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"I was going places": Investigating the Complexities of Travelling Indigenous Characters in Contemporary Māori Short Fiction

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Abstract: *Focussing on the aspect of travelling cultures, this article deals with Indigenous characters from Aotearoa/New Zealand who are internationally mobile. The discussion of Anahera Gildea's "Te Ahi Kā" (2011), Kelly Joseph's "Transient" (2003), Lauren Keenan's "In the Shadow of Monte Cassino" (2017) and Arihia Latham-Coates' "Fly Away Home" (2007) draws on current scholarly work surrounding mobility as well Indigeneity, and particularly the specific Māori concepts of tūrangawaewae and ahi kā. Rather than staying put, the main characters in each story roam the world, going to different countries yet all longing to determine what it means to be an Indigenous person and where home can be found. Each of the narratives adds another twist to the subject, thus demonstrating that, while displaying numerous commonalities, these stories simultaneously feature diverse motives, perspectives on and attitudes towards global Indigenous mobility. What is more, they testify that it is not only places which are of importance to narrations, but often also character-related aspects – including where the respective characters are before or in between their journeys, why they leave or return, and the amount of time they spend somewhere.*

Keywords: Global, Indigeneity, Māori, Mobility, Short Story

1. Introduction: Indigenous Mobility and Mobile Indigeneity

Aspects of human movement and stasis are part of nearly any fictional narrative. Characters proceed toward a certain destination, roam aimlessly, cross borders, experience confinements or may stay put for particular reasons. Many of these elements can also be found in the short stories selected for this article. Indeed, all of them feature titles which can be associated with the conglomerate of mobility. The international aspect, for instance, is clearly emphasised in Lauren Keenan's "In the Shadow of Monte Cassino". The idea of movement back to a place of origin is implied by Anahera Gildea's "Te Ahi Kā" and Arihia Latham-Coates' "Fly Away Home" respectively, whereas Kelly Joseph's "Transient" connotes a

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general sense of restlessness and change. What is notable is that all four stories deal with the issue of returning. Whereas in "Transient", it is prefigured but not yet put into effect, in "Fly Away Home", this process is an essential part of the narrative and can be described as successful. Returns are less conclusive and unambiguous in "Te Ahi Kā". "In the Shadow of Monte Cassino", on the other hand, is all about the brief journey to Italy, which constitutes a temporary movement away from home but also a transgenerational return related to historical events. Peculiarities such as the ones just mentioned will be examined in detail shortly. Prior to this, the concept of mobility will be introduced on a more general level to provide a clear frame of reference for the analysis.

Mobility may be defined "as movement infused with both self-ascribed and attributed meanings" (Salazar 2016, 1). It is furthermore "a *lived relation*", that is, "an orientation to oneself, to others and to the world" (Adey 2010, xvii). There are different attitudes towards mobility, two of which can be subsumed under the so-called sedentarist and nomadic position respectively:

> The first sees mobility through the lens of place, rootedness, spatial order, and belonging. Mobility, in this formulation, is seen as morally and ideologically suspect […]. The second puts mobility first, has little time for notions of attachment to place, and revels in notions of flow, flux, and dynamism. Place is portrayed as stuck in the past, overly confining, and possibly reactionary (Cresswell 2006, 26).

However, these positions are two extremes on a continuous scale rather than the only options (Cresswell 2006, 26). Nonetheless, it can be noted that, in today's world, most people usually highlight mobility as something

> unremittingly positive. If something can be said to be fluid, dynamic, in flux, or simply mobile, then it is seen to be progressive, exciting, and contemporary. If, on the other hand, something is said to be rooted, based on foundations, static, or bounded, then it is seen to be reactionary, dull, and of the past (Cresswell 2006, 25).

With regard to *temporary* mobility in particular, one similarly encounters a continuum of possible attitudes ranging from "travel, negatively viewed as transience, superficiality, tourism, exile, and rootlessness" to "travel positively conceived as exploration, research, escape, transforming encounter" (Clifford 1992, 105). Even though mobility is substantially dependent on what we make of it, there are often unwitting attributions with regard to certain groups (e.g. homeless people, women). This is also the case with Indigenous peoples.

Indigeneity is a concept that has been repeatedly associated with place-boundedness, continuity and settledness. Indeed, virtually any scholar defining Indigenous identity refers to the importance of having a close connection to the land. Therefore, Indigeneity and cosmopolitanism or globalisation at first seem to be diametrically opposed (see Levi and Durham 2015, 395; DeLoughrey 2010, 196). In the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, there are two concepts that also highlight the importance of occupation and continuity when it comes to the *whenua* or land. The first one is *tūrangawaewae*, which is commonly translated as *a*

place to stand. It is closely tied to a sense of belonging and defies a purely geographical understanding. Rather, it contains physical, cognitive, spiritual and emotional elements (see Doherty 2012, 31). According to a Māori understanding, people are connected to the land genealogically, thus forming part of it. This connection is traditionally confirmed by burying the afterbirth (which is also termed *whenua*) on homeland. An apt summary and also a warning regarding the dangers of moving away from this place is provided by Cherryl Smith, who states:

> In Māori society, a tūrangawaewae is a place to stand tall in the knowledge of belonging to people and more importantly, to a place and landscape inhabited and inherited from generations past. There is a sense of pride, continuity and responsibility to future generations that invokes a duty of care, guardianship and accountability. Being pushed or pulled away from the tūrangawaewae through processes such as land confiscation, urbanisation and migration or by violence, sexual abuse, or mean heartedness, or simply for something better, like education, work and health opportunities, can lead to a loosening of connectedness and a frustrated desire to remain so (2015, 101).

