mother Earth, as she currently exists in Indian religions, is primordial, a creator, nurturer … [Native Americans] care for and nurture Mother Earth, who in turn cares for and nurtures them" (Gill 142). As women and the earth are bonded by their femininity, the novel critiques a patriarchy that oppresses both women and the environment, reflecting François d'Eaubonne's definition of ecofeminism in which women and environment are connected by their shared domination by man. This critique is most evident in an insert-narrative in which Dora-Rouge tells the story of Agnes rescuing a bear from the captivity of a male French settler. To gain the bear's trust, Agnes "lifted her shirt and showed the bear her round, full breasts. Oh, it understood already. It knew she was a woman. It knew she had compassion" (52). The compassion of woman is

conveyed as the antithesis to the cruelty of the settler man who subjugates human and non-human beings for profit and pleasure. *Solar Storms* offers an ecofeminism that makes explicit the cultural and feminine connection between its Native women characters and the world around them.

Boundaries between the physical body and nature prove to be meaningless in *Solar Storms,* and the catalyst for this realisation occurs when Angel and her family embark on the transformative canoe trip to Two-Town, Dora-Rouge's homeland where the dam construction is taking place. Fitzpatrick argues that "the journey of these women into the boundary waters … enables the women to transgress gender boundaries, as well as boundaries between self and nature, spirit and matter, space and time, and dreams and reality" (1). For each woman on this journey, travelling across the boundary waters enables them to access a deeper connection with the natural world. Dora-Rouge successfully communes with the water and makes a pact with the waters to protect them on their journey: "she had told [the water] that if it gave us safe passage down the Se Nay River, she'd give up her so desired death to fight for it. She'd pledged her soul" (320). Bush, meanwhile, becomes "as uncontained as she had previously been contained by skin, house, island, and water. Now it seemed there were no borders," and she is able to "dance a slow dance, or … talk to the land" (217). By traversing the boundary waters, the women also learn to "leave behind Western perceptions of time" (10), and thus gain deeper access to their Indigeneity. This is made evident when Angel comments that "the time [they'd] been teasing apart, unravelled. And now it began to unravel us as [they] entered a kind of timelessness" (208). As they attune themselves to the geological time of the natural world, they are effectively re-indigenised and become more attuned to their Native gifts. For Angel, this manifests as the realisation of her full potential as a 'plant dreamer': "as soon as [Angel] left time … plants began to cross [her] restless sleep in abundance … the plants and [she] joined each other" (209). For all the women, the journey effectively reminds them that everything is interrelated and deeply connected. This bodily experience across the boundary waters is the catalyst

for their journey across the border from a Western view of nature as separate from the self, to a Native view of nature and the self as one and the same.

Indigenous knowledge manifests as Native gifts, once again blurring the boundaries between the material self and the wisdom of the earth. After their journey across the boundary waters to help stop the dam construction, Angel and her family find themselves in a new community in which these gifts abound. In *Solar Storms,* all Native peoples have a "gift, each person a specialty of one kind or another, whether it was hunting, or decocting the plants, or reading the ground for signs of hares" (330). Communing as a tribe with the earth to learn its secrets, Angel and the wider community "formed something like a single organism" – speaking once again to their integration into the wider ecosystem (330). Some of these gifts appear to be supernatural in nature. Bush, for example, heals Angel's burn through the power of words: "she spoke to the burn, spoke with it, and said, 'burn, go away. Coolness enter'" (331). Yet, these gifts are not fantastical or supernatural but reflect the Indigenous wisdom held by the community. Indigenous knowledges, according to Potawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte,

> range from how ecological information is encoded in words and grammars of Indigenous languages, to protocols of mentorship of elders and youth, to kin-based and spiritual relationships with plants and animals, to memories of environmental change used to draw lessons about how to adapt to similar changes in the future. (157)

This representation of communal knowledge reflects the Indigenous philosophy that "knowledge is not universal but is dispersed among diverse knowers" and is not "restricted to humans, because humans are not the only ones who know" (Weir 264). Indigenous knowledge manifests as physical gifts bestowed upon members of the Native community, so that the corporeal body becomes a site of knowledge and liminality. Thus Bush's healing power, which reflects the healing powers of the earth, "embodies the land and a way of knowledge that is felt and known in the body" (Fitzpatrick 4). In *Solar Storms,* just as knowledge is transmitted through oral narrative and ceremony,

knowledge is also inherited in the physical body, speaking to the genealogical relationship between Indigenous peoples and the earth they inhabit.

Ceremony and oral storytelling

Oral storytelling and ceremony are also presented in *Solar Storms* as methods of connecting more deeply with Native culture, spirituality, and the earth. Both ancient traditions are integral to Native culture. Ceremonies are comprised of "traditional ritual and ceremonial activities that include song, dance, spiritual meditation, and oral narrative, which all affirm the concept of a reciprocal relationship with all things Creation" (Ortiz 15). In her non-fiction book about the spiritual history of the living world, Hogan argues that the purpose of ceremony is to remind people that "all things are connected" (*Dwellings* 40). Oral storytelling similarly reaffirms this concept of interdependence and reciprocity. Simon Ortiz writes that "the sense [Native Americans] have always lived here is reiterated continually in oral narrative … these lands and waters are all elements of Creation, are a part of you, and you are a part of them; you have a reciprocal relationship with them" (14). Oral storytelling is also a viable means of transferring wisdom through the generations which allows contemporary communities to access ancient knowledge imperative for cultural and ecological survivance. Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko describes the importance of orality to her own people: "the ancient Pueblo people depended upon collective memory through successive generations to maintain and transmit an entire culture, a world view complete with proven strategies for survival" (268). Both ceremony and oral storytelling are integrated into the plot of *Solar Storms* to illuminate the ways in which Native culture offers viable scientific and spiritual insights into environmental preservation, decolonisation, and health and wellbeing.

