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**HERITAGE AND INNOVATION
POLYNESIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH**

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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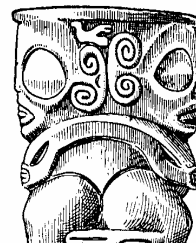
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V Praze dne

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It was something that we Polynesians have lost and cannot find, something that we yearn for and cannot recreate. The background in which that spirit was engendered has changed beyond recovery. The bleak wind of oblivion had swept over Opoa. Foreign weeds grew over the intended courtyard, and stones had fallen from the sacred altar of Taputapu-atea. The gods had long ago departed.

Te Rangi Hiroa – Peter H. Buck

Introduction

The aim of the diploma thesis is to present contemporary Polynesian literature in English that has not yet been studied in the Czech context. Due to the fact that the problematics of Polynesian studies has not yet been treated in the Czech Republic, I stepped on a *terra incognita* and had to chart the limited sources available. I had to turn also to foreign sources and to investigations by Francophone researchers, as for example, to the important studies of Polynesian literature by Sonia Lacabanne and Sylvie André, and contact persons in Polynesia, who provided the indispensable and here unreachable materials. At the same time, it was necessary to exploit in depth the possibilities of the accessible documents. For instance, as concerns the Polynesian oral tradition, even though the vast work by Teuira Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, gathers mainly the oral sources of the nowadays Francophone Tahiti situated in Central Polynesia near the mythical island of Hawaiki, it has been an invaluable reference to provide a complete idea of the oral tradition of the islands explored in the thesis because the author provides an exhaustive and reliable account of it and supplies comparisons of the Tahitian pre-colonial culture with the culture of the other islands groups of Polynesia that spread from the central region.

Because of my restrained financial means, it was not possible to reach a number of primary and secondary literature from abroad to enrich the investigation on the subject. Therefore, the thesis is founded on the materials that I managed to collect. Its objective is to introduce the subject of Polynesian Literature in English, which deserves manifestly to be investigated further, into the Czech background. Due to the nature of the thesis, several chapters, and mainly the second part, are necessarily more descriptive than analytical.

The subject is treated from the perspective of “heritage and innovation” because to inherit and to innovate seem to be the proclaimed fundamental creative principles of the Polynesian authors writing in English, which the ensuing work endeavours to demonstrate.

The thesis is divided into three parts and each part contains three chapters. The first part, entitled “The place of Polynesian Literature in English in Post-colonial studies”, tries to define the main characteristics of the new literature in question and presents its main issues. At first, it determines the boundaries of the selected literary area – the countries of Polynesia that are the former colonies of Great Britain – and describes its basic characteristics in terms of geography, ethnology, history, politics, and linguistics. Concurrently, there is explained the place of Polynesian literature in English in post-colonial studies and there is defined its relationship to other post-colonial literatures, mainly to Pacific post-colonial literature in English. The second chapter contextualizes the birth in the 1960’s of the new literature in question and the situation that led to the initiation of a pan-Polynesian movement which culminated in the publication of the first anthologies of Polynesian writing in English *Whetu Moana: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English* and *Mauri Ola: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English*, *Whetu Moana II* in 2003 and 2010. The pan-Polynesian movement has derived from a broader regional pan-Pacific movement that provides the theoretical framework to Polynesian literature in English. The indigenous writers and literary critics endeavour to offer alternative responses to the questions of cultural identity in the post-colonial context of Polynesia and the Pacific, which is exposed in the same chapter. The third chapter treats the theme of diaspora that indeed becomes highly relevant in the Polynesian context.

The second part of the thesis, entitled “Stages of the development of Polynesian literature in English”, attempts to present the birth and the early development of the treated literature, which demands an overview of the Polynesian pre-colonial culture that is based on orality and an explanation of the transition to the written word. The first chapter provides an outline of the Polynesian oral tradition and presents the context of the introduction of literacy. The second chapter shows the development of Polynesian literature in English by supplying a survey of Polynesian authors writing in English, from the first published texts to the contemporary literary stage. At the same time, it explains the writers’ choice of English as their language of literary expression and

comments on their method of work with both the English and their indigenous languages. The third chapter demonstrates how the Polynesian authors manage to achieve a syncretism of their two heritages – the Polynesian and the British or European – in their writing, which is also the expression of their attitude towards the construction of a new post-colonial cultural identity.

The objective of the first two parts of the thesis is thus to define, contextualize and present in general the problematics of Polynesian literature in English.

In the third part of the thesis, entitled “Heritage and Innovation”, analyses of the works of three representative Polynesian writers – Witi Ihimaera (New Zealand), Alistair Te Ariki Campbell (Cook Islands), Albert Wendt (Samoa) – follow one another. The function of the analyses is to illustrate by concrete examples Polynesian literature in English, which was presented theoretically in the first two parts of the thesis, and to exemplify the principle of heritage and innovation on which the new literature is based.

Among the range of Polynesian works that I have read and that are mentioned mainly in the second part of the thesis (see Bibliography), I have chosen the three authors mentioned above and selected to analyse their respective works – *Tangi*, *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* and *Sons for the Return Home* – because they correspond to landmarks in the birth and development of Polynesian literature in English and respond pertinently to its expounded issues and mainly to the problematics of heritage and innovation. The given works are characterized particularly by their strong affiliation to the inherited Polynesian oral tradition that is innovated by its transference into the frame of contemporary life and fiction. Their interpretation focuses on the dominant individual segments of Polynesian mythology that appear in them and that fulfil a decisive function in their structure in terms of form and contents. The order of the individual analyses follows the chronology of the treated myths: from the creation of the world by Rangi and Papa, through the first created island called Hawaiki, to the exploits of the demigod Maui.

A brief comparison of the studied works that reveals the common major concerns and directions of the three representative Polynesian authors closes the third part. It is important to add that, because I presume that the works are rather unknown here, particularly in the analysis of Albert Wendt's novel *Sons for the Return Home* that has a much more pronounced epic character than *Tangi*, and in which the action plays a central function, I had to pay attention to a more detailed presentation of the plot.

The conclusion recapitulates the studied problematics of Polynesian literature in English and comments on the results of the research. At the same time, suggestions for further investigations on the subject are proposed.

At the end of the thesis there are five appendices. Appendices I and II are two maps. The first map, entitled *Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia, the geo-cultural areas of the Pacific*, features Oceania and the repartition of the Pacific region into the three geo-cultural areas of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. The second map, *States and territories of Polynesia*, is a cut-out, focusing on the area of Polynesia, from a contemporary map of Oceania oriented on the geo-political situation of the islands. The joint table specifies the current political status of the Polynesian islands as independent states or non-independent states and territories with special status or high degree of autonomy. The maps are indispensable for the determination of the post-colonial Polynesian literary area. Appendix III presents the Polynesian diaspora described in the third chapter of the first part and may be used as a complement of the second analysed work in the third part of the thesis, *The Dark Lord of Savaiki*, that refers to the Polynesian common mythical island of origin Hawaiki. It is important to remark here that, for the sake of unity, the Maori variant of the name of the given island will be kept throughout the thesis, except in the analysis of the mentioned poetry collection where the poet's use of the Tongarevan Maori variant "Savaiki" will be maintained. Finally, Appendices IV and V are constituent parts of the analyses of the two novels, *Tangi* by Witi Ihimaera and *Sons for the Return Home* by Albert Wendt, in the third part of the thesis. They are transcriptions and translations into English of the two Maori myths on which the interpretation of

the respective works is based. The myths entitled *The Children of Heaven and Earth* and *The Legend of Maui* are taken from the work *Polynesian Mythology* by Sir George Grey. The versions of the myths needed to be shortened for the purpose of the work and due to the reduced space possibilities.

The orthography of the Polynesian words used throughout the thesis, particularly the macron that indicates long vowels, is variable. In spite of the fact that the use of macrons is codified in dictionaries of the respective Polynesian languages, they are often skipped in texts. I keep the orthography of the main studied authors who omit it. The translation of Polynesian words is taken from the glossaries provided by the Polynesian authors at the end of their works.

I. THE PLACE OF POLYNESIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH IN POST-COLONIAL STUDIES

1. Delineating the Polynesian post-colonial literary area

Polynesia is one of the three geo-cultural insular areas of the Pacific Ocean together with Micronesia and Melanesia (see Appendix I). The given division has been set in 1832 by the French explorer Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont d'Urville (1790-1842). The settlement of the Pacific islands of all the three areas had been made throughout the progressive migrations of peoples from Southern Asia and Indonesia to the East between approximately 48,000 BC and 1300 AD. Nowadays, the given repartition of the Pacific islands is the subject of polemics among the indigenous intellectuals who question its accuracy and who endeavour to establish their own criteria to determine the space to which they are affiliated. Indeed, only the autochthonous populations of the islands grouped as Polynesia, the last and farthest to be settled, show to have firm ethnic, cultural and linguistic bonds, although some common elements are found with the populations of the bordering islands of the other two regions.

The first European expedition throughout the Pacific was led by the Portuguese Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521) in 1521. He was followed a century later, in 1642, by the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman (1603-1659) who navigated mainly through the Western part of the Pacific. It was not until 1767 that other European crews reached the Pacific: one led by the English explorer Samuel Wallis (1728-1795) and the other by the French navigator Louis-Antoine de Bougainville (1729-1811). Two years later, in 1769, the English captain James Cook (1728-1779) undertakes the series of journeys across the Pacific Ocean. In 1788 Australia is annexed by the British Empire and in 1797 the London Missionary Society settles in Tahiti, the capital island of today's islands group called French Polynesia. From then on, the colonial and missionary enterprise of the various rival European powerful nations – mainly Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States of America – in the Pacific will not

stop until the 1960's for some territories as Western Samoa who becomes the first independent state of the Pacific in 1962, and has not stopped yet for a number of islands. The indigenous populations as the Maoris and the Aborigines have become minority groups in self-governing settler nations and colonial powers as New Zealand and Australia.

The thesis focuses at first on the geo-cultural area of Polynesia that is also alluded to as “the Polynesian triangle” with Hawai‘i in the North, Easter Island in the East and New Zealand in the South. This reduction is the consequence of the fact that the given area represents a homogenous unit within the immense Pacific whose indigenous populations and cultures are too diverse to be treated here in detail. Indeed, the population of Polynesia forms one diasporic community that spread from one common centre. Polynesian diaspora deserves to be explained in depth; therefore, the third chapter of the present part of the thesis is dedicated to the subject.

The colonial powers of Chile, France, the United States of America and Great Britain have divided Polynesia into four geo-political regions and three linguistic areas. Easter Island or Rapa Nui has been annexed by Chile in 1888 and is the only Spanish-speaking island of Polynesia. The central area of Polynesia, colonized by France, is denominated as French Polynesia. The French acquired also Wallis and Futuna on the Western side of Polynesia. In the North of the triangle, Hawai‘i is a state of the United States of America since 1959. Eastern Samoa is also a territory of the United States since 1899 and is called American Samoa. The remaining area of Polynesia has gone through the influence of Great Britain, mainly New Zealand, Tonga, Niue, Western Samoa, Cook Islands, Tokelau, Tuvalu, on the Western side of Polynesia, Phoenix and Line Islands (nowadays part of Kiribati) in the North, and Pitcairn Islands in the East. The political status of the individual territories in relationship to their colonial nation has transformed significantly in the course of time and many of them have now acquired a high degree of autonomy or have achieved independence (see Appendix II).

The thesis concentrates only on those islands of the Polynesian triangle that may be characterized politically as “post-colonial” because they have acquired independence from their colonial authority. However, the term “post-colonial” will be understood in a broader sense, rather as dealing with “European colonialist histories and institutional practices, and the responses (resistant or otherwise) to these practices on the part of all colonized peoples”¹ or with “the various cultural effects of colonization”² according to the usage of literary critics since the 1970’s, than in its strictly historical sense. They are mainly the Polynesian islands presenting resistance against the colonial hegemony, struggling for their self-assertion and independence, and those that have achieved sovereignty that have developed a literature in the language of the former colonial authority that may be identified as “post-colonial”.

Moreover, for the sake of unity, it explores only the territories that have gone through British colonial rule. The reason is that the process of colonisation and decolonisation and its consequences on the autochthonous peoples and their cultures vary considerably according to the individual ruling countries.

Finally, the indigenous writers of the given countries have articulated a common anti-colonial resistance together with a struggle for self-determination built upon their resistant relationship to colonialism in the frame of a pan-Polynesian literary movement and have chosen English as their language of expression. The literary movement has been concretized lately in the two successive publications of the first Polynesian anthologies of contemporary poetry in English edited by Albert Wendt, Reina Whaitiri and Robert Sullivan entitled *Whetu moana: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English* in 2003 and *Mauri Ola: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English, Whetu Moana II* in 2010. The delineation of the post-colonial Polynesian literary area proposed in the thesis is based on these two publications. What unites the literary production in English of these Polynesian post-colonial writers is the grounding of their anti-colonial resistance and their effort of self-assertion in their common Polynesian

¹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin: *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies*, Routledge, London 1998, p. 189

² *Ibid.*, p. 186

ethnic, cultural, mythological and linguistic inheritance: “There is a commonality in our bubbling polyglot Polynesian diversity, the commonality of the ocean, of a shared vocabulary, of our communal cultures and values, and our colonial experience. These are the forces that draw our poetries together.”³ As the title of the thesis indicates, the Polynesian writers innovate their shared heritage by relating it to contemporary life and to the development of their civilization and culture. The titles of the mentioned anthologies have been devised to symbolize the pan-Polynesian movement. “Whetu Moana” means “Ocean of Stars” and it alludes to the shared past diaspora that has formed the Polynesian cultural identity. The sea voyagers established strong ties with the natural elements of the sea and the sky, which impacted also on their conception of the universe:

The sky and the sea must have seemed both boundless and eternal to the early Polynesians, for how the people lived and connected with one another was determined by how well they understood and could control these two elements. (...) The people of Polynesia carefully and meticulously recorded their whakapapa, or lineage, thus establishing and strengthening their links with the earth, the sky, the gods and each other. Polynesians also believe that when we die we become the stars that help to guide the living across that huge body of water Te Moana Nui a Kiwa. The people learned how to read and work with their world, they learned about reading the ocean currents, the winds and stars, using that knowledge to sail and navigate their lives by.”⁴

The title of the second anthology “Mauri Ola” refers to particular concepts common to all Polynesians used here to express the driving forces of the emerging literature:

The term ‘mauri ola’ or ‘mauri ora’, is found in most Polynesian cultures. In combining the Maori ‘mauri’ and the word ‘ola’, common in many Polynesian languages, the new pan-Polynesian title makes the anthology more inclusive of all our peoples. Mauri is the location of emotions, usually the centre of the person (...) Ora or

³ Albert Wendt, Reina Whaitiri and Robert Sullivan: “Introduction”, in *Whetu Moana: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English*, ed. by A. Wendt, R. Whaitiri and R. Sullivan, Auckland University Press, Auckland 2003, p. 2

⁴ Ibid., p. 1

ola is life, to be alive. Together, mauri ola is the life force that runs through all things, gives them mana and holds them alive and together. (...) For us, poetry is the mauri ola of language: Tihei mauri ora! Look, we are still alive, we are still here! Despite the radical changes we have suffered, and are still undergoing, we are vibrantly alive and well and continue to define, to determine and to create ourselves and our destinies.”⁵

The British ex-colonies and nowadays self-governing Polynesian nations that participate in the given literary movement are Western Samoa, the Cook Islands, Niue and Tonga. They are the major and most inhabited islands of the British former colonies in Polynesia. The New Zealand Maoris, a Polynesian minority group in the independent settler nation of New Zealand, take also an active part in the development of Polynesian post-colonial literature in English. The indigenous populations of the five countries have passed through a different colonial history and have acquired a different political status. In order to understand the “post-colonial” situation that is reflected in their emerging literature, it is necessary to draft briefly their relationships with the British Empire.

Western Samoa was formerly a colony acquired by Germany in 1899 on the basis of an agreement with the United States that obtained the Eastern part of Samoa, remaining from then on American Samoa. In 1914, when Germany engaged in the First World War, New Zealand, at that time a Dominion since 1907, took possession of Western Samoa. This last has gained independence from New Zealand in 1962 to become the Independent State of Samoa, a parliamentary republic, member of the Commonwealth of Nations in 1970.

The British annexation of the Cook Islands and Niue took place in 1888. In 1901, the two territories were relegated to the supervision of New Zealand, then the self-governing colony of the British Empire since 1852. During the general Pacific wave of decolonisation of the 1960’s to the 1980’s, both the Cook Islands and Niue acquired the status of self-governing states in free association with New Zealand, the former in 1965 and the latter in 1974. The head of state of

⁵ A. Wendt, R. Whaitiri, R. Sullivan: “Introduction”, in *Mauri Ola: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English, Whetu Moana II*, ed. by A. Wendt, R. Whaitiri, and R. Sullivan, Auckland University Press, Auckland 2010, p. 2

the two countries remains Queen Elizabeth II through their association with New Zealand that is a Commonwealth realm, and the Prime Minister is appointed locally. The Cook Islands and Niue's sovereignty in individual matters varies according to the respective agreements that they have made with New Zealand.

The Tongan archipelago had been a British-protected state from 1900 to 1970 on the basis of the Treaty of Friendship. Contrary to all other Polynesian islands, the autochthonous monarchy has never been interrupted and the highest representative of the colonial power was that of British Consul. In spite of recognising its own monarch, the Kingdom of Tonga has entered the Commonwealth of Nations in 1970.

The four nations described so far have two official languages: English and the local Polynesian languages, descending from the Austronesian and Malayo-Polynesian languages – Samoan, Cook Islands Maori, Niuean and Tongan. No Pidgin or Creole languages have been developed in these countries although, as the Polynesians assert, they have “indigenised” English “with the introduction of Polynesian words and concepts”⁶.

From the data mentioned above, it arises that the socio-political situation of the Polynesian indigenous population of New Zealand is different from that of the autochthones of the smaller islands groups. New Zealand was annexed by the British Crown through the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 signed with the Maori chiefs. However, this original agreement has gone and is still going through serious controversy. While the British considered to have obtained full sovereignty and the consent to be in command of the indigenous sales of land, the autochthones regarded the agreement as a means to obtain protection from the Empire without compromising their authority and their rights over their territory. The misunderstanding lay in the difference of the English and Maori versions of the treaty. Twenty years after the treaty was signed, the indigenous population was already less numerous than that of the immigrant settlers and unwilling to sell more land. This led to reconsiderations of the Treaty of

⁶ A. Wendt, R. Whitiri, R. Sullivan: “Introduction”, in *Whetu Moana, Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English*, p. 3

Waitangi on the part of the Maoris and to insurrections against the colonial power and ultimately resulted in wars in the period between 1860 and 1872. After the warfare, numerous Maori land properties had been confiscated and expropriations followed so that at the end of the nineteenth century, the indigenous population was pushed to secluded rural areas.

Meanwhile, the British settler colony of New Zealand had been progressively acquiring more independence, from the New Zealand Constitution Act of 1852, through its attainment of Dominion status in 1907, to the 1986 Constitution Act. As it has been mentioned earlier, the territory became itself a colonial authority in the Pacific. Since 1947, New Zealand is a Commonwealth realm and, together with Australia, is one of the leading powers in the transpacific organisations.

It was not until 1975, when approximately seventy percent of the New Zealand population was of European descent that, through the autochthones' growing assertions for their rights, the Waitangi Tribunal was founded. Its task was to review the agreements of the treaty and to find means how to compensate for the violations that have been committed. This political step towards the recovery of the integrity of the indigenous population was accompanied by a strong cultural revival that is usually alluded to as the "Maori Renaissance" starting in the 1970's. As a consequence, the country has gradually taken measures to acknowledge the rights of the Maoris and to integrate them and their culture in the predominantly European society. For example, Maori has become an official language of New Zealand together with English in 1987, and as bilingualism has been favoured, both the English and the Maori names of the country, New Zealand and Aotearoa⁷, are now officially used.

In spite of the differing socio-political situations of the autochthones of the smaller independent Polynesian islands and the New Zealand Maoris, their literatures emerged in relationship to one another. Indeed, one of the central figures of the indigenous cultural awakening, the Samoan Albert Wendt, defines

⁷ "Aotearoa" in Maori means "the land of the long white cloud". This denomination has been given by the first indigenous sailors to have reached New Zealand.

the expression “post-colonial” thus: “For me the *post* in post-colonial does not just mean *after*; it also means *around, through, out of, alongside, and against*. In the new literatures in English it means all these.”⁸

After the Second World War, numerous Polynesians from the neighboring archipelagos, moved to New Zealand, at that time their colonial metropolis, and gathered into minority communities in large cities as Wellington or Auckland. It is the cohesion of the Polynesian immigrants and the local Maoris in one centre that led to the initiation of the awakening of their related Polynesian cultures and to the birth of a post-colonial literature based upon their tight shared heritage and colonial experience.

The third part of the thesis provides a detailed analysis of the works of three representative writers of post-colonial Polynesian literature in English, Witi Ihimaera, Alistair Te Ariki Campbell and Albert Wendt, who come respectively from New Zealand, the Cook Islands and Samoa. Consequently, the post-colonial countries of origin of the writers in question will be the main centre of attention throughout the following chapters.

2. The birth of Polynesian literature in English and its theoretical framework

Now that the Polynesian post-colonial literary area has been delineated, it is necessary to contextualise its birth. Polynesian literature in English has emerged within a broader regional indigenous cultural and literary renaissance of the whole geo-political area of the Anglophone Pacific, which includes Micronesia, Melanesia and Australia, in the period of colonial contestation from the 1960's onwards. In her study, *Les premiers romans polynésiens: naissance d'une littérature de langue anglaise*, Sonia Lacabanne explains that the Pacific or Oceanian post-colonial literature embeds the Polynesian one: “The thing is to

⁸ Albert Wendt: “Introduction”, in *Nuanua, Pacific Writing in English since 1980*, ed. by A. Wendt, Auckland University Press, Auckland 1995, p. 3

consider, far beyond the differences, an Oceanian identity that embraces the Polynesian identity.”⁹

It was fuelled by the gathering of Pacific Islanders’ in common centres and by the creation of institutions for the endorsement of indigenous culture and expression. The foundation of new indigenous academic establishments such as the University of Papua New Guinea in 1966 and, mainly, of the regional University of the South Pacific in Fiji in 1968, were major steps in this movement, although already existing important universities established by the colonial powers such as Auckland University or the University of Hawai’i-Manoa played also a vital role in this artistic and literary effervescence. The South Pacific Creative Arts Society founded in 1972 at the USP and its publication of the journal *Mana* was another catalyser of the enhancement of indigenous self-affirmation. It led to the gradual creation of a body of indigenous literature, which denomination had been developing in parallel to the progressive conceptualisation of the extending literary production according to its geographical, socio-cultural and linguistic aspects by the autochthonous intellectuals.

The denomination “South Pacific literature” is reconsidered due to its geographical inadequacy since several archipelagos included in the literary region in question are situated in the north of the equator. Moreover, the term was coined during the Cold War – it replaced the term of the “South Seas” charged with a set of connotations developed through European exotic literature – to name the westerners’ military strategic region. The adjectives “Pacific” or “Oceanian” are now commonly used, and, as it will arise later on, the latter is ideologically based because it has acquired a symbolic meaning in the determination of a new regional indigenous identity. “Pacific Islands” writing/literature is also widely applied although the indigenous literary production from the large pieces of land of Australia and New Zealand are sometimes included and sometimes not. What is more, Maoris are more likely to be accepted as “Pacific Islanders” than the Australian Aborigines.

⁹ Sonia Lacabanne: *Les premiers romans polynésiens: naissance d’une littérature de langue anglaise*, la Société des Océanistes, Paris 1992, p. 8 (my translation)

The cultural activities taking place in the several centres mentioned above culminated in the publication of the first two anthologies of post-colonial indigenous Pacific literature in English: *Lali: A Pacific Anthology* (1980) and *Nuanua: Pacific Writing in English since 1980* (1995) both edited by Albert Wendt. Since then, the body of Pacific literature has grown significantly and has acquired sufficient force for the individual Pacific regions of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia to publish their own regional anthologies in English and in the vernacular languages.

The emergence of creative writing was accompanied by the rise of indigenous literary criticism. Since the given literature itself enacts the complex issues of the post-colonial situation of the writers, their works of fiction are often paralleled by critical essays in which they explain their views on these problems and offer possible ways to cope with them. Pacific criticism has developed in relationship to the theoretical frameworks of post-colonial studies and to writers from other distanced former colonies of Great Britain as the Caribbean, India or Africa.

