

## **Michal Kapis**

**Title:** Features of oralisation in Indigenous prose of Canada, South Africa and New Zealand

### **Abstract**

The study analyses selected examples of prose in English written by Indigenous authors from Canada, South Africa and New Zealand in order to determine how and why they incorporate into their writing elements of their respective Indigenous oral traditions, such as selected aspects of style and plot, Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies and beliefs as well as character archetypes. Through the use of various stylistic devices the authors are able to approximate many characteristics of oral storytelling which may seem difficult or even impossible to represent in writing, including audience participation or the rhythm of speech. Although many of those features are specific to a given culture, Indigenous community or even author, the thesis proposes that there are a number of universal features found in Indigenous literatures across the three countries. The type of literature that replicates aspects of oral traditions is referred to in the study as *oralised*. By conducting an analysis of 21 Indigenous Canadian, South African and New Zealand texts, the study aims to determine parallels in the usage of oralisation features between cultures, texts and authors and how an awareness of oralisation can inform literary analyses.

The thesis adopts a methodological framework derived from both Indigenous (Vizenor 1989b, Melbourne 1991, Maracle 1994, Archibald 2008, Blaeser 2016) and Western (Ong 1982, Kashula 2002, Allen 2012) literary and cultural studies focusing on orality and literacy as well as oral traditions in Canada, South Africa and New Zealand (Okpewho 1992, Eigenbrod 1995, McRae 2000). In addition, the thesis draws from the wisdom of Indigenous Elders and authors themselves, who often comment on the relationship between orality and literacy as well as the challenges of preserving aspects of oral traditions in a written form. Based on the above, the initial two chapters of the study outline an inventory of potentially universal features that could be used by Indigenous authors from different backgrounds to write oralised prose, including repetitions, line breaks or typographic spaces, the use of Indigenous languages, non-linear time, stories within stories and more. Chapter 3 presents a selective overview of the cultures and histories of Indigenous peoples in Canada, South Africa and New Zealand as well as the histories of colonisation and draws parallels between the developments of Indigenous literatures in the three countries. Chapters 4 and 5 extract the features of oralisation from 21

selected novels, collections of short stories and life writing texts and look at how similar or different their implementation is depending on an author's cultural background. Finally, Chapter 6 is devoted to a detailed analysis of three of the 21 texts, one from each of the three countries: *Potiki* (1986) by Patricia Grace (Māori; Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Raukawa and Te Ati Awa), *The Back of the Turtle* (2014) by Thomas King (Indigenous Canadian/American; Cherokee) and *The Yearning* (2016) by Mohale Mashigo (South African; Basotho). The aim of the analyses is to demonstrate how oralisation features can complement themes explored in Indigenous prose and how awareness of those features can help readers discover new layers of meaning in the texts. The thesis provides valuable insights on the interaction of orality and literacy in Indigenous literatures and showcases how a focus on oralisation features can complement and deepen an analysis of Indigenous literatures.