In *Solar Storms,* healing ceremonies are depicted as valid methods of mitigating and reversing colonial trauma. As previously discussed, Hannah's body and spirit are explored in the novel as the sites of multiple types of trauma – including generational, colonial, environmental, sexual, and physical. Old Man – a respected elder and guardian of ancient wisdom – articulates this when he exclaims that "she is the house, the meeting place" where "time and history and genocide gather and move like a cloud above the spilled oceans of blood" (121). Just as these traumas are contextualised within a Native worldview, so too are the methods for healing. When Old Man learns about Hannah's possession, he claims that "what was needed was a ceremony" (121). Singing and music "are integral parts of most healing ceremonies" (Rybak and Decker-Fitts 336). Bush invokes this ancient ceremonial method in an attempt to regain and protect Hannah's soul from the evil spirit that possesses it: "Old Man said you could sing the soul back if you knew the old song … I thought, if all this could dwell in her, maybe I, too, could go inside" (124). Although Bush's song is not successful in healing Hannah, this form of medicine is depicted as not only viable but essential for combatting evil spirits, and therefore, healing ceremonies – and Indigenous knowledge more broadly – are validated as methods of mitigating colonial trauma.

Mourning ceremonies also reinforce the significance of community and interdependence in Native culture. After Angel was taken as a child from Bush's care at Adam's Rib, Bush held an unconventional "mourning feast" of her own creation, on Angel's behalf (6). To Bush, this feast is her "tradition" to assuage some of her grief; when her guests depart from her home, they "carried … Bush's sorrow … it slid its hand in theirs and walked away with them" (17). Bush alleviates some of her suffering through the power of community, which is a key element of Native healing ceremonies that move the individual from a state of diseased isolation to a state of healthy incorporation (Gunn 80). Harrison argues that the novel also invites the reader to become a part of this mourning ceremony and "carry part of this painful history through our own doors" (22). Bush also keeps an altar in her home to encourage Angel's safe return to her, and Angel reflects that "the

altar, like the mourning feast Agnes told me about, and like the songs, was something akin to sympathetic magic, designed to bring me back" (85). These mourning ceremonies reaffirm the cultural and spiritual significance of community for Native peoples.

The novel's specific engagements with the historic religion and ceremony of the Ghost Dance is integral to understanding its effort to strengthen and maintain Native culture and its political perspective as an anti-colonialist text. The Ghost Dance can be traced to 1890, when hundreds of Lakota Sioux were massacred by the United States military at Wounded Knee (DeMallie). This occurred in a wider context of countless other ongoing atrocities perpetrated against Native American communities, including the appropriation of tribal lands and the "annihilation of the great herds of buffalo" which are culturally significant to many Native tribes and an integral element of many ceremonies (Lesser 109). The Ghost Dance religious movement "promised a destruction of the invading white man, a return of the buffalo and old Indian ways, and a reunion of the Indians and their deceased forebears" (Lesser 109). The anticolonial Ghost Dance was comprised of several rituals and ceremonies, including the ghost dance itself, and it is directly referenced in *Solar Storms*. Angel reflects that "some said [her ancestors] were keeping the Ghost Dance alive … [She] came to believe it in a way, because in spite of the tragedies they'd witnessed, they all had the peaceful look of those who still had hope, those who still believed that their people and the buffalo would return" (30). At the novel's conclusion, Angel remains hopeful for the future despite the ongoing environmental devastation. As she takes care of her sister Aurora with her partner Tommy, she participates in a ritualistic ghost dance: "one night, together, Tommy and I held Aurora up at the traditional dances … together we danced the dance where songs were dressed in sunlight, where they walked silver and thin out of the sky, out of a distant past" (442). As the purpose of the Ghost Dance is to reunite Native descendants with their ancestors, it becomes clear that when Angel refers to "they," she is referring to her ancestors, and she dances to reunite herself with them and continue their mission. By participating in this ritual, Angel continues the work of

her ancestors to revitalise Indigenous customs and enacts it as a means of resistance against settler colonialism.

Oral narratives relaying ancient mythologies and cosmologies also inform Angel and her family's actions in the present day and convey the significance of environmental preservation. Throughout the text, characters retell important cultural stories that transmit essential knowledge and offer guidance for navigating their contemporary world. Many of these oral narratives offer cosmological insight into why environmental stewardship holds cultural significance for First Nations peoples and shape Angel's "understanding of a cosmogonic balance between human and nonhuman nature before the intrusion of a phallocentric, patriarchic dominant society" (Schultermandl 72). Tulik tells Angel about the story of Beaver, the creator of the world. According to Tulik, when Beaver created the humans, "who were strangers to the rest of creation, they made a pact with them. They gave their word. They would help each other, they said … the people … would take care of the world and speak with the gods and all creation" (300). This tale emphasises the responsibility humans have to take custodianship of the earth, and the tale encourages a commitment to Native environmental ethics. Similarly, Dora-Rouge retells the story of Eho, "the old woman keeper of animals," who fell in love with a whale and bargained for the lives of humans and the other animals but died alone on land. Now, "men and women were to be the caretakers of the animals, that was what the Great-Spirit said" (287). Both stories serve to instil a responsibility to "the collective society and to nature" (Vernon 45). Within this novel, the tradition of the oral narrative is continued and maintained – albeit in a transformed, written state – and the stories are strategically employed to explain and strengthen the cultural connection between Native peoples and the earth.

Traditional stories are also used to reflect on and respond to the devastating impacts of colonialism. The complex range of environmental, and physical and sexual traumas experienced by Loretta's daughter and Angel's mother, Hannah, are conceptualised in Native terms through the

windigo The windigo is an ancient monster born human but transformed into a creature exhibiting "grotesque physical and behavioural abnormalities," including cannibalistic urges, and possessing great physical and spiritual power (Brightman 337). Hannah herself appears as a windigo, but this transformation is shown to be a direct consequence of the trauma to her body and the land. After Hannah arrives back at Adam's Rib, she begins to exhibit strange and violent behaviour and Bush understands that "there was something not right with her," while some believed she contained a "bad spirit, a heart of ice" (115). Like a windigo, Hannah steals, commits molestation, kills animals, and even commits an act of cannibalism against her daughter, Angel, biting her face and ripping it "like a dog" (309). Yet the cause of her actions is understood by Angel to be the colonial environmental trauma begotten by their integral connection to the land as Native peoples: "my beginning was Hannah's beginning, one of broken lives, gone animals, trees felled and kindled. Our beginnings were intricately bound up in the history of the land" (114). Hannah's transformation into the Indigenous windigo creature therefore embodies the destructive effects of Native peoples' intersectional experience of colonial, environmental, and personal trauma.

