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

[Cechy oralizacji w indygenicznej prozie kanadyjskiej, południowoafrykańskiej i nowozelandzkiej]

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OŚWIADCZENIE

Ja, niżej podpisany

Michał Kapis

przedkładam rozprawę doktorską

pt. Features of oralisation in Indigenous prose of Canada, South Africa and New Zealand

[Cechy oralizacji w indygenicznej prozie kanadyjskiej, południowoafrykańskiej i nowozelandzkiej]

na Uniwersytecie im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu

i oświadczam,

że napisałem ją samodzielnie.

Oznacza to, że przy pisaniu pracy, poza niezbędnymi konsultacjami, nie korzystałem z pomocy innych osób, a w szczególności nie zlecałem opracowania rozprawy lub jej istotnych części innym osobom, ani nie odpisywałem tej rozprawy lub jej istotnych części od innych osób.

Jednocześnie przyjmuję do wiadomości, że gdyby powyższe oświadczenie okazało się nieprawdziwe, decyzja o wydaniu mi dyplomu zostanie cofnięta.

Poznań, 01.06.2022r.	Michał Kapis
(miejscowość, data)	(czytelny podpis)

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Introduction

"The truth about stories is that that's all we are." This simple sentence written by the Cherokee author Thomas King (2003: 2) teaches a powerful lesson. Our memories are stories, our dreams are stories, our lives are stories. In the end, everything we say, think and experience is stories. The dissertation you are reading right now is a story as well. It is a story told by me, the author, to you, the reader. It is a story informed and inspired by hundreds if not thousands of storytellers from Indigenous cultures around the world. And somewhat similarly to Thomas King's *The Truth about Stories* (2003), it is a story *about* stories.

Oral traditions are the ancestors of world literatures. Long before ancient civilisations invented ways to record language in a material form, people had been telling stories. The capacity for storytelling is perhaps one of the most fundamental features of culture as a whole. With the advent of writing, some of those oral tales, such as Homer's *Illiad* and *Oddysey*, were captured in a physical form and frozen in time. With the invention of print in the 15th century, the technology of writing became more widespread in Europe and Asia and literacy was further detached from orality (McLuhan 1962). Storytellers started composing more and more original stories in writing; literatures flourished and authors were now able to create stories that could travel across continents. Those new stories gradually replaced European oral traditions and pushed them towards obscurity. The oral nature of Homer's works was all but forgotten and only rediscovered within the last 50 years by scholars such as Perry (1971), Ong (1982) and Havelock (1986). Literature was believed to be the next stage in the development of language and it soon became a dominant mode of storytelling, even though not all aspects of an oral tradition can be easily translated to paper (Van Toorn 2004: 24).

In the Age of Exploration, the literate Europeans became aware of the existence of many Indigenous peoples around the world in the Americas, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the Polynesian islands. Using its military might, Europe colonised and subjugated those lands and peoples. The colonisers believed themselves to be superior to other peoples (Brooking 2004, Stapleton 2010, Ray 2012). Indigenous peoples were oftentimes referred to as 'savages', in part due to their illiteracy (Goody 1977). The colonial powers commonly took advantage of Indigenous peoples. Military subjugation was followed by economic exploitation and a rapid spread of new diseases among Indigenous peoples. It is estimated that in the Americas alone, around 56 million Indigenous peoples were killed in the aftermath of European invasions (Pruitt 2019). Some of the settlers, usually Christian missionaries, engaged in 'projects to educate' Indigenous communities about European ways of life, which included teaching them how to read and write. By that time, writing was already an integral part of European lifestyle. Spoken and written language were no longer the same. The invention of print (around 1440) together with the standardisation of spelling, grammar and punctuation, and development of editing conventions gradually put more and more constraints on the written word and these constraints brought orature and literature even further apart. In the case of English, those processes accelerated from the 16th century onwards with the publication of English grammar books, such as *Pamphlet for Grammar* (1568) by William Bullokar or *A New Grammar* (1745) by Ann Fisher. In Europe, the growing differences between orality and literacy were not that apparent, since oral traditions were no longer an integral part of everyday life for all. As noted by Kashula and Mostert (2011: 1), "[a]s the written word evolved, the oral word became devalued and pushed to the fringes." Although oral storytelling continued to exist in limited form, stories were to a large extend relegated to pages of books. It is only when ethnographers took interest in Indigenous oralities that a comparison between an oral and a literate culture became possible. Orality and literacy were conceived of as binary, irreconcilable opposites (Goody 1977, Ong 1982) in a theory known as the Great Divide.

In Indigenous communities, the transition towards literacy was much different. The technology of writing was imposed on Indigenous peoples or used against them during the colonial times and long after. It was used to twist ancestral knowledge and to spread misconceptions about Indigenous peoples (Blaeser 2016: 232). It was presented to them in legal decisions to push them out of their homelands (Heywood 2004: 97). It was

also a tool in schools which attempted to erase Indigenous cultures and replace them with European ones (Van Toorn 2004: 41). Nevertheless, Indigenous peoples have never fully rejected their oral traditions in favour of writing. The violent nature of colonisation resulted in a confrontation between primary oral and literate cultures.

For a long time, European thinkers disregarded Indigenous oral traditions and perceived them as inferior to the written word. There was little to no interest in serious study of Indigenous oral traditions (Ong 1982: 10). This attitude changed only in the 19th century, when non-Indigenous scholars concluded that Indigenous peoples and their cultures were facing certain extinction. This unsubstantiated idea prompted anthropologists to frenziedly visit Indigenous communities and record details about their cultures before the knowledge would 'vanish forever'. Oral stories were often ham-fistedly translated into European languages, unnecessarily redacted or modified to match the dominant sense of aesthetics and generally misinterpreted or misunderstood. The oxymoron *oral literature* emerged, as if oral storytelling was a subset of literature and could only be defined through the prism of writing. Although the term has been widely used in literary and cultural studies around the world, in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I argue against it and in favour of the term *orature* coined by the Ugandan literary theorist Pio Zirimu in the 1970s (Kashula and Mostert 2011: 3).

The Western attitudes to orature shifted gradually in the 20th century, when scholars such as Walter Ong (1982) re-examined the relationship between orality and literacy and when the academic community finally began to listen to what Indigenous peoples themselves have to say on the matter. The second half of the 20th century saw also the flowering of Indigenous literatures when authors from all over the world began recording both traditional and original stories on their own terms. Unburdened from the editorial pen of a Eurocentric anthropologist, many of those literary works have been noticeably different from typical non-Indigenous writing. Despite the fact that writing has been used as a tool and weapon of colonisation, in the modern day, it is impossible to deny the benefits of literacy for communication, education and preservation of knowledge. Contemporary Indigenous storytellers have in many ways been forced to use writing as a medium, but they have been able to adapt it to their own needs. Instead of accepting Western aesthetic conventions, they have moulded writing to make it more suitable a medium for Indigenous narratives. This creative process, which involves incorporating features of oral tradition into writing, is referred to in this dissertation as oralisation.

The inherent differences between the oral and the written modes of communication make it difficult to recreate certain aspects of orature, such as audience participation or musical rhythm, in a written text. Challenging as it is, oralisation can be achieved in many different ways, depending on the author's creativity as well as the characteristics of oral tradition in their Indigenous culture. Some oralisation features may be unique for a specific people, while others could approximate universal qualities of oral tradition and therefore be shared across cultures. These similarities are recognised by Indigenous storytellers themselves, as noted by Thomas King in the introduction to the anthology of Indigenous Canadian fiction:

> For Native audiences, the twentieth-century phenomenon of Native storytellers from different tribes sharing their stories in a common language – through the contemporary and non-traditional forms of written poetry, prose and drama – has helped to reinforce many of the beliefs that tribes have held individually, beliefs that tribes are now discovering they share mutually. (King 1992: ix)

In this dissertation, I aim to demonstrate some of those cultural and literary parallels by analysing features of oralisation in 21 texts written in English by Indigenous authors from Canada, South Africa and New Zealand.

The focus on English language texts is important for several reasons. Firstly, it establishes a common ground for comparison, which is key for such a broad study. Indigenous peoples in Canada, South Africa and New Zealand speak and write in many different Indigenous languages, but in all three countries English is a lingua franca spoken by the majority of the populations (even if it is a second language). Secondly, English has a long history as a written language and standard written English differs significantly from standard spoken English. Since many oralisation features subvert established writing conventions, they are likely to be more striking and distinguishable when used in a language with a long history of literature. Finally, English is the main language of literatures in the three countries in question and Indigenous authors often write in English to reach wider audiences, although code switching is not uncommon.

The selection of Canada, South Africa and New Zealand as the focus of the study was dictated by a few factors. The three countries are former British settler colonies and all use English as one of the official languages, which serves as the common ground for analysis. One of the purposes of this dissertation is to demonstrate similarities in the process of oralisation, which are not dictated by geographic or cultural adjacency. Thus, it

was optimal to choose Indigenous literatures rooted in different parts of the world and in diverse Indigenous cultures. Canada and New Zealand are also sometimes overshadowed in academic studies by the proximity of their larger neighbours, the United States and Australia respectively. Although the thesis does not analyse any Indigenous American or Australian texts, it does recognise the close ties between Indigenous peoples living on opposite sides of the arbitrary political borders. For that reason, Indigenous American and Australian voices are included in the discussion where relevant. South Africa is interesting due to the fact that Indigenous South Africans (unlike Canadians and New Zealanders, who are still in fact colonised) constitute the majority of the country's population. Despite its many rich oral traditions, South African literatures are rarely mentioned in the context of Indigeneity. Although Indigenous South Africans are not a minority in the country, it is also important to remember the legacy of oppression left by the relatively recent apartheid regime. Indigenous peoples in all three countries in question have suffered greatly at the hands of colonial powers. In recent decades, all three of these have also seen new waves of Indigenous writings in English.

The dissertation is divided into 6 chapters. In Chapter 1, I present an overview of Western and Indigenous conceptions of orality and literacy and argues against the "the Great Divide" theory which conceives of the two modes of communication as binary opposites. The Chapter recognises differences between orality and literacy but posits that they can be (and consistently are) reconciled or blended in Indigenous literatures. This type of literature is referred to in the dissertation as "oralised".

In Chapter 2, I draw on literary and cultural studies as well as wisdom of Indigenous authors and Elders to create an inventory of possible features of oralisation. By focusing on the universal qualities of oratures, I attempt to identify common strategies that could be employed by Indigenous authors to oralise their texts. While I focus on the broader features of oralisation for the sake of the comparative study, I also recognise that due to the wide diversity of oral traditions in Canada, South Africa and New Zealand, there likely exist many features of oralisation that are place-, community-, culture- or even author-specific. Although those less universal features of oralisation are equally fascinating and deserving of study, I realise that their proper identification requires in-depth research into every given culture, language, epistemology and ontology and as such, it lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. In the latter part of Chapter 2, I discuss the

possible relations between oralisation and postmodernism as well as oralisation in different genres of literature.

In Chapter 3, I provide a selective overview of the histories of Indigenous peoples in Canada, South Africa and New Zealand, centred around the development of Indigenous literatures. It draws parallels between the histories of colonisation as well as the processes leading to the spread of writing among Indigenous peoples in the three countries. The Chapter also briefly introduces the texts selected for analysis in the following chapters.

Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to analyses of oralisation features in the 21 selected Indigenous novels, short story collections and life writing texts. Rather than proposing detailed interpretations of each of those, this part of the dissertation attempts to extract the universal features of oralisation introduced in Chapter 2 from specific texts and demonstrate how similar or different their usage is across the spectrum of Indigenous literatures of Canada, South Africa and New Zealand.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I draw upon the previous chapters in an analysis of three Indigenous novels: *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 Chapter is to demonstrate how knowledge of oralisation features can deepen one's understanding and interpretation of an Indigenous literary text. Oralisation can oftentimes complement and enhance themes addressed in Indigenous literatures and an awareness of oralisation features can sometimes even lead to the discovery of secondary themes that may otherwise be hidden from readers.

European scholars, such as the aforementioned Ong, have written a lot about the interplay between orality and literacy, but a study of Indigenous literatures should be firmly grounded in Indigenous knowledges. Kimberly Blaeser (Anishinaabe) (2016: 231-232) calls for "a critical voice and method which moves from the culturally centred text outward toward the frontier of 'border' studies, rather than an external critical voice and method which seeks to penetrate, appropriate, colonize, or conquer the cultural centre." Blaeser recognises the fact that modern Indigenous literary works are bi- or even multicultural. Authors often write in English even if they know their Indigenous language and they are usually familiar with both tribal and mainstream Western cultures. She arrives at the conclusion that literary criticism may need to be at least bi-cultural as well to "open up the multicultural texts of Native American literature" (2016: 234) – a conclusion that

may well be applied also to other Indigenous literatures. Lutz (2002: 110) argues that non-Indigenous scholars can contribute to "clearing the way" for mutual understanding between cultures by helping "re-educate and decolonize non-Natives, so that we may become able to see Native peoples without the distortions and stereotypes". It is my intention as the author of this dissertation to approach the Indigenous texts with utmost respect and recognition for their individual cultural contexts. I follow the directions of Indigenous scholars, who ask critics to employ Western theory rather than to apply it. First and foremost, however, I take guidance from Indigenous voices of both scholars and elders in order to gain more insight into the process of oralisation. In doing so, I also recognise my position as a White European scholar based in Poland, writing in the area of Indigenous studies. Lee Maracle (2007: 59) teaches about Stó: lo study methodology: "When studying a subject, we first face our attitudes, our beliefs, and our agendas. We face the filters through which our specific cultural and personal origins affect clear and clean vision." While working on this study I try to follow these guiding words to avoid overgeneralisation. This dissertation strives to draw clear parallels between oralisation features in many different Indigenous literatures, but it is my hope that each of those literatures may receive a more in-depth study of oralisation conducted by scholars conversant with intricacies of the given cultures and oral traditions.

Although individual oralisation features have been noted before by literary scholars, previous studies have been largely limited to a particular feature, text, author, genre or country (Eigenbrod 1995, Dvorak 1998, Deloughrey 1999, Jacobs 2002). The 1997 article by Margery Fee on orality in North American, Australian and New Zealand literature presents one of the very few existing attempts at a broader study of Indigenous oralised literature. To my knowledge, this study is the first to broadly compare oralisation features in Indigenous Canadian, South African and New Zealand literatures. In this dissertation, I aim to collect and systematise observations about oralisation in the three countries, made by literary scholars, ethnographers, authors and Elders. I then attempt to demonstrate that certain oralisation features are used universally in Indigenous literatures despite the physical distance between their places of origin. Finally, I wish to determine how attentiveness to oralisation features may deepen one's interpretation and understanding of Indigenous prose.

Chapter 1: Between the oral and the written

"This sentence is a time machine", writes Amalia Gnanadesikan in her book *The Writing Revolution* (2009: 1). Over 3000 years BCE, ancient Sumerians first captured language and gave it a physical form we call *writing*. Writing has since become so common that it is barely recognised as a technology. In modern societies, children are expected to acquire literacy just as they are expected to learn how to walk. In fact, this technology is now so important in people's day-to-day life that dyslexia has been classified as a disability under the British Equality Act of 2010.

Writing has allowed humans to preserve information and send it into the future. Historians distinguish *history* (recorded past) from *prehistory* (time before written records). And when writing is treated as the primary source of information about the past, it becomes easy to overlook any other medium of communication, in this case oral traditions. Before the 1960s, there was little academic interest in comparing and contrasting orality and literacy. This changed with the work of a group of scholars, sometimes referred to as the Toronto School of Media Theory, which included Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Eric Havelock and Walter Ong. This chapter presents an overview of the fields of orality and literacy studies from Western perspectives. However, it also juxtaposes this research with Indigenous perspectives. For many Indigenous peoples, the transition from primary oral to literate cultures was not slow and gradual but violent and inherently connected to colonisation. Before the settlers' arrival, all aspects of social life in Indigenous communities were based on orality. Indigenous thinkers have therefore always had a greater appreciation for the oral mode of communication than their non-Indigenous counterparts, who have only recently recognised the importance of orality.

1.1. Western conceptions of orality and literacy

One of the most influential academic works discussing the interplay between orality and literacy is without a doubt Walter J. Ong's *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. First published in 1982, Ong's study summarises and expands on his previous research, providing a detailed analysis of the contrast between primary oral cultures,

having little to no understanding of writing, and literate cultures, for which writing is an inherent part of language. Ong famously argues that the spread of writing has changed the way people think and even "restructured their consciousness" (Ong 1982: 77). He supports this theory by explaining that oral cultures communicate using the sense of hearing, while literate cultures use predominantly sight. Oral/aural communication is more closely related to time, it is evanescent and has to be experienced similarly to an event. Writing, in turn, is linked with the concept of space, as words occupy physical space on paper. The shift in sensory dependence from hearing to sight (and from time to space) has changed the way literate cultures perceive the world. From his descriptions of orality and literacy, it may seem that Ong is a proponent of the former. He stresses the fact that writing is only a technology and words written on a page are artificially coded with the use of symbols, which have no real meaning without reference to speech. Writing is for him a largely reduced representation of speech, which provides an illusion of taming the sound (Ong 1982: 73-74).

Having asserted the relationship between orality, hearing, and time, as well as literacy, sight, and space, Ong is able to infer the characteristics which differentiate primary oral cultures from literate cultures. In order to function without the help of writing, people have to think

> in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions, in standard thematic settings (the assembly, the meal, the duel, the hero's 'helper', and so on), in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall, or in other mnemonic form. (Ong 1982: 34)

Ong compiles all these insights into an inventory of features, which he refers to as the nine aspects of orality. Although he himself stresses the fact that the list is suggestive rather than comprehensive, the nine aspects of orality are a valuable tool that may help identify the major differences between primary oral and written communication.

First, the use of language in primary oral cultures is additive rather than subordinative. As mentioned before, oral expression is much more welcoming of repetition than writing, where the constant use of the same word without employing a synonym may be considered a marker of a poor writer. In primary oral cultures, repetition adds to the overall rhythm of communication. Without an excessive number of alternative expressions, it becomes easier to recollect particular pieces of information. Ong supports this point by

providing passages from two translations of the Bible, one from 1610, and one from 1970. In the short passage, the earlier translation uses the introductory conjunction *and* 9 times, whereas the later version replaces it with a range of synonyms such as *while*, *then*, or *thus*, using the introductory *and* on only 2 accounts. The argument is that the earlier version of the Bible was written at a time when orality and literacy were closer together. With the popularisation of print, the two modes of communication gradually drifted further apart with literacy becoming less appreciative of repetition (Ong 1982: 36-37).

The second aspect of orally based thought, Ong explains, is its aggregative character. In contrast to the analytic literacy, primary oral cultures often tend to use ready-made formulaic expressions, for instance when forming epithets. It is very common for a noun to be paired with an adjective, which expresses its most typical (or stereotypical) attribute. Therefore, usual oral narratives abound with phrases such as *beautiful princess*, *brave knight*, *sturdy oak*, or *terrible monster*. Moreover, these attributes are not used on a single occasion, but rather persist as repeatable noun phrases. Whereas in literate cultures, such writing style might seem unnecessary and redundant, in oral narratives it is perfectly usual, as it is easier to memorise information divided into larger units (Ong 1982: 38-39).

The third aspect of orality is closely related to the second one. Orality is redundant or "copious", while literacy can be described as sparsely linear. In primary oral cultures a speaker has to assure that their audience follow the speech. In the case of written expression, the reader may always go back and reread a fragment of the text, but the listener is unable to do that unless the speaker repeats themself. Repetition also allows the speaker to retain fluency while thinking about the next part of the speech. As an example, Ong explains that in the traditional African drum talks, "[i]t takes on the average around eight times as many words to say something (…) as in the spoken language" (Ong 1982: 39-40).

The fourth aspect of orality is its conservative or traditional character. Without writing, the only way of retaining knowledge is by transmitting it orally to one's descendants. There are various traditions associated with that, and elders as transmitters of history, culture and tradition are treated with much more reverence and respect than in literate cultures. The wise old men and women are the only ones who are able to prevent a way of life from being lost to time. In a literate culture, however, it is the energetic youth who move to the limelight. The book, not the elder, is the source of knowledge. The ability to store information on paper frees up a literate person's mind and opens it to

experimentation and speculation. Although conservative, oral cultures do not lack originality. Variation and improvisation are natural in the process of storytelling and new elements are introduced into the stories with each retelling (Ong 1982: 41).

The fifth aspect of orality is its closeness to the human lifeworld. Oral expression in primary oral cultures is always related to real life. There are no abstract creations such as lists or indexes, which present information without context. A word is equivalent in meaning to an action. Therefore, any type of instruction is given specifically in the context of learning a skill. There are no abstract manuals which would explain the process of doing something in a detached and purely theoretical manner (Ong 1982: 42).

The sixth aspect is that orality is agonistically toned. It is a common practice among members of primary oral cultures to engage in oral battles of wits, trying to prove their primacy over the opponent by exchanging riddles, proverbs, or even insults. Examples of such contests can be seen in *Iliad* or *Beowulf*, but also among members of oral societies around the globe. These practices are referred to by linguists as *flyting*. This characteristic is also exemplified by the abundance of both violence and praise in oral narratives. Ong explains that interpersonal relations may be turbulent when all communication is based on the "give-and-take dynamics of sound" (Ong 1982: 43-44).

The seventh aspect states that orality is empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced. Literacy does not require the writer and the reader to be in direct contact with each other. It is therefore easier for the writer to become objective and uninvolved in the interaction. In contrast, oral narratives establish strong connections not only between the speaker and the audience, but also between the speaker and the characters in the narrative. Ong provides examples of speakers who assume the role of their characters and are therefore unable to remain objective narrators. Whereas the writer has to rely on words alone to convey an image in a narrative, speakers of oral tradition can modulate their voice, use gestures and facial expressions and interact with the audience directly, making it a more effective but less objective storytelling technique. This contrast between orality and literacy is further deepened with the development of print. Orderly justified paragraphs equally spaced on a piece of paper make the text even more depersonalised and distant (Ong 1982: 45).

The eighth aspect of orality is that it remains homeostatic. In oral cultures only the present and functional meaning of a word is relevant. Etymology is irrelevant, due to the fact that a word which cannot serve its proper function in the present is obsolete. Ong

draws from other research to show that even seemingly incontestable facts such as a family genealogy may be adjusted over the years as long as they serve the same function as before. Another interesting example comes from Goody and Watt's (1968) research in Ghana, where the Gonja people have changed an important myth in their oral tradition to better reflect recent political developments in their country. The Gonja state used to be divided into seven divisions attributed to the seven sons of its legendary founder. As the state boundaries changed, so did the myth and in the end, the founder was said to have only had five sons. The previous version of the myth seems to have been forgotten, as it no longer served its function (Ong 1982: 47-48).

Finally, Ong describes orality as situational rather than abstract. This aspect once again refers to the functionality of orally based thought. Ong provides the example of a study conducted by a Soviet psychologist, Alexandr Luria (1976). Luria's experiments in remote areas of Uzbekistan where the population was illiterate or semi-literate at the time, showed that in primary oral cultures, thinking is based on operational principles rather than abstract categories. When presented with various geometrical figures, less literate subjects would rather identify them using the names of real objects such as *bucket* or *moon*. They had no need of putting shapes into abstract categories of circles, triangles, and rectangles. After all, these abstract categories do not correspond to the reality in any tangible way (Ong 1982: 49-50).

If the nine aspects are indeed characteristic of oral expression in general, they should be identifiable in Indigenous oral traditions. Consequently, it can be assumed that at least some of those features of orality should be present in experimental written texts by authors who endeavour to incorporate elements of their oral traditions into their work. Firstly, additiveness and redundancy may be fairly easily achieved through repetition in both oral and written narratives. Aggregativeness seems similarly straightforward to implement with the use of appropriate collocations. Conservativeness as explained by Ong would more likely manifest itself as a narrative theme than a feature of expression itself, while the agonistic tone could lead, for instance, to a particular way of writing dialogues. Both the participatory and homeostatic aspects reflect two important elements of orature that are the most challenging to reconstruct in a written form, in which reader participation in the narrative process is almost non-existent and the narrative itself is ossified on a page and can no longer be readily adapted and evolve. If these two aspects were to be approximated in writing, it would require a lot of ingenuity on the part of an author. The

two remaining aspects of orality, i.e. closeness to human lifeworld and situational character, seem to be the least relevant to the question of oralised prose, although they could also be potentially implemented through the use of specific narrative themes. Although not developed with literary studies in mind, Ong's conceptualisation of the nine aspects of orality may serve as a starting point for identifying features of oralised prose. They should naturally be supplemented with other aspects of orality which Ong did not consider and which may be more readily recognisable by Indigenous scholars. The nine aspects have in fact been successfully used as a tool of several literary analyses to date (Dickinson 1994, Kaschula 1997, Dauterich 2005).

