

## Chapter Two

### Imagining Writing History and Theory

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*How do you write a new History when the only History is white? How do you write a new theory when the only theory is white? How do you write when writing itself is imbued with the presence of race?<sup>1</sup>*

#### Introduction.

A critical aspect of the struggle for *Kaupapa Maori*, both in education and in other areas, has involved questions relating to our history as *Maori* and a critique of how *Maori* have been represented or excluded from theoretical accounts of our non/participation and under/achievement in schooling. Every issue has been approached by *Maori* with a view to re-writing/righting the position of *Maori* in history. In this chapter I would like to think further about questions raised by these ideas. I have not set out to answer them here but to examine the reasons why it has been regarded as important to do this and what this has meant for *Kaupapa Maori* as an approach.

Writing or literacy, in a very traditional sense of the word, has been used to determine the breaks between the past and the present, the beginning point of history and the development of theory. Writing has been viewed as the mark of a superior civilisation and other societies have been judged, by this view, to be incapable of thinking critically and objectively, or having distance from ideas and emotions. Writing is part of theorising and writing is part of history.

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<sup>1</sup> There are various sources for these questions. Césaire asks the question about History, Toni Morrison asks the question about writing and *Maori* students have asked the question of theory.

Is History Important/not Important for *Maori*?

A Critique of History.

This may appear to be a trivial question as the answer most *Maori* would give me, I think, is that yes, History is important. But I doubt if what they would be responding to is the notion of History which is captured by the use of the capital 'H'. Poststructuralist critiques of History have focused on the characteristics and understandings about history as an Enlightenment or modernist project. Their critique is of both liberal and Marxist concepts of History. Feminists have argued similarly (but not necessarily from a poststructuralist position), that History is the story of a specific form of domination, namely of patriarchy. Indigenous people have also mounted a critique of the way History is told from the perspective of the colonisers, while at the same time arguing that history is important for understanding the present.

The critique of History argues that History as a modernist project is assembled around a set of interconnected ideas which I will summarise briefly here.<sup>2</sup>

1. *the idea that History is a totalising discourse.*

The concept of totality assumes the possibility and the desirability of being able to include absolutely all known knowledge into a coherent whole. In order for this to happen classification systems, rules of practice, and methods had to be developed to allow for knowledge to be selected and included in what counts as History.

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<sup>2</sup> *The summary of arguments here can be found in a number of different sorts of critiques. I have drawn from indigenous writers, African American, cultural studies writers and historians. The summary statements I have developed myself. See for example, (i) Abu-Lughod, J., 1989. 'On the Remaking of History: How to Reinvent the Past', in Remaking History. Seattle, Dia Art Foundation, Bay Press, pp.111-129. (ii) Awatere, D., 1984. Maori Sovereignty. Auckland, Broadsheet. (iii) Kelly, J., 1984. Women, History and Theory, The Essays of Joan Kelly. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. (iv) Kreiger, L., 1989. Time's Reasons: Philosophies of History Old and New. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. (v) Steedman, C., 1992. 'Culture, Cultural Studies and the Historians', in Cultural Studies. ed. G. Nelson, P.A. Treicher, L. Grossberg, New York, Routledge, pp.613-620. (vi) Trask, H.K., 1993. From a Native Daughter. Maine, Common Courage Press. (vii) Young, R., 1990. White Mythologies, Writing, History and the West. London, Routledge.*

2. *the idea that there is a universal History.*

Although linked to the notion of totality, the concept of universal assumes that there are fundamental characteristics and values which all human subjects and societies share. It is the development of these universal characteristics which are of historical interest.

3. *the idea that History is one large chronology.*

History is regarded as being about developments over time. It charts the progress of human endeavour through time. Chronology is important as a method because it allows events to be located at a point in time. The actual time events took place also made them 'real' or factual. In order to begin the chronology a time of 'discovery' has to be established. Chronology is also important for attempting to go backwards and explain how and why things happened in the past.

4. *the idea that History is about development.*

Implicit in the notion of development is the notion of progress. This assumes that societies move forward in stages of development much as an infant grows into a fully developed adult human being. The earliest phase of human development is regarded as primitive, simple and emotional. As societies develop they become less primitive, more civilised, more rational, their social structures become more complex and bureaucratic.

5. *the idea that History is about a self-actualising human subject.*

In this view humans have the potential to reach a stage in their development where they can be in total control of their faculties. There is an order of human development which moves, in stages, through the fulfilment of basic needs, the development of emotions, the development of the intellect and the development of morality. Just as the individual moves through these stages, so do societies.

6. *the idea that the story of History can be told in one coherent narrative.*

This idea suggests that we can assemble all the facts in an ordered way so that they tell us the truth or give us a very good idea of what really did happen in the past. In theory it means that historians can write a true History of the World.

7. *the idea that History as a discipline is innocent.*

This idea says that 'facts' speak for themselves and that the historian simply researches the facts and puts them together. Once all the known facts are assembled they tell their own story, without any need of a theoretical explanation or interpretation by the historian. This idea also conveys the sense that History is pure as a discipline, that is, it is not implicated with other disciplines.

8. *the idea that History is constructed around binary categories.*

This idea is linked to the historical method of chronology. In order for History to begin there has to be a period of beginning and some criteria for determining when something begins. In terms of History this was often attached to concepts of 'discovery', the development of literacy, or the development of a specific social formation. Everything before that time is designated as prehistorical, belonging to the realm of myths and traditions.

9. *the idea that History is patriarchal.*

This idea is linked to the notions of self-actualisation and development as women were regarded as being incapable of attaining the higher orders of development. Furthermore they were not significant in terms of the ways societies developed because they were not present in the bureaucracies or hierarchies, where changes in social or political life were being determined.