The second Māori term, which is closely related to the first one, is *ahi kā*. This can be translated as *burning fires* and emphasises the importance of consistent occupation of communal land. Accordingly, the joint responsibility is to keep the (metaphorical or actual) home fires alive. As the combination of both terms suggests, one belongs to the land by means of birth right; however, one also has to uphold this connection performatively. This can of course be done by permanently staying close to one's *papa kāinga* or home base. Nonetheless, several Māori scholars have recently argued for a more flexible approach to such notions of belonging against the background of internal and transnational migration. Consequently, reiteratively returning to one's original home may be just as valuable and effective as permanently residing on home grounds.[1]

In order to meaningfully conceptualise contemporary Māori mobility, I will employ the scale suggested by Lyn Carter, who conflates "the notions of ahi kā (warm fires) and ahi mātao (cold fires) – the concepts of home and away", claiming "that these concepts are not polar opposites, but instead act in a contextual continuum that is referenced through levels of participation and maintaining relationships" (2015, 23). In this case, the homeland serves as "a permanent reference point for all aspects of identity and culture" so that "travelling and dwelling are understood as circular and always in relation to the homeland" (Carter 2015, 24–25). If taken this way, ahi kā is not entirely dependent on active physical occupation, while simultaneously the importance of place is maintained. A similar overall argumentation to that of Lyn Carter is pursued by Shiloh Groot and colleagues, who propose that urban and travelling modern Māori can become

> conduits for flows of information, experiences, resources, advice, relatedness and care. The more people engage the 'betweenness' of places departed and their urban [or international] homes, the more likely they are to be remembered and remain as

> important resources across multiple spaces and places. Through engaging the between, they metaphorically invigorate their ahi kā […]. Relationships with people in their tribal homelands are enlivened and nurtured. […] Māori who live their lives through them, along with that of their hau kāinga [true home], claim a new space. This gives rise to multiple relationships and ways of belonging, and to the reality of many homes […] (2015, 60).

Each person is thus a sort of node that is integrated into a larger network, which in turn grants that member a certain amount of flexibility. As is the case with many pluralisms, the ambivalence related to multiple homes can have both positive and negative impacts on the respective person or character. This indeterminacy and also the pursuit of balance will be confirmed in the analysis.

As the mentioned academic evaluations suggest, the concept of Indigeneity might best be seen as a malleable construct which cannot be singularly explained by rootedness. Indeed, the latter seems to be part of a colonialist strategy of containment. Unfortunately, such an ideological binary opposition (DeLoughrey 2010, 196) is sometimes also reproduced by Indigenous people for political and legal purposes when it comes to the need to demonstrate continuous occupation (cf. Hoskins 2012, 85). Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged in academia that mobility is a universal human characteristic (e.g. Merriman 2013, 7; Cresswell 2006, 22) and thus not exclusively Western or modern. "Human history", as Howard Stein nicely puts it, "is a long chronicle of movement over land and water" (1987, 81), and this is of course also the case for the Indigenous population of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Looking at Māori history, one may detect countless cases of individual and collective mobilities (see e.g. Anderson et al. 2015, 3; Groot et al. 2015, 59). As Alice Te Punga Somerville notes, "Māori have indeed travelled globally ever since first contact with Europeans (and before that, if we include our migrations through the Pacific to Aotearoa)" (2007a, 98). More generally, it can be argued that the Pacific as such "is a region assembled from interlocking navigations, migrations, and settlements" (Matsuda 2016, 110). Historical and contemporary examples of international mobility thus constantly question the stereotype of rootedness (see Kennedy 2011, 178). It can be concluded that "Indigenous attachments to place are complexly mediated, and do not necessarily entail continuous residence" (Clifford 2006, 51). After all, Indigenous histories in general are always a mixture of both routes and roots. Consequently, it makes sense that the question of mobility is not only relevant for social or archaeological studies, but also manifests itself as a prominent literary topic. Indeed, while "[h]aving a place to call home and knowing it is there to return to features in almost all the novels" thus far published by Māori authors (Majid 2010, 37), the characters in these works are seldom constrained or incessantly bound by this sense of belonging. Against the background of these contemplations, the selected short stories will now be examined in more detail.