In the later part of his book, Ong predicts a resurgence of orality by means of digital technology. He introduces the notion of secondary orality, much more deliberate and powerful than primary orality. With the use of technologies such as the radio or the television, people from all around the world may participate in verbal communication, a phenomenon which would have been impossible in the world of primary orality due to distance. At the same time, Ong points out significant differences between primary and secondary oralities. He provides the example of political debates in the United States. In Lincoln-Douglas debates in 1858, the candidates really fought against each other with words. "Primary orality made itself felt in the additive, redundant, carefully balanced, highly agonistic style, and the intense interplay between speaker and audience. The debaters were hoarse and physically exhausted at the end of each bout" (Ong 1982: 134). Secondary orality, however, is marked by the strong influence of literacy. Candidates prepare neat, concise, well-organised speeches and do not engage in a show of antagonism against each other. In many cases even body language, gestures and facial expressions are carefully planned and rehearsed. Ong even goes as far as to say that this modern orality is domesticated. Ong (1982: 2) sees secondary orality in "telephones, radio and television", but this trend has only become more widespread with the rise of the internet in the 21st century. While appearances on radio or television are restricted to select few professionals, audio and video hosting platforms, such as YouTube, allow anyone to post either scripted or improvised content.

Ong's study saw a generally positive reception. It was praised by many critics, especially those working in rhetoric and communication studies. Bacon (1983: 270-271) refers to the book as "impressive", "infectious", and "tantilizing", although he also points out that it contains some generalisations. Farrell (1985) agrees with Ong's findings,

suggesting that writing may restructure human consciousness by creating an imbalance in the amount of information perceived by different human senses. Due to the spread of writing, sight has become more vital than hearing in the process of acquiring information. In a more recent review, Dafouz-Milne (2004) applauds Ong for his accessible style and interdisciplinary quality. Hauptman (1983) is less favourable in his review, praising Ong's book for the number of references to other scholars but noting that "it really does not add to our knowledge" and pointing out its "strangely insidious prejudice in favour of orality and predilection for repetition" (Hauptman 1983: 694-695).

Several critics have accused Ong of presenting too stark a contrast between orality and literacy and implying a great divide between the two modes of communication. Others suggest that Ong is biased against literacy. Gronbeck (1984: 208) concludes his generally positive review noting that "Ong cannot help himself; orality and life in oral cultures are lionized." He follows that claim, however, by saying that "Ong writes with the bravado of a McLuhan and yet the analytical precision of an Aristotle." Elsewhere, Long (1986: 3) refers to Ong as a "staunch defender of oral literacy." Dauterich (2005: 27-28) agrees that oral forms can never be fully understood through writing alone but admits that Ong may "appear disdainful of oral forms of expression", which contradicts other scholars' claims. Biakolo (1999: 44) challenges Ong's notions as to the connection between orality, literacy and human senses. Ong argues that orality (hearing) is dependent on time, while writing (sight) is dependent on space. Biakolo attempts to refute that claim providing the example of a continuous sound, which may be heard (or not) depending on a listener's position in space. Since the sound does not stop, time is of little importance. It matters more how far in space the listener is from its source. "At the source of the problems that Ong's descriptions raise is his conception of time and space", writes Biakolo. He goes on to point out Ong's overdependence on the ancient Greek culture in supporting his theories. Connors (1988: 380) agrees that Ong was noticeably "affected by Havelock's work" on the orality and literacy in ancient Greece.

It is true that many of the ideas presented in *Orality and Literacy* had previously been included in various other studies. However, Ong does not attempt to hide this fact. In the opening chapter of his book, he mentions several scholars who explored the dynamics between orality and writing before him, as well as several of his own previous studies (Ong 1982: 6). One of Ong's inspirations was Havelock's *Preface to Plato.* Havelock (1963: 115-128) delineates the importance of orality in ancient Greece around 1175

B. C. Although the Greeks are known to have developed the Linear B script before that point, Havelock argues that the writing system was impractical for wider use and may have even been forgotten completely, making ancient Greece a primary oral culture. Having established that, Havelock goes on to describe the complex Greek culture with its customs, laws, politics, history and philosophy, all based upon oral communication. He stresses the remarkable capacity of oral memory which was supported by an increased usage of formulaic language and repetition. Both of these characteristics are later on adopted by Ong for his more universal theory of orality. Havelock went on to publish another book in 1986, developing Ong's orality theory with a specific reference to ancient Greece.

Another scholar whose works had a considerable influence on Ong was his academic supervisor, Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan (1962: 24-26) is among the first scholars who claim that the historical shift from orality to writing had a broader effect on human consciousness and way of thinking. The reason for this change is that "[t]he interiorization of the technology of the phonetic alphabet translates man from the magical world of the ear to the neutral visual world" (McLuhan 1962: 18). This binary division between aural orality and visual literacy is another important concept in Ong's book, being at the same time a source of criticism against it.

Similar ideas have also been explored in Jack Goody's *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (1977). Goody focuses on literacy as the catalyst for reconstructing human thought. In contrast to his contemporaries, he also devotes a significant part of his book to discussing and criticising the binary approach to the issue. He explains that the division of societies into advanced and primitive, domesticated and wild or open and closed is superficial and ethnocentric. Interestingly though, he does not seem to completely reject these dichotomies himself. In a similar fashion, he criticises cultural relativism, arguing that it is counterproductive to pretend that nothing can be gained from comparative studies of cultures. Goody therefore attempts to navigate the dichotomies to make them less radical. He emphasises difference but reiterates that he does not subscribe to the Great Divide theory (Goody 1977: 57-58). Despite Goody's endeavours, some critics felt that he failed in liberating himself from binary oppositions and dichotomic thinking. Maranda (1980: 393) writes that "Goody's rebellion against binary classification fails to generate epistemological freedom." Maddock (1980: 68) shares this sentiment, and adds that Goody does little to differentiate between cultures which developed writing naturally and

those in which the technology was introduced by colonial powers. Finally, Street (2003: 3) argues that Goody exaggerates the values of literacy by attributing to it cognitive and socio-cultural changes, e.g., the development of logic, while ignoring the larger educational context in which literacy is placed. This line of criticism corresponds in part to what was said about *Orality and Literacy*.

As far as orality in literature is concerned, Ong provides the example of Milman Parry's (1971) work on Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Due to the fact that the works of Homer had been created long before the spread of writing, the author's consciousness had not been restructured by this technology. Therefore, the style in which *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are written is more reminiscent of the oral mode of communication (Ong 1982: 18-27). Ong does not, however, focus too much attention on contemporary works of literature written by members of cultures in which oral tradition is still a relevant part of life. It is worth noting that some contemporary Indigenous authors find themselves in between two cultures and are familiar both with their traditional oral culture and the present reality, in which writing remains a dominating force. In that case, their consciousness would already be restructured, and any use of orality in writing would have to be a deliberate effort to bridge the two modes of communication.

The strength of Ong's work comes from his ability to draw information from a number of other studies and develop them further. Nevertheless, there were also several critics who responded negatively to his concept of orality.

Gee (1990:77) admits that experiments conducted by scholars such as Luria do seem to corroborate Ong's ideas about orality. However, he also states that one cannot be sure whether the examples of increased proficiency in abstract thinking result from literacy, formal schooling, or some other, undetermined reason. Literacy, after all, is usually strongly tied to an education system which entails that the ability to read and write is acquired together with a whole set of intricate ideas and values. Gee further undermines Ong's arguments by referring to Scribner and Cole's (1981) research on the Vai people of Liberia. Some of the Vai are proficient in three different scripts: English, which they learn at school, Indigenous syllabic Vai script, which is taught outside any institutional setting, and Arabic, which is used for reading the Koran. Scribner and Cole conducted experiments similar to those of Luria on subjects literate in one, two, or three of the scripts, as well as some who were illiterate. The results indicate that rather than enhancing overall cognitive skills of the subjects, literacy (or different literacies) improves certain skills

closely associated with the everyday use of a particular script. The authors consequently propose "a practice account of literacy" which rejects the claims that literacy develops global cognitive skills:

> Our results are in direct conflict with persistent claims that "deep psychological differences" divide literate and nonliterate populations (...). On no task—logic, abstraction, memory, communication—did we find all nonliterates performing at lower levels than all literates. Even on tasks closely related to script activities, such as reading or writing with pictures, some nonliterates did as well as those with school and literacy experiences. We can and do claim that literacy promotes skills among the Vai, but we cannot and do not claim that literacy is a necessary and sufficient condition for any of the skills we assessed. (Scribner and Cole 1981: 251)

Subsequently to Scribner and Cole's study, two distinct models of literacy emerge. Street (1984, 2003) refers to them as autonomous and ideological respectively. Ong's model is autonomous. It posits that literacy affects human cognitive processes independently from any other factors. Street (2003: 1), however, argues that the effects of literacy are different depending on a range of socio-cultural circumstances and that the autonomous model involves making a number of ethnocentric and culturally insensitive assumptions. The ideological model, on the other hand, does not look at reading and writing in isolation, but rather takes into account the social practices in which the skill is embedded. It argues that there are as many literacies as there are literate peoples. Based on the particular educational, social, and even economic context in which the ability is acquired, its effects are going to be different (Street 2003: 2).

Another example of significant criticism of Ong's theories comes from Sterne (2003, 2011), who calls for complete rejection of the orality paradigm. Sterne argues that the theory is based on a fallacious reduction of orality to just sound. He provides a list of common misconceptions about hearing and seeing, which he refers to as "the audiovisual litany":

> —hearing is spherical, vision is directional;
> —hearing immerses its subject, vision offers a perspective;
> —sounds come to us, but vision travels to its object;
> —hearing is concerned with interiors, vision is concerned with surfaces;
> —hearing involves physical contact with the outside world, vision requires distance from it;
> —hearing places us inside an event, seeing gives us a perspective on the event;
> —hearing tends toward subjectivity, vision tends toward objectivity;
> —hearing brings us into the living world, sight moves us toward atrophy and death;
> —hearing is about affect, vision is about intellect;

—hearing is a primarily temporal sense, vision is a primarily spatial
sense;
—hearing is a sense that immerses us in the world, vision is a sense that
removes us from it. (Sterne 2003: 15)

Many of the points in Sterne's litany do in fact correspond to Ong's characteristics of primary oral cultures. Sterne claims that the assumption of dichotomic characteristics of hearing and seeing (and by extension orality and literacy) ignores the fact that the two senses coexist naturally and the usage of one does not render the other one moot. In other words, hearing and seeing are not mutually exclusive. What is more, Sterne stresses the theological dimension of the orality theory evident from Ong's earlier work. According to Sterne, Ong "aimed to better understand the conditions under which it was possible for people to hear the word of God in his age" (Sterne 2011: 213). Ong's dichotomy of orality and literacy (hearing and seeing) has its roots in the seeming differences between ancient Hebrew and Greek cultures. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. Assuming that at the time of writing the latter Greek consciousness had already been restructured by the technology of writing, the interpretation of the Bible might change considerably. The debate here centres largely around the meaning of the Hebrew word *dabar*. According to Ong (1982: 32) *dabar* can be translated both as *word* and *event*, which would support his claim that in primary oral cultures language is considered an action and is closely related to time. Sterne, however, strongly disagrees with this notion citing the study of James Barr (1961), who claims that *dabar* functioned more similarly to the English word *thing*, where it could refer to a dynamic event or a physical object depending on the context. Barr also argued that focusing on etymology in Bible studies may lead to bias, as scholars tend to highlight some interpretations of the texts while disregarding others. According to Sterne (2011: 215), Barr's work "lays bare the long series of elisions necessary to characterise the ancient Jews as oral and the ancient Greeks as literate and then extrapolate the general categories of orality and literacy from these two historical instances." Sterne then goes on to argue that orality theory was written with a purely theological purpose and therefore is not fit for more secular theories. He claims that Ong sees orality as a way to get closer to God, and that secondary orality is for him a hope of rediscovering the lost ways of the past (Sterne 2011: 218-220). Rather than propose an alternative to the orality theory, Sterne advocates a return to the earlier ideas of Harold Innis and redevelopment of the whole approach to the issue from there. Innis (1951: 105) stresses the interplay between different senses when it comes to oral

expression: "in oral intercourse the eye, ear, and brain, the senses and the faculties acted together in busy co-operation and rivalry each eliciting, stimulating, and supplementing each other." However, he follows that statement with a description of the shift from oral to written communication in ancient Greece, repeatedly referring to the temporal dimension of orality and the spacial dimension of writing. Although Ong does not refer to Innis in *Orality and Literacy*, their ideas are ultimately similar.

While I do agree with many of the issues raised by Sterne and other scholars, I do not believe that one should completely disregard the approaches to orality developed by McLuhan, Havelock, Goody and Ong. Ong himself highlights the fact that his "inventory of characteristics [of orality] is not presented as exclusive or conclusive but as suggestive, for much more work and reflection are needed to deepen understanding of orally based thought" (Ong 1982: 36). It is also possible that in the 50 years since the publication of Ong's seminal study, the relation between orality and literacy has become more complicated, especially in former European colonies. Kashula (2002: 66) suggest that "there is no longer a purely 'primary oral', or purely 'secondary oral' culture in South Africa (…). The boundaries have been merged and what has emerged is perhaps a post-primary, pre-secondary culture which cultivates literacy, but also accepts orality." When discussing his nine aspects of orality Ong also seems to be undecided whether to treat orality as a binary opposite of literacy or not: the first aspect is titled "additive *rather than* subordinative" while the fifth is simply "close to the human lifeworld" (Ong 1982: 38-42, emphasis mine). This shows, perhaps, that Ong is not convinced that for every aspect of orality there is an opposite aspect of writing. The very existence of oralised literature seems to contradict the Great Divide theory. I do not consider orality and literacy to be opposite or mutually exclusive, but I do recognise the differences between them. In the process of identifying orality features in literature, Ong's model still seems to be a potentially helpful analytic tool, even if it cannot be used exclusively. It is also true that Ong's perspective is rather Eurocentric as he looks at orality from the outside. As this study focuses on Indigenous literatures, it is vitally important to also consider Indigenous approaches to orality and literacy.

1.2. Indigenous conceptions of orality and literacy

In "Native Literature: Seeking a Critical Centre", Kimberly Blaeser (Anishinaabe) stresses the importance of approaching Indigenous literatures from Indigenous cultural contexts. In the past, Western-style literary criticism would often mischaracterise or misinterpret Indigenous texts precisely because scholars were unfamiliar with that context. As part of that practice, elements of oral traditions, writes Blaeser (2016: 232) "have been dismissed as primitive (…) altered and incorporated into mainstream works of literature, and almost theorized into their predicted "vanishment". Western literary theory is seen by her as a threat to the integrity of Indigenous literatures and its careless employment as a new act of colonisation. Despite that threat, Indigenous scholars such as Blaeser and Owens (Choctaw-Cherokee) do not call for outright rejection or omission of Western theory. Instead, they believe it is necessary to transform the theory in order to make it more suitable for discussing Indigenous literatures. This results in a power struggle between Western and Indigenous ways of knowing; a power struggle which extends, as highlighted by LaRocque (Métis/Cree) (1990: xx), to the relationship between the oral and the written and between English and Indigenous languages.

Just like Western literary theory, writing itself can be perceived as a tool of colonisation. Some Indigenous authors find it difficult to reconcile orality and writing, especially since some of their elders have spoken against transcribing traditional stories on paper. This issue is discussed in detail by Hartmut Lutz (1991) and his interlocutors in his collection of interviews with Indigenous Canadian authors. He repeatedly emphasises that "some people who are very traditional and who know their own language say, 'The oral tradition is oral only! The stories are only to be told *orally,* and in the language'" (Lutz 1991: 56; emphasis in the original). In many of the eighteen interviews in the collection, Lutz confronts Indigenous authors with this position to learn about their point of view on the issue. Maria Campbell, an acclaimed Métis writer, responds as follows:

> I would love to be able to preserve the stories in the language. But that's not possible, and if we don't start to record stories, and find a way to be able to do that without the language manipulating us, we are going to lose them, and if we lose the stories, we've lost the people. (Campbell in Lutz 1991: 56)

Campbell later adds that cultures evolve constantly, and oral tradition is more than just the medium. She strongly believes that writing can be the way to preserve Indigenous

knowledge for future generations. As she states in the introduction to *Achimoona*, a collection of traditional stories she edited, Indigenous storytellers "must understand the new language and use it to express their stories without losing the thoughts and images that are culturally unique to them." (Campbell 1985: n.p.) This applies when translating stories from Indigenous languages into English but also from oral tradition into writing. Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, a Chippewa author, shares this sentiment and adds: "I am not saying that writing is better than the oral tradition. I really don't think it is, because you lose that intimacy of contact. But what it does is that it allows you to reach a larger number of people" (Keeshig-Tobias in Lutz 1991: 81). In both cases, the authors feel the power struggle between the oral and the written and realise how much is lost in the transition from one medium to another. Campbell also alludes to the fact that the English language needs to be adapted to the needs of oral tradition to prevent it from manipulating the stories. All of the authors are aware that they are developing new styles of writing, ones that would be more suitable for the expression of oral themes and concepts. The creation of this "oralised literature" is no easy feat. It requires a great deal of creativity and ingenuity to be able to make up for the loss of the immediacy and intimacy of oral tradition. However, it is still absolutely achievable. In the words of Thomas King (Cherokee) (2003: 101), "the advent of Native written literature did not, in any way, mark the passing of Native oral literature. In fact, they occupy the same space, the same time. And, if you know where to stand, you can hear the two of them talking to each other."

Canadian authors are not the only ones who struggle with adapting the English language to their oral traditions. In an interview with Patricia Grace, a Māori writer (Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Raukawa and Te Ati Awa), Dudding (2016) asks her about the unusual syntax in some of her stories. Grace explains: "I was trying to copy Māori structures in English, to make it seem as though the characters could be speaking in Māori, even though I was writing in English. It was experimental." She adds that she is not fully dedicated to this style of writing as she believes it to be "too contrived". Hirini Melbourne (1991: 140), a Ngāi Tūhoe and Ngāti Kahungunu author and composer, stresses the need for "discovering how the rich heritage of the Maori past, both oral and written, might provide a continuing basis for a 'literature' in Maori". Nevertheless, some younger Māori authors of mixed heritage, like Kelly Ana Morey (2017), express some anxiety at readers' expectations that they should use their Māori background in their writing: "I can't be the 'Māori' writer people want me to be (…) Mining the Māori world for material would some how

feel like an act of theft because my knowledge and connection feel so slight and arbitrary." At the same time, Morey admits that she tries to combine her Indigenous and non-Indigenous experience in her writing.

Zakes Mda, a South African Xhosa novelist and playwright, gives similar insights into his work in a radio interview:

> I was not aware that I was getting two different types of education and two different types of storytelling because (…) I would read comic books a lot (…) and then (…) we go to the Eastern Cape, and then of course all the grandchildren from different corners of South Africa are there for holidays, my cousins and so on. So we have now another form of storytelling: *intsomi*, *inganekwane*, *tsomo*, you see? The oral tradition. So the coming together then of the two narrative modes: the literary mode as from comic books and so on, and the traditional oral folk tales, you know, created the writer that I later became, because even today if you read my work, it is highly influenced by traditional modes of storytelling. (Mda in Motene 2017)

It is worth noting that Mda mentions not only the *intsomi* storytelling tradition of the Xhosa people, but also the Zulu *inganekwane* and the Sotho *tsomo*. This shows that as an author, he is inspired by many different oral traditions, combines their influences in his works and adapts the written mode of communication to properly reflect them. Sindiwe Magona is another Indigenous South African author who stresses the importance of oral tradition as inspiration for her writing: "[w]ithout it don't think I could have written. (…) All the nuances of storytelling, the techniques of storytelling and the fact that we are heir to all these emotions – these things you learn as a very young child" (Magona in Ornates 2010: 37). This sentiment is also echoed by Paula Morris (Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Manuhiri and Ngāti Whātua), who writes in *On Coming Home*:

> I had the impulse to combine both of my inherited traditions – the spoken story, passed down through generations and changed, re-invented and augmented along the way, and the great European tradition of the novel, which helps to give those stories a permanence, and to send them out into the world. (Morris 2015 loc. 427)

Jo-ann Archibald (2008), a Stó:lo First Nation scholar, compiles a theoretical framework consisting of seven principles of Indigenous storytelling: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness and synergy. This framework, referred to as *storywork*, is the result of her studies under Coast Salish and Stó:lo Elders and storytellers, and is meant to provide theoretical tools for the interpretation of Indigenous stories and their use for educational purposes. To some extent, the principles also pertain to the relation between orality and literacy. For instance, Archibald defines the principle

of holism as "the interrelatedness between the intellectual, spiritual (…), emotional, and physical (body and behaviour/action) realms to form a whole healthy person" (Archibald 2008: 11). She also visualises this principle with the help of concentric circles, in which the inner circles contain oneself and one's family, while the outer circles encompass community and nation. The image of the circle or spiral, prevalent in Indigenous philosophies in general, symbolises balance between all those areas of human life. It includes the balance between oral tradition and writing, as well as between Indigenous storytellers and academic researchers. At the same time, she compares the current relationship between orality and literacy to that of Coyote who lost his eyes and had to borrow one from Mouse and one from Buffalo. The eyes are mismatched and one is much larger than the other, which symbolises the way literacy has traditionally dominated orality (Archibald 2008: 12).

Archibald admits that she used to view orality and literacy as complete opposites, partly influenced by the works of Western scholars such as Ong, Goody and Havelock. However, having consulted Indigenous critics, she came to the conclusion that many of them share: that approaching Indigenous stories through Western methodologies is inefficient and violates their integrity. Instead of focusing on the alleged negative impacts of literature on orature, she focused more on how the two can work together:

> The oral tradition of the stories shaped and created a framework in which to place and use literacy. Transforming the orally told stories to another language and another form of representation so that the power and integrity of the stories remains requires that one know the essential characteristics of stories. I have heard Elders talk about the necessity of knowing the "core" of the stories. I believe that this means knowing the basic content of the story, the story genre's characteristics or nature, as well as the cultural teachings connected to the story. (Archibald 2008: 25)

Archibald then stresses the challenges associated with conveying oral tradition in the written form by including comments from several Indigenous authors. She also mentions a few techniques they use, such as providing a story in both English and the original language, or adding additional ethnographical information to help outside audiences better understand the context of a story. However, she admits that no amount of dry background information can replace the experience of actually being part of a given community and sharing in its tradition. From this perspective, a full understanding of an Indigenous story may be unattainable for an outsider.

Lee Maracle (1994: 8), a Stó:lo writer and Elder, outright rejects Western ideas of theory as heartless and dehumanised. Instead, she sees theory as another form of story:

> Academicians waste a great deal of effort deleting character, plot, and story from theoretical arguments. By referring to instances and examples, previous human interaction, and social events, academics convince themselves of their own objectivity and persuade us that the story is no longer a story (…) Enough of that talk. There is a story in every line of theory, not in our capacity to theorize. It seems a waste of words dispassionately to delete character from plot line, tension, and conclusion. It takes a great deal of work to erase people from theoretical discussion. (Maracle 1994: 7).

According to Fee (2004: 206), "[r]ejecting the constructed distinction between orality and literacy that consigns one set of human beings to the primitive and another to the modern makes it easier to understand Maracle's concept of orality."

The great diversity of Indigenous cultures and oral traditions all around the world is reflected in the many theories and opinions about orality and literacy. Nevertheless, the power struggle between the two modes of communication seems to be a consistent phenomenon across cultures. Indigenous authors are trying to adapt writing to their traditional modes of storytelling or perhaps the other way round. Those attempts show that the writers do not believe oral tradition and writing to be irreconcilable.

1.3. Terminology

Having surveyed both Western and Indigenous approaches to orality and literacy, it becomes apparent that there are a few issues and ambiguities related to terminology in the field. The two terms used in the title of Ong's book are now politically charged. Every critic seems to have a slightly different idea about the way orality and literacy interact, which adds an additional level of vagueness to the terms. Nevertheless, there does not seem to be a better alternative. MacLure, Phillips and Wilkinson (1988: 4) propose the term "oracy", which could serve as a substitute for orality. However, the term is mostly used in the context of education to signify the ability to express oneself well in speech. What is more, with no consensus among the critics about the exact nature of these two modes of communication, oracy may just as well inherit all the problems plaguing orality.