Intersecting this set of ideas are some other important concepts. Literacy, for example, was used as a criterion for assessing the development of a society and its progress into a stage

where History can be said to begin. However, even in places such as India, China and Japan, which were very literate cultures, prior to their 'discovery' by the west, there were other categories which were employed to define them as uncivilised. Their literacy, in other words, did not count as a record of legitimate knowledge and their philosophical traditions still exist on the margins of the western academic canon.

The German philosopher Hegel is usually regarded as the 'founding father' of History in the sense outlined here. This applies to both Liberal and Marxist views.<sup>3</sup> Hegel conceived of the fully human subject as someone capable of 'creating (his) own history'. However, Hegel did not simply invent the rules of History. As Robert Young argues, 'the entire Hegelian machinery simply lays down the operation of a system already in place, already operating in everyday life'.<sup>4</sup> It should also be self-evident that many of these ideas are predicated on a sense of otherness. They are views which invite a comparison with 'something/someone else' which exists *on the outside*, such as the exotic, the oriental, the 'Negro', the 'Jew' and the '*Maori*'. Views about the other had already existed for centuries in Europe, but through the Enlightenment these views became more formalised through science, philosophy and imperialism, into explicit systems of classification and regimes of truth. The racialisation of the human subject and the social order enabled comparisons to be made between the 'us' of the west and the 'them' of the other. History was the story of people who were regarded as *fully human*. Others who were not regarded as human (that is, capable of self-actualisation) were pre-historic. This notion is linked also to Hegel's Master-Slave construct which has been applied as a psychological category (by Freud) and as a system of social ordering.

A further set of important ideas embedded in the modernist view of History relates to the origins (causes) and nature of social change. The Enlightenment project involved new conceptions of society and of the individual based around the precepts of rationalism, individualism and capitalism. There was a general belief that not only could individuals remake themselves but so could societies. The industrial modern state became the point of

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<sup>3</sup> Young argues that Althusser was one of the few orthodox Marxists to attempt to escape Hegel although other Marxists thought he escaped Marxism in the same process. Young, p.6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

contrast between the pre-modern and the modern. History in this view began with the emergence of the rational individual and the modern industrialised society. However, there is something more to this idea in terms of how History came to be conceptualised as a method. The connection to the industrial state is significant because it highlights what was regarded as being worthy of history. The people and groups who 'made' history were the people who developed the underpinnings of the state, that is, the economists, scientists, bureaucrats, philosophers. That they were all men of a certain class and race was 'natural' because they were regarded (naturally) as fully rational, self-actualising human beings capable, therefore, of creating social change, that is History. The day to day lives of ordinary people, and of women, did not become a concern of History until the middle of the twentieth century.

### Contested Histories.

For *Maori*, this critique of History is not unfamiliar, although it has now been claimed by 'post-modern' theories. The idea of contested stories and multiple discourses about the past by different *iwi* is closely linked to the politics of everyday contemporary life for *Maori*. These contested accounts are stored within our *whakapapa*, our landscape, our carvings, weapons, even the personal names that many people carried.<sup>5</sup> They are the subject of keen debate on *marae* and of complex grievances and settlements. The means by which these histories were stored was through our own systems of knowledge. Many of these systems have since been reclassified as oral *traditions*, therefore they have become defined as existing

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<sup>5</sup> *Ranginui Walker* argues in his paper 'The Development of *Maori* History' that 'because of tribal difference, schools of learning anticipated disagreement arising out of multiple discourses'. Walker gives the example of a *tohunga* instructing his students to hold steadfastly to their teachings and to leave other people to follow their own teachings. From my own *iwi* of *Ngati Awa* there are examples of both co-operation and competition when it came to the teachings of the *whare wananga*. For example, some *whare waananga* specialised in certain teachings (birth rites, astronomy, healing) and people from our *iwi* and other related *iwi* would travel to the session of the *wananga*. Similarly *tohunga* were trained over many years and became more and more expert across a range of fields of knowledge. Their community depended on their versatility as *tohunga*. In the case of *Ngati Awa* we are part of a *waka* tradition (*Mataatua*) and belong to a larger confederation of *iwi* who ascribed to certain agreed upon accounts of our earliest voyages to *Aotearoa*. Walker, R., 1994. 'The Development of *Maori* History', paper presented to the History Association Conference, University of Auckland.

outside what counts as History. They are myths and legends.<sup>6</sup>

Under colonialism *Maori* people have struggled against History and yet been complicit with History. We have allowed our 'histories' to be told and have then become outsiders as we heard them being retold.<sup>7</sup> Schooling is directly implicated in this process. Through the curriculum and its underlying theory of knowledge, early mission schools and Native Schools redefined the world and where *Maori* were positioned within the world. From being direct descendants of sky and earth parents, christianity positioned us as higher order savages who deserved salvation in order that we could become children of God. Maps of the world (of the British Empire) reinforced our place on the periphery of the world, although we were still considered part (the far flung part) of the Empire. This included having to learn new names for our own lands. The British Sovereign was our replacement Earth Mother. Other symbols of our loyalty, such as the flag, were also an integral part of the imperial curriculum.<sup>8</sup> Our orientation to the world was already being redefined as *Maori* were being systematically excluded from the writing of the History of this new nation called New Zealand.

This on its own may not have worked if it were not for the actual material redefinition of our world which was occurring simultaneously through such things as the renaming and taming of the land, the alienation and fragmentation of *Maori* lands through the Native Land Court, the *Raupatu* and through various forms of pressure on *Maori* to sell land. The education of *Maori* was simply one aspect of Native policy and needs to be read alongside the impact of other policies and of other social consequences of colonisation.<sup>9</sup>

*Maori* attempts to reclaim land, language, knowledge and *rangatiratanga* have usually

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<sup>6</sup> See for example, Biggs, B.G., 1966. 'Maori Myths', in *Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, ed. A. McLintock, Wellington, Government Printer, v.2, p.448.