2. Mobilising the Past

Keenan's "In the Shadow of Monte Cassino" will be discussed first. This very brief short story is set in the area of the eponymous Italian hill, where the main character Eruera wishes to retrace his father's earlier steps in the same place. The reader is told that his progenitor had previously fought in Italy as a soldier in World War II. During the present-day endeavour, the protagonist reminisces about the person that his father was and also about the comments that the latter had always made towards him. Whenever his father was disappointed by Eruera, he would say something like: "You're just like Uncle Gerry, who couldn't enlist in the war because of his flat feet, and died of shame after the heroes came home. You're just like Uncle Gerry, both of you couldn't have climbed Monte Cassino if you'd tried" (Keenan 2017, 72). One can therefore conclude that the main character's journey is probably part of a stubborn attempt to prove his deceased father wrong. Yet indeed, as his begetter had prophesied, Eruera struggles with the task of climbing even the outliers of Monte Cassino in the searing heat. After a while, he is torn between turning around and moving on:

> Maybe he should go back to Rome to join his wife? Eruera could sit in the hotel pool and drink a glass of wine. It was very tempting. Maybe he should turn back after all? Maybe he should come back here later, when he had a better map? He shook his head. No. He couldn't leave, he had to see Monte Cassino up close. How else could he understand his father, his high highs and his low lows? This was where Dad had fought. It was his price of citizenship and his bit for God, King and Country. Soon, Eruera would walk around the battle site and understand the horror, chaos and bravery that had made Dad who he was. Maybe then it would all make sense. If Eruera left now, he would be no better than Uncle Gerry with his flat feet (Keenan 2017, 72–73).

Interestingly, the initial accumulation of *maybes* is intermediately resolved by a clear negation yet reintroduced at a later point in the quotation – this time in relation to the possibility of understanding his father better (which is indeed affirmed by the remaining narrative, though in an unexpected fashion). At large, the cited excerpt suggests that the protagonist is still keen to continue with his endeavour.

Shortly afterwards, though, Eruera realises that he cannot live up to the ideal of his father. He admits that "[h]e'd never even get close" (Keenan 2017, 73). However, rather than merely sketching a defeat, the story provides the reader, as well as the protagonist, with a sudden revelation. When Eruera takes a break at the local cemetery, he incidentally detects his uncle Gerry's tombstone. This prompts the realisation that it must have been Gerry, rather than the protagonist's father, who went to war. Besides, the existence of the grave indicates that latter never made it home. As a result,

> [j]igsaw pieces of his memory slotted into place: Dad's parents not speaking to Dad; Hoppy's old man calling Dad a coward; the vitriol about Uncle Gerry; the yelling when Eruera had asked 'What's wrong with flat feet anyway?'; Eruera's expensive orthotics;

> Dad's description of a small Italian village being in both North Italy and near Salerno (Keenan 2017, 75).

It is thus revealed that Eruera's life has not only been shaped by high and skewed expectations, but also by confusing inconsistencies and difficult family dynamics. After this brief but illuminating interlude, the narrative continues in the present. With time progressing on the day that is described, Eruera decides he has to go back to Rome, where his wife waits. His ambitions have supposedly not been completely discarded, though: "Maybe he'll do it next time. Certainly. Probably. Maybe. Probably not" (Keenan 2017, 75). Interestingly, this picks up on the ambiguous adverb *maybe* once more and also mirrors a reverse sequence of qualifiers mentioned shortly before the protagonist's visit to the graveyard, thus emphasising the waning likelihood of a renewed attempt. The story ends with a defiant inner outburst: "'You're right, Dad', Eruera thought. 'There is no way I could have climbed that hill. But neither could you, Dad. Neither could you'" (Keenan 2017, 75).

What this story alludes to on a general level is one of the most frequent reasons for Māori to travel in the twentieth century – namely foreign wars. Many Māori decided to enlist in this particular war because they were hoping to gain either the right of citizenship, and thus a respected place in a society dominated by Pākehā (white European) economic and political interests, or to prove their manhood. The former is implied by the notion of "God, King and Country", which is mentioned by Eruera in the passage previously quoted (Keenan 2017, 72–73), and it is also something that is explored by other authors, such as Patricia Grace in her novel *Tu* (2004; see Schulze-Engler 2016; Wilson 2008, 92). However, this is not the focus of Keenan's story. Rather, by revealing the lie surrounding Uncle Gerry towards the end of the story, the author complicates questions of leadership, pride and warriorhood, as well as survival and guilt. It also puts into question the notion of victim and agent. These issues are all tied to the more general construction of Māori masculinity. Flat feet, it is suggested, are a form of disability hindering men from partaking in war efforts. Eruera's father seems to regard this deformation not only as a despicable physical constraint but also as emasculating. Having to live with this drawback, he decides to construct a series of stories surrounding his deceased brother rather than admit to his own feelings of inadequacy and guilt. Such an attitude is countered by Eruera's sense of satisfaction towards the end of the story; he may not be able to climb the mountain, but neither would his father have been. Nevertheless, this way of coping with his failure is problematic in some respects, as he does not actively grapple with the linkage to ableism and gender stereotypes. Overall, it can be concluded that Keenan's story deals with some of the late repercussions of the complex web of international relations and experiences created by the two World Wars.