Like her mother, Angel also embodies a mythological figure, the Wolverine. However, "unlike her mother's windigo, Angel's enacts a trickster who may be angry, but whose ultimate motive is to restore the world to balance" (Castor 172). In this sense, Wolverine is similar to the "trickster God Coyote of the American Southwestern tribes" (Fitzpatrick 5). Wolverine is described in negative terms by Angel's kin as a chaotic trickster and a "thief" (98). However, Angel begins to unravel the truth of Wolverine's intentions and purpose after listening to the Creation Story of Mondi the Wolverine. Like Coyote, Mondi helped to create the universe, sun, and moon, but also steals vital food from humans. When Angel considers this story, she realises that "Wolverine wanted the people to leave, he wanted to starve them out of his territory, his world" (407). Consequently, Angel embodies Wolverine to "starve out the soldiers and the police" who have invaded her homeland and have recently set fire to her friend Tulik's home (407). This reasserts the

power of storytelling and myth as means of active resistance: Angel asserts that her "lessons … came from stories. They came from the animals. From Wolverine" (409). Her transformation into an activist Wolverine-like figure is also firmly juxtaposed with her mother's violent windigo, conveying the idea that traumatised individuals need not succumb to the cycle of violence, and that while generational trauma is experienced by Native peoples, Native culture also offers a richness of stories and experiences which can beget resilience, change, growth, and colonial resistance.

In *Solar Storms,* Hogan invents "a multivocal ceremonial form modelled on healing and mourning rituals designed to reintegrate the individual into a more-than-human living world and to distribute action among a wider alliance community" (Harrison 4). Hogan has asserted parallels between her writing and ceremony, stating that her work "connects the small world of humans with the larger universe, containing us in the same way native ceremonies do, showing us both our place and a way of seeing" (*Dwellings* 16). In this novel, the main plot, narrated by Angel, is disrupted several times by the stories of her female ancestors. These "insert narratives" are a "meditation by one of [Angel's] three grandmotherly figures on the historical sources of trauma and healing" (Harrison 7). These inserted narratives illuminate links between trauma to the land and the people, and suggest how these traumas are passed down from generation to generation. Formally, these interspliced stories reaffirm the major philosophy of the novel, which is that the lives of Native people and the natural world are interconnected and should not be read in isolation. Moreover, by creating a narrative which transcribes and privileges oral stories, *Solar Storms* can be read as a modern adaptation and continuation of these traditional methods of knowledge transference. This relates to the novel's stance on the power of words as having the ability to create, shape, and change; when Angel hears the stories that Bush tells her, she reflects that "Bush's spare words were creation itself. I had been empty space, and now I was finding a language, a story, to shape myself by" (111). Through Hogan's novel, Native peoples are finding a new story to shape themselves by. *Solar Storms* itself becomes a story that honours Native culture – including ceremonies, traditional

storytelling methods, and ancestral wisdom – and reasserts the significance of these forms to a new generation.

Colonialist intervention and resistance

Colonial and environmental trauma manifest as evil spirits in *Solar Storms*, providing a means to comprehend these issues within a Native framework. Angel and her family – like all Native peoples – share a long history with colonialism and its consequent environmental destruction. These histories permeate the identity of the entire community, including its people and its places. Loretta, Hannah's mother and Angel's grandmother, came to Adam's Rib from Elk Island, where settlers had previously killed and poisoned the local deer as a means of eliminating the wolf population that would eat them. Yet, this intervention also killed many Indigenous people after the starved Elk Islanders succumbed to their hunger and ate the poisoned deer. To some, Loretta seemed "haunted" and as if she brought "a bad spirit" with her, but the novel asserts that any 'wrongness' that could be attributed to her was born from the horrors inflicted by colonialist intervention: "the curse on that poor girl's life came from watching the desperate people of her tribe die" (43). Although Angel's matrilineal history of abuse and trauma can be traced back to Loretta, she is not the "original sin" (44). Instead, the original sin of the aptly-named Adam's Rib is depicted as the arrival and intervention of settlers who harmed the Native environment, animals, and people: "true sin … consisted of crimes against nature and life" (196).

The name of their settlement itself, Adam's Rib, also "alludes to the minor importance and subsequent abuse of the women in the history of white settlement" as it evokes the biblical creation story of Eve having been crafted from Adam's Rib – thus, asserting that women are secondary to men (Grewe-Volpp 273). Angel's ancestors – the "first women at Adam's Rib" – named themselves

the Abandoned Ones after being abandoned in this desolate, non-profitable landscape by the French fur trappers they were travelling with (29). Settler colonialism has irrevocably altered the cultural and physical landscape of Adam's Rib and has 'broken' the line between Angel and her past, who seeks to repair the "fragments and pieces left behind by fur traders, soldiers, priests, and schools" (91). In *Solar Storms,* "the degradation of land, animals, Indigenous people, and women is exposed as intricately linked to a Western worldview that is hierarchical and patriarchal" (Fitzpatrick 7). Within Adam's Rib, a street originally named Poisson Road by the French has been renamed Poison Road after wild animals were poisoned there to "make more room for the European settlers and the pigs and cattle they'd brought with them" (23). Angel exposes the polarised worldviews between her Native community and the capitalist settlers when she exclaims: "for us, hell was cleared forests and killed animals. But for them, hell was this world in all its plentitude" (102). Yet, while there is a history of environmental devastation as a result of settler colonialism, there is also a rich history of activism and resilience that Angel and her family members continue into the next generation. Angel asserts that "for [her] people, the problem has always been this: that the only possibility of survival has been resistance" (411). This reflects Hogan's own philosophy on activism, as she stated in an interview that "for [her], the things that are very important, the spiritual and the political, are very united. You do not believe one way and act another" (Bruchac 131).