One of the fundamental moments in defining the growing post-colonial literature has been the Pacific Writers' Forum and the Pacific Literature Conference held at Tokai University in Honolulu in September 1994 and whose promoters were mainly the professors, critics and writers Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson. This first major gathering of indigenous intellectuals from the whole Pacific region was given the title "From the Inside Out: Theorizing Pacific Literature". The event gave birth to a structured compilation of the various theoretical views on Pacific literature that the participants had exposed entitled *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific* edited in 1999 by the two promoters of the event. It presents essays by and interviews with influential writers and critics that give a mosaic of the multiple approaches to the essential questions of the birth and the development of this post-colonial literature, and of the cultural identities of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific, fashioned on the background of the colonial experience, that are being promulgated through it. As Rob Wilson explains in his introductory essay to the

book called “Toward Imagining a New Pacific”: “In such contexts of colonial damages and ‘postcolonial’ renewals, one must read texts not just as ‘literary’ icons but sites of social representation and historical struggle.”¹⁰

At this stage, the exposition of the theoretical alternative responses to the Pacific post-colonial situation and of the new regional cultural identity that have been recognized at the given conference will follow. Indeed, the drawn principles represent the enfolding theoretical frame to Polynesian literature in English.

As the title of the conference and of the ensuing book suggest, the unifying cultural, social, and historical process that is taking place in the various literatures across the Pacific Ocean in birth is a movement *inside out*. This movement acquires various complementary meanings. First, it designates the positioning of the Pacific Islanders themselves as “the insiders” in relationship to the colonisers or “outsiders” and it implies a reversal of speaker and perspective, of centre and margin: “...now is a time of turning things over and (as our title suggest) a time of writing from the inside out.”¹¹ In response to the representations of the “insiders” that have been modelled and imposed from the “outside”, the “insiders” desire to speak for themselves, from the “inside”, and contend against the erroneous images of them that have been propagated by the “outsiders” and that have progressively built what may be called the discourse of Pacific “Orientalism” as it is described by Edward Said in his work *Orientalism*. However, to write from the “inside” does not imply an uncompromising rejection of all that is not Pacific nor is it the articulation of an authentic, pure and absolute ethnicity. Indeed, as Rob Wilson declares, this approach would be neither possible nor suitable:

...‘the outside’ is already very much ‘inside’ the cultural-identity ingredients of Pacific literature, and only some severe acts of hegemonic eradication, linguistic and

¹⁰ Rob Wilson: “Introduction: Toward Imagining a New Pacific”, in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, ed. by Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., USA 1999, p. 1

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1

ideological purification, or outright psychic denial could ever bring about a clean break with history, language, religion, and tradition.”¹²

Therefore, the term “inside out” acquires a second meaning, that of the unavoidable blending of the “inside” and the “outside” in the cultural identities of the indigenous population even after colonial rule, and the necessary acceptance of hybridity. The “new Pacific” identity is conceived as a process characterised by a constant move on the border between the “inside” and the “outside”. This border area is the siege of the creative potential: “Rather, to be ‘inside out’ is to be impure, working at the borders, risking mixture, outreach and invention...”¹³ The given conception is analogous to Stuart Hall’s view of identity exposed in the essay “Cultural identity and Diaspora” in which he characterizes the Caribbean cultural identity as a process taking place on the basis of three historical and cultural *presences*. Moreover, the cultural identity defined here echoes also Homi Bhabha’s idea of “border” identities, developed in his introduction to the *Location of Culture*, where the border itself is considered as the privileged area of creativity.

The “inside out” position enables the Pacific intellectual to approach the past, present and future from a new perspective and it gives him the possibility to see or to “re-imagine” a Pacific where all contradictions are subverted and transformed into something new: “The important thing is to pull yourself up by your own hair / To turn yourself inside out and see the whole world with new eyes”, “To turn yourself inside out is to live at the tense borders of the skin, to live in an uneasy truce of evolution and the molting of cultural identity into something unforeseen and new.”¹⁴ The recurrent motif of the flying fox found in the literary work of the Samoan writer Albert Wendt could be applied here as a symbol of the Pacific writer.

Rob Wilson describes two main steps, characterized as the “creative dialectic”, that are enabling to the indigenous writers and artists to adopt this

¹² Ibid., p. 2

¹³ Ibid., p. 2

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 2-3

“inside out” position: the process of “decreation” and “recreation”. A process beginning with an act of political and cultural decolonisation, a resistance to the “outsiders” hegemony and that is leading to the “insiders” affirmation and self-determination through the creation of new cultural representations enabling the recovery of a lost dignity. In the words of Rob Wilson, “decreation” is “...the articulation of an engaged process of decolonization, critical negation, and culture-based resistance to forces of global belittlement and symbolic effacement, the working of ‘Pacific orientalism’, and the semiotics of Euro-American domination...” and “recreation” is: “...the ongoing rehabilitation, affirmation, and cultural-political strengthening of the indigenous and local imagination that are struggling to be heard and to link up inside the Pacific.”¹⁵

One of the most influential essays that have led to the given concept is entitled “Towards a New Oceania” and was published for the first time in the journal *Mana* in January 1976. Its author is again Albert Wendt.

As the title indicates, the purpose of the essay is to encourage an innovative force that would lead to the “recreation” of Oceania. Oceania and the Pacific region that has been treated so far correspond to the same geographical area, although the term Oceania is commonly used as the denomination of the region as an “oceanic” continent.

According to Albert Wendt, in order, for the indigenous people, to be able to express or to speak from “the inside”, the first step is “A Rediscovery of our Dead”¹⁶. It means to recover cultural dignity and self-respect by the allegiance to a past when the autochthonous civilisation was still an independent and functioning one. Because “Like a tree a culture is forever growing new branches, foliage and roots”¹⁷ and “No culture is ever static and can be preserved (...) like a stuffed gorilla in a museum”¹⁸, in which again a rapprochement with Stuart Hall’s conception of cultural identity is found, even then, in “pre-papalagi”¹⁹

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 1-2

¹⁶ Albert Wendt, “Towards a New Oceania”, in *The Arnold Anthology of Post-colonial Literatures in English*, ed. by John Thiemes, London, 1996, p. 641

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 644

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 644

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 644, “pre-papalagi” means before the arrival of “persons of European stock”.

times, the culture was not in a fixed state that might serve as a model to be recreated.

Moreover, contrary to the utopian stereotypes that have been established by the European visitors to the Pacific, or to the so-called “Pacific orientalism”, the pre-colonial culture and society was also affected by internal tensions and violence. Therefore, the past and the traditional culture should only serve as a basis or as an inspiration on which to build up or to imagine a new identity blended with the present, and not as authoritative parameters used to define an “authentic” or “true” superior identity that would be illusory, and which Albert Wendt characterizes as another form of racism.

At the same time, the autochthones must deal with the changes identified as “whitefication”²⁰ that colonialism has operated on their identity due to the fact that the imposed European culture was made superior to the local one. The result of the process of “whitefication” has been the “insiders” adoption of the view of their culture as inferior and their undermining to “mimicry” in the way Homi Bhabha defines it in *The Location of Culture*. Indigenous peoples must “decreate” or emancipate from this feeling of inferiority and necessity for “mimicry”.

This process of “decreation” and “recreation” is the way to construct the new Oceania that Albert Wendt proposes: “Our quest should not be for a revival of our past cultures but for the creation of new cultures which are free of the taint of colonialism and based firmly in our own past.”²¹ Therefore, the movement “in-between” or in “the border” between the “inside” and “outside” cultures should not occur on a hierarchized basis but on an equally valued heritage of diversity. Diversity enacted through the contact not only between the culture of indigenous peoples and the remaining globalizing culture of the colonisers, but also between the various indigenous cultures of Oceania themselves. It is throughout this creative exchange situated in the present, or throughout this syncretism, and in this new Oceania, that the “insiders” will regain their pride.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 647

²¹ Albert Wendt: “Towards a New Oceania”, p. 644

Another reversal of angle of view and of imposed hierarchies is found in the referential essay “Our Sea of Islands” by Epeli Hau‘ofa, also a very influential author, of Tongan descent. In spite of recently acquired independence, the Pacific islands of Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia did not believe in the possibility of their complete economic autonomy, which had a strong impact on their self-determination. According to Epeli Hau‘ofa who, himself, used to propagate such a discourse, this lack of self-confidence and the resignation to the need of former colonial powers is due to the “outsiders” way of thinking that has been imposed on and internalized by the “insiders”. It may be considered as a form of neo-colonialism.

The European continental conception of power and wealth is measured by the scale of land surface and limited by established national borders. Therefore, during the colonial period, this view that is limited to land ownership has reduced the Pacific insular region, which is, in fact, larger than the European continent, to the attainable pieces of dry land. The transference of this scale on the myriads of scattered islands of the Pacific inevitably makes them appear as small isolated states that evidently cannot be sustained by themselves alone and must depend on larger, therefore richer, surfaces of land such as New Zealand or Australia, and relate to them as to their centres.

However, Epeli Hau‘ofa turns again “inside out” this conception and shows that “Smallness is a state of mind”²². He rather conceives of the Pacific not as “islands in a far sea” but as a “sea of islands”²³. He goes back in time to the migrations of the ancient Pacific peoples that are recorded in the oral tradition and to the pre-colonial times where the ocean surrounding individual islands was not perceived as a boundary. The ocean was a vital element and resource of everyday life and was considered “home” equally as the firm land. The ancestors were not confined to the tiny pieces of land but created a net of oceanic connections between them and established relationships of interdependence rather than of dependence. This reversed view gives a much enlarged dimension

²² Epeli Hau‘ofa: “Our Sea of Islands”, in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, p. 31

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 31

to the Pacific region and to its possibilities of economic growth and autonomy. Therefore, Epeli Hau'ofa advocates the use of the term "Oceania" instead of that of the "Pacific Islands" because it emphasizes the incorporation of the huge ocean as a vital living surface instead of reducing the Pacific area to its insular surface. This material concept is a firm basis on which the indigenous population might regain self-confidence and "recreate" their identity:

Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean. We must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again and take away our freedom.²⁴

The concept of a new Oceanic identity opens the insular national boundaries, encourages a renewal of the exploitation of the sea as a precious source of wealth, the recovery of the lost net of interchange as well as it enhances the dialogue between the various indigenous cultures that share the common traditional tie to the ocean in order to gain strength together as a region: "...the sea is our pathway to each other and to everyone else, the sea is our endless saga, the sea is our most powerful metaphor, the ocean is in us."²⁵

The "inside out" positioning and the possible means of identification that it implies, is central to the theoretical reflections of writers and critics of the Pacific. It arises as a result of the various questionings that have been coped with in works from all the fields of literature from the 1960's onwards. Albert Wendt and Epeli Hau'ofa's essays offer useful complementary means how to "decreate" and "recreate" a new Pacific or Oceanian cultural identity on the plan of the various levels of the "inside out" binaries. It is on these principles of inheritance and innovation that the contemporary Pacific literature in English is founded.

In spite of its unique geographical, historical, ethnical and cultural character, the need to come to terms with the colonial heritage, the quest for a

²⁴ Ibid., p. 37

²⁵ Epeli Hau'ofa: "The Ocean in Us", in Epeli Hau'ofa: *We Are the Ocean*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu 2008, p. 58

new autonomous identification for the recovery of self-esteem and the confrontation with challenges brought up by the acquired independence and the globalized world, is what the recently born Pacific and Polynesian literature in English, “the youngest literature in the world”,²⁶, shares with the post-colonial literatures of the other former colonies of Great Britain. The established theoretical principles show strong interrelations with the post-colonial theories of intercontinental critics such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha or Stuart Hall, which also shows that the Pacific anti-colonial struggle was born within the international move of resistance against all hegemonic systems after World War II. It offers alternative positions from which to deal with the problems of post-colonial societies although it concentrates on its own local conditions. The proposed Pacific “inside out” solution broadens the spectrum of vision on these issues, and the fluid and large Oceanic identity that is put forward, challenges all reducing one side visions and aspires to a “recreation” that consists in accepting plurality of meanings and reversals of points of view that show everything under a new, broader and imaginative aspect. The drawn principles of the Pacific post-colonial literature and the articulated new regional cultural identity described so far provide the theoretical framework for the presently studied Polynesian post-colonial literature in English.

3. The Polynesian diaspora

The migratory aspect of the indigenous population of the Pacific developed in Epeli Hau‘ofa’s essay puts forward the question if their culture might be regarded as diasporic and, therefore, if the experience of diaspora should be taken into account as an essential factor in the formation of their identity. As it has been said already, the Pacific islands have been settled by seafaring peoples migrating from West to East. The oral traditions and especially the recitation of genealogies that go back to the names of the seafarers that navigated from one place of origin to the new one make Pacific Islanders until

²⁶ Rob Wilson: “Introduction: Toward Imagining a New Pacific”, p. 1

the present well aware of the fact that they are descendants of a “passage”. The migration was voluntary and acquired epic dimensions and, although its reasons were in all probability socio-political, it cannot be compared to other forms of diaspora such as the “middle passage” between Africa and the New World exposed in Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic*. The Pacific diaspora is perceived as glorious because it required an outstanding mastering of sea navigation and courage, and it led to the creation of new homes for succeeding generations. The different waves of migrating peoples created interconnected islands’ settlement groups that held a common place of origin, and, therefore, whose languages and cultures were developing from the same roots.

The autochthons from the Polynesian triangle form one of these diasporic communities. As it has been commented in the first chapter, it is the most homogeneous diaspora community of the Pacific that has developed in terms of ethnicity, language and culture, which is the reason why the development of a pan-Polynesian movement has been possible.

They acknowledge the same island of origin that acquired the status of a mythical place called “Hawaiki”, “Avaiki”, or “Hawai’i” depending on the Polynesian language. According to the Polynesian mythology and the more recent researches of the scientists, the diaspora from the original island of Hawaiki²⁷, supposedly the nowadays island of Ra’iatea located in central Polynesia in the archipelago of the Society Islands, occurred at different periods and stages of the development of the system of thought. The marae Taputapuatea of Hawaiki, or Ra’iatea, was the religious and political centre of Polynesia that used to establish the norms of the society. However, these norms were gradually developing, and the leaving canoes carried with them the traditions and the language that were current at the time of their departure. Therefore, it is possible to date the leaving of the New Zealand Maoris before the marae Taputapuatea assigned the god Ta’aroa the role of the creator of the universe. Ta’aroa or Tangaroa in Aotearoa appears as the god of the sea and the fish, and is one of the sons of the abstract genitor entities or primordial parents Rangi – the sky and

²⁷ For the sake of unity, the Maori variant of the name, “Hawaiki”, is used throughout the thesis.

space – and Papa – earth stratum. The Cook Islands oral tradition presents a scheme similar to the Maori one, and therefore, they must have migrated around the same period of time.

What is more, the Polynesians believed that the souls of the dead returned to the given island of origin Hawaiki. In his influential study on the Polynesian migrations and oral tradition *Vikings of the Pacific* (1938), the ethnologist Peter Buck – Te Rangi Hiroa (1880-1955), himself of Maori descent, explains the traditional belief:

From Hawaiki, their ancestors set out on the trail of the rising sun, and to Hawaiki the souls of their dead return along the golden train cast on the ocean by the dying rays of the setting sun. It is as it should be; the morning sun for youth and adventure, the setting sun for age and rest. (...) On almost every island from Samoa to Easter, from 'Hawai'i to New Zealand, there is a traditional departing-place-of-spirits, from which the human soul sets out on its return journey to the west. There is no recorded instance of the Polynesian myth-makers forcing the tired souls to continue exploration to the east. They conceded the spirit homing instincts and allowed it to return to a western homeland.²⁸

Samoa and Tonga are the only island groups of Polynesia that do not consider Ra'iatea as the mythical Hawaiki in their orality. Samoans and Tongans have originated in their proper islands according to their mythology, and relations of migrating people are absent. Indeed, the largest island of Samoa bears the name of Savai'i that is the local variant for Hawaiki and, in their traditions, the Underworld was situated in the mythical island of Upolu, which is the sister island of Savai'i. However, in spite of those differences, their oral tradition remains parallel to that of the other Polynesian islands, it presents a related pantheon of gods and assigns high functions to similar deities as, for example to Tangaroa, or Tagaloa in the respective local languages, which testifies their common origin with the other Polynesians.

²⁸ Peter H. Buck: *Vikings of the Pacific*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1959, pp. 20-21

In his book, Peter Buck attributes the given variations to the very early separation of Samoans and Tongans from Hawaiki of central Polynesia. According to him, what was forgotten in the memory was replaced by new mythical realities. The influence from Fiji accounts also for the dissimilarities with the rest of Polynesia.

On the other hand, in a more recent study *The Island Civilisations of Polynesia* (1960) by the American archaeologist and anthropologist Robert C. Suggs (b. 1932), the archipelagos of Samoa and Tonga may have been the first place of settlement, or the first “Hawaiki”, of the migrants from Southern Asia and Indonesia, that opened the way for the further route to Central Polynesia, to the second hub of “Hawaiki”.

The shape of the octopus where the head of the animal represents Hawaiki is commonly used to represent the individual journeys of the settlers to the surrounding Polynesian islands (see Appendix III). Through each “passage” across the sea where the destination was usually unknown beforehand and yet was the end of the expedition, the original cultural identity of the migrants was in a state of “becoming”²⁹, transforming during the experience of the voyage on the sea and adapting to the new terra firma and its living conditions. Once the migrants decided to settle on an island, they appropriated it as their “whenua”, “fonua” or “enua”: a vital Polynesian concept that denotes an owned piece of earth to which one is deeply affiliated materially and spiritually through his ancestors be it in the scale of a small estate or of a country; every one is defined in relationship to the “whenua” he belongs to. Therefore, once the migrants dropped roots in the new land, their cultural identity was being fixed and continually transmitted through the recitation of genealogies.

Until today, the Polynesians concretise this fundamental tie to the “home land” by burying the birth cord of new born children in the earth, which ceremonial is described for example in the novel *The Whale Rider* by the Maori writer Witi Ihimaera. Therefore, even though mobility is natural for Polynesians

²⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, U. S. A. 1987

and their identity can be conceived as being in the process of formation through voyaging, their anchor must be fastened in one particular piece of earth that defines them. One who has no ancestral place he belongs to is considered to be without identity, which explains with more strength the present claims of the Maoris for the lands of which they have been dispossessed. The fact that the oral tradition of Samoans and Tongans ignores the moment of the “passage” may be seen as a consequence of their emphasized will to tie with their land.

However, even though Polynesians established their “whenua”, the cultural bonds with the mother island were never interrupted, except for Samoa and Tonga. Each tentacle of the octopus represents the firm, although in the meantime, maritime fluid and moving ties with it. The oceanic space is conceived as a unifying element rather than as a boundary. Consequently, it would be possible to see the cultural identity of the Polynesians as “rhyzomatic”, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari put forward in their treatise on nomadology *A Thousand Plateaus*, although, as we have seen, Polynesian culture cannot be characterised as a nomadic one since nomadism was experienced by them only at a certain temporary stage.

It may be of use to remark here that the term “Maori” denominates not only the inhabitants of Aotearoa. It means “ordinary”, “indigenous” and, in a broader sense, it denominates the Polynesian people and their Polynesian languages. In fact, all the autochthones of Polynesia are “Maori”, “Maoli” or “Ma’ohi” with variations in the word according to the respective Polynesian languages.

It is the annexation of the various Polynesian “whenua” by the different European countries, the introduction of boundaries within the net of existing naval relations between the archipelagos and the imposition of the diverse foreign cultures and languages that broke the functioning “positive” form of diaspora of the Polynesian Islanders, in which we include the Maoris of Aotearoa.

However, at the twilight of the colonial period, in spite of the linguistic, cultural and socio-political imposed divisions, it is the remaining common

Polynesian diasporic heritage that still unifies not only “Anglicized” Polynesians but also the “Francized” and “Hispanicized” ones. This Polynesian inheritance represents an invaluable source of strength for the “recreation” of the regional cultural pan-Polynesian identity to be incorporated within the larger Oceanic one.

It is necessary to add that another and more recent form of diaspora has developed in the Polynesian region. The maritime journey and reciprocal inter-island interchange are a natural part of the Polynesian culture. However, the migrations of indigenous insular peoples to larger and wealthier European settler countries functioning as regional centres such as New Zealand or Australia but also to the United States are a source of tensions. This movement is principally motivated by the search for better educational and professional opportunities, and, therefore, by the desire for an acquisition of better social standing. However, this diaspora has become one of the major preoccupations of the Polynesian writers because it often implied the “mimicry” of the European lifestyles and their importation in the native islands and rural areas to the detriment of the traditional mores. The longer stays or the growth in these centres governed by European cultural norms is often the cause of dramatic internal splits of identity and of difficult returns to the native rural islands on which the standards of living highly differ from those of the great and wealthy “papalagi” or “pakeha”³⁰ cities and where the traditional life is decaying due to the increasing adoption of the apparently more effective and modern foreign modes of living. The literary works analysed in the third part of the thesis, offer various representations of the Polynesian contemporary diaspora experience.

On the other hand, it has been viewed that this move to the centres and, especially, to the newly created ones, although weaker and smaller, such as Fiji have played a tremendously important and positive role in the gathering of Polynesians and their union in the claim for the awakening of their shared cultural identity. Indeed, the movement between these centres and the native lands show also to be highly resourceful and creative.

³⁰ “papalagi” and “pakeha” mean “white Europeans”. These terms are currently used by indigenous writers from Samoa and New Zealand to design people of European descent.

The ancient and the contemporary forms of diaspora are central concerns expressed in Polynesian literature in English and they are intrinsically related to questions of cultural identity. The experience of diaspora that it renders although differently, links Polynesian literature in English to other post-colonial literatures, as for instance to Caribbean post-colonial literature.

II. STAGES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLYNESIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

1. Polynesian oral tradition and the transition to the written word

The common Polynesian pre-colonial heritage is the vital source of “recreation” expressed through contemporary Polynesian indigenous literature in English. The past is essential for the post-colonial Polynesian writers to define their new literature and cultural identities. Indeed, the Polynesian tie to the land or whenua described earlier arises from the particular relationship to the past and its inheritance as a source of power and identification for the present time. It is due to the fact that Polynesians conceive of time not as linear but as circular. In his essay “Pasts to Remember”, Epeli Hau‘ofa denominates it “ecological time” because it is based on the natural cycles. In the vernacular languages the term for the word “past” is “the time which is going ahead / in front / before us” whereas the equivalent for the word “future” is “the time that is at the back / behind” since it is unknown. Therefore, the present is intrinsically linked to the past; it defines the present:

That the past is ahead, in front of us, is a conception of time that helps us retain our memories and be aware of its presence. What is behind us cannot be seen and is liable to be forgotten readily. What is ahead of us cannot be forgotten so readily or ignored, for it is in front of our mind’s eyes, always reminding us of its presence. Since the past is alive in us, the dead are alive – we are our history.³¹

This notion of time is again the reversal of the European one: the Polynesian looks towards the past to figure out the present whereas the European looks towards the future to undertake the present. This interrelation between time and identity explains to what extent the Polynesian inheritance preserved especially in the oral tradition, is fundamental for the contemporary cultural

³¹ Epeli Hau‘ofa: “Pasts to Remember”, in Epeli Hau‘ofa: *We Are the Ocean*, University of Hawai‘i Press, Honolulu 2008, p. 67

“recreation” in the field of literature. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of Polynesian orality, the cistern of memory, in terms of its function, contents and forms but also to contextualise it historically.

Polynesian oral tradition contains the genesis of the world, the pantheon of gods and demigods, the birth of the first men and women, the origin of islands, plants and animals, narratives of the subsequent migrations from Hawaiki and the leaders of the canoes, the settling of islands, the material, social and cultural adaptation to the new lands, tribal genealogies and the deeds of the settlers’ descendants as well as esoteric lore, subjects of customary everyday life and folktales.

Orality was a determining element in the structure of the pre-colonial Polynesian society. The political, social, cultural and religious life of the Polynesians was articulated through the elaborate usage of the spoken word that was considered as an act. The society was organised into tribes or families governed by chiefs and high chiefs who inherited their titles according to the senior male line. Their power or “mana” over the tribe and the land was consigned to them on the basis of the recitation of genealogies or “whakapapa” in Maori that were memorized by assigned priests of noble birth who had passed through arduous study in the prestigious houses of learning, called “whare wananga” in Aotearoa. The chieftain and priesthood lines ascended to the gods, and consequently, the genealogies reached back to the creation of the world. Due to this intrinsic link between the divine, the human and the land, the performance of the ancestral history used to take place on the sacred stone platforms named “marae” and had a strictly followed formal structure.

Indeed, the Polynesians were very pious and believed deeply in the unity of the universe: the manifestations of the gods, the humans and nature were regarded as interrelated. In the same way the arts of dancing, singing, music and poetry were unified forms of expression of the oral tradition.

Quotidian activities were accompanied by a multitude of ritual utterances. For example, the construction of wooden canoes had to be accompanied by formal incantations to Tane, the god of the trees in New Zealand. If the canoe

would sink, it would be understood as an evidence of the fact that the canoe builders had neglected the invocation of the god or had committed an error in its process. In the above mentioned houses of learning where instruction was given orally, usually through chant, the priests specialized in the various fields of activity as fishing, marae or house construction, curing, etc., for which practical and verbal ceremonial completion they were responsible. Knowledge transmitted and learnt through the spoken word was reserved for the elites and had a sacred dimension.