On a brief side note, it should be mentioned that an overseas war experience is also fleetingly addressed in Gildea's "Te Ahi Kā". In this case, it is captured by memorabilia from that time:

> The ancestors are all there anyway – their photos crowding the walls and keeping vigil, along with the plastic flowers and cigarette boxes. The flowers are her touch, to soften the ordered lines of little boxes along the top of the china cabinet. These are only a portion of his collection – the most exquisite ones that he'd acquired when he was overseas at war. The maroon and white box from a Turkish soldier was his favourite, and was placed in the centre of his 'front line' (Gildea 2011, 74).

In this case, the collected objects serve as a constant reminder of war times. Their array in a neat order suggests that these boxes also stand in for people and tactics, making them individualised items with particular trajectories and thus more than mere objects. This can in turn be related to the parallelisation of an object with a person in Joseph's "Transient", which will be considered in more detail later.

3. Mobilising Death

Something that frequently incites narratives of return in Māori fiction and which draws on cultural realities is the event of death. The extinguished life of a member of one's extended family or *whānau* is usually extensively mourned, a process which is guided and supported by culturally specific protocols. However, participation in this communal process of mourning may prove to be a challenge for people who live overseas. It is both a question of economic and temporal means to be back in time for the funeral rites, called *tangihanga* or *tangi*. Additionally, in contemporary society it may also be a question of priorities. Thus, when in Gildea's "Te Ahi Kā" Ruhi dies, one out of five children does not attend the tangi. It is the only female offspring, Nellie, who is described as living a rather happy and well-off life abroad. Bit by bit, the reader learns more about her possible reasons for not coming home for the burial. Daphne, Ruhi's widow, hears her daughter stammering on the phone, "We just won't be able to ... just can't... can't get time off... it's not like home here... this is London not Te Horo... was home last year..." (Gildea 2011, 74), and subsequently overhears the mocking conversation that her sons have about Nellie's absence: "They are on and on about Nellie not coming. About her big life and bigger husband they've never met. Shocking, they all agree, shameful" (Gildea 2011, 74). In this context, Nellie's excuses sound questionable and weak. Her reasons for refusing to return do not seem to be related to any economic issues but rather to temporal means. At the same time, what she says subtly implies that foreign cultural contexts may restrict Māori in their ability to exercise culturally specific expectations, such as the attendance of lengthy funeral rites. In the course of the story, though, Nellie's motivations and restrictions are complicated by further descriptions. Her life is contrasted with that of her brothers:

> Wiremu had become deeply involved in politics, and would not hesitate to let everyone know how Māori he and his family all were. [...] Peter and Hemi just kept out of these conversations, preferring to talk about their work at the council. Nellie hadn't lived here since she was in her twenties, so neither of them was surprised when Wiremu reported

> that she's said she'd send some money.[2] After that even Davis, the least likely, was swearing about her with his brothers (Gildea 2011, 75).

Thus, it becomes clear, firstly, that Nellie has spent close to half of her life away from Aotearoa/New Zealand already and, secondly, that she does not seem inclined to come back. When she did return a year before the current occasion for the first time, she "walked through the airport as a foreigner, comparing it to Sydney except with a funny accent and strange money" (Gildea 2011, 79). The impression one receives is that she is completely estranged from her family and home country. In contrast, flying gives her the feeling "of being free – of being someone else", as she assures her parents (Gildea 2011, 80). Thus, for her, aeromobility seems to hold the promise of new possibilities and an autonomous identity. The reader is left wondering whether Nellie's international lifestyle should be attributed to her own deviance and strife for independence, or whether she previously had negative experiences that drove her off. In either case, what is made clear is that family dynamics are in some respects unpredictable and will lead to different developments despite similar conditions of upbringing. Besides, the narrative offers an explanation of how Nellie, like her urban-dwelling brothers, is still connected to her home place, regardless of where she chooses to live, which will be discussed presently.