The major environmental conflict in the novel centres on the construction of a hydroelectric dam, which is set to wreak devastation on Angel's ancestral homeland and the people and natural beings that inhabit it. Angel and her family are first visited by boys from a neighbouring town, who belong to the so-called Fat Eaters tribe, warning them that the "government and a hydroelectric corporation had decided to construct several dams" (66). This project parallels the real historic development of the hydroelectric dam of James Bay which began in 1971 and continued to expand for over 25 years, causing unprecedented damage to the surrounding environment (Castor). The boys relay how roads have been constructed without permission from the landowners and mineral

exploration is taking place, diverting the rivers into reservoirs. The subsequent devastation is already being felt among the women of Adam's Rib, with the "lake at a record low … dead fish found belly-up on the south shore and a few poisoned otters [who] were found mired in mud," while in addition "the caribou and geese were affected, as well as the healing plants the people needed" (67, 82). Moreover, the lives of the people who "had been sustained by these lands … would cease to be" (67). Yet, continuing the tradition of Native activism, the boys do not ask "for money, just for people to show up to stop the machines. Or … a ceremony to assist them in reaching a good end" (67). Angel and her kin travel to the site of the construction to fight alongside the Fat Eaters to protect their land.

Solar Storms argues for the importance of petitioning and active resistance to ensure cultural survivance. Bush, Angel, and the rest of their community engage in a range of protest activities to halt the construction of the dam. They petition, hold meetings with officials, set up a blockade to stop the railroad from carrying "the land and trees away" after their removal, and much more (310). Bush engages in political activism through journalism, writing articles and taking photographs of the construction site to send to national newspapers In hopes of garnering mass support for their cause. Angel makes a plea for support on the national radio show, Indian Time, and embodies the spirit of Wolverine to steal the police force's food and starve them off their land. Metaphorically, Angel's act of resistance being broadcast on 'Indian Time' speaks to the novel's brand of Native political activism – a type of activism that is innately Native and on their own terms. The Fat Eaters also set up a barricade to stop the trains, placing fenders, chairs, and eventually themselves on the tracks, while armed with weapons and guards to keep themselves safe. These acts are viewed as essential for their livelihood and cultural sovereignty: "in Auntie's large brown hand was the piece of paper she'd readied for a petition … she carried it carefully, as reverently as if it were the Magna Carta, the worlds of a life, a people's freedom, and all of us would agree that it was" (349). As a result of their efforts, Angel and her extended family feel a resurgence of self-belief: "we had pride.

We were in something together. We no longer allowed others to call us Fat-Eaters. We were again the Beautiful People" (395). Indeed, "it is not so much through their return to a pristine land within their tribal territories but rather through their activism for the preservation of the tribal lands that the characters in Hogan's fiction reach a sense of completion to their identity quests" (Schultermandl 69). Schultermandel argues that "Hogan creates in the character of Angel a role model for a new generation of people who are compassionately responsible for the world within and around them" (81). To return to the land is not enough, the novel suggest, for it is only through activism, custodianship, and guardianship of the land that Angel feels whole once again.

Conclusion

Through its engagements with feminism, ecocriticism, and anti-colonialism, which are firmly rooted in a Native context and guided by Native cultures, *Solar Storms* presents a pertinent example of Native ecofeminism. The novel illustrates this through the transformation of Angel from a broken girl to a whole, healed Native woman. As she listens to the stories of her people, spends time with nature, and engages in activism, she begins to heal from the generational trauma that began with her female ancestors, the Abandoned Ones. Through this healing process, *Solar Storms* implies that the "reconciliation between woman and her tribal lands not only [involves] the individual person's re-initiation into an organic world but also the possibility for consequential change for the entire human race" (Schultermandl 69). Hogan's text can be seen as a new ceremony, privileging the concepts of interdependence, reciprocity, and Indigenous sovereignty, and urging the reader to engage in Native ecofeminism and Indigenous environmental ethics. At the same time, this is not a simplistically utopian narrative: at the novel's conclusion, the waters continue to rise, and capitalist developments continue to make progress on Native land. Yet, Angel

is optimistic for her future and the future of her kin as ceremonies, oral narratives, mythologies and cosmologies, and political activism are all conveyed as viable means of resisting against capitalism, patriarchy, and settler colonialism. Ultimately, *Solar Storms* argues that while oppressive systems have historically damaged Native people and the earth, there is a parallel history of cultural survivance which ensures that First Nations people will continue to thrive for generations to come. Angel ends the novel with a promise that "something beautiful lives inside us. You will see. Just believe it. You will see" (443).

Conclusion: The Future of Indigenous Ecofeminism

Island of Shattered Dreams, Potiki, The Swan Book, and *Solar Storms* are all marked by the strength of their anticolonial and ecofeminist concerns. Each text deftly navigates the liminal spaces at the intersection of a variety of social and cultural issues, most notably environmental damage and climate change, colonialism, and capitalism. Read and analysed in isolation, each text is undeniably informed by the author's cultural background, which manifests within its themes and formal structure and contributes to a unique ecofeminist vision. However, considering these novels as a collective also reveals striking similarities that point to the existence of an Indigenous ecofeminist literary tradition and ethos.