<sup>7</sup> This has often meant that the stories were generalised as if all *Maori* had these stories, they were often regendered and reinscribed with a suitable moral at the end. Most of the sexy parts were removed or glossed over quickly, the scale of the story was cut down so that it involved only a few individuals and they were turned into quite nice children's stories.

<sup>8</sup> Mangan, J., 1993. *The Imperial Curriculum - Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience*. London, Routledge.

<sup>9</sup> For example, health issues, employment and economic issues, political representation.

involved contested accounts of the past between *Maori* and *Pakeha*. These have occurred in the court system (all the way to the Privy Council), in the *Waitangi* Tribunal, in the media, in Parliament, in pubs and on talkback radio. In these situations contested histories do not exist in the same cultural framework as they do when *iwi* histories are being debated on the *marae*. They are not simply struggles over 'facts' and 'truth', the rules by which these struggles take place are never clear (other than that we as *Maori* know they are going to be stacked against us) and the final arbiters of what really counts as the truth are not *Maori*.

It is because of these issues I ask the question, 'Is History in its modernist construction important or not important for *Maori*?' For *Maori* people who are presently engaged in research for claims to the *Waitangi* Tribunal the answer would appear to be self-evident. We assume that when 'the truth comes out' it will prove that what happened was wrong or illegal and that therefore the system (the Tribunal, the courts, the Government) will set things right. We believe that History is also about justice, that understanding History will enlighten our decisions about the future. WRONG. History is also about power. In fact History, I think, is mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions of power where they can continue to dominate others. It is because of this relationship with power that we have been excluded, marginalised, othered and generally rendered as the 'slaves' in the 'Master-Slave' dialectic. In this sense History is not important for *Maori* because a thousand accounts of the 'Truth' will not alter the 'Fact' that *Maori* are still a minority and do not possess the power to transform History into justice.

This leads then to several other questions. The one which is more relevant to this thesis is the one which asks, 'Why then has revisiting History been a significant part of *Kaupapa Maori* and of other forms of *Maori* decolonisation?' The answer, I suggest, lies in the intersection of *Maori* cultural approaches to the past, of the modernist History project itself and of the resistance strategies which have been employed under *Kaupapa Maori*.

*Maori* bring to history our own understandings and orientations to the past. It is how we define ourselves as members of *whanau*, *hapu*, *iwi* and as *Maori* who possess *rangatiratanga*. The past is experienced as very real. There are signposts and symbols in our



world view which reinforces our sense of the past. Part of *Kaupapa Maori* has been about reclaiming and reasserting for the following generations, that sense of the past, through our language and ways of knowing. There is an imperative which leads us into the past in search of ourselves as people.

Our colonial experience traps us in the project of modernity. There can be no 'post-modern' for *Maori* until we have reconciled the problems of the modern. This does not mean that we do not understand or employ multiple discourses, or act in incredibly contradictory ways, or exercise power ourselves in multiple ways. It means that there is unfinished business, that we are still being colonised (and know it), and that we have not ourselves recovered our *rangatiratanga*.<sup>10</sup>

*Coming to know the past* has been part of the critical pedagogy of *Kaupapa Maori*. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form the basis of alternative *Maori* ways of doing things, that is *Kaupapa Maori*. However, to transform our colonised views of our own History (as written by *Pakeha*) requires us to revisit, site by site, our history under western eyes. This in turn requires a theory or approach which helps us to engage with, understand, and then act upon History. It is in this sense that the sites visited in this thesis begin with a critique of history and then develop ways of transforming that history into praxis.

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## An Interview About Writing.

### *Why is writing important for Maori?*

As the thesis is arguing, every aspect of the act of producing knowledge within academic structures needs to be decolonised in some form. Reading, writing, talking, these are as fundamental to academic discourse as science, theories, methods, paradigms. If I begin with

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<sup>10</sup> Here I use *rangatiratanga* to mean our sovereignty and our humanity, our capacity to be generous, to act as the *tangata whenua*.

reading, then I would quote from Patricia Grace that 'Books Are Dangerous'.<sup>11</sup> She argues that there are four things that make many books dangerous; (i) they do not reinforce values, actions, customs, culture and identity, (ii) when they tell us only about others they are saying that (we) do not exist, (iii) they may be writing about us but are writing things which are untrue and (iv) they are writing about us but saying negative and insensitive things which tell us that we are not good. Although Grace is talking about school texts and journals, her comments apply also to academic writing. Much of what I have read has said that we do not exist, that if we do exist it is in terms which I can not recognise, that we are no good and that what we think is not valid. Within academic discourse we as *Maori* are represented in particular kinds of ways. When we wish to write or talk about ourselves on different terms then we are writing outside the 'tradition' within which we have been placed.

Leonie *Pihama* makes a similar point about film. In a review of 'The Piano' she says, '*Maori* people struggle to gain a voice, struggle to be heard from the margins, to have our stories heard, to have our descriptions of ourselves validated, to have access to the domain within which we can control and define those images which are held up as reflections of our realities'.<sup>12</sup> Representation is important as a concept because it contains claims to truth and to knowledge. When I read texts I frequently have to orientate myself to a text-world in which the center of academic knowledge is either in Britain, the United States or West Europe, in which words such as 'we', 'us', 'our', 'I' actually exclude me. It is a text-world in which, if what I am interested in gets a mention, I have learned that I belong (partly) in the Third World, (partly) in the 'Women of Colour' world, (partly) in the Black or African world. I read myself into these labels (partly) because I have also learned that, although there may be commonalities, they still do not entirely account for the experiences of *Maori*. These writers are often as trapped in their localised histories as we are in ours.

So, reading and interpretation present problems when we do not see ourselves in the text. It also presents problems when we do see ourselves but can barely recognise ourselves through

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<sup>11</sup> Grace, P., 1985. 'Books Are Dangerous', paper presented at the Fourth Early Childhood Convention, Wellington.