Embedded in the narrative, there are several passages that are marked by italics, which at first seem like snippets of Daphne's memories but could also be interpreted as imaginative sequences since, in the final rendering, she leaves together with her husband by boat and he becomes youthful again even though he is initially described as having "bandied legs and wrinkled knees" (Gildea 2011, 80). In this last episode, Nellie's mobility is relieved of its negative connotation when Ruhi looks back at his offspring and pronounces to his wife: "*They are attached to me like fishing lines […]. Their hooks are embedded in the flesh and ribs of my back*" (Gildea 2011, 80). This metaphor illustrates the physical, almost visceral, link that exists between Māori and the land, as well as their predecessors, which is reinforced through the principle of *whakapapa* (genealogy). In this context, the title "Te Ahi Kā" makes sense: as long as there is someone left to keep the home fire(s) burning, other relatives have a place to return to. Ruhi's understanding of his children's attachment also has temporal implications, as it underlines the Māori notion of walking backwards into the future; hence his backward-facing position in the boat and the statement that his four sons and daughter are not attached to his front but rather to his back – they are the future. Even though Ruhi's earthly life extinguishes, he can be assured that, owing to him, his children have a place to return to and, thus, in a way he himself also lives on. Yet the reader might question whether this has entailed some kind of sacrifice – the hooks being attached to his body could be hurtful, even though they are "embedded" rather than dug or borne into his back – and also whether the fishing lines will be sturdy and endurable enough to continue exerting a pull on the descendants. Overall, it can be argued that the diverging trajectories and

aspirations of the whānau members represent (in a highly condensed fashion) the plurality and complexity of real-life Indigenous modernities.

4. Mobilising Identity

Another story that deals with death and its implications for international mobility is Latham-Coates' "Fly Away Home". The protagonist, Annie, leads a life in London based on motives that are not so different from Nellie's. She narrates: "When I left I thought I would never be back, I was going places, getting away from this thread of land in the sea. I was going to find myself because there was nothing keeping me here" (Latham-Coates 2007, 61). Both Nellie and Annie are therefore in search of a sustainable identity and – at least in the latter case – want to escape the perceived isolation of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Without knowing it for sure at first, Annie is likewise connected to her homeland via the invisible ties of whakapapa. The silence surrounding this descent is traced back to her grandmother Vera White, whose story is one of disconnection.[3] The sense of being lost and disassociated has been transmitted onto Annie, as her grandmother's reticence leaves her with no option to reconnect and in a suspended state of perpetual guessing:

> Through school my heart ached for connection to something, my moth wings beat ferociously toward some notion of light.[4] [...] We went on a marae [courtyard, sometimes signifying the entire complex of buildings of a local cultural centre] trip in intermediate school and my feet felt rooted to the spot when a karanga [welcome call] rang out in the wind and tears pricked my eyes as if I had been pinched deep inside. [...] I never talked to Dad or Nana about the way I felt. Nana's stoic silence around her past was like a barbed fence never to be scaled. Like many young people, I isolated myself in the belief that I was the only one feeling the way I did. I felt I knew nothing of myself, felt lost, a limb, amputated from an unknown body. Floating in the space of life, I spun through the black skies, no rope to pull me home, and hurtled, an asteroid, inevitably crashing to earth (Latham-Coates 2007, 62).

This passage mentions a temporary sense of rootedness, yet also integrates two potent metaphors that describe Annie's disorientation and disconnection. The comparison to a severed limb bespeaks a feeling of incompleteness and malfunction. Besides, it points to the importance of community, which is only coherent if all parts are assembled. Similarly, the image of the asteroid is used to pronounce a perceived lack of agency and conscious aim amid the vastness of possibilities presented by life. Both images attest to her sense of irreversibility and dwindling hope.

It is her lacking sense of belonging that prompts Annie to leave for London, where she hopes she will be able to make sense of her existence. There, she encounters Tama, who one day asks her about her life:

> 'So Annie, where is it you're from in New Zealand? You've a lick of the tar brush like me eh? Where's your whānau from?' I just about choked on my soup. [...] My barbed fence went up just like Nana's, erected in a flash – she taught me well. 'I, I don't...' I looked

> into Tama's eyes [...]. He picked up my hand and squeezed it, letting the words I couldn't formulate sink into his hand (Latham-Coates 2007, 63).

Tama consoles Annie, telling her that she is not the only one who experiences such a disconnection. She laments that she is uncertain of whether she is really Māori at all, whereupon Tama tells her: "Aē, te wahine pōuri o te pō, the sad woman of the night, she is our tīpuna [ancestor][5] never to pass on her whakapapa as she is married into the white world, never to be seen again" (Latham-Coates 2007, 64). His words spawn unexpected emotions in her and she ends up kissing him: "My lips brushed over his smooth full lips, and he caught mine in his. His and mine, mine and his; for the first time, in a long while, I felt a sense of home" (Latham-Coates 2007, 64). What this passage indicates is that home is not something exclusively place-bound, but instead dependent on relations and emotions. Thus, it can be found in multiple places.