Palyku scholar Ambelin Kwaymullina argues that "among the key differences between Indigenous and Western systems is that Indigenous systems tend to orientate towards process" (200). One process present in all four novels is what Potawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte names "renewing relatives," that is, the process of "restoring persisting relationships that are part of longstanding Indigenous heritages but also creating new relationships that support Indigenous peoples' mobilising to address climate change" (158). As all the Indigenous cultures analysed in this thesis privilege the idea of community and interdependence, fostering and renewing relationships – with each other, with allies, and with the natural world itself – is presented as essential to climate resistance and cultural survivance. For the Tamihana whānau in *Potiki,* this is achieved through farming, fishing, and other means of living off the land which enables self-sufficient, communal living and food security. For Angel in *Solar Storms,* reconnection with the land unlocks her Native gifts and contributes to her strong sense of cultural identity. In *The Swan Book,* Oblivia demonstrates the value to be found in our relationships with animals and exhibits their wisdom and knowledge in a climate crisis. The Indigenous worldviews featured in this thesis all "predicate a core belief in the vital, plural relationships of all living things, including organisms, plants, nonhuman and human animals, and the surrounding animate and inanimate world" (Carrière

19). Consequently, each novel showcases how renewing relatives is a vital process for mitigating climate change and preserving both the environment and cultural values.

Formally, the inventiveness of each text derives from its incorporation of an Indigenous worldview into the narrative structure. Each of the cultures that have shaped them hold a non-linear or cyclical conception of time, and this is embedded most explicitly in the plots of *Potiki* and *Solar Storms.* Another important similarity centres on the importance of oral storytelling as medium for transmitting cultural values, stories, and instructions for the next generation. Writing a novel in the coloniser's language is significant as "one of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language" (Ashcroft et al. 7). With the exception of Chantal T. Spitz, who wrote *Island of Shattered Dreams* in reo Mā'ohi, these predominantly English language texts are all inherently transgressive as they modernise an ancient mode of communication for the contemporary reader while decolonising language. Both *Potiki* and *Island of Shattered Dreams* depict a female storyteller who writes stories to preserve her culture and 'writes back' against colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy (Ashcroft et al.). Tangimoana and Tetiare symbolise the modern Indigenous woman and are representative of the authors' own radical choice to write these Indigenous stories in English. In doing so, these novels argue that Indigenous cultures might be ancient but they are not stagnant. As is evident in the plot of each novel, adaptability and resilience are at the core of their cultures and prove vital for cultural survivance. Through privileging Indigenous temporality and writing back against colonialism, the texts themselves become acts of resistance.

Acts of resistance against climate change, environmental devastation, and colonialism are also prevalent in each of these novels. In his essay "The Oceanic Imaginary" (2001), Fijian scholar Subramani considers literature written by Indigenous peoples to be "a site of resistance, perhaps the site of most effective resistance" (157). Although Subramani is referring to a resistance against Eurocentric epistemologies, this is also relevant to the ecofeminist struggle against the many oppressive systems that have worked to subjugate both women and the environment, in addition to

efforts to resist and mitigate these political, cultural, and environmental crises. Each of the novels examined in this thesis is an effective site of resistance, although their approaches differ. All imagine acts of peaceful protest, and some also explore more radical forms of activism to achieve their goals: in *Potiki,* Tangimoana's destruction of the construction equipment finally forces the developers out of their homeland; in *Solar Storms,* Angel steals food from the police forces to catalyse change; and, in *Island of Shattered Dreams*, Tetiare utilises the power of writing through oraliture. Such acts are informed by specific cultural histories and myth and these women are guided by the actions of their ancestors. *Potiki*'s Tangimoana continues a long-standing tradition of Māori as powerful warriors. For Angel in *Solar Storms,* her embodiment of the Wolverine figure is inspired by the story found within her own Native cosmology. In *Island of Shattered Dreams* and *The Swan Book,* protests, petitions, and cultural survivance at any cost are also prevalent themes. Indeed, "resilience, resistance, and multispecies relations cannot be easily disentangled from one another" (Adamson and Monani 10).

Indigenous knowledges and wisdoms are also prevalent in these novels and convey a "decolonised feminist theory of knowledge" in which Indigenous knowledge is recognised as simply "*knowledge* – and, in many cases, as *better* knowledge" (Weir 266). Mythologies and cosmologies are frequently presented as valid means of mitigating climate devastation and restoring environmental balance. Indigenous scholar Joni Adamson argues that because these engagements with mythology take place within "specific histories, geographies, and contemporary contexts, they are an active means to negotiate the practice of daily survival" and constitute dynamic, living epistemologies (8). These epistemologies "present sound ethical and scientific reasoning for ecological protection" and are present in these texts (Adamson and Monani 9). The principles of environmental stewardship demonstrated within *Potiki, Solar Storms,* and *Island of Shattered Dreams* are informed by their mythologies and ancestral connections to ancient deities: Angel embodies the Wolverine figure to starve out the police force and protect her land, the Tamihanas

engage in sustainable and ethical fishing and farming practices to preserve the health of the land (and therefore their ancestors, including Papatūānuku), and pu fenua burial is conveyed in *Island of Shattered Dreams* as a means of solidifying a connection to the earth and ancestors. In many cases, cultural practices informed by mythology are also sustainable acts of environmental preservation.

Chantal T. Spitz, Patricia Grace, Alexis Wright, and Linda Hogan articulate unique, Indigenous visions of ecofeminism and contribute to a rich Indigenous ecofeminist literary canon. These novels share viable methods for environmental preservation, decolonisation, re-Indigenisation, and much more. Through activism and resistance, renewing relatives, and engaging in environmental practices informed by mythologies and cultural histories, these texts employ fiction to offer meaningful insight and instruction. In an Australian context, Deborah Bird Rose argues that "'caring for Country' has the potential to become an ethos of the settlers as well as the Aboriginal inhabitants of [Australia]" (84). When we read these four novels and consider their similarities, a global Indigenous ecofeminist ethos is revealed with the potential to be adopted by all kin across the globe. Within the global context of this thesis, which foregrounds the ecological devastation caused by the ongoing climate crisis, recognising the knowledge in these novels as valid, viable, and sacred is vital. As a collective, these novels highlight the unparalleled value of Indigenous ecofeminist literature and its potential to be used as a framework for mitigating climate change and resisting the harms of colonial, patriarchal, capitalist systems.