Diverse social gatherings and events had their protocol of expressions, proverbs and chants accompanied by specific gestures, applied, for example, for the welcoming of a stranger, described by Peter Buck as “the removal of the taboo”, or during the councils of chiefs or for mourning. Without the pronunciation of the formal avowals, the social encounter was not perceived as being effective. War conflicts also developed an important body of verbal customs; the conventional text that comes with the war dance of the “haka” provides an example.

The art of rhetoric was highly valued in pre-contact Polynesia and the ability to speak eloquently increased the impact of the speaker in the society. For instance, a member of the Samoan political council called “fono” could achieve a higher function if he proved to be a skilful orator. The use of figurative language and imagery, the rhythm of speech and the modulation of the voice, the expressive gestures were all elements that composed the theatrical performance of the “korero”, orator, or the bard if a comparison with the European oral tradition is made.

Polynesian mythology and history were being retold by these learned korero during tribal festivities held on the marae or in the meeting houses, “whare whakairo” in Maori, built especially for the regular gatherings of the tribes where they would share their ancestral patrimony and matters of everyday life. The narration of the korero used to interfere with different established forms of music, songs and dances that would occasionally illustrate further the retold story. Indeed, as Teuira Henry mentions in her invaluable publication *Ancient*

Tahiti, no festivity was considered complete without the accompanying rhythm of the drums.

Pre-colonial Polynesian oral literature cannot be dissociated from performance, be it expressed by the means of elaborate recitation, religious or esoteric incantation, ceremonial chant, rhetoric, narration, singing and chorals or dancing. The abundant use of symbols, the highly metaphorical language, the all-pervading importance of rhythm and the richness of rhythmical patterns emphasized by the constant use of drums, are the poetic devices of the Polynesian oral tradition.

The facts described so far show to what extent the oral tradition had a crucial function within the organisational and ideological structures of the Polynesians, as the warrantor of power, knowledge and identity or as the formal mediator between the gods and the humans and between Men themselves. It was an integral part of collective life and, consequently, the bearer of the skill of performing and transmitting further the hereditary communal oral tradition had a fundamental social role. It needs only be added that the contents and forms of the oral tradition varied in the different island groups of Polynesia as a consequence of the diaspora from the common island of origin Hawaiki.

Nevertheless, nowadays, the oral tradition provides many uncertainties, as for example the confusion about the origin of Samoans and Tongans, because what remains of it are only fragments. The oral tradition was interrupted by the gradual imposition and subsequent appropriation of a new system of thought in the course of the European colonisation and mainly throughout the Christianisation initiated by the London Missionary Society that arrived first to Tahiti in 1797 and that spread gradually its missions to the other Polynesian islands.

Autochthons were urged to abandon their religious beliefs by the missionaries, and some ceremonies were even forbidden. Since the local society and cultural life was founded on their specific notion of the universe, they had to discard their oral tradition as well. Nevertheless, Christianity spread rapidly within the islands, the new converts helping to evangelise in their turn, and

literacy was diffused together with it. Indeed, in order to propagate the gospel, the missionaries first learned the indigenous languages, devised orthographies for them, translated the bible and taught the autochthones to read and write. The only Polynesian nation that had previously devised a type of writing were the inhabitants of Easter Island or Rapa Nui: it was a system of ideograms called “rongo-rongo”.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Polynesians produced their own writings in the indigenous languages by the means of the newly acquired alphabet: texts related to the spreading of Christianity, transcriptions of the Polynesian mythology dictated or written by those who were well-acquainted with the traditional knowledge, which were sometimes encouraged by the missionaries and colonists themselves, memoirs of chiefs or indigenous Christian priests, letters, biographies or tribal and family genealogies. The contemporary indigenous writer Albert Wendt comments on the practical adoption of literacy by the Polynesians: “...we indigenised writing, using it for our own purposes.”³²

Few of the invaluable manuscripts written by the autochthons have been published in the course of time and a large quantity of them still remain kept concealed in tribes or have been deposited in public libraries. It is due to the fact that, as it has been said earlier, knowledge was considered sacred and was accessible only to particular persons such as the chiefs and the priests, even when written. Secondly, because, particularly the genealogies are warrantors of identity as well as land rights, they are to remain private.

The official publications of the oral tradition available today were nearly always the result of the cooperation between the autochthones and the Europeans. The main textual body of reference for the Polynesian ancestral patrimony was edited by the missionaries of the London Missionary Society and European state functionaries. They solicited the learned Polynesians to transcribe their oral tradition in manuscripts that they printed together with fragments of the orality that they had collected by themselves. They provided translations in

³² Albert Wendt: “Introduction”, in *Nuanua: Pacific Writing in English since 1980*, p. 1

English and extensive complementary notes and commentaries on the local society.

Among the works in question belong *Polynesian Researches* published in 1829 by William Ellis (1794-1872), a missionary mainly in Hawai‘i, at that time called Sandwich Islands. Then, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands* (1837) and *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific* (1876), written by the missionaries John Williams (1796-1839) and William Wyatt Gill (1828-1896) who had been effective in the Cook Islands, and the former one also in Samoa. One of the most influential and faithful works is considered to be *Ancient Tahiti* (1928) by Teuira Henry (1847-1915), the granddaughter of the missionary Reverend John Muggridge Orsmond (1784 [?]-1856) who had collected and completed her grandfather’s manuscripts describing nearly all aspects of the life on the island of Tahiti. Finally, *Polynesian Mythology* (1906) by Sir George Grey (1812-1898), governor of South Australia from 1841 to 1845, twice governor of New Zealand in 1845 to 1853 and in 1861 to 1868, and its Premier from 1877 to 1879, deserves also to be mentioned. This last edited also manuscripts entirely in Maori without translations, transcribed for him by Polynesian erudite scribes. The most complex of these works is *Ko Nga Moteatea me Nga Hakirara o Nga Maori* (1853) written by Te Rangikaheke (? - 1896) of the Ngati Rangiwewehi tribe of Te Arawa.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a considerable amount of texts of the oral tradition were edited in newspapers held by European settlers. One of them, the prominent *Journal of the Polynesian Society* founded in 1892 by the New Zealand ethnologists Stephenson Percy Smith (1840-1922) and Edward Tregear (1846-1931), supplied a repository of these texts in indigenous languages contributed by Polynesians with English translations. The project was initiated on the basis of the determination to save from its complete oblivion the native culture that was dying out under the dominant imported culture. The journal is being released until now.

Therefore, it is possible to trace the transition from the oral tradition to the written word and a beginning of the Polynesian written literary tradition in the

vernacular languages back in the nineteenth century. When the oral tradition was ceasing to be a performative constituent within Polynesian societies, the primary function of this literature was to fix the collective oral patrimony in order to prevent it from being forgotten. This urge to record in writing went hand in hand with the growing cultural hegemony of the colonial powers and the imposition of English over the indigenous languages.

It is throughout the wave of colonial contestation of the 1960's that these written texts have become a vital source of reference for the revival of the indigenous cultures and the securing of the continuity of the oral tradition, although fragments of them were still persistently alive in the current indigenous culture, particularly in songs. The indigenous self-assertion realised by the restoration of the native languages through specialized institutions facilitated the access to them and encouraged their practical reproduction, during regular tribal meetings or lately established festivals of traditional culture, and their rewritings.

New poetry in vernacular languages following the traditional formal patterns have been produced, designed to be presented either orally or in print in specialized indigenous journals as for instance, the journal *Te Kaea* in New Zealand or *Mana* in the USP, and in more recent anthologies of literature.

Also, the political activism of the New Zealand Maoris in favour of bilingualism has led to the convergence of the literatures in Maori with English translations and in English in joint anthologies, as for instance, in *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* (1985), edited by Ian Wedde and Harvey McQueen, with an introduction on the Maori literary tradition by the specialist in the matter, Margaret Orbell. Until then, the term "New Zealand literature" included only texts written in English by the descendants of "pakeha" settlers.

Along with poetry, literature for children was another genre that fostered the development of Polynesian literature in the indigenous languages since the 1960's. The retellings of myths and legends adapted for children and teenagers have shown to be a powerful didactic means to secure the continuity of the autochthonous linguistic and cultural heritage for future generations. The stories usually carry the formal structures of the traditional oral narratives of the

respective islands and provide illustrations with Polynesian conventional motives and styles. In his article “In Search of a ‘Written Fagogo’: Contemporary Pacific Literature for Children”, the children’s book editor D. S. Long affirms:

But the authors of children’s books do something more: they are also engaged, in some profound sense, in the very creation of readers. We become readers by reading, and the first books we read somehow set us in our ways. In the contemporary Pacific those ‘ways’ seem less and less English or French and more and more Maori, Samoan, or Hawaiian.³³

The Polynesians have “indigenised writing”, they have assumed rapidly and with ease the transition to the written word in their vernacular languages, using it as a useful tool for the preservation and continuation of the oral tradition, for the recording of personal experience, family histories and for political and social written interaction. However, it is not until the 1960’s that the autochthones appropriated English as a language of written expression and started to write fiction.

2. The dawn of Polynesian literature in English

The first text in English written by a Polynesian autochthon has been the autobiography of the young Florence Johnny Frisbie (b. 1932) *Miss Ulysses from Puka-Puka*, published in 1948. The author’s mother was of Pukapuka, a coral atoll of the Tuamotu archipelago, and her father was from the United States. However, they lived principally in the Cook Islands. In her work the three languages in which she was brought up – English, Pukapukan and Cook Islands Maori – alternate.

Another autobiography written in English by a Polynesian author was *Doctor to the Islands* by Tom Davis (1917-2007) published in 1955, in which he describes his personal experience as a doctor. This last was a Cook Islander from

³³ D. S. Long: “In Search of a ‘Written Fagogo’: Contemporary Pacific Literature for Children”, in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, p. 232

Rarotonga, although also of mixed Polynesian and “pakeha” descent. In another much later autobiography entitled *Island Boy* (1992), the author explains his affiliation to Polynesia: “Our mother being half Polynesian and our stepfather full Polynesian, we grew up in the Polynesian way. Once brought up this way, you are unlikely to be anything but Polynesian in your fundamental ways.”³⁴ His biological father’s origins are unknown.

Makutu written by the same author in cooperation with his first wife Lydia and published in 1960 is considered as the first Polynesian novel in English. However, in her study *Pacific Islands Writing*, Michelle Keown regards the novel rather as a “precursor, rather than a forerunner”³⁵ of the anticolonial Polynesian literature in English. The work perpetuates the contents and forms of European exotic literature. Suffice it to say that it is narrated from the point of view of an English doctor.

At this stage, it is necessary to specify the use of the adjective “indigenous” used throughout the thesis to qualify the authors of the new literature in question. Indeed, it arises that neither of the first two writers are “full Polynesian”, as Tom Davis puts it. They both have American or European antecedents. It is due to the fact that since the beginning of European and American colonisation of Polynesia and throughout the further development of international interactions, the arriving foreigners and the natives intermarried. The Asiatic immigrants to Polynesia completed the ethnic palette of the local peoples. Nowadays, Polynesians of “pure blood” are hardly existing. Not a single author mentioned in the present work is one hundred percent “indigenous”. However, what makes them “indigenous” is precisely that they have grown up “in the Polynesian way”, that they assert their affiliation to Polynesian ancestry and cultural identity, and that they oppose themselves to the colonial cultural hegemony. Their specific experience is reflected in their literary works that provide the “inside out” point of view on Polynesia.

³⁴ Thomas R. A. H. Davis, Pa Tuterangi Ariki: *Island Boy: An Autobiography*, University of Canterbury, New Zealand 1992, p. 5

³⁵ Michelle Keown: *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa / New Zealand and Oceania*, Oxford University Press, New York 2007, p. 111

It is Hone Tuwhare (1922-2008) and Alistair Te Ariki Campbell (1925-2009) that are to be considered as the true pioneers of the Polynesian imaginative literature in English. Both of them made the breakthrough as poets, which may be an evidence of the fact that poetry is the most natural means of literary expression of Polynesians, as it has been viewed in the preceding chapter on the oral tradition. Alistair Te Ariki Campbell's *Mine Eyes Dazzle*, published in 1950 was the first collection of poems in English written by a Polynesian. The author was born on the Cook Islands, to a Tongarevan mother and a Scot father, but after the early death of his parents, he moved to New Zealand in 1933. His first poems show a strong influence of European contemporary poetics while his later ones progressively retie with his Polynesian Cook Islands childhood background, as for instance in *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* (1980) or in *Stone Rain: The Polynesian Strain* (1992).

Hone Tuwhare is the first Maori to publish a collection of poetry in English, *No Ordinary Sun*, in 1964. The author of its preface, the New Zealand "pakeha" poet R. A. K. Mason, characterizes the work in the following way: "Here – and I think this is for the first time – is a member of the Maori race qualifying as a poet in English and in the idiom of his own generation, but still drawing his main strength from his own people."³⁶ Qualified as a boilermaker, the craft of poetry was transmitted to him by his Maori father who was a proficient traditional orator.

The following development of Polynesian literature in English was stirred in the context of the political and cultural activism of the natives. Its decisive genesis is to be traced out among the literary activities taking place within university centres from the 1960's onwards and new indigenous creative associations together with the subsequent publications of pieces of this literature in birth in newspapers and specialized journals, as the mentioned journals *Te Kaea* or *Mana*.

³⁶ R. A. K. Mason: "Foreword", in Hone Tuwhare, *No Ordinary Sun*, Blackwood and Janet Paul, New Zealand 1964, p. 6

Those who actively participated in the Maori Renaissance and opted for English as their language of literary expression were Witi Ihimaera (b. 1944), of Maori, Anglo-Saxon and Asiatic descent, and Patricia Grace (b. 1937), also of mixed origins. The former led the way through with *Pounamu, Pounamu* in 1972, and then with *Tangi* in 1973, the first Polynesian collection of short stories and novel in English. Witi Ihimaera is a key figure in the Polynesian literary emergence because he edited the first anthology of Maori literature, both in English and in Maori, entitled *An Anthology of Maori Writing, Into the World of Light* in 1982. Patricia Grace represents the first Polynesian woman writer to publish a collection of short stories *Waiaraki* in 1975, and a novel *Mutuwhenua, The Moon Sleeps* in 1978.

Although the successors to Alistair Te Ariki Cambell and Hone Tuwhare have borrowed the European literary forms of the novel and the short story, the contents of their work deals more in depth with indigenous realities, and they take much more liberties with the English language and the style of writing than did their predecessors.

In so far as the Polynesian Islanders are concerned, it is the Samoan writer Albert Wendt (b. 1939), who has played a central role in the growth of the literature in question. He was born in Western Samoa, to Samoan parents, although he acknowledges that one of his great-grand-fathers was German. He was educated in New Zealand where he achieved an MA in history. His later career is marked by crossings between Auckland University, the University of the South Pacific Centre in Samoa and the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. He helped in the establishment of the last two universities created principally on the basis of indigenous initiatives. In 1974, he started to teach creative writing at the USP, which enhanced a wave of production of indigenous texts in English, published regularly in the cooperative journal *Mana* inaugurated in 1973 by Marjorie Crocombe within the South Pacific Creative Arts Society instigated in 1972. The USP became a centre of gathering of Pacific Islanders from the surrounding region, which initiated the pan-Pacific literary movement realised soon after in the edition of the key anthologies of Pacific writing *Lali: A Pacific*

Anthology in 1980 and *Nuanua: Pacific Writing in English since 1980* in 1995, edited by Albert Wendt, the leader of the development of indigenous creative writing. He is also the originator of the derived pan-Polynesian literary movement described earlier through the edition of the anthologies of exclusively Polynesian texts in English and focused specifically on the genre of poetry *Whetu Moana: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English* of 2003 and *Mauri Ola: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English, Whetu Moana II* of 2010. This initiative is the consequence of thirty years of development of creative writing that resulted in the growing abundance of texts that made possible further regional subdivisions in terms of autonomous literary production. The anthology *Mauri Ola* is dedicated to the recently deceased pioneers of Polynesian literature in English as Alistair Te Ariki Campbell and Hone Tuwhare:

We dedicate this anthology to them, acknowledging their indefatigable struggle against racism and colonialism and to have our literature recognised nationally and internationally. We are greatly indebted to them, and thank them for the marvellous poetry they have bequeathed us. Much of the poetry in *Mauri Ola* reflects the influence of their work and example.”³⁷

Albert Wendt’s involvement in the expansion of indigenous literature in English and in the raised questions of cultural identity is expressed in the introductions to the anthologies he edited and in the primary indigenous theoretical essay “Towards a New Oceania” that appeared in the first issues of *Mana* in 1976.

The first Polynesian play is probably *Te Raukura: the Feathers of the Albatross*, a narrative play in two acts by Harry Dansey (1920-1979), published in 1974. Its Maori author was a journalist and cartoonist who engaged actively in Maori affairs, lately as a race relations conciliator from 1975 to 1979 in the country’s Human Right’s Commission. The albatross feathers featuring in the title are a symbol of the peaceful anti-colonial activism of the Maoris, which

³⁷ A. Wendt, R. Whaitiri and R. Sullivan: “Introduction”, in *Mauri Ola: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English, Whetu Moana II*, p. 3

anticipates the contents of the work. The development of the dramatic genre will be treated in more detail afterwards.

The other prominent writers who belong to this first generation of Polynesian authors writing in English and that should be mentioned here, although they were rather the earliest continuators than the initiators of the literary movement, are Epli Hau'ofa (1939-2009), Keri Hulme (b. 1947) and Kauraka Kauraka (1951-1997)

Epli Hau'ofa, of Tongan parentage, was an anthropologist, which formation influenced his writing. His essayistic work, collected and published in *We Are the Ocean* in 2008, that parallels Albert Wendt's one, deals with the social, political and cultural matters of the contemporary Pacific. His views highly influenced the approach to the formation of the post-colonial indigenous identity, as has been shown in the first part of the thesis. He founded the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture in 1997 that concentrates on the development of indigenous visual and performing arts in an open space within the campus of the USP. Apart from essays, he published also a novel *Kisses in the Nederends* (1995), a collection of short stories *Tales of the Tikongs* (1994) and poems.

Keri Hulme, of mixed Maori, English and Scottish decent, a tobacco picker, participated in the emergence of Maori literature with her only but significant novel *The Bone People* published in 1984. She also wrote a poetry collection *The Silences Between, Moeraki Conversations* (1982) and a collection of short stories *Te Kaihau: The Windeater* (1986). Her work is characterized by the fact that it reflects the three origins of the author and results in an interesting blending of three cultural identities.

Finally, Kauraka Kauraka is a Cook Islands poet, who published six collections of poetry both in English and in Cook Island Maori. His poetry is profoundly inspired from the Polynesian oral tradition; the titles of his collections that refer to Polynesian mythology speak for themselves *Return to Hawaiki* (1985), *Dreams of a Rainbow* (1987), *Manakonako: Reflections* (1992).

Unfortunately, there is not enough space in the present work to treat the contemporary prominent writers that came after the first generation writers, as

the Niuean John Pule (1962), the Samoan Sia Figiel (b. 1967) or the Maori Robert Sullivan (b. 1967). It would be valuable to present them and their work in a further study.

Now, why the Polynesian writers that have been introduced chose to write in English, in the language that was imposed upon them by the colonial powers, to express their anti-colonial claims and their struggle for self-assertion?

In her study on Pacific Francophone and Anglophone literature, *Le Roman autochtone dans le Pacifique Sud: Penser la continuité*, Sylvie André asks several fundamental questions concerning this paradoxical choice: “For the Francophone or Anglophone writer, can the French language [or the English language] be something else than the language of dispossession, travesty, and obligatory cultural assimilation?”, is the Pacific writer expressing himself in English “...condemned to the splitting of personality or to acculturation?” and does he betray necessarily “...the symbolic universe proper to his native culture...”³⁸? The Polynesian post-colonial authors writing in English have passed through this series of interrogations.

Some writers didn't have the choice because their vernacular languages were in a state of decline in their childhood and they mastered English better, which is the case, for example, of the Maoris Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera. They learned Maori in their adulthood in the context of the defence of Maori culture and the efforts to transform the situation of diglossia into bilingualism in New Zealand since the 1970's.

In the other island countries of Polynesia, the vernacular languages have been well preserved, and in some of them, a real bilingualism is even practiced. For example, Samoan still holds the status of a mother tongue, and it is the sole language of instruction in the opening school levels, while English is taught only later.

However, the writers have opted for English in order that their work could be accessible to a broader audience. Indeed, although the languages of Polynesia

³⁸ Sylvie André: *Le Roman autochtone dans le Pacifique Sud: Penser la continuité*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2008, pp. 224-225 (my translation)

present a high degree of similarity due to their common origin, it remains a difficult task to read an extensive text in the respective languages of the neighbouring islands. Therefore, English takes on the function and the status of a “lingua franca” or “vehicular language”, an accessible means to express, spread and share efficiently the Polynesian commonality, not only among Anglophone Polynesia but also among the Francophone and the Spanish speaking one, which is another paradox that the indigenous writers have had to assume.

At a wider scale, writing in English enables to reach other Pacific Anglophone indigenous writers, to create a dialogue with the settlers of Aotearoa, with the former metropolitan colonial powers, and with international Anglophone post-colonial writers, and, since English is nowadays, an international language, to be read by any one who masters the language.

According to Albert Wendt, there is no reason why the use of English should be accompanied by a sense of betrayal to the native language and culture or of fear of acculturation since it has been appropriated and “deterritorialized” by the autochthons:

English is more than 200 years old in our region, and is now one of the major languages of communication. English has become a Pacific language. In fact, it has become many Englishes in Polynesia, with each Polynesian country indigenising it for its own use. So now we have Maori English, Samoan English, Hawaiian English and so forth. (...) The languages of the colonisers have been, and continue to be, enriched and revitalised with the introduction of Polynesian words and concepts.³⁹

It is necessary to remark here that the author does not allude to Creole or Pidgin languages, since they have not developed in the selected countries of study.

Therefore, an outline of the devices of the Polynesian writers by which they manage to “indigenise” or “deterritorialize” written English is to follow. Indeed, it is not an easy task for the autochthonous writer to render his specific

³⁹ A. Wendt, R. Whaitiri and R. Sullivan: “Introduction”, in *Whetu Moana: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English*, pp. 2-3

indigenous linguistic and cultural experience and to remain accessible to international readers at the same time. In *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa / New Zealand and Oceania*, Michelle Keown defines the language strategy of linguistic “deterritorialization” defined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure*, as “code-switching between indigenous and colonial languages”⁴⁰. Code-switching is realised at the lexical, grammatical, and syntactic level. The register of English selected by the authors is usually standard.

Words and phrases in Polynesian languages are regularly integrated into the English text. Titles are also frequently in the indigenous languages. They express everyday local realities interiorized in the vernacular such as the fauna and flora, food, features of the traditional organisation of society, customs, religion or feelings, or expressions functioning as symbols of identity. For instance, in order to mention the jade stone that is a symbol of “Maoritanga”⁴¹, the Maori writers use exclusively the indigenous word “pounamu”. Some phrases are expressed in the vernacular because they convey specific Polynesian concepts that do not have direct equivalents in English.

Translations of the Polynesian words are usually supplied in different manners. They are interwoven into the text right before or after the words or group of words. They are explained in the form of footnotes or at the end of the text in glossaries. Sometimes, their meaning is sufficiently predictable from the context, therefore, there is no need for translation. Also, at some points, there are no existing exact translations available.

The incorporation of the Polynesian lexicon is an indicator of cultural identity, it creates an effect of socio-linguistic realism and, above all, it is the expression of the explicit political activism that challenges the hegemonic status of English. The decision to provide translations or not, to make some parts of the text accessible to all Anglophone readers or only to Polynesians, is related to the

⁴⁰ Michelle Keown: *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa / New Zealand and Oceania*, p. 162

⁴¹ “Maoritanga” means “Maori culture, Maoriness”.

individual author's "politics of language". Michelle Keown describes the evolving position of the Maori woman writer Patricia Grace:

While Grace's early publications included glossaries and contextual translations of Maori words and phrases, from the publication of *Potiki* (1986), Grace has made far fewer concessions for non-Maori-speaking readers, and has recently argued that writers from 'small population cultures' should not have to 'other' their languages and cultures by providing glossaries and other explanatory information for readers.⁴²

Grammatical and syntactic patterns from indigenous languages are frequently carried over to English, especially in the utterances of the Polynesian fictional characters, depending on their degree of knowledge of English and on their attitude to it. Michelle Keown provides several examples of the given transferences, ranging from the use of articles, personal pronouns, verbal tenses and moods, to the transference of the Polynesian reduplication of verbs as a means to express repetitive actions into English. For example:

Another form of grammatical transference found in Grace's early fiction particularly is the process of agent deletion, which commonly occurs in Maori narratives in which the identity of the subject has already been established earlier in the text. An awareness of this grammatical process may account for the absence of subject pronouns in the following example of Grace's story 'Toki' (1975): 'To the hills next morning, and from there saw the little boat head straight from the deep' In Standard English, this sentence would normally read something like this: 'I went to the hills the next morning, and from there (I) saw the little boat head straight for the deep.' In 'Toki' however, agent or subject deletion is used throughout the story, effectively establishing the fact that the elderly speaker's first language is Maori."⁴³

The result of the co-existence of the two languages in one text and of their "code-switching" is characterized by Sylvie André in *Le Roman autochtone dans le Pacifique Sud* as an "inter-language". It is not a simple transposition of vernacular expressions into another language, but rather an effort to "nourish"

⁴² Ibid., p. 164

⁴³ Ibid., p. 167

the English language with “...the conceptual and imaginative input from another culture.”⁴⁴ It is neither a mere transcription of the Polynesian languages or of the English spoken locally but a real stylistic invention. Indeed, this “inter-language” is precisely the result of the creative work of the writers with the languages at their disposition. The languages

...cohabit, fight fraternally, confront one another in order to enrich themselves mutually and to create an original thought, a sort of bridge between different but co-existing cultural universes. In this confrontation, to whatever language they appertain, the words acquire a newness, a brightness, a forgotten evidence, unexpected connivances...⁴⁵

The bridge between the confronting universes is crossed precisely through the stylistic innovation and the poetic image. Not only do the Polynesian writers have had to “re-imagine” a new cultural identity, but they also have had to invent a new language in which to express it.