<sup>12</sup> *Pihama*, L., 1994. 'Are Films Dangerous? A *Maori* Woman's Perspective on the Piano', *Hecate* v.20, no.2, pp.239-242, p.241.

the representation. One problem of being trained to read this way, or, more correctly, of learning to read this way over many years of academic study, is that we can adopt uncritically similar patterns of writing. We begin to write about ourselves as *Maori* as if we really were 'out there', the 'other' and all the baggage that that entails. Another problem is that academic writing is a form of selecting, arranging and presenting knowledge. It privileges sets of texts, views about the history of an idea, what counts as significant issues, and by engaging in the same process uncritically, we too can render *Maori* writers invisible or unimportant while reinforcing the validity of other writers.

*So, writing can be dangerous?*

If we write without thinking critically about our writing, as if it is merely a 'tool of the *Pakeha*', then it can be potentially dangerous.<sup>13</sup> Writing can also be dangerous because we reinforce and maintain a style of discourse which is not innocent. Writing can be dangerous because sometimes we reveal ourselves in ways which get misappropriated and used against us. Writing can be dangerous because, by building on previous texts written about *Maori* people, we continue to legitimate views about ourselves which are hostile to us. I think this is particularly true of academic writing although journalistic and imaginative writing reinforce these 'myths'.<sup>14</sup>

*This is the 'Empire Writes Back' debate?*

My understanding of the 'Empire writes back' is that there are a number of different positions within this debate. The most simple position is that writers from the colonies began to write about their experiences as if they were real and important. This writing assumed that the center did not necessarily have to be located at the imperial center. The center could be

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<sup>13</sup> This concept of the 'tools of the *Pakeha*' is derived from Sir *Apirana Ngata's* often quoted poem *E Tipu e Rea* in which he urges *Maori* to grab hold of the tools of the *Pakeha* whilst holding on to our own spiritual strengths. The *Maori* word used in the original poem is *rakau* which also means tree or stick. The poem is reproduced in full in section four. Composer *Tuini Ngawai* had a different view of matters. In her song '*Te Matauranga a te Pakeha*' she equates *Pakeha* knowledge with satan's knowledge.

<sup>14</sup> This illustrates the distinction between producing knowledge which is regarded as the role of universities and intellectuals and reproducing knowledge which is the role of other agencies in society.

shifted ideologically through imagination and that this shifting can recreate history.

Another position in the 'Empire writes back' debate relates to the ability of 'native' writers to appropriate the language of the coloniser as the language of the colonised and to write so that it captures the ways in which the colonised actually use the language, their dialects and inflections, and in the way they make sense of their lives. Its other importance is that it speaks to an audience of people who have also been colonised. This is one of the ironies of many indigenous peoples conferences where issues of indigenous language have to be debated in the language of the colonisers.<sup>15</sup> Another variation of the debate relates to the use of literature to write about the terrible things which happened under colonialism or as a consequence of colonialism. These topics inevitably implicated the colonisers *and their literature* in the processes of cultural domination.

Yet another position, espoused in African literature by Ngugi wa Thiong'o was to write in the languages of Africa. For Ngugi wa Thiong'o, to write in the language of the coloniser was to pay homage to them and to write in the languages of Africa was to engage in an anti-imperialist struggle. He argued that language carries culture and the language of the coloniser became the means by which the 'mental universe of the colonised' was dominated.<sup>16</sup> This applied, in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's view, particularly to the language of writing. Whereas oral languages were frequently still heard at home, the use of literature in association with schooling resulted in the alienation of a child from the child's history, geography, music and other aspects of culture.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *There are some strategies for overcoming this which I heard about when visiting Wales and Ireland in 1991. We met several people who have actively learned the different varieties of Gaelic (Scottish, Welsh and Irish) and where some of the language activists talked about the need for minority populations in Europe to learn at least one other minority European language. This is in the context of a European Community initiative in education for all children in Europe to learn two European languages. I also met couples where one partner for example spoke Catalan and the other spoke Irish. They had met through the conferences and activities of the European Bureau of Lesser Languages.*

<sup>16</sup> Thiong'o, Ngugi Wa, 1986. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London, James Currey, excerpt reprinted in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, eds. P. Williams, L. Chrisman, New York, Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp.435-455, p.442.

<sup>17</sup> Thiong'o, p.443.

*How does this debate impact on Maori writing?*

In New Zealand and the Pacific the debate has its own flavour and this has crept into the school curriculum. It centers, I think, on how 'good literature is defined' and 'who defines it'. A number of *Maori* and Pacific writers have been arguing for a number of years with literary critics such as former Professor of English, Carl Stead, about the value and literary worthiness of the works of *Maori* and Pacific Islands writers.<sup>18</sup> It erupts from time to time over such literary activities as prizes, fellowships and exclusion or inclusion in collections of writings. However, it has influenced opinion about what should be included as literature in the English curriculum, especially regarding literature by *Maori* writers and literature written in *Maori* language.<sup>19</sup>

In the United States for example, there are debates about the 'canon', which is a list of literature prescribed for undergraduate students. The debate centers around the inclusion of literary works by ethnic minorities and women. 'The Color Purple' was one such text which some school districts and public libraries banned because of its content matter. Some, for example Hirsch, argue that the cultural literacy of the nation is being undermined by the inclusion of poor examples of writing.<sup>20</sup> Part of this is a backlash against equal opportunities in university for ethnic minorities.

In New Zealand there have always been *Maori* writers who have written in *Maori* language. It was the first language of instruction in the early mission schools. There were *Maori* newspapers in the 1890s which encouraged this and later, in the 1950s, a magazine called *Te Ao Hou* published bilingual stories written by people who are now well known authors. The problem now, however, is that *Maori* language has been in decline and there are few native

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<sup>18</sup> See for an analysis of the debate in which Stead is a key protagonist, Fee, M., 1989. 'Why C.K. Stead Didn't Like Keri Hulme's *The Bone People: Who can Write as Other?*' in *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada*, 1, pp.11-32.