In the field of literary studies, the term "oral literature" has gained considerable traction, to the distaste of some Indigenous scholars. The term itself is an oxymoron, as

the word literature seems inextricably connected to writing (from Latin *littera* meaning *letter*). In addition, some Indigenous academics and activists have felt that "oral literature" implies the inferiority of Indigenous legends and stories and characterises them as a subset of literature, a Western creation. The issue was partially resolved by Pio Zirimu, a Ugandan literary theorist who coined the term "orature." Mĩcere Gĩthae Mũgo, a Kenyan playwright, commented on the new term in the following words:

> Possessed by the creative muse of the spoken word, fired by the imagination, fanned by the forceful wind of inventive daring, the Makerere School has birthed the term 'Orature,' arguing that since the written word was known as 'litera-ture,' the spoken word should henceworth be referred to as 'orature'. The redundancy and the heavy weight of the begging term 'Oral literature' dropped off our shoulders. No longer would Western-school critics burden us and African Orature with definitions and comparisons that imperialistically judged our indigenous heritages by the yardstick of how accurately they fitted into Western literary notions of ethics and aesthetics. No longer would orature be viewed as the younger sibling of literature or as a child hanging onto the apron strings of Mother Writing. Orature was Orature! (Mũgo 2016: 64)

Considering the above, orature seems to be the best counterpart of literature. Still, the subject-matter of this study is neither literature nor orature, but rather a mixed, experimental form – literature with features of orature. Thomas King (2004a: 182) refers to this type of writing as "interfusional" and points to a collection of stories by Harry Robinson, *Write it on Your Heart,* as the best example of this type of writing. King writes that "[t]he stories in Robinson's collection are told in English and written in English, but the patterns, metaphors, structures as well as the themes and characters come primarily from oral literature." Although adjacent to oralised literature, Robinson and Wickwire's collection is a transcript of existing Indigenous stories, whereas this dissertation focuses primarily written narratives with features of oralisation. What is more, the term interfusional does not say much about this style of writing in and of itself. One can guess that interfusional literature would be a blend of two or more styles. What those styles are, however, remains a mystery. Dauterich (2005) refers to that type of writing as "hybrid expression." Other authors avoid using any single term whatsoever to describe the phenomenon. For the purposes of the study, I would like to introduce the term "oralised literature" to fill the terminological gap. The process of introducing characteristic features of orature into a written text could be hence referred to as *oralisation*. The word *oralised* serves the same function as *hybrid* or *fusion* in "interfusional", but it instantly evokes the features of orature used to create this type of writing. The word *literature* anchors the term as a primarily

written form of expression. Although it is not the subject of this study, one can also theorise the existence of analogous "literalised orature" – an oral form performed in a literary style. This issue is also raised by Kashula (2002), who discusses the potential impact of literacy on the way traditional Xhosa oral poetry is produced. It would also fall in line with Ong's notion of domesticated orality. Indigenous literature can therefore be oralised by introducing elements of one's oral tradition into writing. How it is achieved largely depends on a specific tradition and an author's creativity. However, one might presume that there are certain general features which are shared by oralised texts across different cultures.

Chapter 2: Features of oralisation

Using Ong's characteristics of orality as a starting point and taking into account the afore-mentioned criticism of Western and Indigenous scholars as well as previous studies, I believe it is possible to create a general inventory of techniques employed by Indigenous authors to oralise literary texts. Although these features and their implementation may very much differ from culture to culture or even from one author to another, it seems safe to assume that there might also be some degree of similarity between them on a national or even global level. The following classification should therefore not be understood as a comprehensive list of features of oralisation, but rather a base framework which can be used to analyse literary texts with respect to orality and likely discover more features of oralised prose in the process. That being said, the features can be divided into two distinct categories depending on whether they imitate Indigenous storytelling styles or convey elements of Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies and beliefs.

Stylistic and typographic features, as the name suggests, are a result of the use of various stylistic devices within the text as well as typographic elements that are designed to convey or enhance aspects of oral tradition. They include repetition, alliteration and rhetorical questions as well as typographic spaces, formatting, fonts and typefaces, demonstrative pronouns, Indigenous vocabulary, purposeful misspellings and grammatical errors. The purpose of these techniques is to approximate the styles of oral traditions in the written form. They are generally designed to compensate for the absence of particular orature-specific elements, e.g., a storyteller's power over the narrative, their direct contact with the audience, the rhythm and pacing of storytelling, accompanying music, etc. In some cases, the accumulation of stylistic features of oralised literature might make a text difficult to understand unless it is read aloud.

Ontological and epistemological features are woven into the narrative and are used to reflect the subject-matter of oral tradition in the medium of writing. They may include the usage of legendary and mythological characters derived from oral traditions, Indigenous conceptions and worldviews, references to and commentary on current and historical events and figures, or descriptions of Indigenous customs and traditions. Ontological and epistemological features are usually less readily noticeable than style features, as they often require from a reader at least some background knowledge about a particular

culture. The following section is devoted to a more detailed discussion of the two types of features.

2.1. Stylistic and typographic features of oralisation

2.1.1. Typographic space and line breaks

A lot has been said about the use of typography in literature, especially with reference to poetry. White space is seen as an inextricable part of a poem, in many ways equally important as the actual written words. Contemporary authors experiment with the form creating visual poetry oftentimes literally painting pictures with words. They also change the typeface or font size to amplify the effects they aim for. However, experimenting with typography may also prove useful when writing oralised literature.

In the act of oral storytelling, the speaker has a lot of initiative. They decide when to start the narrative, how fast to tell it, and when to pause. They can modulate their voice to distinguish between various characters in the story. Although the audience can and oftentimes does participate in the process, generally speaking the storyteller is in control, while the listeners play a comparatively less active role, even if they sometimes participate in the storytelling process. When it comes to writing, however, this power structure is reversed. The author provides the narrative on paper and does not have any direct contact with the reader. The reader decides when to start and when to stop reading. In fact, they have the option to completely disregard the way in which the author intended the text to be read. The reader may start from the middle of the text or skip several pages. There is very little an author can do to regain some of the power associated with oral storytelling. Nevertheless, a clever use of typography and line breaks might be a solution.

Because line breaks are less common in prose than in poetry, the average reader is used to their conventional use. Generally, line breaks are used in dialogues or at the end of the paragraph, when transitioning from one thought to the next. Upon encountering a line break, the reader will naturally pause for a second before their eyes move to the beginning of the following line. Line breaks and typographic spaces are therefore one way to force the reader to pause. In that short timeframe, it is the author who once again takes

control over the narrative. In oralised literature, this technique may be used to mimic the pauses the author would make when telling the story orally.

Interestingly, it is possible that the technique of mimicking the natural storytelling pauses with line breaks was first used by anthropologists, who attempted to preserve and catalogue Indigenous tales. Many of those projects were criticised, as most anthropologists focused on the content of stories. Only few understood that the way a story is told is as important as its plot. One of them was Wendy Wickwire, who recorded the previously mentioned stories by Okanagan Elder Harry Robinson, and compiled them into the collection titled *Write It On Your Heart* (1989). Wickwire took great care in preserving as much of Robinson's character in her transcript as possible. The fragment below illustrates her use of typographic spaces and line breaks to replicate the Elder's storytelling pace on paper:

> And he says to this one,
>   that's the older one,
>   and that's the thumb.
> He says to Thumb,
>   "All right."
>
> And he got the paper.
> The paper was fold like that.
> Bigger one.
> On his thought, you know.
> And everything.
>   it's writing just like I did here.
> This paper, it's all writing.
> And he had 'em like that. (Robinson 2014[1989]: 40)

Each centimetre of blank space in Robinson's collection serves an important purpose. That fact combined with other techniques Wickwire used to replicate the Okanagan Elder's style shows why King referred to this work as the best example of interfusional literature. However, Wickwire's transcript is not the only example of this technique used in "as told to" literature (Eigenbrod 1995: 92).

When discussing the various genres in African oral traditions, Okpewho provides examples of two stories as told to him by Charles Simayi. Below is a fragment of one of the stories.

None of them was my father's age. I asked them, "How could I make

charms for the town?
Er. . . . If I am going to save our land, it's our lives we shall all be
　　　saving.
You tell . . . our women to come over here,
I don't want these Idi men."
　　　　(*Three-second pause)*
They left, and went home.
Day breaking, the Omu delegated four people—
We have four quarters—and they came to my house, pleading my
　　　grace. (Okpewho 1992: 184)

Okpewho recorded these stories as academic data for his study rather than literary texts intended for publication. This explains the attention to detail when marking pauses in speech. Okpewho uses wide ellipses and line breaks to indicate shorter pauses. Em dashes signify elongated syllables. Longer pauses are noted in brackets, like in the example above. This final technique would probably not be used in a literary text, as it would arguably lower its stylistic quality. Okpewho also makes it a point to meticulously note down any disturbances that occurred during Simayi's performance (e.g., a crying baby) and audiences' reactions (e.g. laughter). Additionally, italics and capital letters are used to indicate changes in tone. Later in the book, he provides another example of a story recorded by Peter Seitel from the Haya people of Tanzania, which also uses typographic space and line breaks, albeit in a slightly different way:

There was once a man
one.
◯
That man
had gone on a journey
◯
WITH HIS BROTHERS.
◯
So when he journeyed with his brothers . . .
◯
IN THE WILDERNESS
◯
now, they go and stay the night at a certain man's.
(The traveler's) brothers
　　　　　　　were two in number. (Seitel in Okpewho 1992: 205)

In this transcript, Seitel indicates longer pauses using circle symbols, a choice which Okpewho himself refers to as "peculiar." Nevertheless, there still is a great deal of similarity between the styles of the two transcripts. Okpewho (1992: 350) addresses this question

later in his book, where he points to Tedlock as one of the most influential scholars in the development of this type of transcript.

In his paper, Tedlock (1971) criticises previous attempts at translation and transcription of Native American stories, accusing their recorders of choppy style and distorting the original stories. In response, he develops his own system for recording and transcribing oral tales for the purposes of academic fieldwork. Similarly to Okpewho, Tedlock uses line breaks, typographic space, capitalisation, brackets, italics, and stage directions to represent different aspects of Zuni stories. His work was one of the first instances of transcribing Native narratives in verse rather than prose. The techniques he developed inspired many other researchers. Some of them are now used by Indigenous authors to write oralised literature.

A less overt way of indicating pauses is naturally through the use of punctuation. Certain Indigenous writers may find it sufficient to make use of commas and full stops to indicate pauses in their narratives. In that case, an above average use of punctuation and, what follows, simplified sentence structure may be considered another feature of oralisation, one that could be measured by counting the average number of words per sentence in a text to see if it is lower than in non-Indigenous literatures. Whereas typographic spaces and line breaks are used to imitate speech pauses, it is through repetition that transcribers and writers attempt to convey the very rhythm of oral tradition.

2.1.2. Repetition

Repetition might be considered one of the most integral stylistic features of orature. Ong explains that orally based thought is redundant and aggregative in character. Historically, scholars often did not appreciate those qualities of orature as they considered repetition "wearisome" (Okpewho 1992: 71). However, repetition plays a much bigger role in both orature and oralised literature. It is also strongly interconnected with other features of oralised literature. As one of the primary carriers of rhythm in many oral traditions, repetition adds to the musicalization of stories, which is discussed in more detail later. It can be used both locally (e.g., to imitate the sound of drums, which often accompany the storytelling) and globally, following the events of a story in the form of a refrain. Okpewho stresses the power of repetition to emphasise characters' emotions such as urgency,

excitement, or agitation. This effect is especially potent if the initial phrase is repeated and enhanced by dozens of voices from the audience (Okpewho 1992: 72-74). The inclusion of recurring, familiar passages also encourages audiences to actively participate in the storytelling process. The listeners look forward to these moments where they can sing along with the storyteller. What is more, these refrains help to organise the plot of longer stories, providing helpful division markers in particular points of the narratives. Their role is similar to that of chapters in a novel. In some cases, the repetitions serve a more pragmatic function. Okpewho (1992: 76) talks about formulas, which are "certain key phrases and sets of details which they [storytellers] use again and again especially in situations which are roughly similar." Storytellers often depend on these formulas in order to guarantee the fluency of their performance. This feature once again echoes Ong's assertion that orally-based thought is additive and redundant in character. However, considering the many practical functions of repetitions in oral narratives, it becomes clear that out of the two terms proposed by Ong "copious" seems more suitable than "redundant."

In some cases, repetition can even become an important element of a narrative's plot. This can be achieved, e.g., through the use of recurring characters or events. The feature is also strongly connected to the cyclical perception of time discussed later in this dissertation. Importantly, repetitions are relatively easy to implement in writing, which is why they are often used in a similar way in oralised literature. Okpewho (1992: 78) aptly notes that non-Indigenous writers usually eschew noticeable repetitions, as the technique is generally viewed as burdensome or even boring for the reader. African storytellers, however, as well as authors of oralised literature, embrace the stylistic device and use it deliberately.

Sometimes, the written medium allows authors to use different types of repetitions. Formal elements of a text, such as titles, covers and division into chapters can be used by authors to great effect in order to oralise the narrative further. One interesting example of that comes from the 2018 novel *There There* by Tommy Orange. The novel seems to use repetition even in its title. The phrase *there there* appear at different times in the novel in different contexts. Orange cleverly uses homophones of the word *there* to create repetitions with slight changes. For instance, towards the end of the book one of the characters blows soap bubbles, which stick to his grandma's face:

> And he doesn't know if she knows this is happening or if they're really not there. He doesn't
> know that he's not there, because he's right there, in that moment he can't remember as having

happened because it's happening to him now. He's there with her in the kitchen blowing sink bubbles. (…) "Grandma, you know. You know they're there." (290)

The presence of the words in the title makes the reader recognise them as an important element in the narrative. Furthermore, their relatively frequent repetition with slight changes makes the title ambiguous and open to interpretation. The reader may anticipate the words to reoccur in hopes of better understanding their meaning. In some cases, however, the changes in the repeated structure become more significant and the repetition becomes a parallel structure.

2.1.3. Parallelism

Parallelism is another stylistic feature discussed by Okpewho (1992: 78-83) in reference to African oral traditions. Okpewho states that an experienced storyteller is able to introduce into their story seemingly independent elements, which later turn out to "have a common affinity", which creates an overall image of balance. The most basic type of this device is lexical parallelism, in which a lexical structure is repeated (e.g., in a song) with a slight change in word order that puts the two fragments in a balanced relationship. One of the examples of lexical parallelism provided by Okpewho comes from a description of Ogun, a god of the Yoruba people:

> He kills on the right and destroys on the left.
> He kills on the left and destroys on the right. (Beier in Okpewho 1992: 78)

Due to its nature, lexical parallelism is yet another feature of oralised literature related to repetition. It is therefore a device that introduces balance and carries rhythm. Okpewho also describes another type of parallelism called semantic parallelism, in which the meaning of the words, not their position, is contrasted and balanced. A great example of this device comes from a praise poem for the Zulu chief Ndaba as recorded and translated by Trevor Cope:

> *Obeyalala wangangeminfula,*
> *Obeyavuka wangangezintaba.*
> Who when he lay down was the size of rivers,
> Who when he got up was the size of mountains. (Cope in Okpewho 1992: 79)

The parallelism is immediately visible in the original isiZulu, but it is not entirely lost in the English translation. In both versions each line consists of the same number of syllables (eleven), which is also an important part of the device. Okpewho notes that parallelism is more common in songs than in stories. However, the technique seems to be used by Indigenous prose writers as well. In Lee Maracle's *Ravensong* (1993) characters often repeat the phrase "too much Raven" when talking about someone who has done something particularly rebellious or stubborn. These words reverberate throughout the novel and seem to justify characters' behaviour by pointing to their First Nation heritage. However, the words are paralleled in the epilogue when a young boy asks why the First Nation community pays attention to white people's rules and regulations. The answer is "not enough Raven." This shows how parallelism can be adapted to fit longer narrative forms. Instead of contrasting adjacent lines of poetry, the writer can establish an idea early in the narrative and provide its parallel later. In some cases, unfolding the relationships between two ideas at a slower pace may lead to an arguably greater impact from a reader's perspective. Parallelism once again echoes the importance of balance in Indigenous worldview, which has been stressed in Jo-ann Archibald's Indigenous storywork.

As demonstrated above, one of the functions shared by both repetition and parallelism is the imitation of storytelling rhythm. In some cases that rhythm can even emulate music.

2.1.4. Songs and music

Music remains a vitally important element of oral tradition, which oftentimes accompanies storytelling. Depending on the specific culture, there are various instruments that may be used to create background music for a story. Traditional instruments, such as the African marimba and calabash, the Australian didgeridoo, the Inuit fiddle, together with a great variety of drums and rattles are recognised around the world. In addition, some stories incorporate melodic refrains, which are sung with listeners' participation. Even if there is no explicit musical element in a story, oral tradition is known for its particular rhythm, which is akin to that of musical forms. Groenewald and Makgopa (2012: 96) highlight the importance of songs as oral genres in several South African cultures: "it is a vehicle of complaint; it mediates rituals; expresses personal and social

concerns; mediates political change." They provide examples of the personal *khekhapa* songs performed by the Lobedu people, in which women sometimes sing about issues, such as their husbands' infidelity or injustices of labour. Importantly, those oral musical genres survive to this day and are used in more modern contexts, e.g., in praise songs dedicated to buses (Groenwald and Makgopa 2012: 96). Successful emulation of the musical characteristics of oral tradition is one of the elements of oralised literature.

In order to better understand how Indigenous music is represented in literature, it is helpful to first look at how the two forms of art interact in general. Since the early 1970s, the musical nature of literature has received greater attention. Scholars such as Steven Scher (1968, 2004) or Werner Wolf (1999) have developed frameworks for approaching music-inspired literary texts. Scher is considered to be one of the most influential early scholars of the field. He has coined many terms that are still used in critical literature. In his works, Scher talks about "verbal music" and "word music." Verbal music is defined as "any literary presentation (whether in poetry or prose) of existing or fictitious musical compositions: any poetic texture which has a piece of music as its 'theme.'" He further explains that verbal music often consists of descriptions of musical performances or subjective responses to music (Scher 1968: 8). Word music, on the other hand, "aims primarily at imitation in words of the acoustic quality of music (frequently also of non-musical sound)" (Scher 2004: 181). Scher also adds that musical evocation in text can be literary (e.g., a description of a performance in a novel) or non-literary (e.g., notes). Scher is of the opinion that some literary texts transcend the literary medium by approximating other forms of art (Scher 2004: 34). If word music were to be considered in terms of oralised literature, it would probably belong with the stylistic features of oralised literature. Verbal music, on the other hand, could be an example of an epistemological feature.

Scher was also among the first critics to use the term "musicalization of fiction", which was later developed by Werner Wolf. Wolf (1999: 51) understands musicalization as a transformation of music into literature. He searches for references to music in literary texts but also goes deeper to see how music influences the plot, dialogues, the title and the overall structure of the text. He stresses the fact that these analogies or similarities between literature and music should be convincing and properly identified by a scholar before they reach any conclusions. Wolf's systematic study provides a strong theoretical framework for analysing musicalized fiction. Based on Scher's studies, he develops

specifically the theoretical framework for literary techniques used to imitate music in fiction (Wolf 1999: 57-58).

First, Wolf expands on Scher's notion of word music. Word music as defined by Wolf "gives the impression of a presence of music by foregrounding the (original) acoustic dimensions of the verbal signifiers" and "may be achieved by making use of pitch, timbre and rhythm, by introducing 'harmonies' (or 'dissonances') through various forms of acoustic recurrences" (Wolf 1999: 58). This includes, for example, the use of onomatopoeia and sometimes makes the full meaning of a text inaccessible unless it is read aloud.

The second device described by Wolf is called formal and structural analogies, a term which also originated with Scher. Wolf states that

> [f]ormal analogies operate on the levels of textual materiality, phonology, syntax and particularly on the semantic level and may exploit both specifically literary discursive devices and basic similarities between literature and music: the lay-out of a text, its formal segmentation into stanzas, chapters or paragraphs, typographical devices, thematic or motivic recurrences creating patterns suggestive of musical forms, and devices giving the impression of 'polyphonic' simultaneity (…) such as the rapid alternation of different fictional scenes or the suggestion of simultaneous or 'contrapuntal' actions of several characters. (Wolf 1999: 58)

In other words, whereas word music imitates the acoustic qualities of music, formal and structural analogies create a semblance of a musical form, such as echo, ostinato, fugue or sonata.

It is not difficult to notice striking similarities between the phenomena of musicalization and oralisation of literature. Though music and oral tradition are not exactly synonymous, at their core, both musicalization and oralisation describe the process of infusing a written text with characteristics of an auditory form of art. When asked in an interview how she manages to handle the crossover between poetry and music in her work, Jeannette Armstrong, a renowned Sylix Okanagan writer, responds: "poetry is music to me. It's rhythm, and it's sound and it's imagery and it's metaphor, except that poetry can be written" (Armstrong in Beeler 1996: 147).

2.1.5. Use of Indigenous languages

Reading various interviews with Indigenous authors, some of which have already been mentioned, it becomes apparent how big an issue the use of Indigenous languages is in

oralised literature. On the one hand, there are those who claim that traditional stories may only be retold orally in their original languages. On the other, many people worry that Indigenous knowledge will become forgotten and disappear if it is not written down and preserved. Authors want to take advantage of the lingua franca and reach wider audiences to tell their tales. However, they do not want to abandon their Indigenous tongues and might perceive English as inadequate to convey their thoughts. In many cases, authors decide to search for a compromise. They write the text in English but sprinkle it with vocabulary from their Indigenous language. In some cases, they provide English translations of the words (in brackets, footnotes or a glossary at the end of the text). In others, the words are marked with italics. Even their usage of English can be 'filtered' through the sieve of their Indigenous languages with non-standard sentence structure and vocabulary use. For instance, Jeannette Armstrong (Sylix Okanagan) (Armstrong 2006: 22) does some of her writing in Okanagan and translates it to English herself: "I often think, 'Wow! I could never have thought of writing that in English, I could never have put that together!' But because I wrote it in Okanagan first, it makes such a huge difference." The presence of non-standard English may therefore simply be the result of an author's direct translation of phrases or concepts from their Indigenous language. Admittedly, identifying this specific feature would require from a scholar near-native proficiency in an Indigenous language and is better left to be discussed by more focused studies. Each of these strategies or lack thereof can affect the oralisation of the text.

Although Patricia Grace, one of the most famous Māori writers, is not a fluent speaker of her Indigenous language, she does use many words of that language in her fiction. She explains that some Māori vocabulary and concepts have become an integral part of English spoken in New Zealand communities. Grace wants to stay faithful to her characters and write authentic dialogues, even if it results in alienating some of her readers (Grace in Dudding, 2016). In her collection of short stories, *Dream Sleepers and Other Stories* (1980), Māori and occasional Samoan words are not marked with italics, though there is a glossary provided at the end. In contrast, Grace's later novel, *Potiki* (1986), does not include a glossary. She explains:

> But there was one deliberate political act [in the novel], and that was not to have a glossary for Māori text or to use italics. A glossary and italics were what were used for foreign languages, and I didn't want Māori to be treated as a foreign language in its own country. When I told my publishers I didn't want the Māori italicised or glossed, and gave my reasons, they agreed with me. (Grace in Dudding 2016)

Grace later adds that although she has not received much negative press for using Māori words without a glossary, it may have been the reason for the rejection of her book in a literary competition for an Australasian prize. More recent literary works show how te reo Māori and English are used together to create the lingua franca of New Zealand. Māori vocabulary can now be seen in some Pākehā texts as well. Stafford and Williams (2012: 8) explain that "[i]n the literature of the first half of the twentieth century, Māori words are passive, detached from the living world they come from, and thus in need of glossing; in the twenty-first century they are available to be used as an active part of the lexicon of ordinary life". This reconciliation of languages mirrors and contributes to the union between the oral and the written in oralised texts.

Aside from creating original oralised literature, some authors decide to record the oral tradition of their communities in collaboration with their Elders. The use of Indigenous languages remains a vital part of the process in this case as well. One of the most impressive collections of Indigenous South African as-told-to stories, songs and poems was compiled by Bleek and Lloyd around 1870 and published in 1911. It includes a narration by a San man named Kabbo, who describes his imprisonment by Cape Colony settlers:

> We lifted stones with our chests; we rolled great stones. We again worked with earth. We carried earth, while the earth was upon the handbarrow. We carried earth; we loaded the wagon with earth; we pushed it. Other people walked along. We were pushing the wagon's wheels; we were pushing; we poured down the earth; we pushed it back. (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 157)

Even though the San stories, poems and myths were transcribed and translated into English by non-Indigenous writers, they still preserve many of the original features, such as concise sentence structure and abundance of repetitions. Similarly to Wickwire, the authors did not attempt to impose European writing conventions onto the Indigenous narratives. In some cases, they also preserve San vocabulary explained in notes:

> And they gave to *kó-gnuin-tára* of the *háken*. And *kó-gnuin-tára* exclaimed, she said to her younger sister: "Thou shalt leave this *háken* alone; I will be the one who eats it. For, thou art the one who shalt take care of the child. For, this *háken*, its smell is not nice." (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 66)

The first edition of the collection additionally employs early conventions developed by missionaries to transcribe Khoisan languages. This includes the usage of signs such as |,

!, ||, # and @ to indicate click sounds. Most of the stories in this collection were narrated and performed by Kabbo and his family. Lloyd explains that he "was an excellent narrator, and patiently watched until a sentence had been written down, before proceeding with what he was telling. He much enjoyed the thought that the Bushman stories would become known by means of books" (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: viii).