As an Indigenous woman, my aim for this thesis has been to amplify the voices of Indigenous women – authors and scholars alike – while analysing how each woman articulates her culturally-informed ecofeminist vision. However, this thesis discusses only four novels from only four cultures and is limited by its scope as well as my own linguistic capabilities. There are entire continents, cultures, and communities excluded from this research, including the perspectives of trans Indigenous women and gender-nonconforming peoples. This is my contribution to an ongoing discussion that I hope will continue for many years to come. I also acknowledge that the knowledge

shared in these texts is a privilege, not a right. While I do argue for the existence of an Indigenous ecofeminist ethos which has transformative potential for environmentalism, decolonisation, feminism and more, it is not my intention to endorse the appropriation of knowledge for the benefit of the settler community. Within this research, I have discussed the importance of the politics of listening (Kwaymullina). I am extending this definition to encompass the politics of reading. Through reading what Indigenous women are writing, we decolonise the act of reading, celebrate the Indigenous literary canon, and are gifted with the ecofeminist, anticolonial wisdoms these novels hold. Whether we are deserving of this taonga depends on what we do with it.

Works Cited

"Te Ao Ma'ohi: An Overview." *Manoa*, vol. 17, pp. 11-21.

Adamson, Joni and Salma Monani."Introduction." *Cosmovisions, Ecocriticism, and Indigenous Studies*, edited by Joni Adamson and Salma Monani, Routledge, 2016, pp. 19-38.

Ahmed, Sara. *Living a Feminist Life.* Duke University Press, 2017.

Alaimo, Stacy."'Skin Dreaming': The Bodily Transgressions of Fielding Burke, Octavia Butler, and Linda Hogan." *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*, edited by Greta Gaard and Patrick Murphy, 1996, pp. 123-138.

Anderson, Jean."Introduction." *Island of Shattered Dreams*, translated by Jean Anderson, Huia Press, 2007, pp. 7-9.

---."Translating Chantal Spitz: Challenges of the Transgeneric Text." *Australian Journal of French Studies*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2013, pp. 177-88.

Ashcroft, Bill et al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures.* 2nd ed., Routledge, 2002.

Barras, Arnaud."Ecopoetic Encounters: Amnesia and Nostalgia in Alexis Wright's Environmental Fiction." *AJE: Australasian Journal of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, vol. 5, 2015, pp. 54-67.

Barrillot, Bruno and John Taroanui Doom."Response to Regnault." *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 17, 2005, pp. 373-77.

Brightman, Robert A."The Windigo in the Material World." *Ethnohistory*, vol. 35, no. 4, 1988, pp. 337-379.

Brown, Ben. "Patricia Grace, the Great Navigator." *The Spinoff*, thespinoff.co.nz/books/17-04-2022/patricia-grace-the-great-navigator. Accessed 25 August 2023.

Carrière, Marie."Taking Care of Water: Katherena Vermette's *River Woman* and Rita Wong's *Undercurrent*." *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 54, 2023, pp. 1-24.

Castor, Laura Virginia."Claiming Place in Wor(L)Ds: Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*." *MELUS*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2006, pp. 157-80.

Cook, Barbara J."Introduction." *From the Center of Tradition: Critical Perspectives on Linda Hogan* edited by Barbara Cook, University Press of Colorado, 2003, pp. 1-10.

Corman, Lauren."The Ventriloquist's Burden: Animal Advocacy and the Problem of Speaking for Others." *Animals, Voice, and Politics*, York University, 2012, pp. 473-501.

Deloughrey, Elizabeth."The Spiral Temporality of Patricia Grace's *Potiki*." *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1999, pp. 59-83.

DeMallie, Raymond J.“The Lakota Ghost Dance: An Ethnohistorical Account.” *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 51, no. 4, 1982, pp. 385-405.

Dessouky, Dina El.“Activating Voice, Body and Place: Kanaka Maoli and Ma’ohi Writings for Kaho’olawe and Moruroa.” *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, edited by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 254-72.

Devatine, Flora.“Written Tradition, Oral Tradition, Oral Literature, Fiuriture.” *Shima: The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2009, pp. 10-14.

Duckworth, Melanie.“Australian Literature and Ecofeminism.” *The Routledge Handbook of Ecofeminism and Literature*, edited by Douglas Vakoch, Routledge, 2022, pp. 57-67.

Fitzpatrick, Bethany.“My Body, My People, My Land: Healing the Bonds That Are Broken in Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms*.” *New Directions in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*, edited by Andrea Campbell, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008, pp. 1-14.

Frengs, Julia L.“Anticolonial Ecofeminisms: Women’s Environmental Literature in French-Speaking Oceania.” *French Cultural Studies*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2020, pp. 293-303.

Fuchs, Miriam.“Reading toward the Indigenous Pacific: Patricia Grace’s *Potiki*, a Case Study.” *boundary 2*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1994, pp. 165-84.

Gaard, Greta.“Indigenous Women, Feminism, and the Environmental Humanities.” *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2014, pp. 86-99.

Gill, Sam.“Mother Earth: An American Myth.” *The Invented Indian*, edited by James Clifton, Routledge, 1990, pp. 129-43.

Gleeson-White, Jane.“Country and Climate Change in Alexis Wright’s *The Swan Book*.” *AJE: Australasian Journal of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, vol. 6, 2016, pp. 29-38.

Grace, Patricia. *From the Centre: A Writer’s Life.* Penguin, 2021.

---. *Potiki.* Penguin, 1986.

Grewe-Volpp, Christa.“The Ecological Indian Vs. The Spiritually Corrupt White Man: The Function of Ethnocentric Notions in Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms*.” *American Studies*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2002, pp. 269-83.

Gunn, Paula Allen. *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions.* Beacon Press, 1986.

Harrison, Summer.“‘We Need New Stories’: Trauma, Storytelling, and the Mapping of Environmental Injustice in Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms* and Standing Rock.” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1-35.

Henare, Manuka.“The Double Spiral and Ways of Knowing.” *MAI Review*, vol. 3, 2009, pp. 1-9.