<sup>19</sup> For example, when the current Minister of Education, Hon. Dr Lockwood Smith, was elected in 1990 under a National Government he had already intimated that the English curriculum which was being revised at the time was not, in his view, appropriate. He scrapped the revised curriculum which had a considerable number of *Maori* writings (that is *Maori* language writing) and established a whole new curriculum initiative.

<sup>20</sup> Hirsch, Jr., E.D., 1988. *Cultural Literacy*. New York, Vintage Books.

speakers of *Maori* who also write.<sup>21</sup> The next generation of native speakers are still children and have yet to develop as writers.

There is another dimension to this debate as more immersion *Maori* programmes and *Kura Kaupapa Maori* are developed. There is a tendency by some involved, to close off access to literature written in English (even by *Maori* writers). This is part of a highly political and significant debate centered around the notion of commitment to *Te Reo Maori*. It is argued, for example, that in order for *Te Reo Maori* to develop as a real language, people have to live it at home, at work, while out shopping, in the community. This means modelling for our children the importance of *Te Reo Maori* in their own lives and social relations. This argument tends to be undercut by the children themselves who, as they get older, watch more television, go to the movies, play sports and generally enjoy learning English.

Writing Back Academically: Starting *Puawaitanga* and the Journal *Te Pua*.

*Puawaitanga* began in 1989 specifically as a *Maori* women's academic writing group, at a time when *Maori* women were organising more around the concept of support groups.<sup>22</sup> *Puawaitanga* was different because it had a focus on academic writing and it was an assembly of women courageous enough to admit that they were either staff or students at university. Interestingly, there was a feeling by many *Maori* women at university that they were marginalised and looked down upon by other 'real' *Maori* out in the community or 'back home' because they were at University. 'Being clever' was more a mark of shame than something to be proud of. When the first *hui* was held many women came just to support the idea but said they couldn't write, one or two said they didn't believe there was a need for us to get together just as women, and hardly anyone said she was going to rush home and write.

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<sup>21</sup> This problem is being addressed through the funding programme for the 'arts and literature', now known as Creative New Zealand which has a *Maori* section, *Te Waka Toi*, who fund *Maori* authors wishing to write in *Maori* language. The *Maori* Language Commission also run workshops for writers in *Maori*.

<sup>22</sup> For example, sexual abuse support groups, incest survivor's groups and other self-esteem type support groups. This is not a uniquely *Maori* phenomenon as other ethnic and minority women have been through the same process. For example, read bell hooks, 1993. *Sisters of the Yam, black women and self-recovery*. Boston, South End Press.

After awhile however, word spread and it was a group of *Maori* women students who brought me their work. One wrote her piece on a scrap of paper, which she had screwed up and I extracted it from her fist. She had written the piece in anger. So had another student. One issue which became clear was that many *Maori* women found it difficult to write about their experiences as *Maori* women. They could write essays and assignments about other topics, but they could not or did not use writing as a medium for their own voices. Some were hesitant to even claim that they were *Maori*, others thought that their lives were not important.

As Fanon noted, colonialism has had a deep psychological impact on the way colonised people think, feel and act towards themselves, each other and to the colonisers. It is inside our heads and is deeply disturbing. Writing has been used, particularly in feminist psychology, as a form of therapy, a means to objectify issues formerly internalised and repressed. This connects with some forms of feminist critical pedagogy where women were encouraged to bring, share and generally spill out their experiences. It encouraged what is referred to as multiple oppressions, for example black/female/working class/abused/disabled.

The forming of *Puawaitanga* was a deliberate attempt to get beyond that approach, to turn writing away from a form of therapy and channel it into an activity that begins to address the problems of representation and exclusion we were encountering in academic discourse, and that could become a forum for *Maori* women to discuss those issues which we, as a group, select as important. As *Reina Whaitiri* wrote in her editorial, '*Te Pua* demonstrates a resistance to the formal constraints of academia, with the writing being accessible, personal and academic'.<sup>23</sup> In the three volumes published so far the important issues which *Maori* women are choosing to write about are; the politics of identity, the problems of white women's feminisms, representation and reflections on our stories. *Te Pua* is a small decolonising project which shares many of the developmental characteristics of other examples of *Maori* initiatives in education; it developed locally, it has a clear '*kaupapa*', it started without resources such as money, it attempted to claim new ground, it built upon a critique of history and then it was made to happen.

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<sup>23</sup> *Whaitiri, R., 1993. 'Maori Women in Politics', in Te Pua 2, Puawaitanga, University of Auckland, p.6.*

## Writing a Thesis.

Cherryl Smith argues that, 'colonialism, racism and cultural imperialism do not occur only in society, outside of the gates of universities'.<sup>24</sup> Thesis writing, she continues, is a way of 'writing back' whilst at the same time writing to ourselves'.<sup>25</sup> The act of 'writing back' and simultaneously writing to ourselves is not simply an inversion of how we have learned to write academically.<sup>26</sup> The different audiences to whom we speak makes the task somewhat difficult. The scope of literature which we use in our work contributes to a different framing of the issues. Our oral arts, *whakapapa*, *whaikorero*, *whakatauaki*, *waiata* and other forms of expression set our landscape in a different frame of reference. Our understandings of the academic disciplines within which we have been trained also frame our approaches.<sup>27</sup> Even the use of pronouns such as 'I' and 'we' can cause difficulties when writing for several audiences, because while it may be acceptable now in academic writing, it is not always acceptable with *Maori* audiences.<sup>28</sup> The values of *whakamaa* and *whakahihi* sanction us against making bold claims on our own behalf.<sup>29</sup> The more desired value is '*whakaiti*' or humility.