Tama incites a yearning in Annie to explore her ancestors' past. She realises: "I knew I had to walk back the pathways of my own. After three years away, my heart was calling me home" (Latham-Coates 2007, 64). When she receives a phone call to let her know that her grandmother is dying, she decides she has to return to Aotearoa. The sympathetic Tama farewells her at the airport, whispering "Fly. Fly away home" (Latham-Coates 2007, 65). When she arrives at the hospital, Annie finally finds the courage to confront her grandmother about her Māori ancestry: "Nana, I want to know about your mother and where she is from, I want to know my whakapapa" (Latham-Coates 2007, 65). Surprisingly, Vera opens up and tells her granddaughter about where she came from. As a result, the latter flies to the South Island, "not knowing what will come next" (Latham-Coates 2007, 66). When she arrives at the local marae, she is at first hesitant but then knocks on a nearby door. As it turns out, the inhabitant is one of Vera's cousins. She agrees to come with Annie to the hospital, where she carries out ritualistic vocal actions: "Her voice rings out – silver, gold and red as she tells the stories of our tīpuna in a call like whales through water. She blesses Nana for her journey, out of this life... home" (Latham-Coates 2007, 67). In a similar fashion, Annie bids her grandmother farewell: "Haere, haere, haere e Kui.[6] Fly away, Home" (Latham-Coates 2007, 67). It is surely no coincidence that "Home" is capitalised in the last case. What is meant here is either Vera's papa kāinga in Moeraki or alternatively the original homeland which her Māori predecessors left many hundred years ago to migrate to Aotearoa. It is commonly believed that everyone returns there after they have died. Either way, it is notable that the word *home* is mentioned several times throughout the narrative, seeming like an echo that haunts the characters yet also constitutes a certain promise for them. What can be noted is that the notion of home is closely related to a sense of belonging in this narrative, making it a nexus of geographical, social or relational, emotional and cultural factors.

After the act of bidding farewell, Annie lives on her present life, yet does so from a new perspective. Talking to her deceased grandmother, she says in a rather hyperbolical and allegorical way:

> I know now after all these years of fighting you and your choices that I am the result of it all, and that I'll be OK...
> That because of you and all our tīpuna before us I stand here in this place of privileged confusion. I am the rapist and the raped, I am the whaler and the woman scraping scales on the shore. I am the white and the deep brown, I have her full brown lips but his bright blue eyes. […]
> I am cultured, I am privileged, I am mixed, I am mongrel (Latham-Coates 2007, 68).

After having learned about her 'other' side, the protagonist is now content to accept her state of in-betweenness. She still has the possibility to roam the world. However, now she can do so with a feeling of attachment and origin. As Erin Suzuki points out, knowing one's whakapapa enables fictional characters "to explore a larger world while maintaining a connection with the landscapes that remain 'painted inside them'" (Suzuki 2012, 122). In Annie's case, this landscape will likely include the Moeraki boulders, one of which she lay on during her brief visit to this region, making her "feel weightless, suspended" (Latham-Coates 2007, 68), as opposed to her earlier self-understanding as a heavy crashing asteroid.

5. Mobilising Objects and Bodies

The final story to be discussed, Joseph's "Transient", is set in the United States, thus offering yet another geographical setting. It also differs from the other narratives in that it does not focus on aspects of intergenerational relations and interactions. Very early on, the reader learns that the protagonist feels a spontaneous urge to go on an excursion to New York and, once arrived, into the Metropolitan Museum of Art. After roaming through the building, she finds a Māori *taonga* (precious object) in a glass case, which triggers sincere emotions, leads to her decision to buy a one-way flight ticket home and thus consolidates her deliberation to leave U.S. behind.

Concerning her reason for moving to the distant country in the first place, the protagonist reveals: "It's been five years since I moved to the States. I came to study, which at the time seemed like a very clever idea. It was exciting, for the few first months, but the novelty wore off quickly and I stayed to pay off student loans" (Joseph 2003, 147). This lack of excitement is paired with nostalgic feelings:

> Deep down I ache constantly for home and family. I have flown back a few times but things have changed since I left. It's clear to me that my homesickness is not just a longing for a place; it's a yearning for people and a time that have passed, that no longer exist and that can never be reached again (Joseph 2003, 147).

This suggests that the first-person narrator feels regret for having left at all, as she is constantly missing out on developments at home. She can be distinguished from the character Annie in that she seems to be securely incorporated in her home community in spite of the current geographical distance. Perhaps this is

part of the reason why she perseveres for quite a while. That is, until she is in the museum, where she feels a force of attraction, which she initially cannot place: "I move through the rest of the Greek and Roman art with a strange feeling that there is something else here that I am being drawn towards. My feet carry me forward" (Joseph 2003, 148). This signals that she lets herself be guided by intuition. "I am being pulled by something", she elaborates, "and the feeling grows stronger. I weave in and out of glass display-cabinets, barely noticing their contents. Whatever I am looking for is much nearer" (Joseph 2003, 149). The narrative tension that is built up in the course of these sentences is finally released when the narrator states:

> It is then that I spot the taonga – a waka huia [treasure box]. Once it probably held the prized possessions of someone important, but now it lies empty, displayed clinically behind layers of protective glass. It is carved with great care and attention to detail. Against the rich brown patterns stand two sparkling pāua [abalone shell] eyes. Though diminutive in size, and easily swamped by larger objects, it has a mighty presence. I know now that is has been calling me (Joseph 2003, 149).