On the Canadian side, Archibald (2008: 28) provides the example of the book *Our telling: Interior Salish stories of the Nlha7kapmx people*. Edited by Darwin Hanna and Mamie Henry, the collection contains traditional Nlha7kapmx stories translated into English. However, instead of asking the Elders to speak English like many anthropologists used to do, these stories were recorded in the original Indigenous languages, and only later translated with great care to preserve as much of the storytellers' character as possible. Archibald notes that those translated stories often contained more details than ones told in English.

Another interesting example is the work of dr Freda Ahenakew, a Cree scholar who collected personal life stories by seven Cree women in a book entitled *Our grandmothers' lives as told in their own word* (1998). Similarly to the previous collection, the stories were first told in Cree to be later translated into English. However, the book includes versions of the stories in both languages, with the original being provided in Cree syllabics as well as the Latin script (Archibald 2008: 29).

It is clear that many authors carefully consider how to blend Indigenous languages and English in their writing.

2.1.6. Reader becomes listener

One of the most important characteristics of orature which it does not share with writing is the communal character of a narrative. There is an important reason why modern day researchers of oral tradition take great care to record audiences' reactions to a story as well as any interruptions that may occur during its performance. Eigenbrod (1995: 98) states that "[t]he oral transmission of a story is by definition a communal event because it cannot happen without an audience and because the storyteller would only tell a story that is of significance to more than himself or herself." This participatory character of oral tradition has also been mentioned in Ong's seventh aspect of orality. It may additionally

be connected to repetitions, which sometimes allow the listeners to chant a refrain together with the storyteller. Nevertheless, all these important elements of oral tradition are lost when a story is written down. The writer and the reader are often separated by thousands of kilometres and have little to no chance of direct contact.

The direct link between storyteller and listener in oral tradition may be impossible to fully replicate in writing. However, there are techniques that can be used to imitate it. In some cases, Indigenous writers are able to use the 2nd person pronoun *you* to make it seem as if they were telling a story directly to the reader. For instance, the Ojibwe author Basil H. Johnston begins his short story "Prophecy" with the following words: "'Tonight I'm going to tell you a very different kind of story…'" The words are part of a dialogue by the storyteller Daebaudjimoot and are directed towards a group of listeners gathered before him. Nevertheless, Johnston only describes the setting in the second paragraph of the short story. By choosing to start with the dialogue, he places the reader among the crowd of people waiting to hear Daebaudjimoot's story. This way he establishes the connection between the reader and the storyteller straight from the start.

"Prophecy" is narrated from a 3rd person perspective, but Indigenous prose is sometimes also written from the 1st person point of view. In the latter case, the author or a character is telling their own story, often without establishing who it is directed to. That promotes identification with the narrator and allows the reader to imagine themself as the listener, sitting opposite the storyteller and experiencing their tale. In the 2018 novel *There There*, Cheyenne and Arapaho author Tommy Orange writes from the perspective of a wide cast of 14 different characters. Despite this fact, most of the novel is written from the 1st person perspective as the narrator "transforms" into various characters from one chapter to the next. Another element that can contribute to the reader becoming the listener in a similar way is the presence of rhetorical questions and other techniques that anticipate the reader's reaction.

2.2. Ontological and epistemological features of oralisation

2.2.1. Indigenous conceptions of time

One of the points in Sterne's audiovisual litany of hearing-sight misconceptions is that hearing is related to time like literacy is related to space. It would, however, be more accurate to say that the difference lies in the perception of time in Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies. In the Western world, people are accustomed to the linear concept of time. A cause leads to an effect. One day follows another in an infinite sequence. We are able to assign unique dates and hours to each and every moment in history to show how unrepeatable they are. Time is slowly but incessantly progressing along this line in one direction. Nevertheless, the linear perception of time is not a universal concept. In various cultures around the world, including many Indigenous ones, time is seen not as a line but as a circle. The circular perception of time finds its roots directly in the observable universe. Our reality is in many ways cyclical. The Earth revolves around the Sun and rotates around an axis. This creates the cycle of seasons, the cycle of day and night, the phases of the Moon. People are born, grow up, and have children of their own, animals migrate, the water evaporates just to fall down again as rain. These are just some examples of cycles that can be observed all around us. It therefore seems perfectly reasonable to graphically interpret time as a circle. If so, where does the linear perception of time originate from?

Csaki (2016: 53-54) claims that the linear perception of time became dominant with the spread of Christianity in Europe:

> In the Christian worldview, the most important occurrence is linear. A person is born and then moves through life with a specific goal or end. That end actually comes after death and lasts for all of eternity, but is understood as the end point, the desired goal in fact. So, from a Christian perspective, in life people move from point A at birth to point B in the afterlife. That makes for a linear or straight line.

Csaki explains how important the circle is in Native American philosophy. Everything in the world, from stars to individual human beings, is connected in the circle of life. Contrary to the common conception of circles in the Western world, Native American circles are seen as dynamic, not fixed or rigid. Circular, semi-circular or spiral motion can lead

to progress, even if one seemingly returns to the beginning but, more importantly, it is also a source of balance. When trying to navigate around a body of water for instance, one often has to go around it, despite the fact that travelling in a straight line would theoretically be more efficient (Csaki 2016: 56). The importance of the circle in Indigenous worldviews is also emphasised by Native scholars. Donald Fixico (2013: 1) of the Seminole and Muscogee Creek descent talks about "Indian Thinking", which he defines as "'seeing' things from a perspective emphasizing that circles and cycles are central to the world and that all things are related within the universe." He explains that Native Americans who were raised in a traditional way perceive the world as an interconnected system of relations between humans, animals, plants, and the environment. That is also why they feel more accountable for the damage inflicted on the natural world. Fixico (2013: 5) also emphasises the importance of oral tradition, saying that "both storyteller and listener engage in reviving an experience of the past that becomes alive again, thereby transcending time from the past to the present. Both tenses of time blur, becoming one and the same." These words show the potential of storytelling for expressing the circular concept of time, but also other elements of Indigenous worldviews. It is yet another unique characteristic of orature, which may prove difficult or even impossible to be conveyed in writing. Fixico later adds that in his people's oral tradition, time is of lesser importance. The events of a story and the reason why they occur are far more important. This way, though something may have happened in the past, it is recounted in the present and serves as a lesson for the future (Fixico 2013: 24-25).

The circular concept of time is also prevalent in the culture of Australian Aborigines. As hunter-gatherers they used to lead a nomadic lifestyle, in which they would travel to different parts of the continent to ensure a sufficient supply of food despite the changing seasons. Donaldson writes about the Aboriginal concept of Dreamtime:

> Through the Dreaming, every person was inseparable from the non-human world, that is, from the non-living world, the world of holy landscape and sacred places, and from the living world of plants and animals to which every person had a species-affiliation, a `totem'. Aborigines were intimately connected with and related to the natural world and the Dreaming: it was indissolubly part of them. (Donaldson 1996: 192)

This description is strongly reminiscent of the Native American circle of life. Donaldson goes on to explain that time for Aboriginal Australians is all-enveloping. The present reflects the past. It is both naturally circular and cyclical. There are many ceremonies

devoted to properly observing the natural cycle of time in Aboriginal traditions. It was believed at one time that if the cycle was broken, it could lead to catastrophic events such as drought, deluge, or famine. The repeatable cyclical events are so interconnected that it is impossible to determine the causal relations between them. The peewee birds migrate to Australia signifying the end of the wet season. But it is also the wet season that ends and therefore brings the birds back from their voyages. Traditionally, specific groups of people would travel across the continent themselves potentially causing the end of the wet season and the return of the birds. In this infinitely connected, cyclical world, it does not matter what comes first and what follows (Donaldson 1996: 190-194). Patricia Grace provides an interesting insight into the topic of circularity (or in Māori context spirality) of time by describing her writing process:

> I have tried to explain before how I position myself in the writing. I don't have a sense, when I begin a new work, of standing at the beginning of a long road and looking along it to an end. Instead I have a sense of sitting in the middle of something – like sitting in the centre of a set of circles or a spiral – and reaching out to these outer circles, in any direction, and bringing stuff in. (Grace in Dudding 2016)

Māori *koru* (spirals) are present in many traditional carvings and paintings, especially the *kōwhaiwhai* patterns, which can be found on meeting house rafters or canoes. The patterns are specifically designed for each *iwi* (extended family) and usually tell the genealogy of a community. Deloughrey (1999: 68) stresses the fact that the spiral signifies a repetition with a difference, stretching from the time of the ancestors towards a better future.

Imani (2012) speaks of Southern African concepts of time in similar words. He explains that the traditional African perception of time may be more circular, holistic, and continuous as opposite to the linear, disjointed, and discontinuous Western time. He provides the example of Southern African *sangoma*, traditional healers, who are believed to have the power to reach the realm of ancestors. By communing with previous generations, they are able to gain access to their healing abilities. Imani (2012: 104) sees this as an example of the past invading the present. He continues to discuss African concepts of time from the perspective of theoretical physics, and even proposes that circular time might help solve the time travel paradox.

Of course, the cyclical perception of time is not exclusively an Indigenous concept. Various aspects of time circularity can be seen in non-Western cultures, religions, and philosophies from all over the world, such as Buddhism or Hinduism. However, it

can still be seen as a common element of Indigenous worldviews, closely related to orality. Its representation in literature, for example with the use of repetition, may therefore be considered a feature of oralised prose.

As mentioned above, repetitions serve multiple functions in orature. However, written narratives can be much longer than a typical oral story, which allows authors to create repetitions that are much more complex than in typical oral stories. Even an entire passage from a novel could be repeated several hundred pages later. In some cases, the author may also decide to introduce slight changes to the repeated passage to create parallelisms. The fixed character of writing will additionally allow the readers to return to the original fragment and compare the two. Another way to hint at the circular nature of time in a narrative is by mixing past, present and future. This is often achieved through various types of visions and foreshadowing. Instead of progressing from point A to B in a straight line, oral narratives often circle back to the beginning but allow the reader and the characters to gain a new understanding of the world in the process.

2.2.2. Indigenous character archetypes

Another feature which can be used to oralise literature is the inclusion of character archetypes originating in oral traditions. These characters may have their roots in orature or Indigenous beliefs. As they originate from various oral tradition, their appearance in written texts can signal that oralised literature is an extension of orature.

Perhaps one of the best known Indigenous character archetypes is the Trickster, who appears in oral traditions all around the world. Among Indigenous Canadian peoples, the Trickster is known by many names. The Cree refer to them as Weesageechak, the Haida and Tlingit peoples call them Raven and the Blackfoot know them as the Old Man. Their other names include Coyote, Nanabush, or Gluscaba. The character is often described as a demigod with shape-shifting abilities. They can take on any animate or inanimate form, which is why they are somewhat gender fluid or genderless. Due to the fact that the Trickster can take so many forms, sometimes a character may be interpreted as a personification of the Trickster, even if they are not explicitly identified as such in the tale. Eigenbrod (1995: 95) explains how Coyote was misunderstood and abused by the written culture, which presented the character as cartoonish and used them in stories for

children. Though the Trickster is known for their mischief and oftentimes finds themself in humorous situations, their position in Indigenous cultures and belief systems should not be underestimated. McLeod (2000: 52-53) states that for the Cree "the trickster represents the life of the consciousness: he/she is always testing the boundaries of consciousness and reality. (…) The trickster (…) represents a form of non-linear consciousness, which is the stuff of dreams." Lenore Keeshig-Tobias compares the role of the Trickster in Indigenous cultures and beliefs to that of Jesus Christ in Christianity. The difference between the two, she says, is that "from our Teacher, we learn through the Teacher's mistakes as well as the Teacher's virtues" (Keeshig-Tobias in Lutz 1991: 85). The very nature of the character seems very fitting for oral tradition. The Trickster changes appearance from one tale to another, just like the tales themselves change from one retelling to the next. Eigenbrod (1995: 95) additionally notices that the character's transformative powers allow authors to easily adapt the Trickster to contemporary reality in order to tackle modern themes and issues.

While Trickster characters are often morally ambiguous, Indigenous oral traditions also feature many characters that clearly have bad intentions. South African Zulu and Xhosa peoples tell tales of the Tokoloshe, a small, hairy demon or sprite that harasses people in their sleep. Tokoloshes are said to inhabit the whole of Southern Africa and often be responsible for people dying in their sleep. Some people also believe there to be a link between Tokoloshe activity and mental illness. One of South Africa's most infamous serial killers, Elifasi Msomi, claimed to have been possessed by a Tokoloshe. Similarly to the Trickster, Tokoloshe has historically been relegated to the realm of children's tales and fantasy by non-Indigenous people. Over the years it has found its way to several songs (e.g., Jack Parow's *Hosh Tokolosh* or John Kongos' *Tokoloshe Man*) and films (*A Reasonable Man* directed by Gavin Hood). It is worth noting that neither of the aforementioned artists is of Indigenous heritage, which brings to question their understanding of the Tokoloshe character. The belief in the demon is still present among some Xhosa and Zulu people, which can be confirmed by the fact that spiritual healers offer their services to free affected members of their communities from under the influence of the creature. Sociohistorical changes in South Africa have led to an interesting shift in mainstream perspective of Indigenous beliefs, exemplified by the study of Lesley Forded-Green (2000) on journalistic practices in South Africa. She explains that tales about Tokoloshe and other beings of folklore used to appear in South African newspapers in the form of

laugh-of-the-day stories. However, after the fall of apartheid, when the non-white communities regained power in the country, these narratives underwent a shift. Forded-Green provides examples of three journalistic reports from 1994 and 1995, which manage to avoid the condescending tone previously associated with such stories and do not ridicule the beliefs of the people involved. Notably, one of the reports describes a panic outbreak at a primary school after several pupils allegedly saw a Tokoloshe.

The rich oral tradition of New Zealand also feature many interesting recurring characters. One of them is Māui, a legendary hero who appears under many names in oral traditions across New Zealand, Polynesia, and even as far north as Hawai'i. Depending on the specific peoples, Māui is credited with various heroic feats, such as fishing up various Polynesian islands (including the North Island of New Zealand) from the sea, discovering fire, or slowing down the sun (Best 1982: 329-386). Sometimes, Māui is also referred to as a Trickster who enjoys mischief. This shows the intriguing duality of Trickster characters as both heroes and troublemakers, which is present in Indigenous New Zealand and Canadian cultures. Best (1982: 329-330) notes that early European writers who attempted to study Māori customs described Māui tales as puerile and ridiculous. This is very reminiscent of the treatment of other characters from Indigenous mythologies in Canada and South Africa mentioned before. Today, the character is treated with more respect. The tales are retold by Indigenous storytellers and writers, e.g., Peter Gossage. The hero even found his way to pop culture by inspiring a character from Disney's 2016 animated movie *Moana*. That last portrayal of the legendary hero has garnered some criticism as Jenny Salesa, New Zealand Labour MP, commented that Disney's Māui is culturally inaccurate and perpetuates stereotypes of Polynesian men being overweight.

The Trickster, Tokoloshe and Māui are just examples of many intriguing characters originating from oral tradition. Some of them may be specific to a given Indigenous culture, while others are known across tribal lines, albeit they appear under different names. Their inclusion in oralised literature allows the authors to establish a stronger connection between their work and the oral tradition of their people. By inserting those archetypes into written prose, Indigenous authors pass them on to the future generations of readers/listeners. Contemporary authors often use universal traditional characters to comment on the present. Thus, writing becomes less of an invading force that destroys oral traditions and more of a possible path for its continuation.

2.2.3. Elements of Indigenous cultures

One of the most important functions of oral traditions is spreading knowledge about culture and history in order to challenge prevailing, non-Indigenous beliefs and philosophies, show the validity of Indigenous knowledge in contemporary world and pass the tradition down to younger generations. In the absence of writing, communities depended on oral tradition to teach children how to survive. The knowledge, often in the form of stories, can pertain to many aspects of life from traditional hunting techniques or making fire to much more contemporary issues, such as modern food recipes, or fixing a car engine. Historically, it was easy to preserve this kind of knowledge in close-knit communities. However, due to the short- and long-term effects of colonialism, Indigenous peoples nowadays are struggling with detribalisation, and young people often do not have contact with their Elders and vice versa. Just like Harry Robinson, the Elders have sometimes been forced to use writing in order to protect the ancestral wisdom of their peoples. Likewise, Indigenous authors sometimes decide to include detailed descriptions of aspects of their traditions in texts, which helps them reach other members of their communities and, in many cases, also educate non-Indigenous readers. What is more, this idea can also be used to combine elements of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures, worldviews and beliefs within one narrative. It is a potent feature of oralised literatures, which echoes some of the most important functions of oral tradition.

One interesting variation on this feature is a commentary on the process of storytelling itself. The authors are aware that writing is not able to convey all the intricacies of oral tradition. However, by having fictional characters participate in the traditional process of storytelling (like in the case of the previously mentioned "Prophecy" by Basil H. Johnston) they are able to depict and describe some of the aspects of oral tradition which are lost in the outer layer of the narrative. This allows the author to depict some of the elements that are normally lost in writing, e.g., the participatory role of the audience, though in this case the audience is comprised of other fictional characters while the reader experiences the story from a neutral third person perspective. It is a variation on the story-within-story literary device and it gives the author the ability to show a more complete image of oral tradition.

In some cases, Indigenous authors use writing to retell traditional myths and stories in more modern settings. Writers such as King and Grace are able to draw from both

oral and Western traditions to create fresh, new narratives. Such writing can be incredibly powerful, e.g., by establishing direct dialogue between characters from Indigenous oral traditions and the Bible. The technique can elevate Indigenous characters to the level enjoyed by biblical ones. Similarly, Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies can be used to challenge non-Indigenous systems and concepts, such as land ownership, capitalism, exploitation of the environment, linearity of time and others. This shows that oralisation can be expressed through both stylistic and cultural hybridity of a literary work.

A few of the features of oralised literary style discussed in the previous section could under some circumstances also be seen as oralised plot features. For instance, Indigenous songs and music could be used as a narrative theme or motive. Similarly, it is not difficult to imagine a complex form of semantic parallelism, which uses contrastive themes, such as life and death, rather than words and phrases. As different authors constantly reinvent their unique oral traditions in various ways, it would not be possible to create a fully comprehensive list of features of oralised literature. The purpose of the classification is therefore to demonstrate that there are many ways in which Indigenous authors can oralise their texts while developing a preliminary framework of the most readily noticeable techniques for further literary analysis. Keeping in mind the general aspects of orality as outlined by Indigenous and Western scholars, the features of oralised style and plot as discussed above as well as specific elements of an Indigenous author's culture, it is possible to identify elements of that author's oralised prose through close reading.

2.3. Oralised literature and postmodernism

Some critics have noted that there is a degree of similarity between some Indigenous worldviews and the ideas of postmodernism. Postmodernism is broadly understood as a mid to late 20th century movement in philosophy, art and architecture. McHale (2012 [1987]) defines the shift from modernist to postmodernist fiction as a change of dominant from epistemological to ontological. Modernism is concerned with knowledge about the world, its acquisition, transmission and limits. It asks questions such as: What should be known? Who knows it? How do they know it, and how are they certain of it? How do they pass their knowledge to others and how reliable is it (McHale 2012: 13)? Postmodernism is in turn open to the existence of many worlds and asks questions connected to

the ontology of a literary text or the world that it projects: What is a world? What kinds of worlds are there, how are they created and what differences are there between them? How does a text exist and how does the world (or worlds) projected by it exist? (McHale 2012: 14). McHale suggests using his theory as a basis for understanding features of post-modernism as outlined by other critics. For instance, Hassan (1975: 48-58) identifies seven modernist rubrics: urbanism, technologism, "dehumanization", primitivism, eroti-cism, antinomianism and experimentalism. He then explains how each of them is changed or expanded upon by postmodernism. The world is more unified but at the same time fractured as there is now more tension between nations, languages, races and other iden-tities; nature becomes increasingly more important through the green revolution; technol-ogy is getting out of control, some are looking forward to new inventions while others perceive it as a threat to humanity; new media and art forms emerge; computer is seen as a potential future substitute for consciousness; art is impermanent; etc. Hutcheon (1988: 4) describes postmodernism as "contradictory", as it "works within the very systems it attempts to subvert." She mentions a few characteristic themes of postmodernism, includ-ing irony, paradox, experimentalism, self-reflexivity and blurring of genres.

Wilmer (1996) makes a direct comparison between postmodern philosophy and Indigenous criticisms of modernity. In both cases Western or modern culture is perceived as intolerant, selfish, materialistic and hostile. He emphasises that Indigenous peoples have never been silent in the face of oppression and have always engaged in acts of re-sistance and activism. Wilmer then continues to discuss specific intersections between postmodernist and Indigenous critiques of modernity. The Western idea of development is inherently materialistic and connected with accumulation of wealth, which leads to "extremely uneven distributions of material well-being, even the destruction of some in-dividuals or groups in the name of development" (Wilmer 1996: 39). Indigenous peoples, on the other hand, have for a long time understood development as a continuous process of environmental, cultural and spiritual adaptation to the world around them. Wilmer also notes that, until recently, the West has been largely ignorant of alternative, non-European paths of cultural development. The assumption was that all societies were following the same path of development but that the Indigenous ones were more 'primitive' and had not yet 'reached' the same evolutionary stage as their European counterparts. Despite the fact that these Eurocentric views of development are now being challenged, the colonial era has left the world dominated by the materialistic "surplus culture," which leads to

"resource exhaustion; the domination and repression of some groups of people by others; and environmental damage accompanied by declining agricultural productivity" (Wilmer 1996: 40). If postmodernism is to be understood broadly as a critique of modernity, then Indigenous peoples have engaged in it before anyone else and could be considered "*the real experts on postmodern practices*" (Wilmer 1996: 36, emphasis in original). Wilmer goes on to outline five points of similarity between Indigenous and postmodern criticisms. Both of them

> (1) emphasize the importance of tensions created by contradiction and paradox; (2) suggest an alternative non-linear way of conceiving of time, including history; (3) point to an alternative world view in which difference and diversity does not obstruct unity and community; (4) are directed by a concern for the harmful effects of modernization; (5) are engaged in a deconstructive project which, in case of indigenous peoples, is also a struggle for their cultural survival. (Wilmer 1996: 41)

Although Wilmer does not talk about literature specifically, many of the points he discusses, for instance non-linear concepts of time, correspond directly to features of oralised literature. Postmodern theories have successfully been used to discuss works of some Indigenous authors, such as Thomas King (Cherokee) or Gerald Vizenor (Chippewa).

The renowned Chippewa writer Gerald Vizenor is one of the most outspoken Indigenous critics/authors who openly discusses his usage of postmodern strategies. Vizenor (1989a: 2) criticises scholars for resorting to formalist interpretations of Indigenous literatures and claims that "more enlightened listeners would consider hermeneutics, postmodern interpretations, and the problems of translation." He explores this idea further in the preface to *Narrative Chance,* a collection of essays he edited. One can read there that

> [t]here are four postmodern conditions in the critical responses to Native American Indian literatures: the first is heard in aural performances; the second is seen in translations; the third pose is a trickster signature, an uncertain humor that denies translation and tribal representations; and the last postmodern condition is narrative chance in the novel. (Vizenor 1989b: ix)

Vizenor repeatedly refers to "the language games of tribal literatures." He is in favour of comic rather than "*hypotragic*" modes of interpretation. The emphasis on humour seems to be one of the characteristics of postmodernism that appeals to him the most. At the same time, he reiterates his previous assertion that "Native American Indian literatures have been overburdened with critical interpretations based on structuralism and other

social science theories" (Vizenor 1989b: x). Vizenor stresses that there can never be an 'objective' or 'correct' reading of an Indigenous text. Instead, he feels that postmodernist theories provide critics with opportunities to reach the most "pleasurable misreadings." Social sciences, in turn, strive to uncover the "whole truth", which is never truly attainable (Vizenor 1989b: 3-12).

Vizenor further asserts that the trickster is inherently postmodern. They are an embodiment of chaotic comedy which defies the structured tragedy of socio-scientific theory.

> The trickster as a semiotic sign is imagined in narrative voices, a communal rein to the unconscious, which is comic liberation; however, the trickster is outside comic structure, "making it" comic rather than inside comedy, "being it." The trickster is agonistic imagination and aggressive liberation, a "doing" in narrative points of view and outside the imposed structures. (Vizenor 1989b: ix)

Throughout his essays, Vizenor refers to the Trickster as a liberator, a healer, a language game, a semiotic sign, a comic holotrope and a narrative chance. The character always transcends the boundaries of the narrative they are in. Vizenor deems theories such as behaviourism, functionalism and new materialism as unfit to discuss trickster narratives. Instead, he is a proponent of structuralism, structural linguistics and semantic theories with an emphasis on semiotics (1989b: 189).