Hogan, Linda. *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World.* Simon and Schuster, 1996.

---. *Solar Storms.* Scribner, 2005.

Holgate, Ben. *Climate and Crises: Magical Realism as Environmental Discourse.* Routledge, 2019.

---."Unsettling Narratives: Re-Evaluating Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse through Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* and *The Swan Book*." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 51, no. 6, 2015, pp. 634-47.

Instone, Lesley."The Coyote's at the Door: Revisioning Human-Environment Relations in the Australian Context." *Ecumene*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1998, pp. 452-67.

Jahnke, Huia Tomlins."Towards a Theory of Mana Wahine." *Mana Wahine Reader: A Collection of Writings 1987-1998*, edited by Leonie Pihama et al., Te Kotahi Research Institute, 2019, pp. 183-98.

Jones, Kevin L. and Anita Smith. *Cultural Landscapes of the Pacific.* UNESCO, 1997.

Kahn, Miriam. *Tahiti Beyond the Postcard: Power, Place, and Everyday Life.* University of Washington Press, 2011.

Kahukiwa, Robyn and Patricia Grace. *Wahine Toa.* Penguin, 1984.

Kawharu, Merata."Ancestral Landscapes and World Heritage from a Maori Viewpoint." *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. 118, no. 4, 2009, pp. 317-38.

Kwaymullina, Ambelin."You Are on Indigenous Land: Ecofeminism, Indigenous Peoples and Land Justice." *Feminist Ecologies*, edited by Lara Stevens et al., Palgrave Macmillian, 2018, pp. 193-208.

Lesser, Alexander."Cultural Significance of the Ghost Dance." *American Anthropologist*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1933, pp. 108-15.

Mackey, Allison."Guilty Speculations: The Affective Climate of Global Anthropocene Fictions." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2018, pp. 530-44.

Mai, Rai et al."The Source: An Interview with Henri Hiro." *Manoa*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2005, pp. 72-81.

Mateata-Allain, Kareva."Orality and Ma'ohi Culture: An Introduction to Flora Devatine's 'Orality: Written Tradition, Oral Tradition, Literature, Fiuriture.'" *Shima: The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2009, pp. 1-9.

Maurer, Anaïs."Snaring the Nuclear Sun: Decolonial Ecologies in Titaua Peu's *Mutismes: E 'Ore Te Vāvā.*" *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 32, 2020, pp. 371-97.

McCann, Carole R. et al. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives.* Taylor & Francis Group, 2020.

Mead, Philip."Unresolved Sovereignty and the Anthropocene Novel: Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book*." *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2018, pp. 524-38.

Mickey, Sam."Editor's Foreword." *Women and Nature? Beyond Dualism in Gender, Body, and Environment*, edited by Douglas Vakoch and Sam Mickey, Routledge, 2018, pp. xix-xxi.

Mikaere, Ani.“Colonisation and the Imposition of Patriarchy: A Ngāti Raukawa Woman’s Perspective.” *Mana Wahine Reader: A Collection of Writings 1999-2019*, edited by Leonie Pihama et al., vol. 2, Te Kotahi Research Institute, 2019, pp. 4-18.

Moorfield, John C. *Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index.* Pearson Education New Zealand, 2011.

Murphy, Ngāhuia. *Te Awa Atua: Menstruation in the Pre-Colonial Maori World.* He Puna Manawa Limited, 2013.

Ortiz, Simon J.“Introduction: Wah Nuhtyuh-Yuu Dyu Neetah Tyahstih (Now It Is My Turn to Stand).” *Speaking for the Generations*, edited by Simon J Ortiz, University of Arizona Press, 1998, pp. x-1.

Pere, Rangimarie Rose.“Te Wheke: Whaia Te Maramatanga Me Te Aroha.” *Women and Education in Aotearoa*, edited by Sue Middleton, Allen & Unwin, 1988, pp. 6-19.

Pihama, Leonie.“Tihei Mauri Ora: Honouring Our Voices: Mana Wahine as Māori Theoretical Framework.” PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2001.

Pihama, Leonie et al.“Preface.” *Mana Wahine Reader: A Collection of Writings 1987-1998*, edited by Leonie Pihama et al., vol. 1, Te Kotahi Research Institute, 2019, p. v.

Plumwood, Val. *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason.* Routledge, 2001.

---. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature.* Routledge, 1993.

Probyn-Rapsey, Fiona.“The Animals Call It: Listening to the Climate Crisis.” *Ecofeminism: Feminist Intersections with Other Animals and the Earth*, edited by Carol Adams and Lori Gruen, 2nd ed., Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022, pp. 319-34.

Raapoto, Turo A.“Maohi: On Being Tahitian.” *French Polynesia: A Book of Selected Readings*, edited by Nancy J Pollock and Ron Crocombe, University of the South Pacific, 1998, pp. 3-7.

Robin, Langaliki et al.“How Dreaming and Indigenous Ancestral Stories Are Central to Nature Conservation: Perspectives from Walalkara Indigenous Protected Area, Australia.” *Ecological Restoration & Management: Linking Science and Practice*, vol. 23, 2022, pp. 43-53.

Rose, Deborah Bird. *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness.* Australian Heritage Commission, 1996.

Rybak, Christopher and Amanda Decker-Fitts.“Understanding Native American Healing Practices.” *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2009, pp. 333-42.

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism.* Vintage Books, 1993.

Schultermandl, Silvia.“Fighting for the Mother/Land: An Ecofeminist Reading of Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms*.” *Studies in American Indian Literature*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2005, pp. 67-84.

Sefton-Rowston, Adelle L.“Hope at the End of the World: Creation Stories and Apocalypse in Alexis Wright’s *Carpentaria* and *The Swan Book*.” *Antipodes*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2016, pp. 355-68.

Sharman, Ataria Rangipikitia.“Mana Wahine and Atua Wāhine.” Master’s Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2019, p. 141.

Sharrad, Paul.“Review: *Island of Shattered Dreams* by Chantal T. Spitz and Jean Anderson.” *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 21, 2009, pp. 190-92.