The trope of being called can be found in many Māori stories. Such a call is more than an acoustic signal, though, as the culturally encoded form of vocal action, *karanga*, is usually produced by women to call forth visitors onto the marae on ceremonial occasions. Likewise, internationally mobile Māori characters seem to be called home – not necessarily by a person, but rather by their ancestors, by vivid memories or (as in this instance) by objects.[7] This is often connected to sudden or building up strong emotions. In the case of Joseph's story, the protagonist starts weeping: "I cry for this treasure, lost to its people and out of place in this foreign land. And I cry for myself, thousands of miles from home, struggling to stay strong but failing miserably. I don't know how I strayed so far from my beginnings" (Joseph 2003, 149). It is among these dislocated objects that the narrator realises her own displacement. This agrees with an assertion that Māori historian Paul Tapsell has made and which applies to urban as well as international contexts, namely: "The isolation of museum-held taonga mirrors this deepening alienation being experienced by tribes' descendants raised away from home" (2011, 11). The museum objects come to metaphorically stand for prior experiences of colonialism and simultaneously for their initial creators and owners (Sully 2007, 38). Even though such items are securely encased and thus "froze[n] […] in mid-trajectory" (Tapsell 2011, 31), in the story they are also described as restless. Consequently, it can be argued, as Alice Te Punga Somerville has done, that the entrapment of the waka huia parallels the homesickness of the protagonist (2007b, 31). At the same time, this object is a kind of surrogate home. It provides "proximity on the basis of kin/cultural/landscape ties" (Te Punga Somerville 2007b, 26–27). Yet this return can only be temporary, which leads to the protagonist's decision to return home for good. The story is thus concluded with a newly found determination: "Surrounded by thousands of displaced objects[8], I know what must be done […].

The following day I book a one way ticket home" (Joseph 2003, 149). What this story suggests very broadly is that objects may resonate with us in certain contexts, and in the case of Indigenous people this is often connected to contemplations of identity. "Sometimes," as Tina Makereti points out, "the museum is where we go to find parts of ourselves we thought we'd left behind" (2015, 185).

6. Concluding Remarks

When contemplating the four short stories collectively, serval observations can be made. For instance, the theme of identity is something that links Joseph's story to the other ones, as all of them are concerned with journeys of self-discovery and thus go beyond depictions of merely physical and touristic trips. What they further have in common is that the economic possibility of mobility is not questioned. They can therefore be differentiated from a considerable number of other narratives that run the risk of reinforcing stereotypes of poor and locally confined Māori.[9] The characters are all depicted as being able to leave and return. On a broader level, this notion of freedom to roam and still stay connected if desired agrees with what Māori Studies professor Mason Durie points out:

> Ironically, separation from tribal homelands by vast geographic distances might be less problematic in the twenty-first century than it was during the urban migration after the Second World War, [… since] communication technology has telescoped the concept of distance to such an extent that Māori in London or Los Angeles […] might still be able to participate in te ao Māori [the Māori world], enjoy the legacy to which they are entitled, and contribute to the ongoing transmission and development of Māori heritage (2005, 3).

However, this optimism is at least partly called into question by the selected stories as well. Whereas these narratives do not question the general ability to travel internationally, they still complicate this type of mobility by highlighting the emotional labour that is often associated with temporary or permanent migration. In any case, it can be concluded that

> [m]igration to other regions, or overseas, […] will add to the complexity of associations and affiliations that must inevitably characterise a highly mobile population. In that process the meaning of 'being Māori' may also change even though a decided preference to identify as Māori will predictably continue, if not strengthen (Durie 1995, 4).

These developments bespeak the dynamic character of Indigeneity and also the high degree of agency that is achieved among a large part of the respective populations.

The particular focus on international mobility is a rather recent trend in anglophone Māori fiction. This has been observed by Janet Wilson, who states that

> the theme of the return home to the marae has dominated Maori writing, becoming central to representations of Indigenous identity in much of Maori Renaissance fiction: the young adult who departs from the rural world, and returns marked by this experience prompted to reflect on Maori subjectivity and collectivity. […] In the recent fiction about the Maori at war this motif is revalued as new locations overseas necessitate its expansion beyond the earlier urban/rural binary (2008, 97).

As the previous discussion has shown, war is not the only motif which has caused this expansion. What is more, there are of course also earlier examples of creative texts that deal with international travel and global interconnectedness (see, for instance, the works of Cathie Dunsford and Robert Sullivan). Additionally, it can be stated that, while all stories analysed in this article deal with more or less contemporary settings, there are also numerous narratives that go further back in time to demonstrate Indigenous transnational mobility. Prominent examples include the historical novels *Rangatira* (Morris 2011) and *The Imaginary Lives of James Pōneke* (Makereti 2018).