The linguistic choices made by the indigenous authors show their aspiration towards the syncretism of their two heritages – the British and the indigenous – as the basis of their creative strength for the “re-creation” of their cultural identity.

3. Syncretism of two heritages

The syncretism does not stop with the invention of an “inter-language”. It is expressed also throughout the work of the Polynesian writers with the imported literary genres and forms and through the integration of the techniques, contents and social function of the oral tradition into the written text.

In the introduction to the anthology *Nuanua*, Albert Wendt insists on the process of “indigenisation”: “We have indigenised much that was colonial or foreign to suit ourselves, creating new blends and forms. We have indigenised

⁴⁴ Sylvie André: *Le Roman autochtone dans le Pacifique Sud: Penser la continuité*, p. 238 (my translation)

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 239 (my translation)

Western art forms, including the novel.”⁴⁶ Sylvie André views this process of “indigenisation” as a subversion of the European genres in order to empty them of their colonial ideology and to refill them with the local oral tradition. She characterizes this new literature as an “oraliture”.

Indeed, as it has been viewed earlier, contemporary Polynesian poetry both in the vernacular languages and in English is the direct continuation of the oral tradition.

After poetry, it was the short story that has been widely explored by the first Polynesian writers in English. It is due to the legacy of indigenous oral storytelling. The emergence of fiction writing in the 1960’s went hand in hand with the renewed interest in the local myths, legends and folktales. The practice of the transcription, translation and rewriting of the traditional stories opened the way to the redaction of the short story. Also, in the context of the beginnings of the literature in question, the genre could easily be published in literary journals, the local press or diffused by the radio. It is through the exercise of the short story that the writers adopted novel writing that does not have a direct precursor in the oral tradition.

As concerns drama, it has been observed earlier that public performance on assigned places as the marae and the meeting house was part of the ceremonial of Polynesian orality. It was a structured whole composed upon the dialogue between the orators, the musicians, singers, dancers and the audience. Therefore, the writers being familiar with some aspects of the European form of the genre of drama espoused it without difficulty and adapted it to the local customs. Polynesian contemporary drama that has developed mainly in Aotearoa among Maori, Pacific and Polynesian diaspora communities, denominated as “Pasifika theatre”, blends the traditional performance with imported drama: “In addition to using marae ceremonies to ‘frame’ Maori theatrical productions, a number of playwrights have also incorporated aspects of marae ritual into the dramatic substance of their works.”⁴⁷ For example, Samoan playwrights usually

⁴⁶ Albert Wendt: “Introduction”, in *Nuanua: Pacific Writing in English since 1980*, p. 3

⁴⁷ Michelle Keown: *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa / New Zealand and Oceania*, p. 209

explore in their works the local theatrical tradition called “fale aitu” that consists of satirical sketches. Moreover, the Polynesian relationship between the actors and the audience is maintained: “the status of the audience from the Western theatrical norm of unacknowledged and silent observers who judge the performance” is replaced by “participants in a ritual, collective experience.”⁴⁸ However, contrary to poetry, the short story and the novel, the genre of drama has not been as much exploited by the Polynesian writers until the 1990’s. As Subramani explains in *South Pacific Literature: From Myth to Fabulation* it is due to the fact that the traditional art performances have been prioritized:

The (...) reason for so few written plays could be linked to the continuing strength of oral performances which still satisfy the entertainment needs of both the literate and the non-literate. The traditional arts are very much alive and there are efforts to strengthen them even further. The inclusion of skits and playettes in these performances proves their dynamic nature. The important breakthrough for written plays would be when traditional music, dance, poetry are incorporated in a major contemporary play.⁴⁹

They are mainly the elements linked to the performance of the oral tradition that the authors attempt to transfer into the written form, be it drama poetry or prose. Rhythm acquires an essential place in the texts, which the writers render through the abundant use of various types of rhythmical figures. The combination of different literary genres is also very frequent, especially, the introduction of songs and poetry into prose. When these are repeated, they function as refrains within the frame of the works’ composition and they convey the principal motives. For example, in Witi Ihimaera’s novel *Tangi*, narrating the death of the main character’s father, a Maori mourning song is reiterated throughout and carries the leitmotiv of the novel.

The presence of the audience enabled to the performer many digressions, as for example, comments, retrospection or anticipation, and subplots as well as

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 209

⁴⁹ Subramani: *South Pacific Literature: From Myth to Fabulation*, Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, Suva 1992, p. 68

skipping between various plots and narrative timelines. In addition to that, the orators used to alternate: each orator was characterized by another mode of expression and gave a new point of view on the subject. These techniques are transferred into the written texts in the use of multiple narrators and in the shifting between various plots and timelines. In the novel *Leaves of the Banyan Tree* (1979), Albert Wendt explores to great extent the possibilities of the given narrative strategies, especially by the introduction of the short story “Flying-Fox in a Freedom Tree” as Book Two, into the monumental novel in which is related, in the third person narrative, the life of the main character Tauilo pepe Mauga. The integrated short story provides temporarily a first person narrator, Pepe. He is the son of Tauilo pepe and he relates, within another narrative timeline, his own life and brings his own perspective on the central story whose main character is his father.

Several specific genres of the oral tradition are taken over, as, for instance, the Polynesian equivalent of the American “tall tale”. It is a comic allegorical tale in colloquial language whose aim is to satirize individual persons or official establishments. Michelle Keown provides an explanation of the characteristics of the given genre:

Because it is considered extremely rude to offer such criticisms directly, the satire is instead conveyed through comic allegorical tales that are shared in storytelling circles. Each individual in the group attempts to outdo the previous orator by infusing his or her narrative with increasingly exaggerated and ribald plot embellishments.⁵⁰

Indeed, public criticism was forbidden in Polynesian societies except in specific types of songs or narrative and dramatic genres. Epeli Hau‘ofa exploits the Polynesian “tall tale” in his *Tales of the Tikongs* where he criticizes the colonial powers, the emergent elites of post-independence Polynesia and the social, political and economic situation of the whole contemporary Pacific. He

⁵⁰ Michelle Keown: *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa / New Zealand and Oceania*, p. 175

experiments with the genre further in his novel *Kisses in the Nederends*, which redaction he describes in an interview with Subramani:

With the novel, I finished it in six months. I was going to spend at least another six months to polish and refine it, but I decided against that because I would have eliminated most of the profanities and obscenities and so cleaned it up as to make it smell like a brand new hospital. The book would have come out as a work of ‘acceptable’ humour, as a nice English lady once told me about *Tales*. I intended *Kisses* to come out very differently; I wanted it raw, not cooked.⁵¹

His writing method reproduces the gradation practiced in the “tall tale” storytelling as it has been described above.

The transference of the techniques of the verbal performance into writing in order to ensure the continuity of the oral tradition gives to an unacquainted reading audience a sense of disjointed texts, which they attribute to post-modern literary tendencies. In the introduction to *Nuanua*, Albert Wendt comments upon this fact:

Postmodernist writers like Calvino and Eco have been influential in our region. However, postmodernism is not new to Pacific indigenous cultures, where storytelling is always seen as a process which changes according to the mood of the teller and the reactions of her audience, and where art is a commodity produced for the community.⁵²

Also in terms of contents the indigenous writers draw from their oral heritage. The rediscovery of Polynesian cosmogony, mythology, legends, epics and tales preserved in manuscripts and their revival through their re-transcription, rewriting and adaptation, particularly in the literature for children, have already been mentioned. The authors of fiction also take over Polynesian characters and stories and revitalize them in their work mainly by placing them in new literary moulds and by situating them in the context of contemporary life, which gives

⁵¹ Subramani: “Epeli Hau‘ofa Interviewed by Subramani”, in Epeli Hau‘ofa: *We Are the Ocean*, p. 143

⁵² Albert Wendt: “Introduction”, in *Nuanua: Pacific Writing in English since 1980*, pp. 4-5

them new possibilities of interpretation. Indeed, contemporary Polynesian literature in English may be viewed as “intertextual” par excellence in the way Gérard Genette explains it in his theoretical work *Palimpsestes*. The manner in which this inheritance is blended with the European one, worked out and innovated in the fiction of selected authors is treated in detail in the third part of the thesis.

As it has been commented previously, the traditional orators had a very important function in Polynesian societies: they were the elected perpetuators of the ancestral patrimony and, thus, the warrantors of cultural identity. Through their engagement in political, social and cultural activities to foster the revival of the given communal heritage, and their efforts in imagining new possibilities of self-representation based on the collective past, the contemporary writers carry over the role of the ancient orators. They are the spokesmen of indigenous post-colonial communities and their function is to give “a discourse of identity effective socially”⁵³. Nonetheless, in comparison to the collective status of the traditional orator, the contemporary writers’ discourse is produced within an authorial literature.

It is a challenge for the indigenous writer to communicate his post-colonial standpoint through his selected writing strategies that establish a continuation with the oral tradition and to make his work accessible to a non-Polynesian reading public and suitable for Occidental canons at the same time. However, in his programme for the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture of the USP presented in the essay “Our Place Within”, Epeli Hau‘ofa advocates the emancipation from the “mimicry” of European aesthetic norms and encourages the establishment of local principles of evaluation:

...we aim to develop our own criteria for assessing the aesthetic merit and other cultural values of our contemporary creations. (...) In the formal teaching sections of the university, each department has an external adviser, usually an internationally renowned scholar from overseas, who regularly assesses the departmental offerings to

⁵³ Sylvie André: *Le Roman autochtone dans le Pacifique Sud: Penser la continuité*, p. 150 (my translation)

make sure that they measure up to internationally accepted standards. These standards are always set elsewhere – namely in the West. We still look to outsiders for approval, a lasting legacy of our colonial past. But we at the Oceania Centre are convinced that on matters of cultural creativity, which express who and what we are, we must be self-asserted by our own standards of evaluation. For this we go back to what remains of the creations from our pasts.⁵⁴

The interpenetration of the two literary traditions should be conceived in the same manner as the previously described “inter-language”. It is not simply the borrowing of foreign moulds and their refilling with elements of Polynesian oral tradition, but rather the result of the writers’ conscientious creative work of synthesis fuelled by the concern to invent a new individual literary expression. The Polynesian writers and artists envisage a “neo-culture” based on this inevitable “inter-culturality”. Indeed, they conceive of culture “not as an evident patrimony but as a construction, be it the reconstruction of a confiscated past or the acceptance of a complex social reality.”⁵⁵ Stuart Hall’s concept of cultural identity as a constant process may be applied again to the Polynesian literature in English. Albert Wendt’s call to syncretism is based on this same view: “All cultures are becoming, changing in order to survive, absorbing foreign influences, continuing, growing. But that doesn’t mean they become any less Samoan or Tongan.”⁵⁶

Indeed, in their essays and works, the authors do not cease to emphasize this new direction that Polynesian post-colonial literature and arts and the new cultural identity that they convey should take. Again: “Our quest should not be for the revival of our past cultures but for the creation of new cultures which are free of the taint of colonialism and based firmly in our own pasts.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Epeli Hau’ofa: “Our Place Within”, in Epeli Hau’ofa, *We Are the Ocean*, pp. 85-86

⁵⁵ Sylvie André: *Le Roman autochtone dans le Pacifique Sud: Penser la continuité*, p. 210 (my translation)

⁵⁶ Albert Wendt: “Introduction”, in *Nuanua: Pacific Writing in English since 1980*, p. 3

⁵⁷ Albert Wendt: “Towards a New Oceania”, p. 644

III. HERITAGE AND INNOVATION

Preamble

In the present part, the analyses of selected works of three Polynesian influential authors writing in English – Witi Ihimaera, Alistair Te Ariki Campbell, Albert Wendt –, introduced in the preceding chapters, will follow one another. The literary works that will be examined – the two novels *Tangi* and *Sons for the Return Home* and the poetry collection *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* – are based on the set of theoretical reflections on cultural identity in the context of the emergence of post-colonial Polynesian literature in English. They display the attempts to synchronize the indigenous and the colonial literary traditions as a means to form a new literature and cultural identity.

The analyses show how the Polynesian writers innovate the inherited oral tradition by assigning central functions to selected mythological segments in their works that deal mainly with problems related to the contemporary Polynesian diaspora. Albert Wendt's novel *Sons for the Return Home* (see Chapter 3) distinguishes itself from the other novel *Tangi* (see Chapter 1) by the complexity of the structure of its storyline and by the accentuated importance of the action. Consequently, it has been necessary to focus more exhaustively on the presentation of the plot since the novel is probably unknown here.

The versions of the myths of the primordial parents Rangi and Papa and of the demigod Maui transcribed and translated into English, on which the analyses of *Tangi* and *Sons for the Return Home* are based, figure as the Appendices IV and V. The myth of the mother island Hawaiki on which is founded the analysis of *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* in the second chapter has already been introduced in the previous parts of the thesis.

1. Function of the creation myth of Rangi and Papa in Witi Ihimaera's novel *Tangi*

Witi Ihimaera's first novel *Tangi* published in 1973 is also the first novel written by a New Zealand Maori to be published. In the versified epigraph, the author characterizes the novel as "...a vivid expression of the / village family unity of rural Maori life."⁵⁸ He explains that his purpose is to represent these Maori values and spread the will and the necessity to maintain and pass them on to younger generations: "This is *Tangi*, written in the hope that such a / life, and the values of that life, will never be / lost."⁵⁹ Indeed, after the Second World War, there occurred a considerable migration of Maori population from the rural areas to the urban centres in search of better social standing. The necessity to adapt and assimilate to the socio-economic system handled by the British settlers led to the gradual weakening of the ties with the rural backgrounds where Maori traditional lifestyle was still alive and to the abandoning of the indigenous culture. As Michelle Keown points out in her study *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa / New Zealand and Oceania*, a language survey effectuated at the beginning of the 1970's showed a substantial decrease of speakers of Maori: "...most native speakers were over thirty years of age, and only around two percent of Maori children were growing up speaking Maori as their first language."⁶⁰ Witi Ihimaera's novel represents a landmark in the beginning of the Maori Renaissance that was stirred mostly by the threat that the indigenous culture and language will disappear.

Tangi displays this critical moment of the Maori rural exodus through the main character named Tama Mahana, a twenty two years old Maori, who left his native village of Waituhi and his family for the city of Wellington mainly in the quest of professional promotion.

⁵⁸ Witi Ihimaera: *Tangi*, Heinemann, Auckland 1973, p. i, epigraph, lines 15-16

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. i, epigraph, lines 17-19

⁶⁰ Michelle Keown: *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa / New Zealand and Oceania*, p. 138

The novel is organised into thirty-two untitled but numbered short chapters that are framed by an epigraph and an epilogue. In the first person narrative are recounted two parallel journeys of the main character: from Wellington to Waituhi to attend the mourning ceremonies for his father who has just died, and from Waituhi back to Wellington where he will make arrangements to quit his actual job and his flat in order to return permanently to Waituhi. Tama is the oldest son of the Mahana family, and, according to the Maori traditions, he is to care for the younger members – his younger sisters Ripeka, Mere and Marama and his younger brother Hone – help his mother Huia and look after their land in lieu of his deceased father Rongo. The separation with the father is a decisive turning point in the life of Tama in several fundamental aspects, and the whole novel is organised around the transition from one life to another, which is conveyed in the narrative structure by the constant alternation of the two journeys – to Waituhi and to Wellington – throughout the rapidly changing chapters, before and after Rongo’s funeral, which cross at the moment of the burial itself. The two routes narrated in the present tense and interspersed with dialogues rendered in direct speech become also one internal voyage of initiation began at the character’s hearing of the sad news and in which highly metaphorical descriptions of emotions, past memories, imagined dialogues with the deceased father, reflections and introspection intermingle to form a flowing internal monologue interwoven into the main thread of the succeeding events.

The title of the novel in Maori, *Tangi*, designates the act of mourning and the set of rituals and chants that accompany it and endorses the given central motive. This last is interrelated right from the introductory lines of the novel in the epigraph with the Maori accounts of the genesis of the world related in the oral tradition, or with the primordial parents existing in the void called Rangitane, the sky, and Papatuanuku, the earth: “My mother was the Earth. / My father was the Sky. / They were Rangitane and Papatuanuku, / the first parents who clasped each other so / tightly that there was no day. Their children / were born into darkness ...”⁶¹ The myth is introduced repeatedly into the narration: the

⁶¹ Witi Ihimaera: *Tangi*, p. i, epigraph, lines 1-6

contemporary times mingle with the primal mythical times and the span of significations of the events stretches and acquires new dimensions.

The heartbreaking separation of Tama's family with the father is paralleled and accentuated by the similarly painful separation of the Sky Father and the Earth Mother and their subsequent grief of being set apart. The pain of parting with Rongo is emphasized throughout until the final farewell in front of the open grave that is expressed by the means of the reference to the myth:

I hold my mother tightly to me. She stretches forward for father. And Earth reaches for Sky and Sky bends to Earth. One last fierce clasp in rain and wind and rain. One last embrace of rage and fury and helpless grief. One last clinging of body to body, of Earth to Sky. One last meeting of lips to lips and tears to tears. And then the slow drawing away, the slow tearing away, the slow wrenching away of Sky from Earth, of Earth from Sky, in the final, sorrowful separation...

*Farewell, e pa. Haere ra, my father.*⁶²

In the given lines and in the epigraph quoted further above where the possessive pronoun "My" is used, the association of the main character's parents, Rongo and Huia, to the primordial parents Rangi and Papa is suggested. Indeed, after one of the mythical children, Tane-mahuta, managed to divide the progenitors, they all remained with the mother (except one, Tawhiri-ma-tea), and so does Tama "I link hands with Mum. (...) But my thoughts are only with my mother. She is my world now."⁶³, "And my mother Earth, do not weep, for I shall comfort you. I am your son, the son of Earth and Sky. Although the sky has been wrenched from you, I shall make you happy. I will give you grandchildren..."⁶⁴ It is interesting to remark that the name of the main character means "child" in Maori, which confers a more universal and representative status to his character and supports his affiliation to the primordial parents.

Tama imparts qualities of the mythical parents in the descriptions of his own parents in terms of physical aspect, character, and their affective meaning to

⁶² Ibid., p. 191

⁶³ Ibid., p. 24

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 54

him. In the portrait of Rongo, the bodily appearance is neglected in favour of his abstract proprieties. He represents Tama's guide: he transmits him the knowledge of Maoritanga and appears as an invulnerable protective arch under which he feels secure. It is necessary to specify here that the sky and its elements was the sole guiding compass of the Polynesian navigators. On his way from Wellington back to Waituhi to the "tangi", Tama engages in internal dialogues with his father. He asks him to wait for him until he arrives to Waituhi before his soul to quit his body and fly back to the mythical Hawaiki where the souls of the dead return according to the Polynesian beliefs. He also begs forgiveness for not having stayed at home the last time he returned there as the father had requested for the reason that he was feeling weak and needed his help. In his turn, Rongo comforts his son and encourages him, this time as a spiritual guide, throughout the long and painful voyage to the marae where his body is being exposed to the mourners. At last, Tama compares his father explicitly to the Sky Father:

I did not think you would ever grow old. You seemed so much part of the universe, e pa. You were the sky, and the sky was always there. The sky does not grow old. I thought you and Waituhi would always remain the same, unchanged: that Time would flow round you both without disturbing you. Time passed only where I was, that's how I imagined it. But not in Waituhi, surely not. Waituhi was timeless. You were timeless.⁶⁵

On the other hand, Tama's mother is depicted with more "earthly" characteristics. Her face is portrayed through the imagery of nature, she is compared to the earth moulded by the manifestations of the upper sky:

It is a handsome face, framed with a long, black scarf. The features are sculpted of earth and sky; the chiselled planes softened by wind, rain and sun. It is a face that has seen the passing of the seasons and understands that all things decay and fall of their own accord. A calm face, which accepts the inevitable rhythms of life: that the sun rises and sets, night follows day, and that winter always comes.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 161

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 24

Contrary to the “timelessness” of the Sky Father, mortality is a constituent part of the Earth Mother. At the end of the portrait, Tama adds “Yet, she has always been a stubborn woman.”⁶⁷, which shows her “down-to-earth” nature revealed in several anecdotes picked from Tama’s childhood memories where she never doubts to take the situation into her own hands and in which she ensures the practical course of the family life.

The mutual fondness of the narrator’s parents for one another is depicted as analogous to the indivisible tie that binds Rangi and Papa together: “We lived belonging to each other, not apart from each other. That’s the way Mum and Dad loved each other too. That’s the way they taught us to love.”⁶⁸

In the “Epilogue”, a reunion of the parents is made possible, however, as the reunion of the body of Rongo with the mythical Earth Mother, which reminds that, in spite of the drawn analogies between the given character and the Sky Father, he was still a Man, and himself a descendant of the primordial parents: “We have urged the diggers to work quicker with the chanting of the haka. We have told them to put their strength to the spade, so that our father is more quickly embraced by Papatuanuku, the Earth.”⁶⁹

Tama’s character and story acquire a more universal dimension through the built correspondences with the mythical tale, and the natural world existing since the beginnings of times as the primordial parents seems to be involved and participate into the “tangi”. The novel exemplifies the Polynesian traditional belief in the interconnectedness of the humans, nature and the gods as it has been described in the previous parts of the thesis. It may be illustrated by one of the teachings transmitted by Rongo to his son: “It always rains when a Maori dies. No matter if the day is sunny. It always rains because the wailing makes the sky sad. (...) As you weep, it will rain.”⁷⁰ And indeed, on the day of the father’s burial it rains heavily. Moreover, the omnipresent description of the natural elements such as the weather changes and the cyclical succession of the days and

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 24

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 85

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 206

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 90

nights are always linked with the progression of the events of Tama's journeys, his doings and emotional states of mind. The natural imagery usually conveys symbolic meanings derived from Maori or Polynesian culture. The series of connotations arise as evident to a Polynesian but may not to a foreign reader. The rain, the dew and the mists that appear frequently in the described landscape allude to the physical contact that Rangi and Papa make between one another since their separation and, thus, they emphasize the sorrow from the parting and the longing for the presence of the departed person. Also, the alternation of the dusk and dawn along the story is charged with cultural connotations. The novel ends with the setting sun, which symbolizes the voyage of the father's soul to Hawaiki, he will finally take his flight from the hill of Te Reinga situated at the northernmost end of New Zealand.

Not only does nature manifest itself from the outside but also in the inside. The imagery of nature is used recurrently to describe Tama's feelings. For example, images of the gradually changing open sea, of the weather conditions and the sudden appearance of driftwood and a canoe creep into the space of Tama's working office of Wellington as he learns the news of his father's death by phone:

– Mr Mahana? Waituhi calling, Mrs. Kingi on the line.

A warm stream flows in my body. Waituhi, my whanau, my home so far from Wellington; Ripeka my sister.

– Tama?

My sister's voice fills me with a flood of happiness and brings joy to the day.

– Hello, Ripeka.

The flood rises, and memories of my whanau and my sister softly eddy in my mind.

– Hey, it's good to hear from you, Ripeka. How are things at home? All right? Oh, it's good...

But she does not answer. The 'phone is silent. A cold stream begins to seep into the warm flood.

– Oh, Tama...

My sister's voice breaks and driftwood splinters float in small eddies. Then softly she begins to weep, scattering the stream with a rain of tears.⁷¹

As Ripeka proceeds in giving the news, the intruding landscape progressively darkens and gets wilder: "A cold wind suddenly swirls across the waves.", "...the wind rising, the waves rippling colder and colder, the driftwood splinters scattering upon the warm stream.", "The current has changed, grown suddenly cold.", until "The wind blasts open my mind. The current changes, wave upon wave of coldness, reaching up to drench the sky then plunging down upon a small canoe adrift. (...) And I drift away amid the swirling, freezing tide, upon that endless sea."⁷²

Now, another important element of the myth of Rangitane and Papatuanuku that Witi Ihimaera takes over to broaden the signification of Tama's experience is the penetration of light into the world after the separation of the Sky Father and the Earth Mother, which recurs as a leitmotiv:

They were Rangitane and Papatuanuku, the first parents, who clasped each other so tightly that there was no day. Their children were born into darkness. They lived among the shadows of their mother's breasts and thighs and groped in blindness among the long black strands of her hair.