When talking about trickster narratives, Vizenor often refers to "mythic verism," which is a mode of writing often compared with magic realism. Originating in Latin America, magic realism (also magical realism or marvellous realism) has been subject of many heated discussions, which resulted in multiple definitions and it is infamously difficult to define. Magic realism and terms related to it can be applied or rejected based on small narrative details, such as a character's reaction to a supernatural element. The label has been commonly applied to texts written by white authors who weave elements of mythology from their original cultures into their narratives (e.g., Irish settlers using Celtic folklore). However, there have also been several attempts to approach Indigenous texts from the same perspective, usually as part of larger, book-length studies on magic realism (Rzepa 2009, Sandin and Perez 2012, Cooper 2012). Nevertheless, Vizenor's mythic verism seems to constitute a conscious effort to avoid externally imposed categorisation, similarly to how King rejects the term postcolonial. Moore (2012: 147) notes that "Vizenor's mythic verism claims a certain revisionary historical and social weight that

contrasts with the somewhat more fanciful and individual escapism of magical realism." For instance, in some of his works, Vizenor tells an alternative history of Columbus' arrival in America. However, if that is indeed the distinguishing factor, then mythic verism suddenly excludes a vast corpus of Indigenous narratives that contain the magical elements but do not adopt a revisionary historical perspective, including some of Vizenor's own work. Moore himself admits that a clear distinction between the two terms calls for a more extensive comparative study. Rzepa (2009: 60) remarks that the term mythic verism "juxtaposes two terms that are antithetical from the Western perspective, but not necessarily so from the Native point of view". What would be characterised as "mythical" or "magical" by a Westerner is in many Indigenous cultures seen as a realistic part of everyday life. The same sentiment is echoed by Lutz (2002: 123) when he states that "Native novels must not be misunderstood as 'postmodern' even if they leave 'reality' as defined by Western materialist perception".

There is an underlying threat of critical imperialism in using non-Indigenous theories to approach Indigenous literatures. Krupat warns that

> postmodern positions, regardless of what they call themselves (e.g., trickster, "Indian," biological, evocative, or whatever), are all based upon models *both* of Western "scientific," "social-scientific," "rational," "historical," modes of thought, *and* of non-Western "religious," biogenetic, "mythic," or vaguely specified "Indian" modes, that are grossly overgeneralized (…). (Krupat 1992: 14; emphasis in the original)

Although Krupat (1992: 14) notes that the frequent calls for new, non-Western historiography and ethnography yielded little response at the time, in the 30 years since the publication of his study a lot of new academic research by Indigenous peoples has been published. Indigenous approaches to literary analysis, e.g. Jo-Ann Archibald's "storywork" (2008) or Vanessa Watts "Place-Thought "(2013), provide new avenues for studying Indigenous literatures.

The question remains whether postmodern and post-structural theory could be applied directly to oralised literatures. On the one hand, oralised texts may be seen as postmodern because they paradoxically blend writing and oral tradition. In Hutcheon's (1988: 4) terms they work within the system to subvert it. One could also consider oralised literature in the context of Hassan's modernist/postmodernist rubrics. Oralisation implies both unification and fracture of orature and literature. The two modes exist together in a single text that itself is the product of the power struggle between them. The importance of

nature and distrust of technology are common themes in Indigenous literatures, although they are more likely the effect of deep-rooted values than a recent green awakening. Finally, there is no doubt that oralised literature is experimental in nature. By challenging historical truth, deconstructing power relations and subverting writing itself, Indigenous authors often, consciously or not, employ strategies that could be seen as typically postmodern. There is no rigid structure to oralisation, the texts are experimental, decentralised blends of styles that are difficult to define and do not remain in balance. The features of oralisation and their implementation can potentially change from culture to culture, author to author and text to text. It is important to note that literary postmodernism has been around for several decades at this point and it is by no means a straightforward phenomenon. Indeed, it is entirely possible to view oralised prose as an example of Indigenous postmodernism or even one of many postmodernisms. On the other hand, such classification also raises considerable doubts and questions. The existence of Indigenous postmodernism implies that it was preceded by Indigenous modernism. It also forces Indigenous literatures onto the same path of development as Western literatures, as if that was the only logical route of progression. Perhaps some authors independently arrive at themes and techniques that are only reminiscent of what we call literary postmodernism. Perhaps some of them learn about postmodernism in Western schools and universities and use decide to use it in their own way. For that reason, I believe that approaching oralised literature with a postmodern and post-structural mindset may be productive, at least in some cases. At the same time, it has to be stressed that Indigenous literatures are not monolithic. Although authors such as King and Vizenor may actively employ postmodern writing techniques and consciously blend them with aspects of oral traditions, it does not have to be true for other Indigenous writers. Some Indigenous scholars even advise against using postmodern literary criticism for interpreting Indigenous literature. Cheryl Savegau (Abenaki) writes in her letter to Craig Womack (2016: 241) (Creek-Cherokee): "[i]t is just now, when we are starting to tell our stories, that suddenly there is no truth. It's a big cop out as far as I'm concerned, a real political move by the mainstream to protect itself from the stories that Native people (…) are telling". Many features of oralisation are directly inspired by elements of oral tradition and although they seem experimental, they may ultimately have little to do with postmodernism. As mentioned before, this dissertation aims to approach the Indigenous texts from their specific cultural contexts first and foremost. Postmodern literary criticism may therefore be employed to

better understand certain aspects of the analysed texts, but it will not be blanketly applied to all the text without first considering their Indigenous contexts.

2.4. Oralised literary forms and genres

Just like traditional literature, oralised literature can be written in many different genres, such as the aforementioned mythic verism. Classifying any artistic work by genre is a difficult task, mostly due to unclear, often subjective boundaries between them. However, when it comes to oralised literature, the challenge may lie elsewhere entirely. Due to the hybrid nature of this type of writing, it is unclear whether oralised literature is written in genres traditionally associated with literature or orature. It is also possible that a whole new set of genres is created in the process of oralising literature, as suggested by Daniel David Moses: "I think we have an opportunity here with the influence of an oral aesthetic, to develop things that go beyond those genres, which are categories that are very much a result of a book culture" (Moses in Lutz 1991: 163). Introducing elements of a traditional oral genre into a written genre may be seen as another layer of the oralisation process. To illustrate that final point, Teuton (2012: 35) provides the example of novels by Sequoyah Guess, a United Keetoowah Band author. He refers to the books as "a distinctively Cherokee refashioning of the horror genre", inspired by Cherokee beliefs in the spirit world. Whereas in Western horror stories the characters usually fear pain or death, in this case the characters dread the corruption of their community. In order to recognise that a literary text blends oral and written genres, a non-Indigenous reader has to first acquaint themself with the characteristics of the former.

The undeniable diversity of storytelling traditions makes it impossible to define a unified set of genres that would take into account all the intricate differences between oral traditions of different peoples, nations, tribes, and bands. Okpewho (1992: 181-221) summarises the many attempts made by scholars to classify African orature. Sometimes orature is categorised based on the protagonists (e.g., animal tales, human tales, or fairy tales), function (e.g., didactic, moralistic), plot elements (e.g., trickster tales, dilemma tales, historical tales), or the context in which a story is told (e.g., moonlight tales, divination tales or hunter's tales). In many cases, these categories overlap, and since they are largely established from an outside perspective, they provide little insight into the characteristics

of actual orature. Okpewho proceeds to propose his own division of African oral tales into legends, explanatory tales, and fables.

Legends are a broad category, which can be further divided into historic and romantic legends. Historic legends deal with real life events and personal stories from the storyteller's life. As they talk about relatively recent past, they are usually quite realistic. If the storyteller changes any details they risk being contradicted by the listeners who also remember the particular event. Romantic legends, on the other hand, recount distant past and are often embellished with fantastic, imaginative elements, magic and mythical characters. If one decides to challenge the believability of such a romantic legend, the storyteller claims "that the world has changed and that the men of today have lost the skills and powers that their ancestors proudly possessed" (Okpewho 1992: 202).

The second category of tales proposed by Okpewho are explanatory tales, which are told "primarily to explain the origin of one of a whole range of things or ideas within a community's environment and experience" (Okpewho 1992: 203). These tales include, for example, various stories describing the creation of the world and humans. As they are usually set in prehistoric times, the storytellers have even more freedom in changing the details and introducing magical or mythical elements.

The final category discussed by Okpewho are fables, which do not have a clear purpose or function. These tales are rather told primarily for the sake of entertainment, which highlights the performative and artistic aspects of oral traditions. In contrast to the previous types of tales, fables are not meant to record events or explain the origins of any phenomena. If a tale asks a question or establishes a conflict at the beginning, the problem is usually resolved by the end (Okpewho 1992: 209-221).

In the later part of his book, Okpewho additionally identifies a few shorter genres of African orature, such as proverbs, riddles, or tongue-twisters. He also stresses the importance of local classifications established by Indigenous communities themselves. His study, however, is very wide in scope, as it encompasses oral traditions from various parts of Africa. Okpewho is able to identify clear similarities between oral genres found in different cultures across the entire continent. These similarities could presumably also be identified in oralised literature inspired by African oral traditions and perhaps even oral traditions originating in other parts of the world.

There are some clear parallels between orature genres in Africa and Canada. For example, according to Wolfart (1973: 11), one of the traditional categories used by the

Cree First Nation to classify their stories is called *ācimōwin*. These stories, jokes and anecdotes are personal accounts of everyday events and deal with the lives of individual members of the community. There exist several sub-genres of *ācimōwin*. *Kayās-ācimōwin* talks about historical exploits and stories from the lives of one's ancestors passed down through generations and *ācimisōwin*, which can be translated as "an act of confessing," is a self-mocking personal story. The Interior Salish peoples have a similar type of stories called *spilaxem*. Tomson Highway, a renowned Cree playwright, expands on that classification in his lecture "Comparing Mythologies" (2003: 21). Highway distinguishes between factual stories called *achimoowin* ("to tell a story or truth"), fictional stories called *kithaskiwin* ("to weave a web of fiction") and the mix between the two called *achithoogeewin* ("to mythologise"). The existence of that last category, "the exact halfway point between (…) non fiction and fiction", fits perfectly with Gerald Vizenor's mythic verism. Many of those genres are also reminiscent of historical and romantic legends as defined by Okpewho.

The Māori people of New Zealand also have several distinct oral tradition genres, such as *whakapapa* (genealogies), *whakatauki* (sayings), *kōrero* (narratives) and *waiata* (songs and chants) (McRae 2017: 5). McLeod (2000: 40) stresses the importance of life narratives in First Nation cultures: "Life histories give us insight into both cultures and individuals. Life histories stress the importance of subjective experience (...) The structure of *Nêhiyâwiwin* [Creeness] is woven from layers of narrative memory and through individual life histories". If such personal stories were to be adapted into oralised literature, one could imagine they would probably take a form similar to Western life writing genres, such as a memoir, diary, or autobiography. The Métis scholar Deanna Reder (2007: 6-7) argues that Indigenous Canadian life writing has been largely misunderstood by literary critics, since most of them do not recognise the Indigenous roots of the genre. Reder explains that she is able to identify many *ācimōwin* elements in Indigenous life writing, because her Cree mother would often tell her similar stories, combining accounts of daily life with supernatural elements and a large dose of humour. Regardless of whether it contains orature features, life writing seems to be a popular genre among Indigenous authors. Some notable examples include Maria Campbell's (Métis) widely acclaimed memoir *Halfbreed* (1973)*,* two autobiographies by Es'kia Mphahlele, and the award-winning memoir *Maori Boy* (2014) by Witi Ihimaera (Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki).

Indigenous authors are also prolific when it comes to writing fiction either in the form of novels or short stories. Considering the length of most traditional oral narratives, short stories seem to be their natural written counterpart. That being said, writing opens the possibility of creating far longer narratives, as the reader is usually not expected to finish an entire novel in a single reading session anyway. In fact, the length of the novel can at times make some features of oralised literature more impactful, e.g., complex repetitions where an event repeats itself several times throughout the narrative. When discussing the genres of oralised literature, it is therefore important to look at both genres found traditionally in Western literature as well as those associated with oral traditions. Indigenous authors sometimes take classic Western genres and transform them to better reflect their own experiences and storytelling traditions. One interesting example of that is Native Canadian Gothic fiction. The settings of European Gothic fiction usually involved medieval castles, dark dungeons and haunted houses. When the genre was first used in Canada and the US, the authors found the source of that danger and uncanny atmosphere in wilderness – dark woods, severe weather and, oftentimes, hostile Indigenous people. Native Canadian Gothic reshapes the genre once again. This time, the threat often comes from colonial, urban centres and the predators are White priests and teachers in residential schools. Lane (2011: 172) notes that Native Canadian Gothic "can be used as a way of reclaiming cultural autonomy, refusing to portray indigenous culture in European terms". The genre also demonstrates how a Western literary mode can be transformed into a new hybrid form that combines elements of both European and Indigenous storytelling.

Interestingly, traditional orature can also provide inspiration for writing in genres that are (perhaps mistakenly) considered to be quite modern, such as science-fiction. Mashigo talks about parallels between South African oral traditions and speculative fiction:

> When I listen to some of our folktales, I say to myself, this is definitely spec fic; if anybody should be thriving in this genre it should be Africans because we're just, we're just naturals at all these supernatural stories, all these wild ideas about people flying, that's who we are. (Mashigo in Birat 2020: 2)

In her collection of short stories, *Intruders*, Mashigo draws from South African oral tradition, including more contemporary urban legends. She also expresses frustration at the fact that Black literatures that use supernatural elements tend to be classified as magic

realism. She suggests that less realistic genres may be more powerful at tackling real world issues, as they allow the readers to put more distance between themselves and the story and therefore not feel personally attacked or criticised (Mashigo in Birat 2020: 3).

As demonstrated, the classification of Indigenous writing into genres is a complicated task. It is of course possible that an Indigenous author writes in a traditionally Western genre, since they are very common and accessible. However, it is just as likely that their work has been misclassified by non-Indigenous audiences who are not familiar with Indigenous genres. Finally, it may also be the case that an author decides to blend elements of traditionally Western and Indigenous genres in order to create something in between – an oralised genre. Although genre is not the primary focus of this study, this opens up an interesting possible area for future investigation, which would require a different selection of texts for analysis.

Despite all the more and less apparent connections between literature and orature mentioned thus far, there is one natural intersection between the two narrative forms, which has not yet been discussed here – theatre. Theatrical plays contain elements of both worlds. It is an auditory and visual form of storytelling, but in order for it to exist, it is most often scripted and written down on paper. Like oralised literature, plays often use techniques such as stage directions in order to convey certain elements of the performance in the written form. The similarities between theatre and orature are also highlighted by Indigenous authors and playwrights. Tomson Highway (Cree) explains that theatre is his preferred medium of creative work because "it's a natural extension of the oral storytelling tradition. You still hear the words" (Highway in Lutz 1991: 95). This sentiment is echoed by Margo Kane (Cree-Saulteaux), whose play Moonlodge began as an oral story and only later was written down. Hone Kouka (Ngati Porou, Ngati Kahungunu and Ngati Raukawa), a famous Māori playwright and theatrical director, introduces elements of oral tradition into the rehearsal process of his plays. Rawiri Paratene (Ngā Puhi and Te Rarawa), who played one of the lead roles in his play Waiora, reminisces about his experience: "The new rehearsal room protocol with karakia [Māori prayers] and mihimihi [traditional introductions], was heartening to me. It represented such a positive progression. Having a kaumātua [respected Māori elder] with us throughout the whole process was superb" (Paratene in Sears: 5). Theatrical events provide an opportunity for Indigenous playwrights, actors and directors to more directly reference ceremonial and performative aspects of oral traditions. This makes theatre a very promising place to search for features

of oralised literature. However, as it would require a whole new approach to the issue, this study will focus predominantly on prose in the form of life writing, short stories and novels.

2.5. Power of storytelling

Before one attempts any analysis of Indigenous literatures, it is important to understand the authors' reasons for writing down their stories. In Western cultures, books are broadly seen as a form of art or entertainment. Authors may perceive their works as creative outlets or simply a way to become rich and famous. And while the same could be true of some Indigenous authors, there is often more to it. In many Indigenous cultures, stories are perceived as powerful vehicles with the potential to shape the world. Thomas King discusses this matter extensively in *The Truth about Stories*, where he compares the Biblical story of genesis to his retelling of the Sky Woman, the creation story of the Iroquois and Huron peoples. King implies that "stories contained within the matrix of Christianity" are partially to blame for modern humans' greed and arrogance (2003: 26). Whereas in the Sky Woman story, animals and human ancestors work together to create the perfect world out of mud, Adam and Eve begin their lives in Eden and get banished for their sin. The Biblical first people are made in God's image and therefore are superior to any other living creature. As a result, they can justify damming rivers and cutting down forests for profit. As King says, "[t]o every action, there is a story" (2003: 29). Traditionally, the power of storytelling extended to language and speech in general. Basil Johnston (Ojibwa) (1990: 12-13) notes that "[l]anguage was a precious heritage; [oral] literature was no less precious. So precious did the tribe regard language and speech that it held those who abused language and speech and truth in contempt and ridicule and withheld from them their trust and confidence." Johnston admits that language lost its revered status due to the spread of writing. However, it seems that the power of storytelling remains strong, even in the written form.

Maracle (1994: 7) explains that First Nations "believe the proof of a thing or idea is in the doing. Doing requires some form of social interaction, and thus story is the most persuasive and sensible way to present the accumulated thoughts and values of a people." Maracle emphasises the purpose of storytelling in facilitating growth and

transformation. She talks about the process of "storying issues up" in order to better understand them. Stories become the very basis of Indigenous philosophy, knowledge and theory, which are all also expressed through storytelling. Nick Thompson (Western Apache) compares storytelling to hunting:

> This is what we know about our stories. They go to work on your mind and make you think about your life. Maybe you've not been acting right. Maybe you've been stingy. (…) So someone goes hunting for you maybe your grandmother, your grandfather, your uncle. It doesn't matter. (…) So someone stalks you and tells a story about what happened long ago. It doesn't matter if other people are around you're going to know he's aiming that story at you. All of a sudden it *hits* you! It's like an arrow, they say. Sometimes it just bounces off – it's too soft and you don't think about anything. But when it's strong it goes in deep and starts working on your mind right away. (Thompson in Basso 1996: 58-59; emphasis in the original)

This power of storytelling to affect people is not restricted to Indigenous narratives, but Indigenous speakers and writers seem to be very aware of the potential of stories. Indigenous literatures commonly use small, personal stories to discuss much larger, global issues, such as land rights, physical and sexual abuse, discrimination, environmental destruction and more. Indigenous authors almost universally engage in discourse and activism aimed to make the world a better place. The very profession of writer seems to be connected to certain responsibilities, which arise from the recognition of the power of storytelling.

Storytelling is also commonly mentioned in the context of healing, especially as a form of therapy for Indigenous people struggling with mental health and trauma. New Zealand's Mahi a Atua (work of ancestors/gods) is an organisation, which uses traditional Māori *pūrākau* (creation stories) in mental health counselling to great effect (Kopua, Kopua and Levy 2021). The stories have been proven to help deal with trauma. Māori people who have lost their connection with their culture due to colonisation are welcomed back into the *whanau* through narrative therapy. In South Africa, traditional healing practices are commonly associated with ritual and performance, which usually includes genres of oral tradition, such as songs. Groenewald and Makgopa (2012: 104) describe healing rituals of the amaNdebele people: "When a healer (…) exhibits signs of entering into trance s/he will chant the *thokoza* discourse. It is a performance resembling a praise poem (…) Healers are prolific singers and songs are invariably sung to a relatively fast tempo and are typically one-liners divided into the call and response." This power of oral tradition may be depicted directly in oralised literature when characters are healed or

influenced by stories and songs. However, it may also be transferred into oralised literature itself. Whenever a reader is impacted by an oralised text, whenever the story stays with them for some time, whenever they reconsider their worldview, preconceptions and beliefs – they may just have been hit with an arrow of oral tradition.

The features of oralisation outlined in this Chapter provide a very general framework for an analysis of Indigenous literatures. This framework, however, has to be used with consideration of the specific histories, beliefs and cultures of a given people. The following Chapter introduces the Indigenous peoples of Canada, South Africa and New Zealand with focus on the histories of Indigenous literatures in the three countries.

Chapter 3: Indigenous peoples of Canada, South Africa and New Zealand

On the surface, it may seem that Indigenous peoples living in Canada, South Africa and New Zealand do not have that much in common. The three countries are located in vastly different parts of the world. The Indigenous peoples that inhabit them are distinct in terms of culture and traditions. When faced with such great diversity, drawing any meaningful comparison seems understandably challenging. However, due to parallel historical circumstances as well as inherent characteristics shared by oral traditions around the world, Indigenous authors sometimes utilise similar oralisation techniques, regardless of their specific heritage. This chapter provides historical context for the spread of literacy and the development of literatures among Indigenous communities in Canada, South Africa and New Zealand. It also introduces the authors and the texts analysed in the following chapters.

A discussion of Indigenous histories from various parts of the world immediately calls for a definition of indigeneity. This issue has been subject to much debate and controversy, since the term (just as most terms related to one's identity) escapes clear definition. The UN has decided not to establish a uniform definition of indigeneity, allowing individuals and groups to self-identify as Indigenous. The UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs broadly states that "Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live" ("Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations" 2020). However, even this very general description raises many questions. Do Indigenous peoples have to be dominated by another culture in order to be considered Indigenous? What about the island nations in Oceania, such as Nauru or Palau, where majority of the population are still Pacific Islanders? And what about Indigenous peoples of South Africa and other African nations, which were historically oppressed and dominated but now have full control of their governments? Surely, they did not lose their indigeneity with the fall of apartheid? Coates (2004: 5) aptly notes that "[o]ver time, the concepts of indigenous and aboriginal have become increasingly synonymous with powerlessness, marginality, and social distress – approaches which are Eurocentric in origin and crisis-based." The

issue becomes even more divisive when one takes into consideration the fact that some governments, such as Canada and Australia, offer certain rights and social programmes exclusively to Indigenous peoples, thus providing incentives for individuals to falsely or mistakenly self-identify. For that reason, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies recognises the right to self-identification but requires proof of heritage when applying for programmes and services reserved for Indigenous peoples. Coates (2004: 1-2) also notes that the UN's decision led to further confusion when groups such as the Welsh and South African Boers (descendants of first European colonisers) proclaimed their indigeneity.

Another issue is one of terminology: whether and how one should distinguish between *Indigenous*, *Native*, and *Aboriginal*. In Canada, representatives of 42 First Nations have rejected the term *Aboriginal*. Marks (2014) argues that their decision may have been dictated by the fact that in contemporary English *ab* in *Aboriginal* can sometimes be mistakenly understood as *not* instead of *from*, which twists the meaning of the word as *not original*. Still, the term remains in common usage, especially in Canada and Australia. As for the word *Native*, since it can be used to describe a native inhabitant of any place in the world, it is seen as too broad to refer to Indigenous peoples.

Considering all of the above, *Indigenous* seems to be the most valid term when referring more broadly to different groups of peoples. This term is not perfect, since it is still a foreign term coined by outsiders to describe Indigenous communities. Whenever it is possible, this dissertation will refer to Indigenous peoples by their specific tribal affiliations. The term Indigenous herein includes First Nations, Inuit, Métis and non-status Indians in Canada, Khoisan and Bantu peoples in South Africa as well as Māori and Moriori peoples in New Zealand. The terms *Native* and *Aboriginal* will only be used in citations and proper names.

The focus on these three particular countries was dictated by several factors. Firstly, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand all have substantial populations of Indigenous peoples representing diverse cultures and oral traditions. Secondly, all three countries are former British settler colonies. Their histories have followed similar paths of colonisation, discrimination and resistance. What is essential for this study, there were also many similarities in the way writing was introduced into the lives of Indigenous peoples. Finally, as a result of their colonial histories, in all three of these countries English is one of the official languages and there are substantial bodies of literature in English written by

Indigenous peoples. It is true that there are other countries in the world that match the above criteria, particularly Australia and the United States. The Aboriginal peoples of Australia are culturally and historically distinct from the Māori peoples of New Zealand. Their literatures remain very promising for a study of oralisation but the inclusion of Australia within this particular dissertation would dilute its focus and would require a new, large set of data.

The situation is somewhat different in the case of the United States. Indigenous peoples in North America have for a long time commented on the artificial character of the International Boundary between Canada and the US. When the border was first established, it cut indiscriminately through Indigenous lands, oftentimes splitting entire communities in half. In the words of the US-Canadian, Cherokee writer Thomas King:

> For most Aboriginal people, that line doesn't exist. It's a figment of someone else's imagination. Historical figures such as Chief Joseph and Sitting Bull and Louis Riel moved back and forth between the two countries, and while they understood the importance of that border to Whites, there is nothing to indicate that they believed in its legitimacy. I get stopped every time I try to cross that border, but stories go wherever they please. (King 2013: xvi)

While it is true that Indigenous peoples in Canada and the US share a common ancestry and there are similarities between their cultures and oral traditions, the development of contemporary Indigenous literature was shaped after the border had already been established and was partially influenced by the policies of the two countries. For that reason, although Indigenous Canadian and US literatures have a lot in common, it would be an overgeneralisation to consider them as one and the same. In this dissertation I decided to focus on Indigenous Canadian literatures, since they are less often studied than their US counterparts. Nevertheless, by choosing Thomas King as one of the discussed authors I hope to also highlight the ever-present link between the storytelling traditions and open a path to potential future studies concentrated on the southern part of the continent.