Edward Said also asks the following questions, '*Who writes? For whom is the writing being done? In what circumstances? These it seems to me are the questions whose answers provide*

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<sup>24</sup> Smith, C.W., 1994. '*Kimihia Te Maramatanga: Colonisation and Iwi Development*', MA thesis, University of Auckland, p.13.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion on how writing 'academically' represents the other read, Dijk, T.A. van., 1989. *Elite Discourses and Racism*. Newbury Park, California, Sage Publications.

<sup>27</sup> This can mean that even among *Maori* academics there are disciplinary approaches which influence what we write about and how we write it.

<sup>28</sup> For further points on this issue see Smith, L.T., 1994(a). 'In Search of a Language and a Shareable Imaginative World: *E Kore Taku Moe E Riro I A Koe*', in *Hecate*, v.20, no.2, pp.162-174. The basic point is that when we use the 'I' it is often interpreted as meaning that we are putting ourselves forward and thinking about our own views first, rather than speaking from a collective base.

<sup>29</sup> Trans. *whakamaa* can mean shy, embarrass, or to be shamed indicating a loss of *mana*, *whakahihi* is often used to mean a 'show off', arrogant, smug, opinionated.



us with the ingredients making a politics of interpretation'.<sup>30</sup> These questions are important ones which are being asked in a variety of ways within *Maori* communities. They are asked for example about research, policy making, curriculum development. Said's comments however, point to the problems of interpretation, in this case of academic writing. Who is doing the writing is important in the politics of the Third World, African America and indeed for *Maori*, and more importantly in the politics of how these worlds are being represented 'back to' the west. In the New Zealand context and specifically in education, *Maori* people were 'invited' to add our views on *Maori* education in the early 1980s.<sup>31</sup> This invitation coincided with a mounting critique of education from all quarters. What was problematic about such an invitation was the sense that one had to behave within a set of prescribed rules.<sup>32</sup> Those invitations have become more common as disciplines seek *Maori* perspectives or input from *Maori* in order to attract *Maori* students. Increasingly, however, *Maori* who become part of that discipline have found themselves having to develop a critique of the disciplinary knowledges being taught to them and to 'write back' against the rules within which they have been trained.

Although in the literary sense the imagination is crucial to writing, the use of language is not

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<sup>30</sup> Said, E., 1983. 'Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community', in *The Politics of Interpretation*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p.7.

<sup>31</sup> Harker, R., 1980. 'Research on the Education of *Maori* Children', in *Delta Research Monograph 3*, New Zealand Association for Research in Education, pp.42-72.

<sup>32</sup> Although an 'invitation' may be made, the expectation is that we would either conform to the rules of practice which had excluded our ideas and views in the first place or we would represent 'folk' views already imbued with western mythology. If we follow the first option, as *Maori* academics we are criticised because we are western trained, if we follow the second option we are criticised for simply reproducing, uncritically, hegemonic views. In addressing this issue, for example, Openshaw, Lee and Lee cite Roger Keesing's statement that 'increasingly powerful and successful *Maori* political movements incorporate idealised, mythicised versions of a precolonial Golden Age, the mystical wisdom of *Aotearoa*'. These authors go to some length in their discussion of the difficulties of writing about early *Maori* education by situating it in a discussion of cultural invention and idealisation, political correctness and theoretical 'dangers'. *Maori* writers on education are neatly positioned as ideologues through Keesing's use of the term (not the authors themselves of course) p.27. Ranginui Walker is referred to as 'thundering' a comment, p.33. While they undercut Sir Peter Buck's contribution on the basis that he was a western trained scholar they attempt to say that Buck's own personal recollections had a 'ring of authenticity', p.30. In the end their account dismisses most *Maori* educationalists views, most radical interpretations (*Maori* or *Pakeha*) leaving just a few historians as the most reliable and legitimate sources of historical accounts. What is interesting about this account is not so much the problems of reconstructing history, which are already widely acknowledged, but the positioning of these problems in a wider political discourse. Refer back for example to the discussion by van Dijk on academic discourses. Openshaw, R., G, Lee, H. Lee, 1993, *Challenging the Myths, Rethinking New Zealand's Educational History*, Palmerston North, Dunmore Press.

highly regarded in academic discourses which claim to be scientific. The concept of imagination, when employed as a sociological tool, is often reduced to a way of seeing and understanding the world, or a way of understanding how people either construct the world or are constructed by the world. However, as Toni Morrison argues, the imagination can be a way of sharing the world.<sup>33</sup> This means struggling to find the language to do this and then struggling to interpret and perform within that shared imagination. Using different literatures, writing in different ways and reaching different audiences are part of that struggle in the writing of this thesis.

This thesis has been written with an attitude. The attitude is not one which chooses not to engage in the current debates on critical pedagogy as struggled over in the Anglo-American or French educational literature. Rather, the attitude is about sorting out what is important here to us, and then foregrounding those priorities against the wider canvas of educational concerns. In order to do this it is essential that the voices of *Maori* are heard. I have deliberately attempted to include and privilege those voices in this thesis without closing off the possibilities for other voices to be acknowledged. I have also attempted to write something which will make sense for other *Maori*. Virtually every chapter has elements in it which have been 'tested' publicly with groups of *Maori* people during lectures, talks and conferences as well as being read by other *Maori* in the field. At the same time however, I have selected and arranged, framed and highlighted and take responsibility for the things which are contained within this thesis.

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### Writing Theory.

The second question which is asked at the beginning of this chapter is about theory. It has already been touched on lightly and will be addressed again in later chapters. Writing theory is not an activity that is given much importance in New Zealand. Writing research is marginally more important providing it results in tangible benefits for farmers, economists,

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<sup>33</sup> Morrison, T., 1993. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. New York, Vintage Books.

industries and sick people. For *Maori*, most of the theorising has been driven by anthropological approaches. These approaches have shown enormous concern for our origins as a people and for aspects of our linguistic and material culture. In education, this theorising about *Maori* has been framed within fundamentally negative views about *Maori* people. These views may not have been specific to *Maori* but have been derived from views about race. Intelligence and psychometric testing in particular were founded on beliefs about the superiority of the *Pakeha* and inferiority of 'other' races.