Sheridan, Susan.“Feminist Fables and Alexis Wright’s Art of the Fabulous in *The Swan Book*.” *HECATE: A Women’s Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 43, no. 1-2, 2017, pp. 197-214.

Silko, Leslie Marmon.“Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination.” *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty et al., University of Georgia Press, 1996, pp. 264-75.

Simmonds, Naomi.“Mana Wahine Geographies: Spiritual, Spatial and Embodied Understandings of Papatuānuku.” Master’s thesis, University of Waikato, 2009.

---.“Mana Wahine: Decolonising Politics.” *Women’s Studies Journal*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2011, pp. 11-25.

---.“Never-Ending Beginnings: The Circularity of Mana Wāhine.” *Mana Wahine Reader: A Collection of Writings 1999-2019*, edited by Leonie Pihama et al., vol. 2, Te Kotahi Research Institute, 2019, pp. 155-64.

Smith, Anita.“(Re)Visioning the Ma’ohi Landscape of Marae Taputapuatea, French Polynesia: World Heritage and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the Pacific Islands.” *A Companion to Heritage Studies*, edited by William Logan et al., 2016, pp. 101-14.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies.* Zed Books, 1999.

Somerville, Alice Te Punga.“English by Name, English by Nature.” *Ngā Kete Mātauranga: Māori Scholars at the Research Interface*, edited by Jacinta Ruru and Linda Waimarie Nikora, Otago University Press, 2021, pp. 90-103.

---.“The Indigenous Backstage Pass.” *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, vol. 14, 2021, pp. 65-78.

---. *Once Were Pacific: Maori Connections to Oceania.* University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Spitz, Chantal T.“I Write: J’écris.” *Huihui: Navigating Art and Literature in the Pacific*, edited by Jeffrey Carrol et al., University of Hawai’i Press, 2015, pp. 243-46.

---. *Island of Shattered Dreams.* Translated by Jean Anderson, Huia Publishers, 2007.

Sturgeon, Noël. *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action.* Routledge, 2016.

Subramani.“The Oceanic Imaginary.” *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 13, 2001, pp. 149-62.

Sullivan, Heather I.“Material Ecocriticism and the Petro-Text.” *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, edited by Ursula Heise et al., Routledge, 2017, pp. 414-23.

Takolander, Maria Kaaren.“Theorizing Irony and Trauma in Magical Realism: Junot Diaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and Alexis Wright’s *The Swan Book*.” *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2016, pp. 95-122.

Teaiwa, Teresia.“Reading Paul Gaugin’s *Noa Noa* with Epeli Hau’ofa’s *Kisses in the Nederends*: Militourism, Feminism, and the ‘Polynesian’ Body.” *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, edited by Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, pp. 249-62.

Teodorescu, Adriana.“The Women-Nature Connection as a Key Element in the Social Construction of Western Contemporary Motherhood.” *Women and Nature? Beyond Dualism in Gender, Body, and Environment*, edited by Sam Mickey and Douglas Vakoch, Routledge, 2018, pp. 77-96.

Toko King, Paula et al.“‘Never-Ending Beginnings’: A Qualitative Literature Review of Māori Temporal Ontologies.” *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 2022, doi:10.1080/1177083X.2022.2138467.

Valera, Luca. “Françoise D’eaubonne and Ecofeminism: Rediscovering the Link between Women and Nature.” *Women and Nature? Beyond Dualism in Gender, Body, and Environment*, edited by Douglas Vakoch and Sam Mickey, Routledge, 2018, pp. 10-23.

Vernay, Jean-Francois. “An Interview with Alexis Wright.” *Antipodes*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2004, pp. 119-22.

Vernon, Irene S. “‘We Were Those Who Walked out of Bullets and Hunger’: Representations of Trauma and Healing in *Solar Storms*.” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 34-49.

Waitoki, Waikaremoana. “The Baskets of Knowledge: A Curriculum for an Indigenous Psychology.” *Te Manu Kai I Te Matauranga: Indigenous Psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, edited by Waikaremoana Waitoki and Michelle Levy, New Zealand Psychological Society 2016, pp. 283-99.

Weir, Allison. “Decolonizing Feminist Freedom: Indigenous Relationalities.” *Decolonizing Feminism: Transnational Feminism and Globalization*, edited by Margaret A. Mclaren, Rowman & Littlefield, 2017, pp. 257-287.

White, John. *The Ancient History of the Maori.* Government Printer, 1887.

Whyte, Kyle. “Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene.” *English Language Notes*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2017, pp. 153-62.

Wilson, Kathy. “Ecofeminism and First Nations Peoples in Canada: Linking Culture, Gender and Nature.” *Gender, Place & Culture*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2005, pp. 333-55.

Winter, Christine Jill. “Does Time Colonise Intergenerational Environmental Justice Theory?” *Environmental Politics*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2020, pp. 278-96.

Wood, Briar. “Mana Wāhine and Ecocriticism in Some Post-80s Writing by Māori Women.” *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2007, pp. 107-24.

Wright, Alexis. “Mabo Lecture.” 2013.

---. “On Writing Carpentaria.” *Heat*, 2010, pp. 79-95.

---. *The Swan Book.* Giramondo Publishing, 2013.

Yang, Karen Ya-Chu. “Introduction.” *Women and Nature? Beyond Dualism in Gender, Body, and Environment*, edited by Douglas Vakoch and Sam Mickey, Routledge, 2018, pp. 3-10.

Yates-Smith, Aroha. “Reclaiming the Ancient Feminine in Māori Society: Kei Wareware I a Tātou Te Ūkaipō.” *He Puna Kōrero - Journal of Māori and Pacific Development*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2003, pp. 10-19.

---. “Te Ukaipo - Te Taiao: The Mother, the Nurturer - Nature.” *Mana Wahine Reader: A Collection of Writings 1999-2019*, edited by Leonie Pihama et al., vol. 2, Te Kotahi Research Institute, 2019, pp. 75-83.