3.1. Indigenous peoples of Canada

According to the data from 2016 census, the number of Indigenous peoples living in Canada totals roughly 1.67 million (4.4% of the country's total population). This includes the Inuit (3.9%), the Métis (35.1%) and First Nations (58.4%). The remaining 2.7% are

people with multiple Indigenous identities and those who identify as Indigenous but do not belong to any of the three major groups (Statistics Canada 2017).

The Inuit inhabit mostly their homeland called Inuit Nunangat, which comprises four regions: the territory of Nunavut, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region in the Northwest Territories as well as northern parts of Québec and Newfoundland and Labrador, referred to respectively as Nunavik and Nunatsiavut. The name Inuit encompasses several distinct groups of peoples in Canada and often also in regions of Greenland, Alaska and north-eastern Russia. These include among others the Inuvialuit, Inupiat, Yupik and Kalaallit peoples. All these ethnic groups together are represented in matters of international importance by the Inuit Circumpolar Council established in 1980. This organisation agreed for the name Inuit to be used as a collective name for all the peoples it represents (Rosinsky 2005: 3-5). In this dissertation, the name Inuit will refer to the Inuit peoples living in Canada.

In addition to histories, cultures, beliefs, customs and traditions, the Inuit also have their distinct languages. According to the 2006 Canadian Aboriginal Children's Survey, there were five major Indigenous language dialects spoken among the Inuit in the country. These include three dialects of Inuktitut as well as Inuvialuktun and its dialect Inuinnaqtun. The data showed that 64% of Inuit children had an Inuit language as their mother tongue. Some Inuit languages are written using the Latin script while others use Inuktitut syllabics, developed on the basis of Cree syllabics (Statistics Canada 2010).

The Métis are a distinct group of people who trace their ethnic origins to both Indigenous and European ancestors. They are represented by The Métis National Council. The ancestral Métis Homeland includes the Canadian Prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta as well as parts of the Northwest Territories, Ontario, British Columbia and northern United States. The Métis have traditionally spoken many Indigenous languages, the most common of which in 2006 were Cree, Dene and Ojibwe. They also have their own distinct language – Michif, which developed as a combination of Indigenous Canadian languages (chiefly Cree) and French with some borrowings from English. Nowadays nearly two-thirds of the Métis live in a metropolitan area (Statistics Canada 2017), which may contribute to the fact that only 1% of Métis children under the age of six speak an Indigenous language as their mother tongue (Statistics Canada 2010). There have historically been several variations of the name Métis itself. The presence of the diacritic reflects mixed French/Indigenous (most often Cree) ancestry of the people.

However, sometimes the term appears without the diacritic in reference to a different community of Anglo-Metis with English or Scottish ancestry. These people were also known as Countryborn. Nowadays, the term Métis generally includes both groups.

The First Nation peoples are the largest and most diverse out of the three main Indigenous groups in Canada. There are more than 600 distinct First Nations in Canada, the majority of whom live in the western provinces of the country. For statistical purposes, the Canadian government counts both people with and without registered or treaty Indian status under the Indian Act as First Nations. According to the 2016 census, there are more than 70 Indigenous languages spoken in Canada, although this number includes the previously mentioned Inuit languages and Michif. Next to Inuktitut, Algonquian and Athabaskan are the two most widespread Indigenous language families. The Algonquian family includes languages such as Cree, Blackfoot, Mi'kmaq and Ojibwa. The Athabaskan family in turn includes, among others, Dene, Slavey and Tagish. It also has to be mentioned that many of the First Nation languages spoken in Canada have their own dialects associated with more specific peoples. Cree, in particular, is famously diverse with as many as 10 dialects and its own syllabary writing systems, which were also the basis for Inuktitut syllabics (Statistics Canada 2017).

According to archaeological studies, the ancestors of Indigenous Canadians first migrated to North America from Siberia around 12.000 years ago. They adapted and learned how to survive in their new home and developed a strong connection with the land. The first Europeans to ever set foot in what is today known as Canada were most likely Norse sailors, who travelled west along the coasts of Greenland. There is some evidence of contact between the Vikings and Indigenous Americans, though the Europeans largely kept to the coast and did not manage to establish a settlement further inland. The deterioration of climate eventually forced them to return to Europe (Ray 2012: 1-4).

It was only at the turn of the 16th century that Europeans learned again about the existence of two whole continents to the west. In the era of explorers, many made their way across the Atlantic. The areas around Newfoundland and Nova Scotia became popular among European fishermen. Although at first they did not show much interest in land resources, they soon began trading with Indigenous peoples for furs, which were considered luxury items in Europe. In 1534, Jacques Cartier traded furs with the Mi'kmaq at Chaleur Bay, although his main goal was to discover whether there are any rich Indigenous settlements in Canada, similar to the Aztec and Inca ones, which by that time had

already been plundered by Spaniards. The arrival of Europeans quickly started affecting the life of Indigenous peoples. Goods from across the ocean, such as iron, copper and decorative beads were traded between different Indigenous groups. A tragic side effect of these early days of contact was that European diseases, including measles and smallpox, spread rapidly among Indigenous North Americans oftentimes leading to their death (Ray 2012: 25-58).

Regular trade led to the establishment of trading outposts and settlements. Fur traders were eventually followed by missionaries, who attempted to directly influence and transform the Indigenous ways of life. Although most missionaries may have had good intentions and even tried to protect Indigenous peoples from the harmful aspects of European cultures (e.g., alcohol), they still perceived themselves as superior and were determined to eradicate any beliefs, traditions and customs that stood in opposition to Christian doctrines. In some cases, missionaries were also responsible for instigating conflicts between converted and unconverted groups of Indigenous peoples (Ray 2012: 58-59). By the early 1600s, settlements, trading posts and missions developed to the point that European presence in the area became continuous. It was also around this time when mixed relationships between French settlers and Indigenous women resulted in the eventual emergence of the Métis.

In 1634, French Jesuits established their presence among the Huron peoples. They were among the first missionaries who attempted to convert Indigenous communities from within by first learning their language and understanding their customs. Nevertheless, their efforts failed, since the Huron were distrustful of the foreigners and blamed them for spreading deadly diseases. When the Iroquois attacked the Huron in 1648, this missionary endeavour collapsed. The victorious Iroquois confederation continued their military campaign against other Indigenous groups that they considered enemies and soon also launched attacks against the French settlers. Although they never mounted a full-scale invasion against New France, they still managed to capture many farms and lay siege to Montreal. Towards the end of the 17th century, the Iroquois nations mounted another offensive against the French as part of the war between France and England (Moore 2012: 95-117).

At the turn of the 18th century, the rivalry between the French settlers and the English-run Hudson Bay Company again led to several armed skirmishes. After the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), the English gained control over the trade in Hudson Bay but the

rivalry between the two nations continued inland. However, the continued animosity between the two nations eventually resulted in the Seven Years' War, which engulfed both Europe and North America. This time, Indigenous peoples remained largely neutral. Nevertheless, the English forces in North America managed to defeat the French, dealing the decisive blow at the Plains of Abraham in 1759 when they captured Quebec City. In 1763, under the Treaty of Paris, the population of New France officially became subjects of the British Crown (Moore 2012: 174-180). Also around that time, the Indigenous peoples began new armed resistance against British expansion. Led by the warrior Pontiac, they killed more than two thousand people, forcing the colonial powers to establish the "Indian Territory" in 1763. This did not last long, however, since with the rapid development of the colonies, by 1774 the "Indian Territory" was no longer recognised (Wynn 2012: 181-188).

By 1821 European fur traders marked their presence in every area of Canada, except for a few most remote locations. Most of the trade was controlled by the Hudson Bay Company, which, due to a decrease of competition, was able to dictate their own terms in the relationship with the Indigenous peoples. The Moravian Brethren had established several missions in the north to convert the Inuit. They also contributed to the spread of diseases with major outbreaks of measles, typhus and scarlet fever damaging Indigenous communities. European alcohol was another factor that proved devastating for Indigenous peoples all over Canada, as many of them became addicted. The land and the sea could no longer sustain the overwhelming international demand for luxury products. As a result, the Indigenous peoples, their population ravaged by foreign diseases, were now often seen not as business partners and strategic allies but as a nuisance, since the colonial powers shifted their focus towards timber and agriculture (Ray 2012: 83-94).

In 1867, the Province of Canada, and the colonies of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick united into the Dominion of Canada, a newly formed Confederation with Sir John Macdonald as its Prime Minister. British Columbia joined soon after. The new administration then expressed interest in taking over Rupert's Land, a vast area to the west encompassing Hudson Bay and all the rivers that flow into it. The Dominion eventually purchased it from the Hudson Bay Company for only 1.5 million dollars. However, the expansion to the west was not left without a challenge. The areas around the Red River were at the time controlled by the Métis, who were not content with Canada disrupting their way of life. In 1869 the Métis forces led by Louis Riel captured Upper Fort Garry

and occupied it until the Dominion agreed to establish the Province of Manitoba and grant special privileges for the Métis and the French. This decision was met with opposition from Ontarians, who believed that these lands would become part of their territory. Growing tensions reached their tipping point when Riel's people captured a group of armed, English-speaking Ontarians outside of Fort Garry and executed one of them after trial by court martial in 1870. Riel was convicted of murder and eventually banished from Canada for 5 years (Waite 2012: 318-334).

For the Canadian government, The Red River Rebellion indicated the need for legal regulation of the relationship between the state and the Indigenous peoples. This came in the form of 11 Numbered Treaties, negotiated and signed between 1871-1921, as well as the Indian Act of 1876. Despite multiple amendments to the latter, all of those documents have been widely criticised by Indigenous activists, leaders and politicians. The Indian Act was the basis for forceful assimilation of First Nations. It prohibited Indigenous peoples from expressing their culture by banning potlatches and spirit dances. It allowed the government to establish church-run residential schools for Indigenous children, where practicing their customs and using their mother tongues was strictly prohibited. Apart from the cultural abuse, the schools were also infamously sites of frequent physical and sexual abuse. It is estimated that even 150,000 Indigenous children passed through the system. The policies that led to the establishment of the residential school system have been often described as nothing less than a cultural genocide. Another example of the assimilation policy established by the Act was depriving Indigenous women of their status if their married a non-Indigenous person. The Indian Act's purpose was largely to gradually assimilate the Indigenous populations, annihilating their languages, cultures and customs in the process. It included many provisions that stripped Indigenous peoples of their Indian status, e.g., if they received a university degree, joined the military or became lawyers (King 2003: 132). On the other hand, the Indian Act did not apply to Métis and Inuit peoples, which meant that a significant part of the Indigenous Canadian population was completely excluded from many government programmes. Although some of those issues have slowly been addressed and laws have been amended since the 1960s, there are many who still see even the current version of the Indian Act as a source of oppression of Indigenous peoples and wish to change it or abolish it altogether (Leslie 2002). One provision of the Act that is most heavily criticised is the so-called "two-generations cut-off clause" that causes children to lose their Indian status if their family

married out of status for two generations. It is predicted that, should this provision remain unchallenged, most Indigenous peoples in Canada may lose their status within fifty to seventy five years (King 2003: 144).

In 2008, the Government of Canada established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The commission heard testimonies from seven thousand people from across Canada and in its extensive final report, published in 2015, it included ninety-four Calls to Action as a road map for continued reconciliation. As part of the report, the Commission called upon the pope to issue a formal apology for the Catholic Church's role in the running of residential schools. As of writing this dissertation that apology is yet to come but after hundreds of unmarked children graves were discovered in several Canadian provinces in 2021, Pope Francis expressed his intention to visit Canada and speak to the Indigenous peoples.

The first instances of Indigenous Canadian oratures being put to paper came soon after writing was introduced to North America. The earliest known transcripts of Indigenous stories come from the *Jesuit Relations* compiled by French missionaries and sent back to Paris in 1610. These documents included first attempts at describing performances, songs and culture of Algonquin speakers. Missionaries often studied Indigenous languages and translated parts of the Bible to better appeal to potential converts. Their teachings were often the first opportunity for Indigenous peoples to learn the basics of writing. However, despite the missionaries' efforts, some time still had to pass before a more substantial number of Indigenous people were introduced to their ideas (Lane 2011: 7).

Many collections of Indigenous tales were also the result of ethnological and anthropological works of the 19th and early 20th century. These include *Algic Research* (Schoolcraft 1839), *Blackfoot Lodge Tales* (Grinnell 1892), *Haida Texts* (Swanton 1908), *Tsimshian Mythology* (Boas 1916), *Loucheux Tales* (Leechman 1950) and many others. Some of these tales had notably already been influenced by European narratives by the time they were recorded and translated. Others were purposefully changed by the recorders in order to appeal to their own sense of aesthetics or unwittingly altered in the translation process (New 1989: 7-23). Collecting transcripts of Indigenous folklore was rather fashionable among Western scholars at the time. There was a sense of urgency since many believed that Indigenous North American cultures are doomed to disappear altogether.

This idea later became known as "the vanishing Indian" myth. In later years, several Indigenous authors published their own collections of traditional stories. One of them is Alexander Wolfe (Saulteaux/Ojibwa), whose *Earth Elder Stories* (1988) is a translation of Saulteaux stories told to him by his elders.

In the middle of the 19th century, the efforts of Christian missionaries bore fruit in the form of a group of Ojibway converts, who learned English, adopted English names, became missionaries themselves and produced a number of texts in English. These converts included, among others, Peter Jones, George Henry, Peter Jacobs and John Sunday. The most prolific of this group was George Copway, who is credited with writing the first Indigenous book in English: *The life, history, and travels of Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh* published in 1847. Copway wrote about Ojibway stories, customs and traditions and even classified Ojibway narratives into three genres: the Amusing, the Historical and the Moral (Lane 2011: 16). Even before that, in 1838, Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) travelled to London for an audience with Queen Victoria, where he presented a written petition from Mississauga Ojibway chiefs asking her to grant the community title deeds to the land at the Credit River. The written message was supplemented with clan emblems as signature, traditional wampum strings and Kahkewaquonaby's own oral supplication. Van Toorn (2004: 22, emphasis as in original) stresses that, "[t]o work effectively, the written petition had to be delivered *as though it were an oral message.*" Van Toorn further explains that the meaning of the petition was thought to be derived not from the written words themselves but more importantly from the speaker's delivery of the message and the ceremonial setting surrounding the event. This shows that writing and oral tradition had been used in conjunction long before the publishing of first oralised texts.

Another early publication comes from the Mohawk poet Pauline Johnson (Mohawk), also known as Tekahionwake, who transcribed her own poetry and performances as well as traditional stories. Her works were published in several books, the first of which was *The White Wampum* (1895)*. Johnson was one of the first Indigenous Canadian authors who mediated and combined Indigenous and European visions of the world in her stories, though Lane suggests that her style was dictated and shaped by the demand of her non-Indigenous audience. King (2003: 86) describes how Johnson would switch from her Native outfit to an elegant gown in the second half of her performances. This met with the approval of Western audiences, as it was understood to symbolise progress and 'civilising' the Indigenous peoples. The same audiences would be confused whenever

Johnson decided to reverse the order and transition from Western clothing to traditional fur pelts.

The beginning decades of the 20th century were difficult for the development of Indigenous Canadian literatures. The residential school system was designed to forcefully assimilate First Nation peoples into the Canadian society while effacing their own cultures, traditions and language. One important literary trope that emerged during those decades was the incarceration trope, in which residential schools, adoptive families and reserves were likened to prisons. Lane (2011: 19-20) notes that this injustice, discrimination and cultural genocide gave rise to a wave of protest writing often expressed through the incarceration trope. Rymhs (2007) performs a detailed analysis of Indigenous American literature written from or about prisons with notable works including *Indian School Days* (1988) by Basil Johnston (Ojibwe), *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998) by Thomson Highway (Cree) and *Stolen Life* (1998) by Ruby Wiebe (Cree). Lane additionally stresses the fact that due to the Indigenous peoples' political situation, the development of their literatures has been strongly connected with protest writing and activism. However, Canadian audiences for a long time remained deaf and blind to the plight of Indigenous peoples.

Lutz (2002: 117) strongly objects to relegating early Indigenous Canadian literature to the category of protest writing. He finds the term dismissive and rightfully praises the texts as evocative, moving and highly literary. Even though many Indigenous texts do address the issues of discrimination and social injustice, they must not be seen only as a reaction to political wrongdoings. At the same time, it is important to recognise the role that response to colonisation has played in the shaping of Indigenous literatures. Emma LaRocque (2010) does so to great effect in her analysis of Indigenous Canadian literary resistance against colonisation between 1850-1990. There are many different aspects to Indigenous literatures that should be considered in their analysis, one of them being oralisation.

The second half of the 20th century saw a shift in attitudes towards decolonisation and minority empowerment. A wave of activism spread across Canada led by figures such as Bertha Clark Jones (Cree-Métis), Helen Mamayaok Maksagak (Inuvialuit) or the members of Ojibway Warriors Society. Protests were oftentimes supported by significant numbers of non-Indigenous citizens forcing governments to change their assimilatory strategies. The residential school system was being slowly dismantled and new avenues

appeared for Indigenous publishing. Newspapers and periodicals, such as *Indian Outlook* (est. 1960), *The Mikmak News* (est. 1965), *The Indian Voice* (est. 1969) and others provided a platform for a new wave of Indigenous writing, oftentimes combining elements of orature and literature. The first anthology of Indigenous Canadian writing, *I Am an Indian,* was published in 1969 and was a collection of fiction and non-fiction, such as newspaper columns and speeches. The subsequent decades saw a flourishing of Indigenous anthologies and collections with notable examples including *Many Voices: Contemporary Indian Poetry* (1977), edited by David Day and Marilyn Bowering, *A Gathering of Spirit: A Collection by North American Indian Women* (1984), edited by Beth Brant, *All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Writing* (1990), edited by Thomas King and many others (Lane 2011: 162). The number of texts contained in each of these volumes demonstrates better than anything else how diverse and productive Indigenous literatures in Canada have been. Lane argues that

> [o]ne of the great successes of Aboriginal writing is the production of hybrid modes of discourse: prose, poetry and drama draw great vitality from orature, indigenous humour, narratives of historical and personal struggles (defeats and successes), and perhaps most importantly of all, performative modes of action and representation drawn from indigenous ritual. (Lane 2011: 163)

This hybrid mode has emerged as soon as Indigenous Canadians started writing in English and has since developed into a web of oralisation techniques that allow their texts to navigate the complex relationship between literature and orature.

The second half of the 20th century was marked by a rapid development of Indigenous Canadian literature in English. Important milestones of the time include the publication of the first Inuit novels *Harpoon of the Hunter* (1970) by Markoosie and *Sanaaq* (1984) by Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk, as well as Maria Campbell's breakthrough memoir *Halfbreed* (1973), describing her turbulent childhood and early adulthood, as well as the struggles of the Métis people in general and Métis women in particular, whose plight had for many years been completely ignored by the Canadian government. Lutz (2002: 116) emphasises the importance of autobiography as one of the most important genres of Indigenous writing in the 20th century. Notable examples include *Woman of Labrador* (1973) by Elizabeth Goudie (Inuit), *My People, The Bloods* (1979) by Mike Mountain Horse (Blood) or *Indian Rebel* (1975) as-told-to by Lee Maracle (Coast Salish). Lane (2011: 170) points to historiographic fiction as one of the most popular genres of this

period. When suppressed groups of people win back their voice after years of being silenced and censored, it is only natural that they wish to retell and re-examine historical events from their own perspective. This preference for historiographic prose can therefore be observed in Indigenous South African and New Zealand literatures as well. In Canada, it was expressed in autobiographical texts, such as *Prison of Grass* (1975) by Howard Adams (Métis), or novels, such as *Slash* (1985) by Jeannette Armstrong (Sylix Okanagan). In many cases, such as Thomas King's (Cherokee) *Medicine River* (1989) and *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993), Indigenous authors approach difficult issues through their subversive sense of humour. Conversely, King (2003: 105-106) himself mentions that historiographic fiction is no longer popular among Indigenous authors and speculates that historical stereotypes, such as the cowboy/Indian dichotomy, may now be so firmly lodged in North American culture that writers cannot subvert them by writing about the past.

Indigenous literatures in Canada have continued to develop in the 21st century. A popular Haisla author, Eden Robinson, has recently proven through her fantasy and science-fiction prose that Indigenous cultures and traditions can serve as an inspiration to write in any genre. The works of Joshua Whitehead have provided a unique life perspective of an Indigenous member of the LGBTQ community. Whether it is in the form of masterful poetry like that of Billy-Ray Belcourt, transformative drama like that of Tomson Highway, or acclaimed prose like that of Lee Maracle, Indigenous Canadian literature constantly grows, adapts and shapeshifts not unlike oral traditions it often derives from. The authors represent many diverse cultures and worldviews but they are still able to express them in the limiting medium of writing. These qualities make Indigenous Canadian texts great candidates for the study or oralised literature.

3.2. Canadian texts selected for analysis

The selection of a handful of Indigenous Canadian texts for analysis is a challenging task due to the sheer number of Indigenous cultures, authors and literary texts. Although it is admittedly impossible to fully represent all Indigenous peoples in a single overview study, I still wished the selected to reflect, albeit broadly, the cultural makeup of the country. With this in mind I have selected the following:

- *Halfbreed* (1973), the memoir by Maria Campbell of Cree and Métis descent,
- *Ravensong* (1993), a novel by Lee Maracle of Sto: lo, Coast Salish descent,
- the collection of stories *One Good Story, That One* (1993) and the novel *The Back of the Turtle* (2014) by Thomas King of Cherokee descent,
- *Monkey Beach* (2000), a novel by Eden Robinson of Haisla and Heiltsuk descent,
- *Split Tooth* (2018), a novel by Tanya Tagaq of Inuit descent,
- *Jonny Appleseed* (2018), a novel by Joshua Whitehead of Peguis descent.

Both Campbell and Maracle are respected writers who belong among the first Indigenous authors to be published in Canada, charting a path for the next generations. In addition to their literary work, the two women have also fought and advocated for Indigenous rights throughout their lives.

Classifying King as an Indigenous Canadian author may raise some questions because he was born in the US and only moved to Canada in his forties. As the author himself states:

> I think of myself as a Native writer and a Canadian writer. I doubt if I could call myself a Canadian Native writer, just because I'm not from one of the tribes up here. But all of my short stories, and the novel, and the anthologies, and the critical book that I co-edited, were published here in Canada, and they all have to do with Canadian material. I have done nothing in the US to speak of. So, yes, I consider myself a Canadian writer. (King in Lutz 1991: 107-108)

King exists in a space between Indigenous US and Canada but only if one accepts the arbitrary political division of North America. Thematically his works are closer to Indigenous Canadian narratives: the stories are usually set in Canada and deal with the lives of Canadian First Nations. In his numerous novels, non-fiction books and essays, he often comments on Canadian and US policies and advocates for Indigenous rights and environmental protection. King's use of oralisation features has been noted by several scholars (Eigenbrod 1995, Gibert 2006, Schorcht 2012). Given the transnational and transcultural character of this dissertation, his works could provide an interesting and unique perspective on oralisation. For the purposes of this study, I have selected *One Good Story, That One* as one of his classic, acclaimed works as well as *The Back of the Turtle*, a more recent narrative that has not yet been analysed from this angle.

Eden Robinson represents the next generation of Indigenous Canadian writers. Her debut work was a collection of short stories entitled *Traplines* and published in 1996.

Since then, she has gained international popularity for her standalone novels *Monkey Beach* (2000) and *Blood Sports* (2006) as well as a more recent trilogy of young adult novels. The latter became so popular among fans around the world that it received a TV adaptation.

Tagaq and Whitehead have both only debuted recently with their first novels published in 2018. Tagaq is known also for her unique combination of traditional Inuit throat singing and Western musical genres. The hybrid nature of her music may also be reflected in her writing. As a Two-Spirit poet and novelist, Whitehead provides an important perspective of an Indigenous member of the LGBTQ+ community.

3.3. Indigenous peoples of South Africa

The original inhabitants of Southern Africa were the Khoisan peoples. This group includes two large subgroups – the Khoekhoe and the San. The San are sometimes referred to as "Bushmen" from the Dutch word *Bosjesmans*, although this term is now considered derogatory by some ethnographers. The San do not have a name for their people in their own language. Instead, the name "San" comes from Khoekhoe and its etymology is also reportedly racist, as it used to mean "tramps," "robbers" or "vagabonds" (Barnard 1992: 1-11). Nevertheless, the word "San" remains part of the now commonly used compound Khoisan, which is a term accepted by the organisation representing the interests of this particular Indigenous group – the National Khoisan Council. The Khoisan were historically marginalised peoples, since many of them were killed or enslaved in conflicts with both Dutch settlers expanding north from the Cape of Good Hope and Bantu peoples migrating south from Central Africa. Only recently have Khoisan activists risen up to demand their rights. The first official meeting between the Khoisan National Council and the South African Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs took place in 2018.