Harker assembles educational research on *Maori* into three major themes; historical, language and scholastic achievement.<sup>34</sup> The latter theme contained studies which examined the 'social' aspects of *Maori* life. However, as Toby Curtis has argued, a danger of these studies is that assumptions were made about *Maori* life purely on the basis of what was observed at school and what preconceived views the researchers already held.<sup>35</sup> These views were then set within the wider theoretical framework and language which was derived from Britain or the United States. Hence, for example, 'cultural deprivation' based studies in the 1960s and 1970s which took Basil Bernstein's research on language codes and turned it into a major schooling intervention based on language and cultural enrichment. One effect of this 'victim-blaming' theorising about *Maori* under-achievement in education, and similar theorising in other social policy areas, was that *Maori* people became 'sick and tired of being blamed'.<sup>36</sup> A consequence of this attitude was a deep suspicion towards any form of research and any theorising which was derived from research. One form this attitude took was to become 'anti-theory'.

The development of theories by *Maori* which attempt to explain our existence in contemporary society (as opposed to the 'traditional' society constructed under modernism)

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<sup>34</sup> Harker, 1980.

<sup>35</sup> Curtis, T., 1983. 'A *Maori* Viewpoint Related to Research in *Maori* Education', Seminar Paper presented at Auckland Teachers College republished in *The Issue of Research and Maori*, eds. M. K. Hohepa, G.H. Smith, Research Unit for *Maori* Education, University of Auckland.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in Curtis, 1983.

have only just begun to develop.<sup>37</sup> None of them claim to be derived from some 'pure' sense of what it means to be *Maori* nor do they claim to be theories which have been developed in a vacuum separated from any association with the civil rights movement, other nationalist struggles or other theoretical approaches.<sup>38</sup> What is claimed, however, is that new ways of theorising by *Maori* are grounded in a real sense of and sensitivity towards what it means to be *Maori*. As Kathie Irwin urges, 'We don't need anyone else developing the tools which will help us to come to terms with who we are. We can and will do this work. Real power lies with those who design the tools - it always has. This power is ours. Through the process of developing such theories we will contribute to our empowerment as *Maori* women, moving forward in our struggles for our people, our lands, our world, ourselves'.<sup>39</sup>

Contained within this imperative is a sense of being able to determine priorities, to bring to the center those issues of our own choosing and to discuss them among ourselves. This has been particularly marked in education. From 1984 the number of *Maori* presenting papers at the New Zealand Association for Research in Education annual conferences has grown from one individual to more recent conferences which contain *Maori* symposia on *Maori* education, which can run concurrently throughout the conference, as well as papers presented by *Maori* across all the other areas of educational activity. There are also specialist *Maori* seminars and regular bi-annual conferences of *Maori* academics from across all disciplines and from all the universities.<sup>40</sup> What is also different about these conferences, as opposed to earlier *Maori*

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<sup>37</sup> I acknowledge that *Maori* have gathered at various Conferences to discuss the issues of the times, for example the *Te Aute Old Boy's Association* were meeting in the 1890s and preparing written papers, but the overwhelming focus of these conferences were framed in terms of very specific social issues such as, 'what to do about ....' and were concerned with coming to terms with *Pakeha* society, while retaining some aspects of *Maori* 'culture'.

<sup>38</sup> In the 1970s groups such as *Nga Tamatoa* were influenced in part by the civil rights movements in the USA and the anti-Vietnam War movement, other groups of this time were influenced by Marxist theories. In later times *Maori* 'radicals' (*Ripeka* Evans and *Donna Awatere*) were accused by the Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, of being trained in Cuba.

<sup>39</sup> Irwin, K., 1992. 'Towards Theories of *Maori* Feminisms', in *Feminist Voices: Women's Studies Texts for Aotearoa/New Zealand*. ed. R. Du Plessis, Auckland, Oxford University Press, p.1-21, p.5.

<sup>40</sup> The first national *Maori* Psychology *Hui* was held in 1995, there have been *Hui* on *Maori* education for several years, usually hosted by non-academic organisations such as The New Zealand *Maori* Council and the teacher unions. *Maori* academics in education have begun to meet regularly at New Zealand Association for Research in Education conferences for updates on inter-university disciplinary meetings.

Leadership Conferences, is a confidence and an awareness that perhaps *Maori* academics can be theoretical and yet still be connected with their organic communities, that is that they can still be *Maori*.<sup>41</sup>

There is a new context for being able to advance ideas which relate to *Maori* ways of knowing and to *Maori* education. However, because it is new it is still regarded by other *Maori* as a marginal activity engaged in by particular individuals. Making the development of *Maori* theories more credible depends on how the few individuals involved are perceived, both within *Maori* communities and within research and policy agencies.<sup>42</sup> There are expectations of *Maori* academics from their own *whanau*, *hapu*, *iwi* and communities to deliver tangible benefits back to the people. There is also the implicit expectation that *Maori* academics will not 'do to *Maori*' what other (*Pakeha*) academics have done in the past.