Until the time of separation and the dawning of the first day.⁷³

As it has been hinted on earlier, Tama's two parallel journeys render precisely the instant of the transition between two stages of his life, produced by the death of the father. This decisive moment in Tama's life is captured as the phase of cosmic chaos that accompanies the division of the earth from the sky by the children longing for another form of existence, and the passage from darkness to light. The constant alternation of the two journeys and timelines by each chapter in the narration renders the given stage of chaos in which the end and the beginning, and darkness and light combine: one world ending, corresponding to

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 3

⁷² Ibid., pp. 3-4

⁷³ Ibid., p. 26

darkness, as he goes back to Waituhi to mourn over his deceased father and another world beginning, the coming of light, as he takes the train to Wellington after the “tangi”. Immediately, the first lines of the first chapter declare the transitory state of things, the passage from darkness to light, which is repeated until the end of the novel: “This is where it ends and begins. (...) Here begins the first step into the future, the first step from the past.”⁷⁴ The narrator describes himself as being “half in light, half in darkness”⁷⁵.

The description of the three days of the “tangi”, the central point of transformation, gives the strongest impression of the primal disorder where Tama cannot discern whether it is day or night, he repeats several times: “Which day is this? It is the third day? And which night is this approaching?”⁷⁶ His confusion is emphasized by a recurrent refrain singing in his mind and mingling with the chanting voices of the mourners: “*What night is this? Let the night be endless, endless, Let the new sun never rise...*”⁷⁷, “*Is this the end of the night? Is this the beginning of my new day? Which day is this, which night?*”⁷⁸

The weight of the responsibility that his father has entrusted him with to look after the family motivates him to get over the painful separation and carry on even without him:

Another hour must begin, the hands moving away from the hour gone. A sun explodes, another brightens the sky forming nova. A new day. From the ruins of an old life, a new life must rise. (...) E pa, for you, I will build life anew. For Mere, for all my family, I will build a good life.⁷⁹

And from out of this dark night, you⁸⁰ must bring them light again.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 1

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 204

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 179

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 180

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 182

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 126

⁸⁰ In Chapter 27, the arrival to the marae of Rongopai where the tangi is held, the narrator engages in a dialogue with himself, addressing himself in the second person singular. The undermining splitting of himself and the setting of a distance towards his own subjectivity at the critical moment of confronting his father's death marks the growing intensity of his grief accompanied by the urgent need to control himself emotionally in front of the mourners in order to be able to fulfil in a dignified manner the ceremonials of the tangi as the eldest son. It emphasizes at the same time his on-going self-reflection.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 150

Again, Tama's last name "Mahana", which means "day" in Maori, suggests his passage towards a new day.

Such as the god children of Rangi and Papa, Tama will emancipate from the protective shelter provided by his father as a child and initiate an independent life as a man, he passes from the world of childhood to the world of adulthood: "This is the night of my childhood ending. This is the night of my own life beginning, Father is dead and I am at once a man."⁸² The genesis of Tama's adult life, in which he becomes himself the sheltering "sky" for his younger siblings, must go through the dark separation with his father. Tama's decision to return to his "whanau" and his conversion into a man are expressions of the discovery of his identity. The two journeys emerge as the process of acquisition of identity, in which the central crossing, his father's death, reminds him of where he belongs to, of who he is and desires to be. The passage from darkness to light symbolizes the ongoing achievement of identity. Thus, the novel takes on the characteristics of the genre of the "bildungsroman".

From the effectuated analysis it arises that the structure and the contents of *Tangi* based upon the Maori creation myth suggest a cyclical view of life. They feature an overall spiralled movement in which life and death, day and night, beginning and end, constitute an indivisible continual sequel and represent the moving principle of the universe. The novel thus illustrates in more detail the Polynesian notion of time in which the past that is constantly "before us" cannot be dissociated from the present.

Tangi depicts the indigenous inherited myths, values, traditions and beliefs, and mainly the solidarity and love or "aroha" of the Maori family structure called "whanau" that extends far beyond the nucleus of parents and children but comprises the whole circle of relatives, which usually corresponds to the whole village. The given social organisation is the outcome of the ancestral tribal system. The unity of the "whanau" is shown most importantly during the difficult occasion of the "tangi". Tama is not alone to bear his father's death and its consequences, he can rely on all the members of his extended family: "For

⁸² Ibid., p. 130

these people I am son, friend, father too. They are to me in turn, my sons, daughters, fathers and mothers. That is the Maori way: not to talk of one family for we belong to each other, not only family living but family dead.”⁸³ The traditional principle of sharing that Rongo insists on when he transmits his knowledge to his son is summed up in the phrase in Maori that is frequently repeated: “To manawa, e taku manawa. (...) Your heart is my heart.”⁸⁴ The same phrase is repeated with other personal pronouns to refer to all the “whanau”: “Taku manawa, a ratou manawa. My heart is their heart. And their heart is mine.”⁸⁵ The given social value is also the reason why Tama is bound to leave Wellington and return to Waituhi.

However, the presented positive Maori traditions are under the threat of being abandoned and the author expresses at the same time his grief over their occurring loss: the “tangi” is held for the dying values that used to be conveyed from generation to generation. Yet, the omnipresent reference to the founding myth of Rangitane and Papatuanuku is a means to express and ensure the continuity with the most fundamental Maori traditional beliefs. Moreover, because death gives way to new life according to the spiral logic of the novel, so is Witi Ihimaera’s work one of the first expression of the renewal and innovation of the traditional culture: “This is *Tangi*, an account of death, but also / an affirmation of life. / (...) / This is *Tangi*, the first novel written by a / Maori to be published.”⁸⁶

As a last remark, it is interesting to comment on the fact that the author’s overall work including his short story collections *Pounamu Pounamu* (1972), *The New Net Goes Fishing* (1977) and the consecutive novels *Whanau* (1974) and *The Whale Rider* (1987) presents progressively the destinies of the individual members of one “whanau”. The characters of the novels reappear in short stories and vice versa, or they cross at some point with the main characters of another story, which creates a socio cultural fresco representing the series of facets and

⁸³ Ibid., p. 30

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 48

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 120

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. i, epigraph, lines 9-10, 20-21

issues of the contemporary Maori familial body. Tama Mahana and his nuclear family appears also, for example, in the last story of *Pounamu*, *Pounamu* entitled “Tangi”, a condensed version of the novel, or in “Gathering of the Whakapapa” and “The Greenstone Patu” of *The New Net Goes Fishing*. This last puts into question Tama’s expected return to Waituhi as the continuator of his father: it takes place several years after Rongo’s death, the narrator is again in Wellington, receiving the visit of his aunt Hiraina:

Yet I was still here in Wellington. Auntie Hiraina saw my despair. She pressed my shoulders, comforting me.

– We understand, boy, she whispered. We know the time isn’t right yet for you to come home to us. We understand.

I shrugged my shoulders and tried to smile.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Witi Ihimaera: “The Greenstone Patu”, in *The New Net Goes Fishing*, Heinemann, Auckland 1977, p. 110

2. Function of the mythical mother island Hawaiki in Alistair Te Ariki Campbell's poetry collection *The Dark Lord of Savaiki*

The poetry collection *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* published in 1980 is the work of a mature poet. Alistair Te Ariki Campbell has already thirty years of poetry publishing behind him, his first collection *Mine Eyes Dazzle* being issued already in 1950. The poet has been introduced in the second part of the thesis as a representative of the pioneer generation of Polynesian authors writing in English. However, his concern with the indigenous heritage begins only with *The Dark Lord of Savaiki*. Indeed, the collection represents a turning point in his poetics: while his earlier work responded to the European literary canons and represented the socio-cultural realities proper to the milieu of the descendants of the New Zealand Anglophone settlers, his later work is deeply influenced by the Polynesian oral tradition and culture. The transition in the literary inspiration of the poet is closely related to his own personal internal transformation. Therefore, it is necessary to present briefly the important biographical facts that determined the fundamental change in his creative work.

Alistair Campbell was born in 1925 on the island of Rarotonga, the main population centre of the Cook Islands, situated in the Southern archipelago. His father Jock Campbell was a New Zealander of Scottish descent and his mother, Teu, was a descendant of the regal dynasty of Tongareva (Penrhyn Island) in the Northern Cook Islands. When he was seven years old his mother died, and a year later his father died also. Due to the early death of his parents, he was sent together with his siblings to the relatives of the father's side in New Zealand. However, the children were later placed into an orphanage. All the bonds with the native country were torn by the departure to New Zealand. The circumstances made Alistair Campbell grow up in the community of "pakeha" New Zealanders, to identify only with his father's heredity and to overlook his Cook Islands origins, which is reflected in his early literary career. In an interview provided by Antonella Sarti is even mentioned a denial of the Polynesian ancestry, which the poet explains in the following manner: "I did it because I thought it necessary for

my survival. Racism was rife in New Zealand in those days before the war, and as a small boy in a mainly white community I felt vulnerable.”⁸⁸ It is only in 1979 or forty-six years later that Alistair Campbell returned to the Cook Islands. In her study “A Journey from Despair: Alistair Te Ariki Campbell’s *The Dark Lord of Savaiki*”, Suzanne Nola explains the poet’s decision to return: he had undergone a nervous breakdown that led him to come to terms with his childhood traumatic experience of his parents’ premature death and consequent departure from home and to recognize his Polynesian origins. Also, he had discovered a letter for him sent to New Zealand by his Tongarevan grand-father named Bosini, in which this last expressed his affection and begged Alistair Campbell not to disregard his Tongarevan heritage. *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* published a year after his first return sprang up directly from the re-encounter with the mother island. Alistair Campbell undertook the voyage as a spiritual pilgrimage, a search for needed origins and identity.

The poetry collection contains ten poems that are introduced by an epigraph. Each poem is numbered from one to ten and has a title. The poems have all a different number of lines, from six to thirty-five lines, and are not organized into stanzas. They do not reproduce any established lyrical form. The whole collection is in free verse, each line containing one to ten syllables, and follows predominantly an iambic metric pattern. Sentences and syntactical units are regularly broken into various lines or rhythmical units, which causes the recurrent enjambments. The poet thus accentuates individual words and semantic sections.

The verse instrumentation is based on vocalic and consonantal ranges, and sometimes on alliteration. The rhythmical figure of epizeuxis and the anaphora are occasionally used.

The English language used is characterized by its simplicity. The poet makes himself present at times through the use of the first person singular and the possessive pronoun “my”.

⁸⁸ Sarti Antonella, *Spiritcarvers: Interviews with Eighteen New Zealand Writers*, Rodolpi, Atlanta 1998, p. 16, in Suzanne Nola: “A Journey from Despair: Alistair Te Ariki Campbell’s *The Dark Lord of Savaiki*”, *ka mate ka ora: a new zealand journal of poetry and poetics*, Issue 1, Auckland 2005, p. 70

Although the poetic formal devices are founded on the model of modern Occidental poetics, the poems are set in the poet's ancestral island of Tongareva. They refer to the Polynesian background, oral tradition and culture, from which the poetic imagery is derived.

The reference to the Polynesian mythical island of Hawaiki, Savaiki in Tongarevan Maori, expressed in the title suggests that the poet conceives of Tongareva as of his own mythical mother island from where he has departed to find a new home, as did his Polynesian ancestors. At the same time, he acknowledges that through his Cook Islands ancestry, he is connected as well with the common Polynesian heritage since he shares with them the same primary island of origin Savaiki.

The re-encounter with Tongareva represents also the reunion with his mother. An analogy is created between the island of origin and the mother. The poems "3 Teu" and "9 Trade Winds" are dedicated to the poet's mother and to her felt presence as soon as he arrives there. She is represented as waiting for his return and receives him: "Mother, you were there / at the passage / when our ship arrived."⁸⁹ "Mother, / your footsteps falter / outside my window, / where you have waited / fifty years / for your children to return."⁹⁰ The apostrophe and the use of the second person singular emphasize the presence of the deceased mother and the renewed dialogue of the son with her. Even a physical contact is established between them. The correspondence between the mother and the native land is made explicit when she manifests herself through the natural elements: first as the rain falling on him during the night of his arrival "and you wept / when you laid / the Southern Cross / upon your eyes"⁹¹, and then, as the moon and the wind that caresses him: "The moon comes out, / lovely / as a mother's face / over a sleeping child. / The trade winds / are your fingers / on my eyelids."⁹²

⁸⁹ Alistair Campbell: "3 Teu", lines 1-3, in *The Dark Lord of Savaiki*, Te Kotare Press, Pukerua Bay 1980

⁹⁰ "9 Trade Winds", lines 14-20

⁹¹ "3 Teu", lines 10-13

⁹² "9 Trade Winds", lines 21-27

However, the meeting with the maternal island and the mother is protruded by the sense of death. Although he feels the closeness of his mother, he reminds her death and describes her too short life with his father: “You followed him / from island to island, / bore his children / only to see your dreams / break up / on the hidden reef / of Savaiki.”⁹³ Savaiki is also the place where the souls of the dead return. Therefore, as the poet’s journey is a journey home, it is at the same time a journey to the Underworld. The return to the native island is characterized by the omnipresence of death.

First, the poet expresses his grief over the irreversibility of time and the impossibility to bring back the joyful days of his childhood in Tongareva and with them his deceased family. His past on the island, characterized by the vigil of the senses and compared to beautiful and fragrant flowers, is now ended, in “ruin”: “and the wind was drugged by the scent of tipani / and tiare maori / that flowered abundantly / along the roadways / now overgrown and sunk in ruin.”⁹⁴

Also, the triggered childhood memories revive the traumatic experience of the separation with the mother and the native land expressed through the allusion to Tongarevan religious customs: “and the wind hurries past / clutching in its fingers / the leaf-wrapped souls / of children torn / from the eyelids of despairing mothers.”⁹⁵, and through natural imagery: “I was happy being a child again, / and, careless as a child / in a treasure house, / I ripped up chunks of coral / to take home. / Horrid amputation! / The living creatures seemed / to shriek, / and bled a kind of ichor.”⁹⁶

Therefore, the sense of loss is central to the poetry collection and gives an elegiac character to the poems. These might be compared to the Polynesian traditional mourning chants in terms of their semantic content.

The atmosphere of death is also created by the poet’s evocation of his deceased ancestors. In individual poems, he presents them by their names,

⁹³ “9 Trade Winds”, lines 7-13

⁹⁴ “5 The Doves of Pauma”, lines 6-11

⁹⁵ “1 Under the Tamanu Tree”, lines 11-15

⁹⁶ “4 At Nahe”, lines 6-14

describes some of their major characteristics, and indicates where and how they are buried, as for example, in the short poem “6 Tapu”:

The sea gnaws at Paroa’s bones
 where he lies at Nahe,
but Paetou,
 beloved of Maringikura,
sleeps secure at Hanoa
under an untidy heap of stones.

Throughout the presentation of his forbearers and his comments on their lives and deaths are richly expressed the Polynesian traditional beliefs and mores. For example, in the poem “2 The Witch of Hanoa” are described the ancient funeral traditions of the Cook Islanders: “When Kavatai died, / his son Paroa, as chief mourner, / wrapped his corpse in mats / and hung it from the ceiling / to decay in decent isolation”⁹⁷. The belief in the spirits and the practice of sorcery are also alluded to: Kavatai’s soul transformed into a storm and was called back home by his widow, Puatama or “the witch of Hanoa”, who was gifted with supernatural powers, and the spirit returned to her on the back of a shark. Now the husbands Kavatai and Puatama lie together “in an unmarked grave”⁹⁸

The series of numbered poems arise as a visit of the individual burial places of the poet’s antecedents by which he makes their acquaintance. Their recalling seems to bring them to life again as spectres, which enables the poet to address them:

Ancestral shapes
 on the beach,
lying beside their drawn-up boats,
chatting and laughing softly
 as they await the dawn –
so many names to remember,
 so many names to honour!

⁹⁷ “2 The Witch of Hanoa”, lines 1-5

⁹⁸ “2 The Witch of Hanoa”, line 35

Grandfather Bosini,
why do you beckon
from the deeper shadows beyond your tomb?⁹⁹

The effectuated enumeration of the ancestors is comparable to a traditional Polynesian genealogy that the poet is attempting to reconstruct, which is emphasized by the lines of the final poem “10 Bosini’s tomb”: “so many names to remember, / so many names to honour!”¹⁰⁰ In her study, Suzanne Nola explains that the source of the epigraph, “Te Ara o Tumu”, corresponds to the name of the chants that used to introduce the recital of genealogies. Therefore, through the epigraph, Alistair Campbell reveals that the poems to follow represent a traditional recital of “haka-papa”. The genealogies used to go back to the genesis of the world or to the primary parents of which all the subsequent generations descend. Indeed, the speaker of the epigraph “I”, who is identifiable to the poet, characterizes himself as one of the children of the primary parents, Tumu and Papauri, the Tongarevan variants of the names Rangi and Papa in Maori: “*I am the one in your dreams, / master of passion, / favourite child / of Tumu and Papauri. / Te Ara o Tumu*”

As it has been explained already, in the Polynesian culture, the knowledge of the family lineage was considered as a decisive factor determining the identity of a living person. A person’s affiliation that could be proved only through the recital of the family genealogy gave him simultaneously the rights to the ancestral land to which he was tied not only materially but above all spiritually. The poet’s efforts to reconstruct his family genealogy in the poetry collection express his quest and discovery of identity through his past, which he effectuates according to the Polynesian practices. The first line of the first poem in the collection asks a question about identity: “Who, who and who?”¹⁰¹ The subsequent naming of the ancestors brings the response to the initial question. The “haka-papa” drawn in the poetic work is also a gesture that testifies of

⁹⁹ “10 Bosini’s Tomb”, lines 1-11

¹⁰⁰ “10 Bosini’s Tomb”, lines 6-7

¹⁰¹ “1 Under the Tamanu Tree”, line 1

Alistair Campbell's decisive acceptance of his Tongarevan identity that he had previously denied and is the expression of his will to renew the bonds with his native island and culture through the acknowledgement of his past. Indeed, several years after his first return to Tongareva, the poet expressed further his newly recognised affiliation to the Polynesian heritage by the alteration of his name: he introduced "Te Ariki"¹⁰² to it, thus identifying himself with his Tongarevan regal lineage of which he is a descendant. It is important to remark here that it was a common practice in ancient Polynesia to change the name after a fundamental change in one's life, which seems to be the poet's case.

The recital of the genealogy culminates in the final poem "10 Bosini's Tomb" where all the deceased relatives gather around the poet on the beach where the grand-father to whom he is deeply attached lies. The elegiac tonality of the preceding poems is replaced by the joyful atmosphere reigning over the reunion of the family: "The children of Marata / join hands / with the children of Tumu / and have peaceful dreams. / They smile to see / Father and Mother / walking hand in hand / across the swirling waters / of Taruia passage, / where the leaping dolphins celebrate the dawn."¹⁰³

The reconnection with the family explicit in the final poem and achieved through the recital of the genealogy brings happiness and peace to the poet. The "amputated" members of the poem "4 At Nahe" seem to be restored to him by the last poem of the collection. Nature's participation in the occurring communion of the poet with the land also is manifested by the leaping dolphins and the dawn. The dawn symbolizes life contrary to the sunset that symbolizes death or the voyage of the souls of the deceased to Savaiki in Polynesian thinking. Paradoxically, the image of the parents walking hand in hand across the Taruia passage where the first settler from Savaiki, Taruia, had landed suggest that their souls are at last leaving to Savaiki since their son whom they were waiting for has now come back and the bonds have been restored through the recovery of the genealogy.

¹⁰² "Te Ariki" means of regal or chieftain descent.

¹⁰³ "10 Bosini's Tomb", lines 12-22

Now there remains to answer the question of who is “the dark lord of Savaiki”, the eponymous character of the collection that appears only in the first line of the first poem “1 Under the Tamanu Tree” and whose identity is questioned and never explicitly answered: “Who, who and who? / Who is the dark lord of Savaiki?”¹⁰⁴ In the Polynesian oral tradition, there is no mention of a mythical character to which “the dark lord” would allude directly. Therefore, the explanation is to be found in the poems that provide several possible interpretations.

The poet’s return to the native island is primarily an encounter with an irreversible past from which he had been violently divorced and with the decaying tombs of his dead forbearers; he is directly confronted with death. Because death is related to darkness, it is possible to view the mysterious character of “the dark lord of Savaiki” as the personification of death. It is death that reigns in the island of origin when he arrives: he is in the kingdom of the dark lord. The question about the identity of the dark lord is answered throughout the poems in which he is omnipresent as the manifestations of decay and death.

It is also possible to draw an analogy between the poet and the dark lord since his return to the island represents a search for roots and, therefore, for identity. The question on the character of the dark lord that introduces the subsequent poems may actually be addressed by the poet to himself: “Who, who and who? / Who is the dark lord of Savaiki?” The Ariki descent of the poet and the created analogy between Tongareva and the Underworld Savaiki, support the implied correspondence between himself and the dark lord. Therefore, the dark lord may also represent the unknown part of the poet that he comes to find out. Now, the means to answer to the question about his identity is through the discovery of his decayed past and of his dead through the genealogy. It is through the acquaintance with his past and his deceased ancestors, or through facing death, that the poet acquires his present identity. Therefore, the recital of the genealogy represents also a voyage of initiation to the underworld Savaiki in which the encounter with his antecedents helps him understand the unknown part

¹⁰⁴ “1 Under the Tamanu Tree”, lines 1-2

of himself. However, the acknowledgement of his affiliation to the ancestors, of which he is now part, is at the same time a recognition of his own mortality: like them, he will die. He becomes conscious of the fact that he will once join them in the Underworld when he compares his ultimate journey to Savaiki to his current journey to Tongareva in the poem “8 Omoka”:

It will be like this one day
 when I sail home to die –
the boat crunching up on to the sand,
the wading through warm water
 to the beach,
the friendly voices
 round me in the darkness,
the sky dying out
 behind the trees of Omoka,
 and reaching out of hands.

The dark lord or death is part of himself since he was born, it is the dark side of his transitory existence.

Therefore, the central figure of the dark lord of Savaiki assumes different but complementary semantic levels mainly as both the personification of death and human mortality and the unknown part of the poet’s identity. The discovery of identity is thus interconnected with the confrontation of death and the awakening of the awareness of mortality. The last poem “10 Bosini’s Tomb” mentioned earlier presents the moment of the acquisition of identity as a joyful reunion of the dead and the living. The pervading darkness transforms into the dawn, the acquired knowledge brings light to the poet.

The structure of the poetry collection presents a gradation that culminates in the poet’s finding an answer to the initial identity question, which parallels the poet’s autobiographical line. He reaches the answer by finding out his genealogy that is the expression of the Polynesian notion of time and cyclical view of life: the present and the past are inseparable; the past that “lies before us” generates

the present. The reference to the island of Savaiki as to Tongareva heralds the poet's gradual understanding of the bipolarity of life: Savaiki is the island of birth, the cradle of Polynesia, but it is at the same time the place of dwelling of the dead. The bipolarity of the human existence is at the core of *The Dark Lord of Savaiki*: the poet is alive but his dead are also alive inside him, the native Tongareva foreshadows his own death, light follows after darkness. Therefore, through the discovery and the reunion with his Polynesian heritage, the poet arrives to general questions of life and death.

It is necessary to remark at last that, even though the poet chooses the formal devices of Occidental modern poetics to frame the Polynesian contents, it has been viewed that poetry is the genre that corresponds the most to the traditional oral tradition. The recital of genealogies was characterised by its regular rhythmical patterns and imagery that are proper to poetry.

Alistair Te Ariki Campbell's poetry after *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* develops further the restored ties with his native background. The fact that he has collected and published his subsequent poems under the title *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* in 2005 testifies of the continuity with his landmark poetry collection.

3. Function of the mythical demigod Maui in Albert Wendt's novel *Sons for the Return Home*

The novel *Sons for the Return Home* published in 1973 is the author's first novel. However, as Sonia Lacabanne points out in her study *Les premiers romans polynésiens: naissance d'une littérature de langue anglaise*, it should not be considered as "a work of youth" since in 1963 Albert Wendt had already written the first draft of his monumental saga *Leaves of the Banyan Tree* published only in 1979. Moreover, he had already published shorter pieces of writing in various literary magazines. In the essay "A Letter from Paradise" published in the 1965 edition of the Auckland University's Students Association "Kiwi 65", the Samoan writer had drawn the origins of *Sons for the Return Home* and delineated its main themes. Unfortunately, the work in question is out of reach to enrich the present analysis.

The novel copes explicitly with the contemporary Polynesian diaspora, mainly with the migration of Polynesians from rural or insular areas to wealthy Occidentalized city centres. It explores the migratory movement from the country of Western Samoa independent from New Zealand since 1962 to the colonial settler nation, to the city of Wellington. Through the story of a young Samoan reaching the age of twenty-five by the end of the novel are presented major issues that may be experienced in the given specific situation of diaspora. The narrative of the life of the Polynesian demigod Maui progressively intrudes and shows manifest relevance to that particular experience. The action being anchored mainly in New Zealand, the country of diaspora, the author has chosen to refer to the deeds of the mythical character as they are recounted in the Maori oral tradition. Also, the contents of the Samoan version of the myth are much more restrained than the Maori one.