What most short stories at hand demonstrate is that globally travelling characters are actually not, as Annie initially believes, amputated limbs. Instead, they can be described as "offshoots [rather] than broken branches" (Clifford 2006, 61) and their mobility should not be categorised in terms of deficiency per se. Besides, they evince that "it is necessary to suspend ideas of Māori travelling and dwelling away […] as disconnection and separateness" (Carter 2015, 27). After all, "[d]iasporic ruptures and connections – lost homelands, partial returns, relational identities, and world-spanning networks – are fundamental components of indigenous experience today" (Clifford 2007, 217). Ultimately, I would conclude with Jerome Levi and Elizabeth Durham that, while

> indigenous identity does conjure up images of that which is 'aboriginal,' and therefore also of notions concerned with origins, history, and connectedness to place, […] this neither precludes openness to the future nor participation in a world of differences, flows, communication, and mobility transcending geographical, political, and cultural boundaries [...] (2015, 397).

Borders are always arbitrary constructions that can be either valued or discarded. The scale of ahi kā and ahi mātao enables Indigenous people (and characters) to do both. Generally, it is interesting to note that all presented narratives also suggest what Hirini Matunga has professed, namely that, "to know where you are going, you have to know whence you came", which is in turn based on the idea that Māori are "part of a living history, a continuum which reaches back through their *whakapapa* (genealogy), *tupuna* (ancestors) and through time", and that this scope includes "events, people, places, objects" (1994, 219). This links them to many other Māori stories which proclaim that mobility without rootedness often seems senseless or at least undesirable.

The previous analysis has demonstrated that, in one way or another, the four authors unsettle the seemingly secure centre of Indigeneity, revealing that it is a dynamic construct which is constantly negotiated. The introduced concepts

of tūrangawaewae and ahi kā are depicted as producing, rather than hindering, mobility, though often in a helical fashion. It can be concluded that there are multiple layers and types of modern Indigenous mobilities, all of which are valid. When jointly taken together for consideration, Keenan, Gildea, Latham-Coates and Joseph contribute to the creation of a complex web of fictional Indigenous mobility.

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Notes

[1] Additionally, Alice Te Punga Somerville argues that physical residence is not the only criterion for upholding spatial relationships: "If language is a form of assertion, a form of *fire*, then the massive number of Māori who do not reside on their traditional homelands are not necessarily cut out of the question of asserting an active relationship with place" (2010, 37). According to this logic, ahi kā can also be maintained by means of linguistic competency, storytelling and artistic productions.

[2] Tangi are usually costly events, since it is expected that the affected whānau shows hospitality (including food and sleeping accommodation) towards other mourners. Sending a *koha* (gift) of money is therefore quite common, though usually not in the case of a close family member dying. In such circumstances, physical presence and active help is expected.

[3] The name itself is telling in this respect, as it does not give away any traces of Māori ancestry and the last name in particular can be applied to her upbringing – namely a Pākehā or white New Zealander one.

[4] This could be read as a reference to *te ao mārama* (the world of light), which constitutes the physical world that enables human life in general, but is also connected to education, enlightenment and understanding.

[5] This seems to be a spelling mistake, since *tīpuna* indicates a plural form, whereas *tipuna* would be correct in this context to signify a single ancestor.

[6] *Haere* is a verb that can be translated as *to go*. When used reiteratively, though, it is usually rendered as an expression of farewell. By adding "e Kui", Annie addresses her grandmother.

[7] By far the most frequent mention of karanga in Māori literature is related to the literal form, that is, characters being called onto a marae during ceremonial occasions. However, as in Joseph's story, there are also transferrals of this initiating and forward-urging notion to other settings (e.g. Ihimaera 2012 [1987], 3-4; Cherrington 2004, 87; Ihimaera 1995, 359). In the case of Latham-Coates' story, Annie curiously feels "rooted to the spot" (2007, 62) rather than urged to move forward when she is called onto the marae during her school days.

[8] Joseph's frequent allusion to the displacement and current isolation of the museum objects highlights that they, like humans, have individual trajectories and histories that are linked to colonial structures (see also Te Punga Somerville 2007b, 35). This can in turn be read not only as a condemnation of past wrongdoings but also as an implicit call

for future action and change in museum practices. Ideally, the waka huia would thus also be able to return to its place of origin in the long run.

[9] Perhaps the most iconic examples of such a type of narrative are Alan Duff's novel *Once Were Warriors* (1995 [1990]) and the eponymous film (Tamahori 1994). Both continue to be amply criticised for this reason and recently there has been a resurgence of interest in the context of the quarter-century movie anniversary. Its problematic legacy is, for instance, discussed by Miriama Aoake (2019). Other short stories that, if read in isolation, may convey a stereotypical image of Māori poverty include K-T Harrison's "A Picnic with the Bears" (2015) and Chas Te Runa's "Sonny and Loren" (2003), as well as several works by Ann French, Phil Kawana and Alice Tawhai. Of course, this a general issue related to short stories: due to their brevity, an elaborate character arc or multiplicity through a large set of characters is difficult to achieve and may make the reading process cumbersome. It is therefore also partly the responsibility of editors to display a broad spectrum in anthologies.

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