*Te Kohanga Reo* and *Kura Kaupapa Maori* are both initiatives which have been significant in changing attitudes to theory. *Te Kohanga Reo* showed not only that *Maori* could establish a system of language and *whanau* intervention which attracted large numbers of *Maori* children, but that it was possible to build something employing the ways of knowing and doing things that are part of the way *Maori* live. *Te Kohanga Reo* demonstrated that we could restore cultural practices and values very easily when we had control over the whole programme. It showed that *Maori* parents did work hard to support their children's development if the systems in place were *Maori* systems. The development and affirmation

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<sup>41</sup> For example, in 1970 the issues discussed at a Young *Maori* Leaders' Conference included: Problems in the Community, *Maori* Identity, *Maori* Associations, Budgetting, Education and Vocational Training, Urban *Marae*, Urban-Rural Differences. These issues reflect the social context of the times and the connection which was drawn (very consciously) between education and *Maori* leadership. The concern with becoming 'leaders' is not quite so marked in current *Maori* students, as there has been a shift back to the leadership of *kaumatua* and elders although that is being contested by younger *Maori*. 1970. Report of the Young *Maori* Leaders Conference. Department of University Extension, University of Auckland.

<sup>42</sup> This gets quite complex as there are many *Maori* who value *Pakeha* academic qualifications and approval by *Pakeha* as a stronger recommendation for someone than what *Maori* may say. It is further complicated by issues of gender, age, *iwi*, involvement as an 'insider' in various activities and commitment to the '*kaupapa*'. Some choose to work with *Pakeha* for a whole range of issues, such as, they have more experience, skill and cultural capital, some *Pakeha* are 'on a mission' and tend to be 'predictable', some have built up longlasting relationships with a community. On the negative side, however, there are still hegemonic views relating to the 'natural' inferiority of *Maori*, even when they are qualified, some are seen as 'rip-off artists' and others are not trusted for various reasons.

of these values and practices overturned a whole way of thinking about education. In particular, *Te Kohanga Reo* involved new groups of people who became empowered through their involvement. Young mothers, *kaumatua*, native speakers of *te reo*, women who were good organisers, people who were prepared to struggle for what they wanted. *Te Kohanga Reo* has played a significant part in the development of *Maori* theories about education. It showed possibilities and captured a sense of energy which has continued into other spheres of *Maori* social life. It is from this context that *Kaupapa Maori* has emerged as a way of framing and articulating *Maori* theorising.

Imagine Writing History and Theory.

A dilemma posed by a such a thorough critical approach to History, Writing and Theory is that whilst we may reject or dismiss History, Writing and Theory, this does not make them go away, nor does the critique necessarily offer the alternatives. We live simultaneously within such views while needing to pose, contest and struggle for the legitimacy of oppositional or alternative histories, theories and ways of writing. At some points there are, there has to be, dialogue across the boundaries of oppositions. This has to be because we constantly collide with dominant views while we are attempting to transform our lives on a larger scale than our own domestic circumstances. This means struggling to make sense of our own world while also attempting to transform what counts as important in the world of the powerful.

Part of the exercise is about recovering our own histories/herstories. This is inextricably bound to a recovery of our language and epistemological foundations. It is also about reconciling and re-prioritising what is really important about the past with what is important about the present. This process is occurring in the arts, for example, with younger people wanting to have *moko* tattooed on their faces. It is occurring in the health and community area with research focusing on recovering *Maori* healing practices. It is occurring in small curriculum initiatives related for example to physical education. It is also occurring in

academic research by **Maori** students.<sup>43</sup> It is occurring in *Kura Kaupapa Maori* with students being taught much more complex versions of our origin stories. One of the problems with such a pursuit is that it often becomes disconnected from our colonisation histories and what is seen as 'traditional' knowledge is frequently absorbed unproblematically. An example of this is that many who have learned to speak *Maori* language as a result of political action by others then turn on people who do not have the language and attempt to shut them out of debates by claiming that only through the language can certain issues be discussed. In one analysis of this tendency Cheryl Smith has argued that people have 'gone down the cultural track (through such things as involvement in performance groups)' and disconnected themselves from *Maori* politics, allowing themselves furthermore to be co-opted by accepting invitations to perform at venues such as *Waitangi* Day, where they are seen by other *Maori* as representatives of the government.<sup>44</sup> What is being argued here is that the 'cultural' and the 'political' together form the basis for imagining new possibilities for *Maori*.

In the following chapter the importance of imagining new possibilities is examined in more detail. This chapter has explored one intersection, that of History/Writing/Theory, with more emphasis on History/Writing. It was positioned as a chapter immediately following the introduction because it seemed important to me to set out a series of 'barriers' which I encountered as I struggled to write a thesis. The introductory chapter enabled me to write myself in to the thesis. This chapter has been about setting out some ambivalences which have made it difficult to write. Discussing issues of theory need more space, addressing it in this chapter has been about examining theory in relation to two categories, History and Writing, with which it is closely associated. In terms of theory it is being analysed, dismissed,

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<sup>43</sup> For example, there are a number of theses being written with very specific foci on retrieving oral histories or pulling together accounts which have been scattered across other sources. The following examples all contain a section which attempts to bring together what is currently known through both written and oral sources about some aspect of our history. Port, R.V., 1995. *He Mate Huhua: He Tirohanga Maori, Maori Attitudes to Disability: Clubfoot*, MA thesis, University of Auckland, Richards, R., 1991. *Te Reo Paheke: The Underdevelopment of Te Reo Maori in Te Whanau-a-Te-Ehutu hapu, Eastern Bay of Plenty*, M'Ed. thesis, University of Auckland, Stanley, P., 1995. *Kaua e Mahaki: Kahore Hoki Koe e te Whakaherahara: Institutional Intoxication of Maori in Aotearoa*, MA thesis, University of Auckland, Taylor, K.M. 1994, *Nga Kupu Paake a Nga Wahine Maori Conversations with Maori Women Educators*, MA thesis, University of Auckland.

<sup>44</sup> Smith, C.W., 1995. *The Natives are Restless*, paper given at *Te Kawau Maro Sovereignty Lecture Series*, University of Auckland.

restructured and re-imagined throughout the entire thesis. In the next chapter I will discuss four major themes which are interwoven throughout the thesis. The number of themes is totally unrelated to the number of sections, nor is there any magical significance in the number 'four' itself.