Due to the fact that the reference to the Polynesian heritage emerges and becomes pertinent only later on as a consequence of the circumstances of the given diaspora, it will be necessary to present these lasts at first, and then will it be possible for the analysis of the function of the mythical hero to follow.

The novel is organised into thirty-nine untitled but numbered short chapters that are divided into three thematic parts with an unequal number of chapters – the first part contains the chapters one to twenty-three, the second part, the chapters twenty-four to thirty-two, and the last one presents the remaining seven chapters. The chapters represent individual scenes that span more or less two years and a half in the life of the main character and are comparable to brief scattered movie sequences. The central narrative timeline is interrupted by a number of flashbacks into various periods of time. The third person narration is kept throughout and focalises mostly on the main character and recedes into his childhood and adolescence at some points. All the characters appear without names. They are referred to with personal pronouns as “he” or “she”, or in a general manner as “the boy”, “the girl”, “the man”, “the woman”, “his father” etc. The reasons for the given choice of the author will be elucidated throughout the following analysis. Although several internal reflections of the main character are rendered at critical moments of the story, the narration is limited principally to the action and to dialogues at the expense of the psychology of the characters, and the narrator does not interfere with any comments. It is not astonishing that the novel has been adapted on screen since the narrative technique is convenient for movie adaptations. In several chapters, the other characters also become the narrator’s centre of attention, which gives a variety of perspectives on the story. The selected technique may result from the influences both of Polynesian traditional storytelling and of the procedures of modern prose. For instance, in the chapters two, eleven and thirteen, the focalisation is shifted on the main character’s parents. Also, the narrative strategy intends to explain the circumstances of the diaspora that the main character deals with and to show its manifestations in an even broader spectrum.

Indeed, the main character was five years old when his Samoan parents decided to migrate to New Zealand. The reasons of their departure are illustrative of the scheme of the factual ascending wave of migration initiated since New Zealand became the colonial metropolis of Western Samoa and that reached its peak after the Second World War. The second eldest brother of the main

character's father, a bulldozer driver, starts the move from the native village, first to Apia, the capital city of Western Samoa, and then to Wellington where the job opportunities and the pays are better. Once there, he manages to improve significantly his financial situation, he sends money home and then his wife and children join him. Afterwards, he motivates his other family members to migrate also:

He wrote letters to his family in Samoa, telling them how easy life was in New Zealand – good pay, good schools for the children, and the Samoan church was the fastest growing church in the new land. Sometimes, usually before Christmas, he sent them large sums of money. He bought a house and then wrote and asked the rest of the family to shift to New Zealand. He suggested that one of the older men should come over first, work, and send money back for the next one to come over, and so on.¹⁰⁵

It is only the youngest son, the main character's father who takes the decision to travel to Wellington as well, but for different reasons. Because his wife could not have children and the traditional Samoan cures did not help, they resigned to go to Apia's hospital. It is remarked vehemently that the Occidental medical cares are unknown to Samoan villagers, rarely used and perceived as strange, which indicates the clash between Polynesian rural life and the modern European city lifestyle that is shown permanently throughout the novel. Thanks to the treatment, the wife gives birth to two sons, of which the younger is the main character. The success of the imported knowledge and techniques gives the father the impulse to move to New Zealand:

When his younger son turned five and was ready to begin school, he wrote to his brother in New Zealand. He would forsake for a time the land that he knew, understood, and loved so that his sons could acquire the miraculous knowledge that wonderful doctor had possessed.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Albert Wendt: *Sons for the Return Home*, Penguin Books, Auckland 1973, p. 42

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45

They would work in New Zealand in order to get a better economic and social standing and wait until their sons complete their university degrees to become doctors and then return to Samoa. They consider their migration only as a temporary and necessary exile.

The encounter with the “papalagi” society and lifestyle in Wellington to which every character reacts differently is at the core of the novel. The author studies particularly the case of the young man in question who has left his native island when he was only five years old. In comparison to his two years older brother who becomes a bus driver, he managed to succeed at the English-speaking school and is to complete a Bachelor’s degree at university. Evidently, the hopes with which the parents came to New Zealand are laid into him.

The character’s success is not without conflicts. In the “papalagi” environment in which he receives his education, he is in constant confrontation with the racial prejudices of the New Zealand society inflicted on the Maoris and the Polynesian immigrants. In the fourth chapter is manifested his early acute lucidity over his status of inferiority as a Samoan in a European milieu after the meeting of his parents with his school’s principal. This last wants to congratulate the parents personally because he is the first Samoan to have passed the school leaving exam:

‘...they humiliate you,’ he said to his mother.

‘We’ve been here for nearly thirteen years and they still treat us as strangers. As inferiors.’

‘But they don’t treat you that way,’ his father said. ‘Look at how they’ve helped you get where you are!’

‘Only because they can’t do anything else, Papa. I’m better than them at that stupid game¹⁰⁷ they worship so much. I can compete with the best of them in class as well. I speak their language, their peculiar brand of English, as well as any of them. They have to pretend I’m their equal, that I’m a New Zealander, because they can’t do anything else.’

‘They don’t!’ his mother insisted.

¹⁰⁷ rugby

He was almost crying. ‘Mamma, have you forgotten all the humiliations we’ve had to suffer since we’ve been here? Have you forgotten how they treated my brother? He only spent a year at that school and he wanted to leave. They called him a ‘dirty coconut Islander’, and when he beat up, the kids who called him that, the Principal – the same condescending man who refused to call you by your names today – caned him in front of the whole school and called him “a brainless Islander who should be deported back to the Islands”. Have you forgotten that?’¹⁰⁸

The boy’s familiarity with his native culture and his aptitude to absorb the foreign one makes him more aware than his parents of the racial chiasms between the two groups of people. Indeed, the parents dedicate themselves to manual labour where they do not need to communicate; only Samoan is spoken at home and they have only a modest knowledge of the English language.

The consciousness of his social position makes him gradually close himself to the surrounding “papalagi” society and take emotional interest only in his family and the Samoan community gathered around one common church. As it is emphasized in other works by Albert Wendt, Christian religion brought by the English missionaries has become a fundamental constituent of Samoan cultural identity. As his parents have explained to him since childhood, his stay in New Zealand is only temporary: “Our whole life here is only a preparation for the grand return to our homeland.”¹⁰⁹ Another flashback in the narrative shows the mother describing regularly to her children, especially during the tough winters, their country of origin as an ideal place with mild weather, tropical flora and fauna, clean villages, and people physically strong characterized by their moral principles especially of solidarity and Christian values in comparison to New Zealand’s overcrowded and unhealthy cities inhabited by weak, ill-mannered, individualist and atheistic “papalagi”. She contrives to create within her children an imaginary idealised Samoa:

And so she continued throughout the years, until a new mythology, woven out of her romantic memories, her legends, her illusions, and her prejudices, was born in her

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 13-14

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 40

sons: a new, fabulous Samoa to be attained by her sons when they returned home after surviving the winters of a pagan country. Her husband also contributed to the creation of this Samoa.¹¹⁰

The main character's estrangement from his foreign environment and his indifference to it is expressed straight from the beginning of the novel: he is bored with the university lecture, he goes to the students' cafeteria for lunch and seeks to sit alone at a table. When a New Zealand girl of British descent sits at his table, he ignores her in spite of the fact that she tries to enhance communication. The second day, despite of his repeated reluctance, the same girl tries again to initiate contact with him again at the cafeteria. Through her efforts, she finally manages to make him invite her to the cinema. Leaving the cinema, in spite of her urgings, he refuses to help a man lying unconscious in the street. At their third meeting in the cafeteria initiated once more by the "papalagi" student, she asks him why he didn't help the man in the street. He reveals that he doesn't want "to get involved" emotionally with nobody except his parents and his "own people":

You get involved if you help people. Or hate them.

Or love them.

Yes, or love them.

But what about your parents?

I am involved with them. But only them and my own people.

Then you do feel something for someone.

Yes.

What about all those other two-legged creatures outside your chosen circle? (...)

They can take care of themselves.

It is because most of them are white – pakeha?

That has something to do with it.

Racist.

True. Very true. They turned me into one.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 76

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 17

The main character's distance shows to be a mechanism of auto-defence. However, the attention of the young lady and her apparent non-conformism weakens gradually his detachment and he tells her after a few days of internal struggle: "I like you. And I want to get involved."¹¹² It arises later on that she, who characterizes herself as "the spoilt daughter of a businessman (...) stingy with money"¹¹³, is interested in a member of a minority group due to the fact that she shares the same feeling of estrangement from her own milieu, which makes her uncaring of the social norms imposed from it and search to identify with something different.

Still, the affective involvement with the "papalagi" girl that the Samoan opts for and the developing love relationship between them imply that they have to cope with their differing and opposed cultural backgrounds. Their liaison represents a challenge. On each side, they have to deal with the prejudices and stereotypes incarnated into their conservative parents and their respective social groups. Individual chapters are dedicated to the encounters of the pair with the New Zealand and Samoan parents and their introduction into their respective communities, which are moments of crisis of their relationship: he has to face directly the racial humiliation of her people and she has to learn "what it's like to be part of a minority group"¹¹⁴ as a "papalagi" within his Samoan community. The clothing, the manners and above all their ethnic origins determine the way they are perceived from the other side. Due to their mutual understanding and affection they both make efforts to overcome one another's differences and to get integrated into each other's background, which shows to be a highly difficult process.

It is during their trip into the central area of the North Island around the lake Taupo that the lovers are liberated from the external pressures of their societies. It is in the open nature that they are permitted to give free course to their emotions. As soon as some of the young woman's friends appear in her

¹¹² Ibid., p. 19

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 8

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 63

parents' country house where they are staying or that they return to the city that the difficulties reappear.

Nevertheless, the relationship with the New Zealander began since the beginning of summer transforms the Samoan and makes him progressively accept his initially adversary environment by the end of the first part of the novel: "Christmas sang in the heart of the city. And he felt at home in it for the first time in his life."¹¹⁵

In the second part of the novel, the young man realises that he has accepted the girl entirely, that she is now a part of him, and that through her and his love for her, he has opened himself to the "papalagi" world:

For you, she has become an extension of who and what you have grown into through knowing her. Without her, you would be much less than you are now. As you walk the main street of this city which, through loving her, you have learnt to accept, (...) this is what your heart tells you. She is you; the very pores of your breath. Without her, this city, this country, would be a barren place of exile.¹¹⁶

However, the given insight is aroused directly after there unexpectedly emerges the possibility that he may lose her, that she may not accept him in the same way as he did. The young lady announces to him that she is pregnant, and she doesn't acquiesce directly to his marriage proposal formulated as soon as he learns the news. According to her, her parents had married not out of love but for social reasons, because her mother was pregnant with her. She has always suffered from the lack of love between her parents. She fears that if her boyfriend and she get married because of the child, their relationship might become like her parents' one and they might be unhappy. She affirms that to have an abortion and then get married might be a solution.

The achieved internal transformation of the main character and the recognition of the affection he feels for his lover and the sudden possible loss of her and their child compels him to start to think about the sense of existence,

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 52

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 129

about the relationship between life and death. Until then, he felt truly alive, not only “involved” but “committed totally” through love. However, his commitment suddenly collapses and he puts into question the meaning of love that has filled him with life, which makes him suddenly conscious of his mortality and of the transience of existence. It gives him an insight into the human condition:

Loving her and knowing to the frightened quick of your bones that you can now lose her, has made you fearfully aware for the first time of the impermanence of all things and the finality of life: that even love – the most precious feeling we can have for one another – can die or be destroyed. But you have no choice. You are committed totally, for love commits one totally to life and to death.

The shift from the third person narration to the second person narration that occurs in the given passage accentuates the moment of deep self-reflection that the character goes through and shows at the same time that on the background of the third person narration centred on the young man lies actually a first person narration. Also, it is during that internal monologue that the story of the main character and the tale of the Polynesian mythical hero Maui start to merge. The young man engages for the first time in an identification of himself with Maui: in the final episode of the demigod’s quest for immortality in which the cycle of life and death connected with love is manifest. According to the myth, Maui has to enter the vagina of the sleeping giant goddess of death, Hine-nui-te-po, and emerge from her mouth in order to gain immortality. However, the laughter of the fantail awakes the goddess who smashes Maui within her womb. His efforts have been vain, he dies and all his descendants will remain mortal forever. The main character feels to be in a similar situation as Maui, the “commitment” through love that he has achieved towards the girl but also towards the country brings him the awareness of his mortality and of the inevitable separation with his lover now or one day or the other:

Why now do you suddenly think of Maui's fate? Of his death in the womanhood of Hine-nui-te-Po? Perhaps Maui was, after all, deeply in love with the death-goddess, and it was that love which made him wholly mortal and destroyed him.¹¹⁷

It is important to note that the main character's reference to his mythical ancestor in the given critical moment indicates his strong affiliation to his Polynesian heritage.

Already during their communal journey within the volcanic region of the North Island recounted in the first part of the novel – designated by the Maoris “Te ika a Maui” or “Maui's fish” that the demigod had fished from the depths of the sea according to the Polynesian oral tradition – the main character had related the myths about the creation of the first woman called Hine-ahu-one out of earth by the god Tane, of the goddess of death Hine-nui-te-po, and of Maui. According to the main character “...the absurdity of life was at the core of all Polynesian myths and was especially evident in the saga of Maui, the legendary Maori hero.”¹¹⁸ In his opinion, Maui's heroic efforts to improve the quality of life as the slowing of the motion of the sun for the humans to have more time for their daily activities, his bringing of fire to cook food, the creation of new spaces to inhabit and his ultimate intent to achieve immortality appear as useless since he fails to overcome death. The recounting of the myth of Maui to the beloved girl was supposed to illustrate their previous discussion about the inter-racial issues that both had come through. The Samoan accepted that the relationship with the girl helped him to overcome his racial prejudices that now seemed to him as “absurd”.

The realisation of the senselessness of his preconceived ideas about his country of diaspora, the fact that the relationship in which he has “committed” himself might have an end and, therefore, be meaningless, and the analogies he starts to draw between himself and Maui whose story he characterizes as “absurd” announce the main character's gradual adoption of a consciousness of

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 129

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 99

the absurdity of life as the French philosopher Albert Camus expresses it in his work.

From that moment, the correspondences with the episode of Maui's encounter with the death-goddess progressively intensify and acquire more meaning in the novel. The three women that appear in the work assume more and more resemblance with the death-goddess Hine-nui-te-po. Already in the twelfth chapter, during the beginning relationship, the young man had made an explicit comparison of his girlfriend to her as a joke: "'The Maori Death-Goddess,' he said, with a laugh. 'I think she looked like you. Only she was 'coloured', as the natives in this reservation would say.'"¹¹⁹ The joke anticipated the tragic end of their love relationship that is depicted in the second part of the novel: the girl will leave for Australia in order to get an abortion without the consent of her boyfriend and by doing this, end their relationship against his will, which corresponds to the destruction of Maui by Hine-nui-te-po. The girlfriend also appeared as a bearer of death during their trip: while the main character was contemplating alone the flight of a hawk at dawn and reminding his ancestral beliefs that assign godly qualities to animals, she killed the hawk with a rifle.

Both mothers of the loving couple show to be strongly prejudiced and opposing categorically the relationship, contrary to the fathers who try to accept the choice of their children and who play the role of harmonizers. While the fathers have given consent to the marriage and to the child, it is the Samoan mother who, abusing of her influence over the girl, advises her to get the abortion that causes the decisive separation of the lovers. The agreement between the mother and the young woman is kept secret and the main character learns it until the penultimate chapter: he considers his mother's act as a betrayal not only of himself but also of the "fa'a Samoa" or of the Samoan values. He breaks the Samoan taboo between parent and child, denies his mother and hits her, which he feels as a liberating gesture: "The sharp final slap of his forgiving hand across her face broke open the womb of his grief and guilt, and he was free at last."¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 47

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 215

The image of the womb in the quotation refers again to the encounter of Hine-nui-te-po with Maui: the main character liberates from his sense of guilt and from his mother who is revealed to be responsible for the death of their child and his love relationship. The analogy between the Samoan mother and the death-goddess is emphasized further when Albert Wendt takes liberties in recounting the myth of the creation of the first woman by Tane and their descendants through the mouth of his main character:

So his [Tane's] creation comes to be known as SHE, the first Woman. And Tane and She fall to the sand and make thunderous music. (...) Soon Woman she gives birth to another She who in time becomes more beautiful than her mother. (...) So Tane he looks for variety with his daughter. One night Woman hears her adulterous mate mating with her other self, so to speak biblically. She is jealous and horrified. (Incest is no laughing matter!) So she flees to the underworld, and is given legal permission by the gods to return to earth and destroy all the fruit of Tane and his daughter's incestuous but highly enjoyable union. She insists that the gods must give her god-status and a title befitting that rank. So they deify her as 'Hine-nui-te-Po'. (...) But Tane's incest also led to man's death, to our own death.¹²¹

However, contrary to the recounting of the main character, according to the oral tradition, it is the daughter of the first woman and of Tane, and not the first woman or the mother, who retires to the underworld and who has become the goddess of death. The daughter, Hine-nui-te-po, does so when she realises that she has had incestuous relationships with her own father. Through the given interchange, Albert Wendt makes more evident the role he gives to his character's mother. Moreover, he develops further the sense of the impermanence of all things that pervades the novel: a mother gives life but with it, also death.

In the third part of the novel that relates the "grand return" after "twenty years of exile" of the Samoan family, that occurs after the separation of the lovers, the images of the native island nourished by the main character's mother while in New Zealand break down also when he confronts it with the reality.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 101

In her idealised descriptions, his mother did not prepare him for the real conditions of life in the tropical village: the flies and mosquitoes, the poor sanitary conditions, the constant noise of the cicadas, flying-foxes, dogs, and of the number of familiar people living communally: “They were all round him, enveloping him in their chatter, laughter, crying, arguing, growing, movement, especially the children.”¹²² When he gets sick due to the local food, he starts to observe Samoan life and to undo the idealised images that he had received:

He tried to recapture the gaiety of the first week but failed. It was as if he had vomited it all out. His mind was analysing the life around him, cutting down through the glittering surface of the myths to the bone. For a few days he tried to stop himself from doing this. Then he gave up; he had to be honest with himself. To deny his thoughts would be to deny a major part of what he was. One had to be honest even with paradise.¹²³

While his other family members manage to integrate happily into the village life, he feels again estranged from everything that is going on around him. Also, like in New Zealand where he was perceived different being a Samoan, now there he is considered by the others as “the very papalagi son”¹²⁴. While in New Zealand, he spoke of Samoans as “his people”, now “...it was more difficult for him to refer to them as his people because he was now more papalagi than Samoan...”¹²⁵ He becomes conscious of the fact that, paradoxically, even in his native land, he arises as a stranger: he is entrapped between the contradictory feelings of “alienation” and “belonging”. His expectations to retie with his ancestral heritage in Samoa are deceived when he sees his family members transform: they import the New Zealand lifestyle there, they suddenly start to speak English among their people and they behave like distinguished and wealthy Samoans that have succeeded in “the country that God had forsaken”¹²⁶ paradoxically in spite of the fact that they manifest ardently their piousness. His

¹²² Ibid., p. 176

¹²³ Ibid., p. 175

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 176

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 177

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 216

deception culminates when he learns that his mother had even acted against the “fa’a Samoa” itself when she recommended the abortion to his beloved girl.

The internal conflicts that these learned realities effect are later pacified by the discovery of the person and past life of his dead grand-father with whom he is able to identify at last: also a divided man who could not belong anywhere, and who presents evident similarities with Maui, also internally divided between his manly and godly nature.

The premature birth of the grand-father as a “clot of blood” abandoned by the mother is analogous to Maui’s birth whose mother Taranga casts him out to the ocean where he is nurtured by the god of the sea Tangaroa or by the sea flora and fauna according to the various transcriptions, and then by the ancestor Tamani-te rangi. Similarly, the grand-father was taken over and nurtured by his grand-mother, gifted with healing skills and supernatural powers, which she transmitted to the child. Like Maui, the grand-father’s childhood predetermines him to be different from the others, doted of unique qualities. Since the grand-father was a continuator of the local traditions and beliefs in a society that was being evangelised, he defied the current accepted civilisation norms, and due to that, he was “alienated” from his own people in spite of the fact that he was consulted when healing remedies were needed. In the same way, Maui’s parents and brothers have difficulties in accepting him among themselves due to his different physical appearance and skills.

When the main character cannot bear the anxiety he feels in Samoa and announces to his father his decision to return to New Zealand, he has a sense of guilt because he has failed to fulfil his parents’ dreams and is “betraying (...) the twenty years they had spent in exile so that he could get a good education.”¹²⁷ He had already deceived their hopes once when he revealed that due to his lack of capacities in sciences he could not study medicine to become a doctor as his parents had wanted and that he studied history instead. His father accepts the someway expected decision of his son and compares him to his own father or the

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 191

grand-father. The drawn comparison suggests that the main character is also analogous to the hybrid Maui:

‘You look like him too. You’ve always reminded me of him. Even more so now that I’ve watched you trying to live in Samoa. But I’ve never told you that before (...) Because, even though I loved him and admired him and thought him a very courageous man, I didn’t really want you to turn out like him. True, I wanted you to be a doctor, a healer, like him. But I didn’t want you to turn out like him as a man. (...) Like him you see too clearly. And, because of that, like him you will never be happy with things as they are. Like him you will always be in permanent exile. You will never belong anywhere. (...) In exile you acquired the same gift that he had – the gift, the curse, that stops you from belonging to anybody or anything. To belong, to feel really needed, you would have to destroy the very gift which keeps you strong, free, separate from us weaker, more human, human beings.’¹²⁸

The ideas about his native country created through the mother’s recounting and his acquaintance with mythology in which he had enclosed himself so many years emerge as being no longer valid in the contemporary Samoa. The ancestral Samoa to which he has bound himself through his identification with Maui and his grand-father does not exist any longer. The awareness of his permanent solitary status of a stranger makes him opt for being a stranger rather in the foreign country of diaspora than to be a stranger in his mother country.

He buries his past and goes through a momentary internal death during his flight back to his adoptive country:

...he no longer felt any sensation of motion; it was as if the plane was now fixed forever in a placid timeless sea between his past and his future, and he had nothing to lose. He lay back in his seat. He didn’t know why he was going back, but even then that didn’t seem important any longer.

In addition to that, the consciousness of mortality attained through the experience of love and its loss caused mainly by the ambivalent bigotry of his

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 204

mother makes him see the meaninglessness and the illusory rationality of the daily activities, efforts and convictions of men. He sees in the Samoan migrating people in the plane, of which he was once part, the vanity of their ambitious quest to secure their faint lives and their illogical dreams:

But, as the plane continued to defeat fate, to maintain a haughty equilibrium above the chasm below struggling to suck it down, the promise of the future and their dreams of lucrative jobs, money, houses, cars, a good education for their children, calmed their fears, gave meaning to their journey into what they believed would be only a temporary exile from which they would return unharmed, unchanged, rich.¹²⁹

It is possible to say that through his complex experience, the knowledge of his double nature and of his lasting position of a stranger, the character has attained the consciousness of the existential human lot, which means to live in the constant bipolarity of two worlds and of life generally. After all, his own fate is the same as that of the demigod Maui: he writes it down on a tourist brochure “*And Hine-nui-te-Po woke up and found him in there. And she crossed her legs and thus ended man’s quest for immortality*”¹³⁰. The consciousness of the absurdity of his situation and of life generally enables him to be free of all the endured heavy difficulties of the life in diaspora and to commune with the world finally: “He had nothing to regret; nothing to look forward to. All was well. He was alive; at a new beginning. He was free of his dead.”¹³¹

It enables him to feel happiness, and he comes to identify himself entirely with his mythical ancestor: “He imagined Maui to have been happy in his death.”¹³²

By this closing sentence, Albert Wendt completes the parallel between the story of his character identifying himself with Maui and Camus’ interpretation of the myth of Sisyphus. It is a direct allusion to the essay “The Myth of Sisyphus, An Essay on the Absurd” (1942), in which Camus compares human life to

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 216

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 217

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 217

¹³² Ibid., p. 217

Sisyphus' lot: the repetitive rolling of a boulder on the peak of a hill from where it rolls down again. In his interpretation of the myth, Camus asks about the meaning of this continual activity that leads to no achievement. His response is: "We must imagine Sisyphus being happy"¹³³, because the sole consciousness of the uselessness of his effort or of the absurdity of his situation makes him superior to it and enables him to experience a paradoxical happiness.

Albert Wendt's Samoan character – that can be regarded as the portrait the author claiming: "Going home keeps reasserting the central fact of my existence that I am an outsider permanently"¹³⁴ – divided through his complex experience of diaspora finds a way out by reference both to the Polynesian inherited myth of Maui and at the same time to the Occidental existentialism. It is his "in-betweenness" that gives him the privilege to make an analogy between Camus' interpretation of the Greco-Roman mythological character of Sisyphus with his own Polynesian mythological hero Maui and create mutual parallels between cultures that are apparently so distinct in order to grasp and define his proper cultural identity. Albert Wendt intentionally does not give a name to his character in order to express with more strength the lot of a person living in diaspora.