The most numerous group of Indigenous South African peoples are identified in the most recent 2011 census as Black Africans. They make up 79.2% of the country's population. These are predominantly Bantu peoples who migrated from Central Africa around 11th century, before the arrival of European settlers. The Bantu are very numerous and extremely diverse peoples. In South Africa they include several ethnic groups, the

largest four of which are Nguni, Sotho, Tsonga and Venda. The more specific ethnicity question was not included in the 2011 census, however, the language data may provide some insight into the current Indigenous population of South Africa. The Nguni peoples including the Zulu, Xhosa and Ndebele seem to be the largest group with 43.3% of South Africans using isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele or siSwati as their mother tongues. Sotho languages such as Sepedi, Sesotho and Setswana are spoken as first languages by 24.7% of people. Xitsonga and Tshivenda are used as mother tongues by respectively 4.5% and 2.4% of the population. This data allows for a rough estimate of the population of the specific Indigenous groups, although it does not take into account Indigenous peoples whose first language is now English or Afrikaans (Statistics South Africa 2011).

The history of South Africa is marked by colonisation, conflicts between many factions of colonial powers and Indigenous peoples as well as struggle for natural resources. Many of those events also influenced the development of South African literature. In 1652, the Dutch East India Company established a permanent strategic outpost at the Cape of Good Hope to supply their ships on the route from Europe to India. The settlers encroached on Khoisan grazing lands, which led to the Dutch-Khoi Wars in 1659-60 and 1673-77. After the second war, many Khoisan lost their cattle and were forced to work as slaves for the settlers. The remaining Khoisan peoples engaged in guerrilla warfare for the majority of the next century. The Indigenous population were at a significant disadvantage, since they did not have access to iron weapons and they were decimated by a smallpox epidemic. The settlers expanded further east and soon clashed with Xhosa tribes, who posed a bigger threat due to their numbers and more advanced technologies. Throughout the 18th century, both sides of the conflict suffered significant losses in subsequent Cape-Xhosa Wars, attempting to take control of the fertile lands between the Fish and Sunday rivers. In 1795, the Cape Colony was seized by British forces as part of a larger political conflict between Britain and France. British soldiers clashed repeatedly with both Nguni armies and Boer rebels, who descended from the original Dutch settlers and by this time started developing their own culture and identity. Thus began a long and violent century of military conflicts leading to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, a British-ruled dominion with borders matching the current South Africa. The country gained full independence in 1931. In 1913, the new administration passed the Native Lands Act, which defined less than 10% of the country as reserves for Indigenous

peoples and prohibited them from purchasing land outside these reserves (Stapleton 2010: 1-8).

In the second half of the 20th century the government passed a new series of racist and discriminatory laws to limit the power and opportunities of non-white South Africans. The Population Registration Act was used to arbitrarily assign categories to different peoples according to race and ethnicity. The Group Areas Act then outlined specific areas of the country called homelands or Bantustans, where a particular group had to live and which comprised only a fraction of the South African territory. This led to racial segregation of non-white majority. Black South Africans were not allowed to attend the same schools or use the same facilities as white people. Interracial marriage was banned and Indigenous people could not own land. What followed was a rise of antiapartheid movements and activism, both in the form of peaceful protests and armed struggles. In 1960, 69 people were shot when the police opened fire towards protestors in what became known as the Sharpeville massacre. In 1976, hundreds of young South Africans were killed by state security forces during the infamous Soweto Uprising. Due to growing antiapartheid insurgence and crippling international sanctions, by the 1980s the government began easing on some of the apartheid laws. After long negotiations between the state and the African National Congress, the first democratic election was held in 1994 and Nelson Mandela became the first Black president of the country. In order to lower tensions in the still divided population, the new government established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which began its hearings in 1996 (Stapleton 2010: 152-191). In 2000, the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation took over the Commission's role as an institution devoted to reconciliation and restorative justice.

The tumultuous history of colonisation, conflict and struggle against racial discrimination determined the trajectory of the development of South African literature. Heywood (2004) divides his *History of South African Literature* into two parts, before and after Sharpeville. Although there were many other impactful events that influenced the themes and genres of South African writing, the Sharpeville massacre indeed prompted an unprecedented wave of protest writing, not only in South Africa but all over the world. However, in order to trace the transition of Indigenous narratives from orature to literature, one has to begin at the time when the two modes of communication first came into contact.

Writing was one of many new technologies introduced by Dutch and British settlers who arrived at the Cape of Good Hope. Very early in the development of the outpost, the Dutch took in a few Khoisan children and educated them to serve as translators and interpreters between them and Indigenous peoples. One of the famous figures of that time was Krotoa, who later adopted the name Eva. As early as in 1658 and 1661, the Dutch East India Company established schools for slaves and Khoisan servants to teach them Dutch and further facilitate communication. These were the first Indigenous peoples in South Africa to learn how to read and write (Koch 2004: 64-122). However, the settlers were not particularly interested in learning about Khoisan oral tradition. Educating the selected Indigenous people was a means to make trade and exploration more efficient. Despite writing being present in Indigenous lives since the middle of the 17th century, it took nearly 200 more years before South Africa saw the first transcripts of oral traditions and texts written by Indigenous peoples themselves.

Some of the earliest examples of literature originating from Indigenous peoples come from verbatim transcriptions of oral performances collected by European scholars. Having travelled to South Africa for research purposes, linguists, folklorists and anthropologists were more interested in Indigenous oral traditions that the profit-focused foreign powers. One of the most impressive collections of San orature was compiled by Bleek and Lloyd around 1870 and published in 1911. As linguists, Bleek and Lloyd were focused on the accurate representation of the San language more than the stories themselves. Their attention to detail led to the preservation of many stylistic features of orature. Contemporary Indigenous authors sometimes use similar techniques to imitate the style of orature in their writing.

The British expansion in the 19th century and the conflicts with the powerful Zulu and Xhosa kingdoms also led to some early transcriptions of Nguni oral tradition, although many of those collections have been lost (Heywood 2004: 29). Among those that withstood the test of time, there is *The Religious System of the Amazulu* (1870) written by the English missionary, Henry Callaway. Callaway published his book in both English and Zulu in two columns. Missionary work was one of the main sources of information about Indigenous oral traditions and cultures at the time. Just like in Canada, missionaries helped develop the first writing systems for Indigenous languages and thus contributed to the spread of literacy in those communities. However, in order to gain access to education, the Nguni-Sotho peoples often had to convert to Christianity.

In 1821, the Glasgow Missionary Society developed a writing system for isiXhosa. The first book written in this language was also authored by one of the missionaries, John Bennie. Influenced by the ideas of Christianity, a great Xhosa prophet named Nsikana founded his own church and later encouraged his followers to travel to the mission station at Old Lovedale. By the end of the first quarter of the 19th century, the children of those followers became the first known Bantu-speaking South Africans to write something in their own language. These early Xhosa writings appeared in mission-published periodical called *Ikwezi*, later renamed *Isigidimi Sama-Xhosa* (Jordan 1973: 38).

Many of the texts written by South African authors in the 19th century were translations of religious texts and hymns but they also included essays, short stories and accounts of historical events. Notable examples include Tiyo Soga's *Uhambo lo Mhambi*, a partial translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress,* the first Xhosa translation of the Bible and "Zemk' Iinkomo Magwala ndini," an account of the devastating Xhosa cattle-killing of 1856-57 written by William W. Gqoba (Jordan 1973: 40-41, 69). Another important contribution to Nguni literature in this period included traditional praise poems (*izibongo*), usually dedicated to a chief or other powerful persons, such as those written by the Xhosa poet Mqhayi or the Zulu poets Herbert Dhlomo and Benedict Vilakazi. The praise poem is a genre of poetry unique to Southern African cultures "for which no exact parallel is to be found either in classical or in modern Western poetry. In spirit, content and form, it partakes of the features of the epic on the one hand, and of those of the ode on the other" (Jordan 1973: 98). The genre continues to be culturally relevant to this day as praise singers often perform as part of important political events, such as the first State of the Nation address of President Ramaphosa in 2018.

The precursors of Indigenous novel in South Africa were undoubtedly Thomas Mofolo (Basotho) and Solomon T. Plaatje (Batswana). Mofolo is the author of the historical novel *Chaka* based on collected oral narratives about the life of king Shaka. The book was first published in SeSotho in 1925 and then translated into English in 1931. It combines accounts of historical events with supernatural elements. Critics also suggested that Mofolo may have modelled his portrayal of king Shaka on Shakespearean characters, especially Macbeth. As a major historical figure, Shaka provided the inspiration for a whole genre of narratives dealing with a tragic military hero's rise to power and his imminent downfall (Heywood 2004: 93-95).

Solomon Plaatje is considered to be one of the most important figures in South African history. Highly talented, Plaatje was fluent in five languages, which allowed him to become an interpreter for Reuters. He was one of the founders of African National Congress, the main political organisation that fought against racial discrimination in South Africa in the 20th century and the current ruling party in the country. Before writing his acclaimed novel, Plaatje published *A Native Life in South Africa* (1916). The book was a protest against the South African constitution of 1910 and the Land Act of 1913, which allowed whites to appropriate ancestral Indigenous lands. His *Mhudi* (1930) was the first novel by an Indigenous African writer to be published in English. The story is set in the aftermath of king Shaka's expansion and the Great Trek of the Boers. Both events caused mass displacement of Indigenous communities, which had an effect akin to that of a civil war. Another important work by Plaatje is *Mafeking Diary*, a posthumously published record of the siege of Mafeking, which Heywood praises as a "rare and astonishing achievement" and a "mastery of the technique of oral delivery" (Heywood 2004: 97).

Sol Plaatje was the first of many Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors in the country and abroad to criticise the new legislation that came with the Union of South Africa. *The Black Problem* (1920) and *Criticisms of the Native Bills* (1935) by D. D. T. Jabavu were direct responses to the government's increasingly discriminatory policies. Stephen Black highlighted the senselessness of the laws in his satirical novel *The Dorp* (1922). Another important author of the period was Rolfes Dhlomo, whose sketches and stories shed a light on the appalling conditions and ruthless economy of the mining industry, which employed many African men. Dhlomo's works were published in literary magazines, which played an increasingly important role in the development of Indigenous South African literature. March 1951 marked the publication of the first issue of *The African Drum* (later renamed *Drum*), which would soon become the main avenue for young Indigenous South Africans to publish their works. Between 1951 and 1958 *Drum* published over 90 stories and many investigative journalist articles. One of the most important features written by Henry Nxumalo (amaZulu) (nicknamed Mr Drum) exposed horrific, slave-like conditions of potato farm labourers in Bethal. The magazine became so influential that in the context of literature, the 50s in South Africa are often referred to as "the *Drum* decade". The magazine was based in Sophiatown, a suburb of Johannesburg, which soon became the main cultural hub for Indigenous people in South Africa,

not unlike Harlem in New York (Chapman 2001: 183-185). This is of additional relevance, since urban areas such as Sophiatown allowed for intermixing of many different Indigenous African cultures and traditions. Children growing up in townships spoke many Indigenous languages and often used them interchangeably, sometimes not aware of where one ends and another begins. This phenomenon in time led to the emergence of Tsotsitaal, a vernacular language combining elements of Afrikaans, English and Indigenous African languages, strongly associated with the criminal underworld of the country. For young authors who grew up in these townships, it often meant being either distanced from their ancestral traditions and beliefs or exposed to an amalgamation thereof. Nevertheless, there are still examples of oralised prose by authors from these younger generations as some of them rediscovered their roots or opted to use oralisation features inspired by several different Indigenous cultures.

The 50s and the 60s were also the decades of Indigenous autobiography. Heywood argues that the popularity of autobiography as a genre signalled maturity and literary independence of South African authors. Notable examples include *Return to Goli* (1952) and *Tell Freedom* (1954) by Peter Abrahams, *Blame me on History* (1963) by Bloke Modisane and *The Ochre People* (1963) by Noni Jabavu. Although all of these authors made substantial contributions to the development of South African literature, Abrahams is especially of note, since in his many novels he succeeded in recontextualising racial relations by using traditionally white genres. In *Mine Boy* (1946), Abrahams provides a new literary perspective on a white mining town. In *Wild Conquest* (1951), he explores the Boers' Great Trek in relation to Indigenous communities. His *Path of Thunder* (1952) is a farm novel (*plaasroman*) that follows a mixed-race Khoisan-white couple living in the country with increasingly restrictive segregation laws. Finally, his *A Wreath for Udomo* (1956) is considered to be one of the first examples of a pan-African novel (Heywood 2004: 117).

The events of Sharpeville intensified the resistance against the dictatorial government. The most notable Indigenous writers of the 60s and 70s were Alex La Guma, Es'kia Mphalele (Bapedi) and Bessie Head. La Guma's collection of short stories *A Walk in the Night* (1962) is a reference to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Heywood explains (2004: 204) that references to literary classics as well as allegorical representation of social classes through characters were among common features in Indigenous South African writing of that period. Whereas the majority of authors of that period were based in Johannesburg and

oftentimes linked to *Drum*, La Guma represents the second largest literary community working from Cape Town.

Es'kia Mphalele, who worked as the literary editor for *Drum*, is one of the most respected and prolific African authors of the 20th century. His acclaimed biography, *Down Second Avenue* (1959), served as inspiration to many non-fiction writers of the period. In his many letters, essays, poems, short stories and novels, Mphalele focused on authentic representation of the world, using his own experiences and rejecting ideological preconceptions. His work and mentorship opened a path to literary career for countless young African writers (Heywood 2004: 197-206).

Bessie Head's novels and short stories explore many important themes, including identity, multiculturalism, abuse and female empowerment. In her masterful *A Question of Power* (1974), Head depicted characters from all main cultures present in South Africa, using her own experience as a mixed person, who struggled to understand where she belonged throughout her lifetime. She was one of several influential female writers of the period, who showed that apartheid is a tool of oppression not only of Indigenous peoples but also of women (Heywood 2004: 215-216).

Faced with widespread resistance and international sanctions, South African leaders realised in the early 1980s that the fall of apartheid was inevitable. In the following years they began dismantling the dictatorial system one oppressive regulation at a time. Even before the first democratic election in 1994, literary voices slowly shifted their focus towards the future, trying to rebuild the country and find avenues for reconciliation. With the burden of apartheid being gradually lifted, authors were also able to explore other literary themes. Notably, the 1980s and 90s saw a rediscovery of Indigenous oral traditions, which was noticed by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars in works such as *Literature and Society in South Africa* (1984) by Landeg White and Tim Couzens, *South African Literature and Culture: Rediscovery of the Ordinary* (1994) by Njabulo Ndebele (amaZulu) and *The Oral-Style South African Short Story in English* (1999) by Craig MacKenzie. Ndebele (1991: 25) in particular emphasises the persisting quality of South African orature in the modern day: "I have listened to countless storytellers on the buses and trains carrying people to and from work in South Africa. The majority of them have woven masterpieces of entertainment and instruction. Others were so popular that commuters made sure they did not miss the storyteller's trains."

The new political system brought liberation not only for Nguni-Sotho Africans but also various other oppressed groups, including women, LGBTQ+ people and Coloured communities, which is one of the reasons why contemporary South African literature fully reflects the undisputable diversity of the country (Heywood 2004: 217-235).

3.4. South African text selection

Indigenous literature in South Africa developed in similar circumstances to that of Canada and New Zealand. However, there are also notable demographic, cultural and political differences among the three countries that make the comparison more challenging.

Firstly, at no point in history were Indigenous South Africans a minority in their country. As mentioned before, they make up almost 80% of the population, which amounts to over 47 million people. This makes them a considerably bigger group than Indigenous Canadians (around 1.67 million people and 4.4% of the country's population) and Māori (around 800 thousand people and 16.5% of the country's population). Consequently, the body of Indigenous South African literature is also much larger, which in turn makes it more difficult to narrow it down for analysis.

On the other hand, due to the oppressive nature of the apartheid government, it became increasingly difficult for Indigenous authors to publish their texts in the second half of the 20th century. Many writers were outright banned, incarcerated or forced to flee the country. In 1972, Nadine Gordimer wrote that "[l]iterature by Black South Africans has been successfully wiped out by censorship and the banning of individuals, at home and in exile" (Gordimer 1994). The majority of the notable texts mentioned in this chapter were originally published by foreign publishers, often in the UK or the US. What follows, the regime impeded the natural development of Indigenous South African literature for several decades.

Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge the impact of urbanisation on Indigenous South African cultures. The apartheid government's plan to forcefully segregate non-white nations into tiny homelands was a complete failure and currently there are no Indigenous reserves in South Africa, although outside of cities, members of specific tribes still inhabit their ancestral lands (e.g. the amaZulu people live primarily in KwaZulu-Natal). For most of the 20th century, Black South Africans could only remain in cities if

they were employed, but even then they were racially segregated to underdeveloped suburbs referred to as townships. The townships soon became melting pots with people of various Indigenous nations living side by side, often in terrible conditions. It also resulted in the mixing of Indigenous cultures, which is sometimes reflected in the works of authors who grew up in multicultural townships. What follows, oralised literature written by city-based authors may well include oralisation features derived from different Indigenous cultures, perhaps even more so than in the case of Canada or New Zealand.

Taking all of the above into consideration, the study will focus on prose published after the fall of the apartheid. This will allow me to examine a sample of texts written at a time when Indigenous South African literature is less constrained and more productive, while at the same time limiting the possible number of texts to be considered. I have selected the following:

- the novel *The Heart of Redness* (2000) and the memoir *Sometimes There Is a Void* (2011) by Zakes Mda of amaXhosa descent,
- *Dog Eat Dog* (2004), a novel by Niq Mhlongo,
- *Spilt Milk* (2010), a novel by Kopano Matlwa of Batswana descent,
- *Running and Other Stories* (2013), a collection of short stories by Makhosazana Xaba,
- *Chasing the Tails of my Father's Cattle* (2015) a novel by Sindiwe Magona of amaXhosa descent,
- *The Yearning* (2016), a novel by Mohale Mashigo of Basotho descent.

Mda, Magona and Xaba are all internationally acclaimed authors. Born in 1948, 1943 and 1957 respectively, they have suffered under and fought against the apartheid regime. Niq Mhlongo was born in 1973 and represents the transitional generation of South African writers who were still young when the country regained its democracy. Finally, Matlwa and Mashigo, born in 1983 and 1985, are up-and-coming writers, who provide a perspective on modern South Africa. The three younger authors grew up in townships which, as explained before, exposed them to an amalgamation of many Indigenous cultures and traditions. I believe that this representative selection of texts may provide a significant insight into how oralisation is used by authors from various generations and backgrounds. This could, in turn, open a path to many future analyses, focused more narrowly on specific authors, cultures or time periods.

3.5. Indigenous peoples of New Zealand

The Indigenous peoples of New Zealand are known as Māori. According to the 2018 census, the Māori constitute 16.5% of New Zealand's population. About 20% of them can speak te reo Māori, though many Māori words have also made their way into New Zealand English. Just like in the case of Canada and South Africa, the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa are very diverse and often identify with smaller ethnic and cultural groups, such as iwi (roughly translated to bands/tribes), hapū (clans) and whānau (families). In fact, the word Māori (meaning normal) became more widespread only in the 19th century as a means of distinguishing the Indigenous population from European settlers. It is also important to note that many Indigenous New Zealanders are of mixed Māori and European descent and do not know their ancestral iwi or do not identify with any particular one (Statistics New Zealand 2020). The earlier 2013 census provides more detailed information on the population of particular iwi. In 2013 the five largest iwi in terms of population were Ngāpuhi (18.8% of all Māori), Ngāti Porou (10.6%), Ngāi Tahu (8.2%), Waikato (6%) and Ngāti Tūwharetoa (5.4%). The alphabetical list of iwi and iwi-related groups published by Statistics New Zealand in 2017 includes 285 items, which shows how diverse the Māori truly are. Most of these iwi consist of at least a few hapū, they identify with specific regions of the country and have their own representative bodies to negotiate with New Zealand government and propose new legislation.

The Moriori are the Indigenous peoples of the Chatham Islands. Although they have common ancestors with the Māori, they were for a long time isolated, which led to development of their unique culture and traditions. The Moriori were thought to have all been killed in a conflict with Ngāti Tama and Ngāti Mutunga iwi. However, their culture has seen a slow revival since the 1980s and their descendants now have the same status as Māori belonging to an iwi. In the 2013 census 738 people identified as Moriori (Statistics New Zealand 2013).

The first ancestors of the Māori peoples are believed to have arrived in New Zealand sometime around the 13th century, making it one of the last major landmasses in the world to be discovered by humans. Oral tradition speaks of Polynesian navigators and discoverers called *tangata whenua*, who travelled to New Zealand from the original homeland of all Polynesian peoples referred to as Hawaiki. Linguistic studies provide some evidence for that ancestral land to be the Marquesas or Society Islands. Geneticists

were able to trace Māori ancestors to New Guinea and further north to Southern Asia. Over the next few centuries the Indigenous New Zealanders had to learn how to live sustainably, since the arrival of humans on the islands had predictably negative environmental consequences, including the extinction of the moa birds (Smith 2005: 1-21).

Europeans first became aware of the existence of New Zealand in 1642 when a Dutch sailor, Abel Janzoon Tasman, stumbled upon its coast. The Dutch, however, deemed the land to be of little interest and Europe forgot about it until the voyage of James Cook in 1769. Cook circumnavigated the islands renaming topographical landmarks and decided that New Zealand provides great prospects as a British colony. The early expeditions also resulted in some conflict between the Europeans, especially the French, and the Māori. In 1770, captain de Surville burned Māori villages after the theft of one of his boats. In 1772, Captain du Fresne and 26 of his men were killed by Ngai Puhi after offending their customs. The French retaliated by massacring 250 Indigenous people. These events made the local population distrustful of the French and more willing to cooperate with the British. As a result of trade, the Māori gained access to iron tools, muskets and new crops, including potatoes. Europeans soon established profitable sealing and whaling operations in the area often with the help of Indigenous peoples. Some Māori travelled on European ships even as far as Britain and America. However, the demands of international trade soon led to depletion of fragile natural resources (Brooking 2004: 23-30).

Like in Canada and South Africa, settlers brought with them new diseases, such as measles and influenza, which resulted in many deaths among the Indigenous peoples. The introduction of muskets also led to bloody intertribal conflicts. It is estimated that during that time the population of Indigenous New Zealanders fell by around 40%. The occasional relationships between settlers and Māori women gave rise to a new mixed-race group called Pakeha-Māori. Brooking (2004: 32) notes that the Māori "adjusted better than many other indigenous peoples to the onslaught of European colonization," which "underscores the power of Māori agency and their ongoing dominance down to around 1850."

At the start of the 19th century, New Zealand also became a popular destination for Anglican, Methodist and Catholic missionaries. These new beliefs appealed to the Māori with their emphasis on genealogy and rituals. In 1833, the Indigenous prophet Papahurihia established the first cult combining elements of Christianity and Māori beliefs.

Other similar movements followed soon afterwards. The missions also provided Indigenous peoples with a path to literacy. Some historians argue that the Māori recognised the benefits of writing and their interest in Christianity was partially dictated by their desire to become literate. Indigenous chiefs wanted their peoples to enjoy the technological advancements brought by colonisation, but they were still wary of the settlers, especially since some of the elders witnessed the plight of Indigenous Australians during their travels. In 1835, 46 northern chiefs and the British Resident James Busby signed the Declaration of Independence, which provided the basis for later negotiations with the British. This came into play in 1840 when around 532 chiefs (over a half of those eligible) signed the Treaty of Waitangi and New Zealand officially became a British colony. The treaty guaranteed the first right to buy Indigenous lands to the Crown but bestowed upon the Māori the privileges of British subjects and governance over New Zealand's natural resources. Although the document and its Māori translations are now seen by legal scholars as contradictive and inexact in its phrasing, it is generally accepted that at least some of the British representatives wished to reach a solution that would be fair and beneficial for all involved parties (Brooking 2004: 34-41).

The good intentions of few may have mitigated but did not prevent injustices against the Indigenous peoples of New Zealand. Private enterprises, like the New Zealand Company, drove the Māori out of their homes to secure arable land for their settlements. In 1843, the Ngāti Toa resisted the settlers in an event known as the Wairau Affray, which resulted in the death of 22 Europeans and 4 Māori. Around the same time the Ngā Puhi iwi led by Hone Heke began protesting their loss of trade and when the governor failed to meet their demands, they responded with force. Despite their somewhat successful military campaign, the Ngā Puhi were not able to sustain a prolonged conflict and eventually decided to sign a truce with Governor George Grey. This, however, was just the beginning of conflict between the Indigenous New Zealanders and the European settlers. When governor Grey passed a constitution that in practice denied the Māori voting rights, several iwi decided to elect their own monarch in the form of Ngati Mahuta high chief Te Wherowhero, who took the name Potatou the First. Although the king passed away the following year, his son Tawhiao continued ruling over the newly established Māori council. The two factions soon clashed in a series of armed conflicts beginning in 1860, known as the Wars of Resistance or the Wars of Rangatiratanga. During that time, the governor amassed a large army of around 12,000 troops in order to overwhelm the Indigenous

forces. Despite numerical and technological advantage, the settlers still found it difficult to seize Māori pā (elaborate defensive forts, usually located on hilltops). The conflicts continued for over a decade becoming more and more chaotic, especially when colonial military resorted to scorched-earth tactics, burning villages and killing women and children. By 1872, most Māori engaged in the campaigns were forced to adopt passive strategies of resistance and seek justice through legal avenues, similarly to Canadian First Nations. The wars resulted in mass confiscation of land from Indigenous peoples, even those who supported the Crown. The New Zealand government formally apologised for these acts in 1995, but many iwi continue to fight for their rights, especially since only a fraction of the land has been returned to the rightful owners (Brooking 2004: 49-60).