The author's reference to the French writer Albert Camus shows his interest in the European literary heritage, which is demonstrated also in the selected narrative techniques that, as it has been viewed, are inspired from the Polynesian oral tradition but also from the modern prose of writers such as James Joyce or William Faulkner. It is necessary to take into account that Albert Wendt has also taught English literature at university.

¹³³ Albert Camus: *Le mythe de Sisyphe*, Éditions Gallimard, France 1942, p. 166 (my translation)

¹³⁴ Albert Wendt: "In a Stone Castle in the South Seas", in Sonia Lacabanne, *Les premiers romans polynésiens: naissance d'une littérature de langue anglaise*, p. 138

Comparison of the analysed works

Although the three analysed works present differences firstly in terms of the genre: two prose fictions and a collection of poetry, it is possible to draw many fundamental parallels between them.

The two novels are both the first novels of the writers and have been published in the same year, in 1973, or in the period of the birth of Polynesian literature in English. In spite of the fact that *Tangi* is characterized by its dominant lyricism and *Sons for the Return Home* is concentrated on the action and has a pronounced epic character, their structure and narrative techniques show important resemblances. The novels are both organised into untitled but numbered short chapters that correspond to individual scenes that follow one another quite rapidly and that provide various narrative timelines. The strategy enables the comparison of the individual chapters to film sequences. Even though *Tangi* presents a first person narrator and *Sons for the Return Home* a third person narrator, it has been viewed that the first person narration is immanent in the third person narration of the second novel.

The Dark Lord of Savaiki has been published later than the novels, when Polynesian literature in English was already growing, and is not the first published work of the poet. However, it is also a landmark work for Alistair Te Ariki Campbell because it is his first poetry collection that may be identified as Polynesian. It is interesting to remark that the poems are also numbered, although they have a title in addition. They may also be compared to individual scenes or sequences. Moreover, they present as well an embedded epic line in which the poet appears both in the first person singular and the third person singular as “the dark lord”.

The selected narrative techniques of the prose writers and the formal choices of the poet may be considered as an attempt at a synthesis of the devices of the Polynesian oral tradition and of the procedures of Occidental modern poetics.

The three works are related principally by their reference to particular segments of the common Polynesian mythology. In spite of the fact that each author works differently with the oral tradition, they assign essential functions to the selected myths within the structure and the contents of their works.

The three works display critical moments in the lives of the two fictive characters and the poet. They are all in a situation of diaspora: they have left their Polynesian rural native places and live in Occidentalised urban centres of New Zealand. The works capture the precise moment when they are mercilessly confronted to their foreign environment, and feel an urgent need to find out their roots and identity. The experiences that trigger and develop the internal search are death, love, and the return home. They lead the protagonists to reach a higher level of consciousness and to form and adopt a proper cultural identity that enable them to initiate a new cycle of their lives. In the novels of Witi Ihimera and Albert Wendt, the acquisition of identity is accompanied by the achievement of maturity of the two young men. In Alistair Te Ariki Campbell's case, the acknowledgement of his Polynesian identity brings peace to the fifty-four years old poet. Thus, the inherited Polynesian patrimony proves to be an invaluable reference for the protagonists to cope with the difficulties they encounter and in their inner quest of themselves. The individual segments of the ancient oral tradition show to be deeply relevant in the dealing with the problems of contemporary post-colonial Polynesian life expressed in literature and their span of meaning is significantly broadened by the writers.

The quest of identity that is at the core of the three analysed works is expressed in the narrative personae and the names of the characters. Tama Mahana that means "child" and "day" shows to be a type name, the main character of *Sons for the Return Home* does not have a name, and the poet in *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* appears as "I" but shows to be "the dark lord of Savaiki" at the same time. As Alistair Te Ariki Campbell is identifiable with the lyrical subject of *The Dark Lord of Savaiki*, so may the fictive characters of Witi Ihimera and Albert Wendt be the reflections of the authors themselves.

On the basis of the mythological references, the three authors give alternative responses to the problems of the contemporary Polynesian cultural identity in the context of diaspora. Witi Ihimaera's character seems to retie with his Maoritanga in which he finds himself and chooses to leave the "pakeha" city in order to return home. The return to the native island shows to be beneficial for Alistair Te Ariki Campbell since it helps him to discover the other constituent part of himself and to accept his double identity of New Zealander and Polynesian. The rest of his life is marked by his constant move between New Zealand and Tongareva. However, the return home where the traditional values are being replaced by an odd form of "mimicry" of the European lifestyle is denied to the unnamed character of Albert Wendt's novel who realises that his identity lies in remaining "an outsider permanently".

The quest of identity awakens broader interrogations on the meaning of life and death generally and issues in the awareness of the bipolarity of life. The binaries of life and death, darkness and light, the past and the future, and the transition between those poles, are the recurrent motives of the three works and convey the Polynesian cyclical conception of life.

As a last remark, it may be said that the authors innovate their Polynesian heritage not only in terms of the thematic contents of their works but also by their formal choices that are inspired from the Polynesian orality. Moreover, the modern techniques of the Occidental literary canons show to be also a great source of inspiration. Therefore, the analysed works manifest the tendency to syncretism selected as a means to "recreate" post-colonial Polynesian literature and culture.

Conclusion

Ka pu te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi.

Maori proverb

The diploma thesis has endeavoured to introduce Polynesian literature in English into the Czech context in the perspective of the two driving principles of heritage and innovation that seem to characterize it most typically.

Polynesian literature in English has been defined as a post-colonial literature written by indigenous writers living in the former colonies of Great Britain in the geo-cultural area of Polynesia. The selected Polynesian authors have chosen English as their language of expression. The post-colonial literary area has been outlined according to its geographical, ethnical, cultural, historical, political and linguistic characteristics. Polynesian literature in English sprang in the 1960's as the articulation of the autochthons' resistance against the manifestations of colonial hegemony, political or cultural, and at the same time, as the expression of their struggle for self-assertion and independence.

It has been claimed that the post-colonial situation of the Polynesian Islanders, from Samoa, the Cook Islands, or Tonga, is different from that of the New Zealand Maoris who represent a minority in the settler nation of New Zealand. In spite of that difference, their literatures have been studied jointly because they have grown together, have developed analogous approaches to their respective post-colonial situations and spring from the common Polynesian heritage, explained in the chapter about the Polynesian diaspora. Together they initiated a unified pan-Polynesian movement that was the outcome of the broader pan-Pacific movement begun earlier in the other areas of the Pacific. Therefore, Pacific literature in English provides the theoretical framework to Polynesian literature in English: through the "inside out" dialectics, it offers alternative ways how to cope with the colonial heritage, how to form a new literary tradition and culture and how to find a new autochthonous cultural identity. It invites to a creative syncretism of the indigenous and colonial heritages. The exposition of

the Pacific post-colonial theory has shown that it has been influenced by the theories developed by other post-colonial writers such as Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said or Paul Gilroy and that such theories can be usefully applied to it.

The successive publications of the anthologies, first of Pacific, and then of Polynesian literature in English have been decisive moments in the determination of these new and affiliated literatures.

It has been observed that in the region of Oceania, the Polynesian triangle presents the most homogenous group of islands in terms of ethnicity, culture and language because its inhabitants have spread from one common island called Hawaiki, which is the Maori variant of the name. The pan-Polynesian movement is founded on the shared diasporic past. The problems linked to the contemporary diaspora have also been presented and are illustrated concretely in the analyses of the works by the three representative Polynesian writers Witi Ihimaera, Alistair Te Ariki Campbell and Albert Wendt.

In the second part of the thesis, the Polynesian oral tradition that is a fundamental creative source for the contemporary indigenous writers has been sketched. It has been shown that it is possible to consider the beginning of the Polynesian written tradition in the vernacular languages already in the nineteenth century, or approximately a century after the arrival of the Christian missionaries. It was used mainly as a means to record the decaying oral tradition. However, the publication of fiction in the English language can be dated only to the middle of the twentieth century. The birth and the early development of Polynesian literature in English have been outlined through the survey of the first generation of authors and their founding works. The exposition of the reasons of their choice of English as their language of written expression and the study of their stylistic use of it have shown that the writers have opted for an “inter-language”. The Polynesian words and phrases intrude into the English text and the morphological, grammatical and syntactic structures of the Polynesian languages are blended with those of English. The writers’ choices are not to be confounded with a mere transference of elements from one language into another nor with a

transcription of the language spoken in the respective islands because they are the result of a real stylistic invention. In the same way, the manner in which the writers incorporate the Polynesian oral tradition into the imported literary moulds of poetry, the short story, the novel, or drama issue in the formation of an “oraliture” in which is manifested the writers’ creative potential. At the same time, it manifests their will to synthesise the two cultural heritages, the indigenous and the colonial, and their opting for an “inter-culture”.

The analyses of the two novels *Tangi* and *Sons for the Return Home* and of the poetry collection *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* illustrate concretely the new literature presented theoretically in the first two parts. They represent landmark works in the birth and development of Polynesian literature in English and enact its main concerns. By their form and contents, they enhance a new literature that responds to Albert Wendt’s proposed solution to the Polynesian cultural identity: “Our quest should not be for a revival of our past cultures but for the creation of new cultures which are free of the taint of colonialism and based firmly in our own past.”¹³⁵

The analyses manifest how the three authors treat the problems of the contemporary Polynesian post-colonial society and culture by the use of borrowed literary forms and by reference to the inherited Polynesian oral tradition. The individual mythological segments are assigned central functions in the structure of the works and represent essential points of reference for the characters of the novels and the poet dealing with the issues related to their situation of diaspora. They are all on a journey physical and internal that results in the discovery of a possible solution to the question of their cultural identity entrapped between two worlds. In this process, the Polynesian heritage is their major reference. The effectuated introduction of the Polynesian oral tradition into the works of contemporary fiction in English dealing with the post-colonial problematic innovates the indigenous heritage. It testifies that syncretism is indeed the selected means of cultural recreation of the Polynesian writers. The synthesis of the two heritages is also made apparent in the chosen literary

¹³⁵ Albert Wendt: “Towards a New Oceania”, p. 644

techniques that blend procedures both from the indigenous oral tradition and from the modern European literary canons, or, for instance, in the created parallels between the philosophy of the French writer Albert Camus and the Polynesian myth of Maui in the novel *Sons for the Return Home*. The use of the imported language, literary moulds, techniques, and references in the indigenous literature expressing the new Polynesian identity removes indeed the underlying colonial content from these. Still, the Polynesian myths remain central and provide the answers to the questions of identity because the “new cultures” must be “based firmly in our own pasts.”

To conclude, it is necessary to repeat that the objective of the thesis has been to map the *hic sunt leones* terrain of the new literature in English in order to introduce it into the Czech background. The thesis only opens the field for further investigations that should complete, specify and deepen the portrait of Polynesian literature in English that has only been sketched here, first, due to the reduced space available and, secondly, because of the lack of accessible primary and secondary materials.

For example, it would be important to have at disposal and to study the works of the primary initiators of Polynesian literature in English, that is Florence Johnny Frisbie and Tom Davis. Moreover, the works of the other first generation writers such as Hone Tuwhare, Patricia Grace, Keri Hulme and Kauraka Kauraka deserve as well a thorough analysis from the point of view of the theme of heritage and innovation. Also, it has not been possible in the thesis to outline the subsequent development of Polynesian literature in English through the study of the works of the new generation of writers born in the 1960's such as John Pule, Sia Figiel or Robert Sullivan. It would be useful to examine whether they continue in the same path as their predecessors studied here and carry on with the same principles of heritage and innovation or whether they have selected a completely new direction.

In addition to that, Polynesian literature in English offers many more possible angles of view from which it may be studied. For example, the three analysed works and the myths provide Polynesian perspectives on the

problematics of gender. The theme of the mother figure is particularly prevailing in the three works. The representation of the mother as the “earth” or “the foundation” in *Tangi* or as “the native land” in *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* depicts the traditional Polynesian strong relationship between a child and his mother and, by analogy, the land, which is concretized in the custom of burying the placenta in the earth after a child’s birth. The given key function of the mother goes hand in hand with the quest of identity going on in the three works. The emphasized Polynesian tie between a child and a mother is shown through the manifest dominant status of the mothers in the three works and, particularly in *Sons for the Return Home* and the myth of Maui where the theme is related to fertility and sterility. The given bond belongs to the basic archetypal relationships already in ancient Polynesian society and the analysed works give evidence of the fact that it is valid until today. It has also been viewed that the women’s power of conceiving life is in addition interwoven with death. The link between the mother and the earth, the child, as well as life and death may be found also, for example, in Czech modern literature, starting from the poet Karel Hynek Mácha (see. B. Fučík, *Píseň o zemi*). It indicates that the Polynesian archetypal mother figure corresponds to the main archetypes of human civilisation generally.

Therefore, it would be interesting to explore further how Polynesian literature in English and its theory deal with gender issues. For example, Witi Ihimaera’s novel *The Whale Rider* challenges the Polynesian tradition of inheritance of chieftain titles that is reserved to the first born males when the author makes the first-born girl Kahu the inheritor of the title of chief. Also, it has been viewed that women writers such as Patricia Grace, Keri Hulme or Sia Figiel are constituents of the body of the literature in question. An inquiry into the gender representations provided in their works would significantly enrich the given problematics.

The literature by Anglophone indigenous writers from the Polynesian territories of the United States of America such as Hawai’i or American Samoa, have been omitted because they present a different colonial background and, consequently, dissimilar anti-colonial claims in spite of the fact that they share

the same diasporic heritage. There was not enough space in the present work to compass the complexities of the two post-colonial situations reflected in the literary works. However, it would be important in the future to complete the study of Polynesian literature in English provided here with the study of the literature of the given geo-political area.

Finally, the Francophone Polynesians have also started a literature of their own in French. Although they present a different post-colonial situation and have undergone a different cultural influence, their work is also affiliated to Polynesian literature in English because they draw their creativity from the innovating synthesis of their colonial legacy and the common Polynesian diasporic heritage. The comparison of the Polynesian literatures in English and in French would bring new and inspiring perspectives on the subject.

Therefore, the thesis is only a completed carved canoe to be embarked on and put to sea for the exploration of the other areas of contemporary Polynesian literature.

I have introduced the thesis with a motto taken from Peter Buck's book *Vikings of the Pacific* in which the author articulates, already in 1938, his worries about the future of the Polynesian civilisation. Through the selected authors and the analyses of their works, I have attempted to point out that indeed "the gods have not departed". Less than a quarter of a century later, Polynesian culture has started being "recreated", not only through Polynesian literature in English, but also through the revitalization of the vernacular languages or through the arts. A new Polynesian culture that ensures the continuity with the old one is being constructed: a new net is being woven.

The same expresses the ancient Maori proverb *Ka pu te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi* that means "The old net is laid aside, a new net goes fishing", to which Witi Ihimaera, the author of *Tangi*, directly responds in his collection of short stories *The New Net Goes Fishing*: "A new generation takes the place of the old..."

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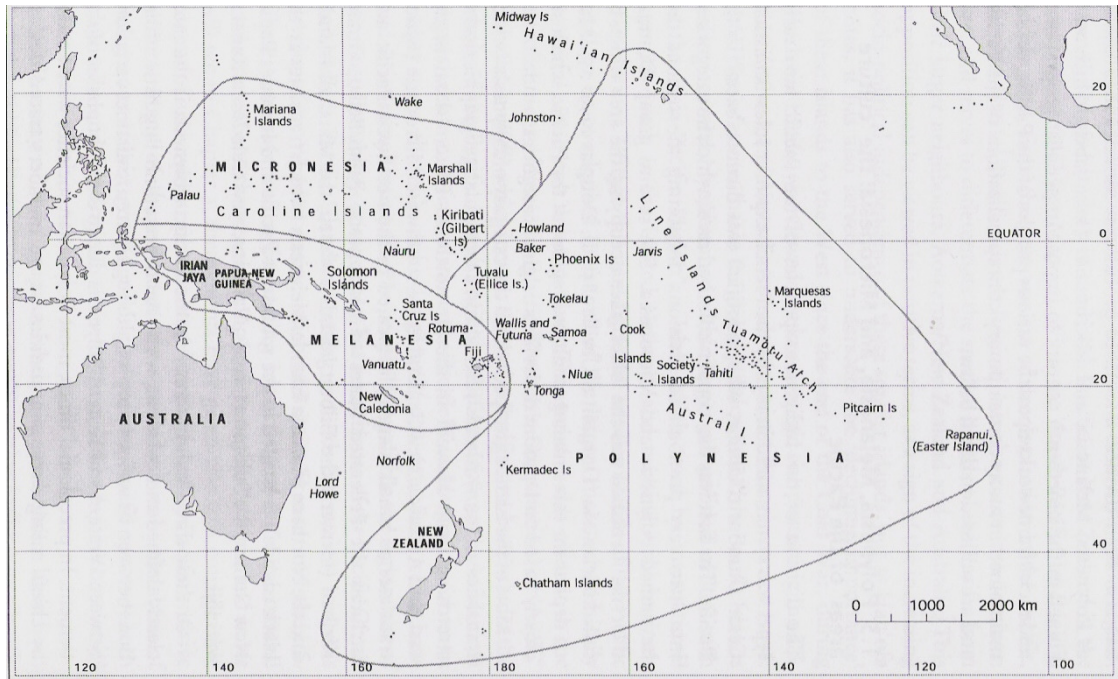
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Appendices:

- I *Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia, the geo-cultural areas of the Pacific*, in Michelle Keown: *Pacific Islands Writing, The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa / New Zealand and Oceania*, Oxford University Press, New York 2007, p. 14
- II *States and territories of Polynesia*, detail from a contemporary map representing the states and territories of Oceania, selection of entries of the table and my translation from French, in www.wikipedia.fr, 2007
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- IV *The Children of Heaven and Earth*, in Sir George Grey: *Polynesian mythology and ancient traditional history of the New Zealanders as furnished by their priests and chiefs*, George Routledge and Sons, New York 1906, pp. 1-10

V *The Legend of Maui*, in Sir George Grey: *Polynesian mythology and ancient traditional history of the New Zealanders as furnished by their priests and chiefs*, George Routledge and Sons, New York 1906, pp. 11-41

I



Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia, the geo-cultural areas of the Pacific

II



States and territories of Polynesia

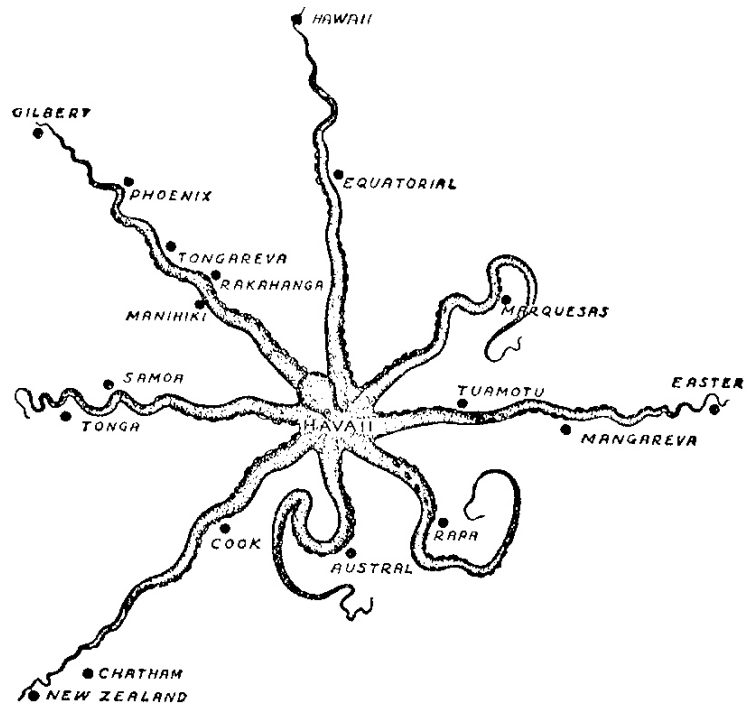
Independent states of Polynesia:

- (2) 🇫🇮 Cook Islands (in free association with New Zealand)
- (4) 🇰🇮 Kiribati
- (8) 🇳🇺 Niue (in free association with New Zealand)
- (9) 🇳🇿 New Zealand
- (13) 🇸🇲 Samoa
- (14) 🇹🇴 Tonga
- (15) 🇹🇺 Tuvalu

Non-independent states or territories with special status or high degree of autonomy in Polynesia:

- (21) 🇨🇱 Easter Island – Special territory of Chile
- (22) 🇬🇧 Pitcairn Islands – British Overseas territory
- (23) 🇫🇷 French Polynesia – Overseas collectivity of France
- (24) 🇺🇸 American Samoa – unincorporated territory of the U. S. A.
- (25) 🇳🇿 Tokelau – territory of New Zealand
- (26) 🇫🇷 Wallis-and-Futuna – Overseas collectivity of France
- (28) 🇺🇸 Hawai‘i – State of the U.S.A.

III



The migrations of Polynesians from Hawaiki represented as an octopus

IV

The Children of Heaven and Earth

Ko nga tama a Rangi – Tradition relating to the origin of the human race

Men had but one pair of primitive ancestors; they sprang from the vast heaven that exists above us, and from the earth which lies beneath us. According to the traditions of our race, Rangi and Papa, or Heaven and Earth, were the source from which, in the beginning, all things originated. Darkness then rested upon the heaven and upon the earth, and they still both clave together, for they had not yet been rent apart; and the children they had begotten were ever thinking amongst themselves what might be the difference between darkness and light; they knew that beings had multiplied and increased, and yet light had never broken upon them, but it ever continued dark. Hence these sayings are found in our ancient religious services: ‘There was darkness from the first division of time, unto the tenth, to the hundredth, to the thousandth’, that is, for a vast space of time; and these divisions of times were considered as beings, and were each termed a Po; and on their account there was as yet no world with its bright light, but darkness only for the beings which existed.

At last the beings who had been begotten by Heaven and Earth, worn out by the continued darkness, consulted amongst themselves, saying: ‘Let us now determine what we should do with Rangi and Papa, whether it would be better to slay them or to rend them apart.’ Then spoke Tu-matauenga, the fiercest of the children of Heaven and Earth: ‘It is well, let us slay them.’

Then spake Tane-mahuta, the father of forests and of all things that inhabit them, or that are constructed from trees: ‘Nay, not so. It is better to rend them apart, and to let the heaven stand far above us, and the earth lie under our feet. Let the sky become as a stranger to us, but the earth remain close to us as our nursing mother.’

The brothers all consented to this proposal, with the exception of Tawhiri-ma-tea, the father of winds and storms, and he, fearing that his kingdom was

about to be overthrown, grieved greatly at the thought of his parents being torn apart. Five of the brothers willingly consented to the separation of their parents, but one of them would not agree to it.

Hence, also, these sayings of old are found in our prayers: 'Darkness, darkness, light, light, the seeking, the searching, in chaos, in chaos'; these signified the way in which the offspring of heaven and earth sought for some mode of dealing with their parents, so that human beings might increase and live.

So, also, these sayings of old time. 'The multitude, the length', signified the multitude of the thoughts of the children of Heaven and Earth, and the length of time they considered whether they should slay their parents, that human beings might be called into existence; for it was in this manner that they talked and consulted amongst themselves.

But at length their plans having been agreed on, lo, Rongo-ma-tane, the god and father of the cultivated food of man, rises up, that he may rend apart the heavens and the earth; he struggles, but he rends them not apart. Lo, next, Tangaroa, the god and father of fish and reptiles, rises up, that he may rend apart the heavens and the earth; he also struggles, but he rends them not apart. Lo, next, Haumia-tikitiki, the god and father of the food of man which springs without cultivation, rises up and struggles, but ineffectually. Lo, then, Tumatapu, the god and father of fierce human beings, rises up and struggles, but he, too, fails in his efforts. Then, at last, slowly uprises Tane-mahuta, the god and father of forests, of birds, and of insects, and he struggles with his parents; in vain he strives to rend them apart with his hands and arms. Lo, he pauses; his head is now firmly planted on his mother the earth, his feet he raises up and rests against his father the skies, he strains his back and limbs with mighty effort. Now are rent apart Rangi and Papa, and with cries and groans of woe they shriek aloud: 'Wherefore slay you thus your parents? Why commit you so dreadful a crime as to slay us, as to rend your parents apart?' But Tane-mahuta pauses not, he regards not their shrieks and cries; far, far beneath him he presses down the earth; far, far above him he thrusts up the sky.

Hence these sayings of olden time: 'It was the fierce thrusting of Tane which tore the heaven from the earth, so that they were rent apart, and darkness was made manifest, and so was the light.'

No sooner was heaven rent from earth than the multitude of human beings were discovered whom they had begotten, and who had hitherto lain concealed between the bodies of Rangi and Papa.

Then, also, there arose in the breast of Tawhiri-ma-tea, the god and father of winds and storms, a fierce desire to wage war with his brothers, because they had rent apart their common parents. He from the first had refused to consent to his mother being torn from her lord and children; it was his brothers alone that wished for this separation, and desired that Papa-tu-a-nuku, or the Earth alone, should be left as a parent for them.

The god of hurricanes and storms dreads also that the world should become too fair and beautiful, so he rises, follows his father to the realm above, and hurries to the sheltered hollows in the boundless skies; (...)

From that time clear light increased upon the earth, and all the beings which were hidden between Rangi and Papa before they were separated, now multiplied upon the earth. The first beings begotten by Rangi and Papa were not like human beings; but Tu-matauenga bore the likeness of a man, as did all his brothers, as also did a Po, a Ao, a Kore, te Kimihanga and Runuku, and thus it continued until the times of Ngainui and his generation, and of Whiro-te-tupua and his generation, and of Tiki-tawhito-ariki and his generation, and it has so continued to this day.

The children of Tu-matauenga were begotten on this earth, and they increased, and continued to multiply, until we reach at last the generation of Maui-taha, and of his brothers Maui-roto, Maui-waho, Maui-pae, and Maui-tikitiki-o-Taranga.

Up to this time the vast Heaven has still ever remained separated from his spouse the Earth. Yet their mutual love still continues — the soft warm sighs of her loving bosom still ever rise up to him, ascending from the woody mountains and valleys, and men call these mists; and the vast Heaven, as he mourns through

the long nights his separation from his beloved, drops frequent tears upon her bosom, and men seeing these, term them dew-drops.

The Legend of Maui

(...) They discovered him one night whilst they were all dancing in the great House of Assembly. Whilst his relations were all dancing there, they then found out who he was in this manner. For little Maui, the infant, crept into the house, and went and sat behind one of his brothers, and hid himself, so when their mother counted her children that they might stand up ready for the dance, she said: 'One, that's Maui-taka; two, that's Maui-rotā; three, that's Maui-pae; four that's Maui-waho'; and then she saw another, and cried out: 'Hollo, where did this fifth come from?' Then little Maui, the infant, answered: 'Ah, I'm your child too.' Then the old woman counted them all over again, and said: 'Oh, no, there ought to be only four of you; now for the first time I've seen you.' Then little Maui and his mother stood for a long time disputing about this in the very middle of the ranks of all the dancers.

At last she got angry, and cried out: 'Come, you be off now, out of the house at once; you are no child of mine, you belong to someone else.' Then little Maui spoke out quite boldly, and said: 'Very well, I'd better be off then, for I suppose, as you say it, I must be the child of some other person; but indeed I did think I was your child when I said so, because I knew I was born at the side of the sea¹, and was thrown by you into the foam of the surf, after you had wrapped me up in a tuft of your hair, which you cut off for the purpose; then the seaweed formed and fashioned me, as caught in its long tangles the ever-heaving surges of the sea rolled me, folded as I was in them, from side to side; at length the breezes and squalls which blew from the ocean drifted me on shore again, and the soft jelly-fish of the long sandy beaches rolled themselves round me to protect me;

¹ If a child was born before its time, and thus perished without having known the joys and pleasures of life, it was carefully buried with peculiar incantations and ceremonies; because if cast into the water, or carelessly thrown aside, it became a malicious being or spirit, actuated by a peculiar antipathy to the human race, who it spitefully persecuted, from having been itself deprived of happiness which they enjoyed. All their malicious deities had an origin of this kind.

then again myriads of flies alighted on me to buzz about me and lay their eggs, that maggots might eat me, and flocks of birds collected round me to peck me to pieces, but at that moment appeared there also my great ancestor, Tama-nui-kite-Rangi, and he saw the flies and the birds collected in clusters and flocks above the jelly-fish, and the old man ran, as fast as he could, and stripped off the encircling jelly-fish, and behold within there lay a human being; then, he caught me up and carried me to his house, and he hung me up in the roof that I might feel the warm smoke and the heat of the fire, so I was saved alive by the kindness of that old man. At last I grew, and then I heard of the fame of the dancing of this great House of Assembly. It was that which brought me here. But from the time I was in your womb, I have heard the names of these your first born children, as you have been calling them over until this very night, when I again heard you repeating them. In proof of this I will now recite your names to you, my brothers. 'You are Maui-taha, and you are Maui-roto, and you are Maui-pae, and you are Maui-waho, and as for me, I'm little Maui-the-baby, and here I am sitting before you.'

When his mother, Taranga, heard all this, she cried out: 'You dear little child, you are indeed my last-born, the son of my old age, therefore I now tell you your name shall be Maui-tiki-tiki-a-Taranga, or Maui-formed-in-the-top-knot-of-Taranga', and he was called by that name. (...)

He then again paid a visit to his parents, and remained for some time with them, and whilst he was there he remarked that some of their people daily carried away a present of food for some person; at length, surprised at this, he one day asked them: 'Who is that you are taking that present of food to?' And the people who were going with it answered him: 'It is for your ancestress, for Muri-ranga-whenua.'

He asked again: 'Where does she dwell?' They answered: 'Yonder.'

Thereupon he says: 'That will do; leave here the present of food, I will carry it to her myself.'

From that time the daily presents of food for his ancestress were carried by Maui himself; but he never took and gave them to her that she might eat them,

but he quietly laid them by on one side, and this he did for many days. At last, Muri-ranga-whenua suspected that something wrong was going on, and the next time he came along the path carrying the present of food, the old chieftainess sniffed and sniffed until she thought she smelt something coming, and she was very much exasperated, and her stomach began to distend itself, that she might be ready to devour Maui as soon as he came there. (...) then the scent of a man came plainly to her, so she called aloud: 'I know from the smell wafted here to me by the breeze that somebody is close to me', and Maui murmured assent. Thus the old woman knew that he was a descendant of hers, and her stomach, which was quite large and distended immediately began to shrink, and contract itself again. If the smell of Maui had not been carried to her by the western breeze, undoubtedly she would have eaten him up.

When the stomach of Muri-ranga-whenua had quietly sunk down to its usual size, her voice was again heard saying: 'Art thou Maui?' and he answered: 'Even so.'

Then she asked him: 'Wherefore hast thou served thy old ancestress in this deceitful way?' and Maui answered: 'I was anxious that thy jawbone, by which the great enchantments can be wrought, should be given to me.'

She answered: 'Take it, it has been reserved for thee.' And Maui took it, and having done so returned to the place where he and his brothers dwelt.

The young hero, Maui, had not been long at home with his brothers when he began to think, that it was too soon after the rising of the sun that it became night again, and that the sun again sank down below the horizon, every day, every day; in the same manner the days appeared too short to him. So at last, one day he said to his brothers: 'Let us now catch the sun in a noose, so that we may compel him to move more slowly, in order that mankind may have long days to labour in to procure subsistence for themselves' (...) Then they began to spin and twist ropes to form a noose to catch the sun in, and in doing this they discovered the mode of plaiting flax into stout square-shaped ropes (*tuamaka*), and the manner of plaiting flat ropes (*paharahara*), and of spinning round ropes; at last, they finished making all the ropes which they required. Then Maui took up his

enchanted weapon, and he took his brothers with him, and they carried their provisions, ropes, and other things with them, in their hands. They travelled all night, and as soon as day broke, they halted in the desert, and hid themselves that they might not be seen by the sun; and at night they renewed their journey, and before dawn they halted, and hid themselves again; at length they got very far, very far, to the eastward, and came to the very edge of the place out of which the sun rises.

Then they set to work and built on each side of this place a long high wall of clay, with huts of boughs of trees at each end to hide themselves in; when these were finished, they made the loops of the noose, and the brothers of Maui then lay in wait on one side of the place out of which the sun rises, and Maui himself lay in wait upon the other side.

The young hero held in his hand his enchanted weapon, the jaw-bone of his ancestress — of Muri-ranga-whenua, and said to his brothers: ‘Mind now, keep yourselves hid, and do not go showing yourselves foolishly to the sun; if you do, you will frighten him; but wait patiently until his head and fore legs have got well into the snare, then I will shout out; haul away as hard as you can on the ropes on both sides, and then I’ll rush out and attack him, but do you keep your ropes tight for a good long time (while I attack him), until he is nearly dead, when we will let him go; but mind, now, my brothers, do not let him move you to pity with his shrieks and screams.’

At last the sun came rising up out of his place, like a fire spreading far and wide over the mountains and forests; he rises up, his head passes through the noose, and it takes in more and more of his body, until his fore-paws pass through; then are pulled tight the ropes, and the monster began to struggle and roll himself about, whilst the snare jerked backwards and forwards as he struggled. Ah! was not he held fast in the ropes of his enemies!

Then forth rushed that bold hero, Maui-tiki-tiki-o-Taranga, with his enchanted weapon. Alas! the sun screams aloud; he roars; Maui strikes him fiercely with many blows; they hold him for a long time, at last they let him go, and then weak from wounds the sun crept slowly along its course. Then was

learnt by men the second name of the sun, for in its agony the sun screamed out: 'Why am I thus smitten by you! oh, man! do you know what you are doing? Why should you wish to kill Tama-nui-te-Ra?' Thus was learnt his second name. At last they let him go. Oh, then, Tama-nui-te-Ra went very slowly and feebly on his course. (...)

Then Maui snooded his enchanted fish-hook, which was pointed with part of the jawbone of Muri-ranga-whenua, and when he had finished this, he twisted a stout fishing-line to his hook.

His brothers in the meantime had arranged amongst themselves to make fast the lashings of the top side of their canoe, in order to go out for a good day's fishing. When all was made ready they launched their canoe, and as soon as it was afloat Maui jumped into it, and his brothers, who were afraid of his enchantments, cried out: 'Come, get out again, we will not let you go with us; your magical arts will get us into some difficulty.' So he was compelled to remain ashore whilst his brothers paddled off, and when they reached the fishing ground they lay upon their paddles and fished, and after a good day's sport returned ashore.

As soon as it was dark night Maui went down to the shore, got into his brothers' canoe, and hid himself under the bottom boards of it. The next forenoon his brothers came down to the shore to go fishing again, and they had their canoe launched, and paddled out to sea without ever seeing Maui, who lay hid in the hollow of the canoe under the bottom boards. When they got well out to sea Maui crept out of his hiding place; as soon as his brothers saw him, they said: 'We had better get back to the shore again as fast as we can, since this fellow is on board'; but Maui, by his enchantments, stretched out the sea so that the shore instantly became very distant from them, and by the time they could turn themselves round to look for it, it was out of view. Maui now said to them: 'You had better let me go on with you, I shall at least be useful to bail the water out of our canoe.' To this they consented, and they paddled on again and speedily arrived at the fishing ground where they used to fish upon former occasions. As soon as they got there his brothers said: 'Let us drop the anchor and fish here';

and he answered: 'Oh no, don't; we had much better paddle a long distance farther out.' Upon this they paddle on, and paddle as far as the farthest fishing ground, a long way out to sea, and then his brothers at last say: 'Come now, we must drop anchor and fish here.' And he replies again: 'Oh, the fish here are very fine I suppose, but we had much better pull right out to sea, and drop anchor there. If we go out to the place where I wish the anchor to be let go, before you can get a hook to the bottom, a fish will come following it back to the top of the water. You won't have to stop there a longer time than you can wink your eye in, and our canoe will come back to shore full of fish.' As soon as they hear this they paddle away — they paddle away until they reach a very long distance off, and his brothers then say: 'We are now far enough.' And he replies : 'No, no, let us go out of sight of land, and when we have quite lost sight of it, then let the anchor be dropped, but let it be very far off, quite out in the open sea.'

At last they reach the open sea, and his brothers begin to fish. Lo, lo, they had hardly let their hooks down to the bottom, when they each pulled up a fish into the canoe. Twice only they let down their lines, when behold the canoe was filled up with the number of fish they had caught. Then his brothers said: 'Oh, brother, let us all return now.' And he answered them: 'Stay a little; let me also throw my hook into the sea.' And his brothers replied: 'Where did you get a hook?' And he answered: 'Oh, never mind, I have a hook of my own.' And his brothers replied again: 'Make haste and throw it then.' And as he pulled it out from under his garments, the light flashed from the beautiful mother-of-pearl shell in the hollow of the hook, and his brothers saw that the hook was carved and ornamented with tufts of hair pulled from the tail of a dog, and it looked exceedingly beautiful. Maui then asked his brothers to give him a little bait to bait his hook with; but they replied : 'We will not give you any of our bait.' So he doubled his fist and struck his nose violently, and the blood gushed out, and he smeared his hook with his own blood for bait, and then he cast it into the sea, and it sank down, and sank down, till it reached to the small carved figure on the roof of a house at the bottom of the sea, then passing by the figure, it descended along the outside carved rafters of the roof, and foil in at the doorway of the

house, and the hook of Maui-tikitiki-o-Taranga caught first in the sill of the doorway.

Then, feeling something on his hook, he began to haul in his line. Ah, ah! — there ascended on his hook the house of that old fellow Tonga-nui. It came up, up; and as it rose high, oh, dear! how his hook was strained with its great weight; and then there came gurgling up foam and bubbles from the earth, as of an island emerging from the water, and his brothers opened their mouths and cried aloud. Maui all this time continued to chaunt forth his incantations amidst the murmurings and wailings of his brothers, who were weeping and lamenting, and saying : ‘See now, how he has brought us out into the open sea, that we may be upset in it, and devoured by the fish.’ Then he raised aloud his voice, and repeated the incantation called Hiki which makes heavy weights light, in order that the fish he had caught might come up easily, and he chanted an incantation beginning thus:

‘Wherefore, then, oh! Tonganui,

Dost thou hold fast so obstinately below there ?’

When he had finished his incantation, there floated up, hanging to his line, the fish of Maui, a portion of the earth, of Papa-tu-a-Nuku. Alas! alas! their canoe lay aground. (...)

Thus was dry land fished up by Maui after it had been hidden under the ocean by Rangi and Ta-whiri-ma-tea. It was with an enchanted fish-hook that he drew it up, which was pointed with a bit of the jaw-bone of his ancestress Muri-ranga-whenua; and in the district of Heretaunga they still show the fish-hook of Maui, which became a cape stretching far out into the sea, and now forms the southern extremity of Hawke’s Bay.

The hero now thought that he would extinguish and destroy the fires of his ancestress of Mahu-ika. So he got up in the night, and put out the fires left in the cooking-houses of each family in the village; then, quite early in the morning, he called aloud to the servants: ‘I hunger, I hunger; quick, cook Home food for me.’ One of the servants thereupon ran as fast as he could to make up the fire to cook some food, but the fire was out; and as he ran round from house to house in the

village to get a light, he found every fire quite out — he could nowhere get a light.

When Maui's mother heard this, she called out to the servants, and said: 'Some of you repair to my great ancestress Mahu-ika; tell her that fire has been lost upon earth, and ask her to give some to the world again.' But the slaves were alarmed and refused to obey the commands which their masters, the sacred old people gave them; and they persisted in refusing to go, notwithstanding the old people repeatedly ordered them to do so.

At last, Maui said to his mother: 'Well; then I will fetch down fire for the world; but which is the path by which I must go?' And his parents, who knew the country well, said to him: 'If you will go, follow that broad path that lies just before you there; and you will at last reach the dwelling of an ancestress of yours; and if she asks you who you are, you had better call out your name to her, then she will know you are a descendant of hers; but be cautious, and do not play any tricks with her, because we have heard that your deeds are greater than the deeds of men, and that you are fond of deceiving and injuring others, and perhaps you even now intend in many ways, to deceive this old ancestress of yours, but pray be cautious not to do so.'

But Maui said: 'No, I only want to bring fire away for men, that is all, and I'll return again as soon as I can do that?' Then he went, and reached the abode of the goddess of fire; and he was so filled with wonder at what he saw, that for a long time he could say nothing. At last he said: 'Oh, lady, would you rise up? Where is your fire kept? I have come to beg some from you.' (...) She replied: 'Welcome, welcome; here then is fire for you.'

Then the aged woman pulled out her nail; and as she pulled it out fire flowed from it, and she gave it to him. And when Maui saw she had drawn out her nail to produce fire for him, he thought it a most wonderful thing! Then he went a short distance off, and when not very far from her, he put the fire out, quite out; and returning to her again, said: 'The light you gave me has gone out, give me another.' Then she caught hold of another nail, and pulled it out as a light for him; and he left her, and went a little on one side, and put that light out

also; then he went back to her again, and said: 'Oh, lady, give me, I pray you, another light for the last one has also gone out.' And thus he went on and on, until she had pulled out all the nails of the fingers of one of her hands; and then she began with the other hand, until she had pulled all the finger-nails out of that hand, too; and then she commenced upon the nails of her feet, and pulled them also out in the same manner, except the nail of one of her big toes. Then the aged woman said to herself at last: 'This fellow is surely playing tricks with me.'

Then out she pulled the one toe-nail that she had left, and it, too, became fire, and as she dashed it down on the ground the whole place caught fire. And she cried out to Maui: 'There, you have it all now! And Maui ran off, and made a rush to escape, but the fire followed hard after him, close behind him; so he changed himself into a fleet-winged eagle, and flew with rapid flight, but the fire pursued, and almost caught him as he flew. Then the eagle dashed down into a pool of water; but when he got into the water he found that almost boiling too: the forests just then also caught fire, so that it could not alight anywhere, and the earth and the sea both caught fire too, and Maui was very near perishing in the flames.

Then he called on his ancestors Tawhiri-ma-tea and Whatitiri-matakataka, to send down an abundant supply of water, and he cried aloud: 'Oh, let water be given to me to quench this fire which pursues after me'; and lo, then appeared squalls and gales, and Tawhiri-ma-tea sent heavy lasting rain, and the fire was quenched; and before Mahuika could reach her place of shelter, she almost perished in the rain, and her shrieks and screams became as loud as those of Maui had been, when he was scorched by the pursuing fire: thus Maui ended this proceeding. In this manner was extinguished the fire of Mahuika, the goddess of fire; but before it was all lost, she saved a few sparks which she threw, to protect them, into the Kaiko-mako, and a few other trees, where they are still cherished; hence, men yet use portions of the wood of these trees for fire when they require a light. (...)

Maui (...) returned to his parents, and when he had been with them for some time, his father said to him one day: 'Oh, my son, I have heard from your

mother and others that you are very valiant, and that you have succeeded in all feats that you have undertaken in your own country, whether they were small or great; but now that you have arrived in your father's country, you will, perhaps, at last be overcome.'

Then Maui asked him : 'What do you mean, what things are there that I can be vanquished by?' And his father answered him: 'By your great ancestress, by Hine-nui-te-po, who, if you look, you may see flashing, and as it were, opening and shutting there, where the horizon meets the sky.' And Maui replied: 'Lay aside such idle thoughts, and let us both fearlessly seek whether men are to die or live for ever.' And his father said: 'My child, there has been an ill omen for us; when I was baptizing you, I omitted a portion of the fitting prayers, and that I know will be the cause of your perishing.'

Then Maui asked his father: 'What is my ancestress Hine-nui-te-po like?' and he answered: 'What you see yonder shining so brightly red are her eyes, and her teeth are as sharp and hard as pieces of volcanic glass; her body is like that of a man, and as for the pupils of her eyes, they are jasper; and her hair is like tangles of long seaweed, and her mouth is like that of a barracouta.' Then his son answered him: 'Do you think her strength is as great as that of Tama-nui-te-Ra, who consumes man, and the earth, and the very waters, by the fierceness of his heat? — was not the world formerly saved alive by the speed with which he travelled? — if he had then, in the days of his full strength and power, gone as slowly as he does now, not a remnant of mankind would have been left living upon the earth, nor, indeed, would anything else have survived. But I laid hold of Tama-nui-te-Ra, and now he goes slowly for I smote him again and again, so that he is now feeble, and long in travelling his course, and he now gives but very little heat, having been weakened by the blows of my enchanted weapon; I then, too, split him open in many places, and from the wounds so made, many rays now issue forth, and spread in all directions. So, also, I found the sea much larger than the earth, but by the power of the last born of your children, part of the earth was drawn up again, and dry land came forth.' And his father answered him: 'That is all very true, O, my last born, and the strength of my old age; well, then,

be bold, go and visit your great ancestress who flashes so fiercely there, where the edge of the horizon meets the sky.'

Hardly was this conversation concluded with his father, when the young hero went forth to look for companions to accompany him upon this enterprise: and so there came to him for companions, the small robin, and the large robin, and the thrush, and the yellow-hammer, and every kind of little bird, and the water-wagtail, and these all assembled together, and they all started with Maui in the evening, and arrived at the dwelling of Hine-nui-te-po, and found her fast asleep.

Then Maui addressed them all, and said: 'My little friends, now if you see me creep into this old chieftainess, do not laugh at what you see. Nay, nay, do not I pray you, but when I have got altogether inside her, and just as I am coming out of her mouth, then you may shout with laughter if you please.' And his little friends, who were frightened at what they saw, replied: 'Oh, sir, you will certainly be killed.' And he answered them: 'If you burst out laughing at me as soon as I get inside her, you will wake her up, and she will certainly kill me at once, but if you do not laugh until I am quite inside her, and am on the point of coming out of her mouth, I shall live, and Hine-nui-te-po will die.' And his little friends answered: 'Go on then, brave sir, but pray take good care of yourself.'

Then the young hero started off, and twisted the strings of his weapon tight round his wrist, and went into the house, and stripped off his clothes, and the skin on his hips looked mottled and beautiful as that of a mackerel, from the tattoo marks, cut on it with the chisel of Uetonga, and he entered the old chieftainess.

The little birds now screwed up their tiny cheeks, trying to suppress their laughter; at last, the little Tiwakawaka could no longer keep it in, and laughed out loud, with its merry cheerful note; this woke the old woman up, she opened her eyes, started up, and killed Maui.

Thus died this Maui we have spoken of, but before he died he had children, and sons were born to him; some of his descendants yet live in Hawaiki, some in Aotearoa (or in those islands); the greater part of his descendants

remained in Ha-waiki, but a few of them came here to Aotearoa. According to the traditions of the Maori, this was the cause of the introduction of death into the world (Hine-nui-te-po being the goddess of death: if Maui had passed safely through her, then no more human beings would have died, but death itself would have been destroyed), and we express it by saying: 'The water-wagtail laughing at Maui-tikitiki-o-Taranga made Hine-nui-te-po squeeze him to death.' And we have this proverb: 'Men make heirs, but death carries them off.'

Thus end the deeds of the son of Makeatutara, and of Taranga, and the deeds of the sons of Rangi-nui, and of Papa-tu-a-Nuku. (...)

Abstract

Polynesian literature in English is being defined as a post-colonial literature written by indigenous writers living in the former colonies of Great Britain in the geo-cultural area of Polynesia. This new literature emerged in the 1960's and became part of the pan-Polynesian movement. It sprang as the articulation of the autochthons' resistance against the manifestations of colonial hegemony, political or cultural, and at the same time, as the expression of their struggle for self-assertion and independence. In their works, the Polynesian writers strive to form a new Polynesian literature and culture and to find a proper cultural identity: they innovate the indigenous oral tradition by putting it in relationship with contemporary life in post-colonial Polynesia and by introducing it into their writing in English. The most representative authors who fulfil this new literary direction are the prose writers Witi Ihimaera and Albert Wendt in their respective novels *Tangi* (1973) and *Sons for the Return Home* (1973) together with the poet Alistair Te Ariki Campbell in his poetry collection *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* (1980). However, they are not alone in their strife, which is evidenced by the series of other names such as Patricia Grace, Epeli Hau'ofa, Keri Hulme and others. All the given prose writers and poets create a synthesis of the indigenous and the colonial heritages in their literary works.

Abstrakt

Polynéská literatura v angličtině bývá definována jako post-koloniální literatura, která je napsána spisovateli polynéského původu žijícími v bývalých britských koloniích v geografické a kulturní oblasti Polynésie. Tato nová literatura se zrodila v 60. letech 20. století a stala se součástí pan-polynéského hnutí. Vznikla jako projev vzdoru původních obyvatel proti koloniálnímu útlaku, ať už politickému či kulturnímu, a současně jako výraz jejich úsilí o dosažení svéprávnosti a nezávislosti. Polynéští spisovatelé usilují ve svých dílech o

formování nového polynéského slovesného umění a kultury a o nalezení své vlastní identity: obnovují původní ústní slovesnost tak, že ji kladou do vztahu k současnému životu v post-koloniální Polynésii a vnášejí ji do své vlastní literární tvorby psané anglicky. K nejvýraznějším autorům naplňujícím toto nové literární zaměření patří prozaikové Witi Ihimaera v románu *Tangi* (1973) a Albert Wendt v románu *Sons for the Return Home* (1973) a básník Alistair Te Ariki Campbell v básnické sbírce *The Dark Lord of Savaiki* (1980). V tomto úsilí však nejsou osamoceni jak dokládá řada dalších jmen jako například Patricia Grace, Epeli Hau'ofa, Keri Hulme aj. Všichni tito prozaici a básníci ve svých literárních dílech vytvářejí syntézu původního polynéského a koloniálního dědictví.