It took over a century of resistance before Māori activists saw first successes in changing the racist system of the country. In the 1960s and 70s, the voices of protestors were amplified thanks to the invention of television. In 1978, the Ngati Toa people went to court and won back their sacred burial land, which had been confiscated during the war and transformed into a golf course. At the same time, Prime Minister Robert Muldoon instructed the police and the army to clear out a large Ngati Whatua protest that blocked the construction of luxury housing on Māori land. It was only since the last decades of the 20th century that the government have striven to ameliorate the relationship with Indigenous peoples. In 1975, they established the Waitangi Tribunal, which investigates Māori claims for breach of the Treaty of Waitangi. In 1984, a Māori ritual was incorporated into the parliament opening ceremony. Although the disparity in health, education and earnings is still present in some parts of the country, from the 1980s forward New Zealand has seen multiple successful efforts for revitalisation of Māori language and culture (Brooking 2004: 151-178).

Indigenous New Zealand literature is the youngest of the literatures discussed in this thesis. Written texts in Māori began appearing in the early 19th century but initially they included mostly non-narrative genres, such as genealogies, letters or political speeches. Neither these texts nor the occasional diaries were published or distributed until mid-20th century, when writers turned to more European genres and texts written in English, including short stories and lyrical verse (Simms 1978: 223). Towards the end of the 19th century, New Zealand literature entered what is known as the Maoriland period, when many Pākehā authors became fascinated with all things Māori. This sudden interest in Indigenous stories, language and way of life was analogous to a similar phenomenon

in the Americas and caused by the same patronising idea – that the Indigenous peoples are about to disappear. Notable works from this period include a collection of Māori songs in two volumes compiled by Pākehā Sir George Grey, *Ancient History of the Maori* (1887-1890) by Pākehā John White or "A Scene from the Past" (1892; 1908), a description of the Māori Haka by one of the earliest Māori politicians Āpirana Ngata (McRae 2000: 3-4). McRae notes that most of songs and prose fragments in Grey's collection can be attributed to Wiremu Maihi Te Rangikāheke, a prolific Māori writer of the period. Although Te Rangikāheke received compensation for his work from Grey, he was not credited in the published collection. S. Percy Smith, a New Zealand ethnologist and the founder of the Polynesian Society, took a different approach to Māori oral tradition. Between 1913 and 1915 he published two bilingual volumes entitled *The lore of whare-wānanga*. In Māori culture, *whare wānanga* was an institution tasked with preservation and teaching of traditional knowledge. Smith edited the book based on records of meetings with Waira-rapa Elders recorded by Hoani Te Whatahoro. Smith was responsible for the project and its translation into English but it is Whatahoro who is credited as the author. (McRae 2000: 5). Nevertheless, Smith's introduction to the collection reveals that the original stories had been altered quite significantly:

> But when it comes to the translation, the number of obsolete words would have proved a serious embarrassment, had not the Scribe willingly assisted in their elucidation. (…) A frequent difficulty has met the translator in finding concise English equivalents to the many obsolete words in the Maori text; the Scribe informs me the frequency of these unknown words was pointed out to the Sages, and their reply was that it was not proper to use ordinary words for matters referred to in their teachings. (Smith [1913]2020: Introduction)

Smith shows his Eurocentric attitude to Indigenous oral tradition. He opts to delete words which he deems obsolete, like repetitions, as well as concepts that seem too foreign. Instead of embracing the unique elements of Māori storytelling style, he decided to remove those features that went against the conventions of writing he was used to.

From 1952, the Māori Affairs Department began publishing *Te Ao Hou,* a magazine dedicated to Māori matters and culture, which provided a major outlet for Indigenous writers to share their works. The first Māori short story in English, "For all the saints" by Jacquie Sturm, was published in *Te Ao Hou* in 1955. Other contributors included Arapera Blank, Rowley Habib and Patricia Grace. The first book of poetry published by a Māori author was Hone Tuwhare's *No Ordinary Sun* (1964). The 1970s marked the beginning of the Māori Renaissance – a period of political and cultural assertiveness partly

expressed through the creation of many striking works of Māori literature (Stafford and Williams 2012: 10). When it comes to fiction, it is impossible not to mention Witi Ihimaera, whose works became iconic not only in New Zealand but also around the world. Ihimaera was the first Māori author to publish a collection of short stories, *Pounamu, Pounamu* (1972), and the first one to publish a novel, *Tangi* (1973). He writes political and historical fiction but often combines it with supernatural elements in a genre similar to magic realism or mythic verism. His most famous novel, *The Whale Rider* (1987), was adapted into an internationally acclaimed film of the same title. Whereas the characters in early Māori fiction in English often preserve a stronger link to their Indigenous cultures and *whanau*, the following generation of authors, such as Bruce Stewart, Apirana Taylor and Renée, explore themes of urbanisation, alienation, uprooting, violence, feminism and sexuality. Many of those themes are also included in Keri Hulme's novel, *The Bone People* (1983), which put Māori writing on the literary map of the world after it won the Booker Prize in 1985. In the 21st century, thanks to increased publishing opportunities, even more Indigenous New Zealand authors made their literary debuts. Tina Makereti, Paula Morris and Alice Tawhai have already become recognisable names on the scene of New Zealand fiction and they are sure to continue providing their readers with new stories (Holman 2014).

3.6. New Zealand text selection

The population of Indigenous people of New Zealand is smaller than those of Canada and South Africa. And although the literature is consequently smaller as well, it does not mean that there is a lack of fascinating texts for analysis. Similarly to the other two countries in question, I have selected five Māori novels, one collection of short stories and one non-fiction book in order to determine some of the techniques used by the Māori to oralise their writing. The selected texts are:

- *The Dream Sleepers and Other Stories* (1980) and *Potiki* (1986) by Patricia Grace of Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Raukawa and Te Ati Awa iwi (subsequently shortened to *The Dream Sleepers*),

- *the bone people* (1984) by Keri Hulme of Kai Tahu iwi (the author specifies that the title should be spelled in small letters),
- *Once Were Warriors* (1990) by Alan Duff of Ngāti Rangitihi and Tūwharetoa iwi,
- *Rangatira* (2011) and the autobiography *On Coming Home* (2015) by Paula Morris of Ngāti Wai and Ngāti Whatua iwi,
- *The Imaginary Lives of James Poneke* (2018) by Tina Makereti of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Te Ati Awa and Ngāti Rangatahi iwi and Moriori descent (subsequently shortened to *The Imaginary Lives*).

Patricia Grace is a household name and one of the most acclaimed New Zealand authors. She has served as inspiration for many Māori writers of later generations. As a pioneer in New Zealand oralised literature, she had to make many important decisions regarding, e.g., the use of the Māori language in English prose or the extent to which she would follow English editorial conventions. Her solutions to these issues would oftentimes be later imitated or developed by other authors. Keri Hulme and Alan Duff both belong to the second generation of Māori writers and they both charted the path for Māori culture and literature to be recognised and appreciated internationally – Hulme by winning the Booker Prize and Duff thanks to the adaptation of his novel *Once Were Warriors.* Their successes inspired a whole new generation of Māori writers who have been striving to follow in their footsteps. Paula Morris and Tina Makereti represent the new generation of Indigenous New Zealand authors. Morris spent several years in the UK and in the US and as an internationalist writes in several different genres and styles. Makereti, on the other hand, seems to be more interested in Māori mythology and the tradition of combining supernatural elements with stories of everyday life. Although there are still many important New Zealand authors who are not included in this study, I believe that this selection will provide valuable insight into the nature and implementation of oralised literature features in Indigenous New Zealand prose.

The histories of Indigenous peoples in Canada, South Africa and New Zealand after the arrival of European settlers follow a clear pattern. In all three cases, the early contact resulted in trade and minor conflicts. The demands of European markets restructured and streamlined Indigenous economies while deadly weapons and even deadlier diseases ravaged through their population. When the settlers started taking more and more, they encountered major resistance but subdued the Indigenous peoples with

military power and technology. After that came centuries of struggle and survivance, which have already resulted in considerable victories but there is still much to be done. Indigenous cultures have proven to be strong and persistent as they have survived despite many deliberate attempts to destroy them. The technology of writing, introduced by missionaries to change Indigenous customs was oftentimes used to bolster and preserve them. Indigenous literatures have sprouted from oral traditions and those same oral traditions are still present and visible in written texts in the form of oralisation.

Chapter 4: Stylistic and typographic oralisation features in 21 Indigenous texts

Oral styles of storytelling in many ways go against the established conventions of written literature. The copious, rhythmic language, frequent repetitions and parallelisms, reliance on pauses for emphasis and punctuation, code switching, idiolects and audience participation are just some of many aspects of oral tradition that prove to be challenging to adapt in writing. This Chapter looks at the selected 21 Indigenous texts to see what strategies authors from Canada, South Africa and New Zealand implement in order to imbue their works with oral storytelling styles.

4.1. Rhythm and repetition

One of the most important characteristics of spoken language that is easily lost in writing is its rhythm. A storyteller is able to fully control the pace of a story, whereas a writer is usually dependent on the whims of a reader. Most literary texts preserve the structure of the narratives through the use of conventions, such as punctuation or division into paragraphs. These conventions, however, are usually not enough to reflect the complex, often musical rhythm of oral traditions. Indigenous authors are able to solve that issue by utilising a variety of oralisation techniques, the most common and versatile of which is repetition. Strikingly non-standard, repetition is usually one of the first features pointed out by critics, who notice oralisation in literature (Fee 1997, Kaltemback 1997 etc.). Repetition is also used in conjunction with other oralisation features, such as onomatopoeias and the use of Indigenous languages. As such, it is a convenient starting point in the study of oralisation. Although for the sake of clarity and organisation, the oralisation features are discussed here one by one, it is important to keep in mind that all features of oralisation are woven together into a complex web that reflects the oral qualities of Indigenous storytelling traditions. For that reason, the interplay between various features and examples featuring multiple oralisation techniques will also be demonstrated in the analysis.

4.1.1. Simple repetitions

The term simple repetitions herein includes repetitions of single words or short phrases usually occurring within the span of a single paragraph. These are the most basic and versatile types of repetitions. They may be used in several ways and their functions include creating rhythm, adding emphasis and forming parallelisms. In the selected novels and short stories this technique is usually limited to a particular scene:

1) The movement took on a rhythm… pick, pick, shovel, shovel, slap, slap, whoosh, whoosh… each separate sound made to the same beat. (Maracle 1993: 119)

2) Fling the hubcap. Toss the rebar. Carry the disc.
   Fling the hubcap. Toss the rebar. Carry the disc.
   Sonny is certain that the people at the Co-op would enjoy this game, especially the part with the rebar.
   Fling the hubcap. Toss the rebar. Carry the disc.
   Fling the hubcap. Toss the rebar. Carry the disc. (King 2014: 381*)*

3) You should be able to hear a rhythmic lub, dub, lub, dub. The sound you are hearing is not the heart muscle itself, but the four valves in your heart closing. (Robinson 2000: loc. 2599)

4) Schht, schht, schht—we struck the lighter's stone for what seemed like minutes, trying to will the flame to burst through. Schht, schht, schht. (Whitehead 2018: loc. 1491)

5) Zulwini was stupid and stupid people irritated him. He immediately felt bad for his thoughts. He was bad, bad, bad, bad. (Matlwa 2010: loc. 1842)

6) Zenzele boasted a population of about a hundred families.
   That's a lot of people, a lot of tongues.
   All a-wagging, wagging wagging.
   All a-wagging, wagging wagging. (Magona 2015: loc. 58)

Most authors in the selected texts opt to use more complex types of repetitions but even the simple ones can evoke the aural qualities of language. Maracle captures the focused monotony and ultimately hopelessness of attempting to fight a fire by throwing shovelfuls of dirt onto the blaze (1). King also describes a repetitive physical task, though in a more

optimistic tone (2). Robinson connects with the reader by invoking the sound of heartbeat that everybody is familiar with (3). Whitehead uses the lighter sound to create anticipation (4). Matlwa opts to repeat the word *bad* for emphasis, instead of using an adverb of degree, which would usually be considered a more standard literary technique (5). Finally, Magona uses repetitions to perfectly reflect the gossipy character of a rural South African community (6). These types of simple repetitions are sprinkled throughout the selected Indigenous texts, although they are often part of more complex features, such as recurring phrases, onomatopoeias and copious language.

4.1.2. Recurring phrases and images

A recurring phrase or image is a complex type of repetition, in which authors choose a particular phrase, image, character or scene and reuse it at different points during the narrative. This technique is particularly potent in novels, since a phrase may be used multiple times due to the length of the text. These repetitions can sometimes function as refrains, dictating the rhythm of the narrative and dividing the text into parts in place of (or in addition to) chapters. Depending on the phrase or image used, they may also haunt a character, serve as foreshadowing or be used as a thematic through-line to neatly bind different aspects of a narrative together.

In Lee Maracle's *Ravensong* (1993), this technique is used in several different ways. Readers may notice two distinct phrases that are repeated by the narrator or characters at different points in the novel:

7) Too much Raven, Stacey recalled her mom saying. Now I've gotten myself in a tight spot. I'll have to tell her what I was thinking. (Maracle 1993: 111)
   "Too much Raven," she said out loud laughing at the curved figure of Steve as he disappeared behind the arc of the bridge. (Maracle 1993: 187)
8) It was nothing so simple as a lack of education – her parents were both well versed in a whole different realm of learning. "No use thinking about it," the returning image of Nora told her. (Maracle 1993: 25)

> Maybe her apathy about Gertie's fate has something to do with it all. She killed this notion quickly – "No use thinking about" echoed violently in her mind. (Maracle 1993: 149)

"Too much Raven" is first and foremost a direct reference to the title of the novel as well as the Coast Salish trickster character. Raven herself appears as a character in *Ravensong* and her significance is explored later in this dissertation. *Ravensong* tells a story of two communities: the Canadian town of Maillardville and the Indigenous village located right outside it, on the opposite side of a river. At first, the communities seem to be each other's opposites: one is Indigenous, the other one is white, one is rural, the other one is urban, one is primarily oral, the other one is literate. The main character in the novel is Stacey, a young, talented Indigenous girl who attends a white school on the other side of town. Stacey serves as an intermediary between the two communities, a small point of linkage, which is often represented symbolically by her standing on the bridge that connects the two river banks. The main character is intelligent and very analytical. Throughout the novel, she tries to reconcile the two worlds and understand why the people do not get along. Her thought process is often reflected by these two recurring phrases and her interpretation of them. At first, Stacey herself does not understand the meaning of the phrase "too much Raven", which she hears from her mother when she acts rebelliously or misbehaves. The phrase can also be understood literally, as throughout the novel Raven tries to influence Stacey's decisions. The main character's view of the two communities changes in the course of the story. Initially, she is angry at her family for adhering to the traditional ways of living. She is initially fascinated with the white community's comfortable, modern lifestyle. After her white friend's suicide, Stacey gradually begins to change her mind and is able to see that the non-Indigenous people do not have a sense of community, which she took for granted. This transformation culminates with her rejecting Steve, her prospective white boyfriend (6). The rejection of Steve could be seen as a turn away from Western lifestyle and towards Indigenous values, symbolised in this case by the word *Raven*.

In the epilogue, the readers learn that the Indigenous community outside Maillardville has been ultimately fractured. Many people died in the flu epidemic. Many others left the community as a result of the consistent erosion of Indigenous culture, which could be seen as one of the long-term effects of colonisation. Stacey explains to her son that her

dream of starting a school for Indigenous children was never fulfilled because the government did not allow it. When asked why they paid any attention to what the white people said, she answers "not enough Raven" (198). This powerful parallelism is enhanced by the multiple repetitions of the phrase throughout the novel. In this case, Raven could be interpreted as both adherence to Indigenous values and acting against laws and regulations. The frequency with which the phrase appears in the narrative suggests that it holds the key to its ultimate meaning. At the same time, its significance is left ambiguous with even the characters often not fully understanding it. As stated by Maracle (1990: 11-12), "[m]ost of our stories don't have orthodox 'conclusions'; that is left to the listeners, who we trust will draw useful lessons from the story—not necessarily the lessons we wish them to draw, but all conclusions are considered valid." Judging from this quote, the ambiguity of Ravensong (and perhaps other Indigenous narratives as well) may be another feature of oralisation, one that emphasises audience participation in the storytelling process. As stated by Archibald (2008: 17), "[s]ometimes Indigenous perspectives are presented without explicit comment – in accordance with the oral tradition of letting the listener, now reader, make meaning from someone's words and stories without direction from the storyteller." The readers of oralised literature often have to decide on their own interpretations of events, which makes the narrative everchanging and unique for everyone who experiences it.

Recurring phrases and images are often used to invoke haunting visions that show a character's connection with the spiritual and foreshadow their future. In *The Yearning* (2016), this feature takes the form of a song:

9) A melody creeps out of the corners of my mind (…) '*Bana be sekolo, bana sekolo …*' This is not a thought. It is not a memory. Nor is it something created by my imagination. It is the sound of children singing in my head (…) '*Tlong sekolong, tlong sekolong …*' (Mashigo 2016: loc. 414-421)

This fragment is significant for several reasons. It combines a few oralisation features, namely the use of the Sesotho language, the use of a song and a recurring phrase. The importance of the first two is explored further in this dissertation. The song or its fragments are repeated at about 8 different instances in the novel. They come in the form of visions accompanied by a dark figure in the mind of the main character, Marubini. At

first, the visions are simply a distracting buzz at the back of her head, but they soon become more vivid and cause her to faint and have seizures. The song represents a buried, traumatic memory of Marubini's childhood, when she was kidnapped and raped. Her father, who is a traditional healer, performs a ceremony in order for Marubini to forget the event. The song dictates the rhythm of the novel and Marubini's reactions to the visions show its growing intensity. It represents the titular yearning for the truth. The plot reaches its climax when the main character remembers her childhood trauma through another traditional ceremony. This is also when the song appears for the last time, sang by children in front of the school where Marubini is kidnapped. After the main thread is resolved, the song is no longer repeated.

There are many other repeated images and phrases in the other texts, which may serve more or less significant roles for the understanding of themes and plot, but which always contribute to the oralisation of the texts. In *Monkey Beach* (2000), the main character Lisa is visited by a small, red-haired man, a tree spirit, who warns her anytime their loved ones are in danger. The phrase "ice in lung" echoes throughout *Split Tooth* (2018), emphasising the narrator and her people's connection to the Arctic landscape. The short story "Totem" by Thomas King talks about a wooden totem in an art gallery, which makes sounds and grows back anytime it is removed. In *Chasing the Tails of my Father's Cattle* (2015), the onomatopoeic phrases "all a-wagging, wagging wagging" and "cluck, cluck, cluck!" are used on over 30 different occasions to represent villagers gossiping about the events of the novel. There is also the echoing plea of dying Miseka, "please, look after my baby!", which is repeated 13 times at different points in the novel, each time written in italics to distinguish it from the rest of the text. *The Heart of Redness* (2000) uses many recurring ideas and images, such as the visions of the headless ancestor Xikixa or the hereditary scars of history. Zakes Mda's novel also features an interwoven historical narrative accompanying the main story. The characters in the present narrative are descendants of those in the historical one and often share the same names and behave similarly. All of these examples are forms of complex repetitions. The ones that connect the present with the past or the future additionally build upon the circular perception of time, which is shared by many Indigenous cultures. This feature is further explored in the section devoted to features of oralised plot.

Patricia Grace's *Potiki* (1986) uses repetition in a different way to invoke another characteristic of oral tradition. The novel tells the story of the Tamihana whanau with

several members of the family narrating different chapters. Sometimes the same events are presented twice from the perspectives of different narrators. There is an underlying theme in the novel of lives as stories. One of the main characters, Toko, explains at one point that "stories are always new, or else there is always something new in stories" (Grace 1986 loc. 1766). By retelling the stories within one novel, Grace is able to capture that malleable, everchanging character of oral tradition. Depending on the storyteller (narrator) the focus can shift from one detail to the next and new information can be provided to the listener (reader). Thanks to the usage of multiple narrators, the author is able to partially circumvent the rigidness and stasis of writing.

4.1.3. Copious language

Another form of repetition that is usually frowned upon in non-Indigenous writing tradition is the repetition of information. It is generally accepted that redundancy makes texts less appealing stylistically, tiresome to read and of course more expensive to print. "Redundancy can sneak into our essays when we write the way we talk," notes Antonova (2019: 114) in *The Essential Guide to Writing History Essays.* "But redundancy in writing is less powerful and harder to follow," she adds. Upon searching the phrase "redundancy in writing" in most popular online search engines, one discovers that all of the results on the first few pages offer to teach writers how to combat redundancy. This undesirable copiousness, however, is an inherent quality of oral language. In speaking, one often repeats oneself, especially since natural utterances are usually not as carefully crafted as written texts. What is more, oral tradition sometimes features repetition of key information to ensure that the listeners have all understood the story. After all, it is fairly easy to stop paying attention for a moment or mishear a word and, unlike in writing, the listeners cannot go back to a previously read part on their own. It is also important to remember that spoken language is made of sounds, not paragraphs, sentences or even words. Well-established written conventions, such as punctuation and sentence structure are sometimes completely disregarded in speech. All of those features of spoken language can be introduced into writing, although not all Indigenous authors decide to follow that path, perhaps due to the fact that these oralisation features may quickly render a text very confusing for an unprepared reader.

One of the authors who uses this type of repetition and language to the greatest extent is Thomas King. His collection of 10 short stories, *One Good Story, That One* (1993), includes multiple oralisation features but four short stories in particular are written in copious language. These are "One Good Story, That One" (10), "Magpies"(11), "The One About Coyote Going West"(12) and "A Coyote Columbus Story" (13).

10) You know, they come to my place. (…) Those ones, they come with Napiao, my friend. (…) Napiao comes with those three. Whiteman, those. (…) Three men come to my summer place, also my friend Napiao. (…) They come and Napiao, too. (King 1993: 3-4)

11) Granny looks at that leg and thinks about dying. So she talks about falling over dead. When that Granny starts talking about being dead, Wilma says no, no, no. (…)

   Granny talks to everyone she see about dying. I'm going to die, she says to me and I say yes, that's right. (…) Granny likes to talk of dying. I'm going to be dead real soon, she says. (King 1993: 21-22)

12) Coyote is going west thinking of things to make. That one is trying to think of everything to make at once. So she don't see that hole. So she falls in that hole. Then those thoughts bump around. (…) In that hole.

Ho, that Coyote cries. I have fallen into a hole (…)

So there is that hole. And there is that Coyote in that hole. (King 1993: 72)

13) But, you know, whenever Old Coyote and the Indians played ball, Old Coyote always won. She always won because she made up the rules. That sneaky one made up the rules and she always won because she could do that. (King 1993: 124)

There are several functions that this type of repetition serves in King's prose, such as making the stories easier to follow and imitating the rhythm of spoken language. All four of those short stories are embedded narratives with the storyteller/narrator speaking directly to the listener/reader. The storyteller often digresses and gets interrupted in the storytelling process. Whenever that happens, a repetition of information may be used to get back on the track of the narrative. Example (10) shows several attempts by this storyteller to begin telling their story. In addition to the repetition of previously mentioned information, these opening lines often provide additional details. In "One Good Story,

That One", the reader first learns that someone visits the storyteller. In subsequent sentences, it is revealed that the strangers are accompanied by storyteller's friend, Napiao, that there are three of them and that the action takes place at storyteller's summer place. In example (11), the storyteller says that Granny likes to talk about dying and the reader is immediately provided with multiple examples of Granny doing just that, which confirms and validates the storyteller's narration, while adding to the humour of the story. Example (13) is slightly different, as it shows the use of repetition for emphasis. Every subsequent sentence in this fragment begins with a repetition of the information provided at the end of the previous one. This repetition causes the sentences to blend together seamlessly across the borders established by punctuation. While the technique may seem to create redundancies, it in fact contributes to the unique rhythm of the tale. Another oralisation feature in the story is that Coyote is often accompanied by the adjective *sneaky*, which evokes the aggregative character of orality as explained by Ong. King does not use those techniques to such extent in *The Back of the Turtle* (2014), although the novel features other types of repetition and parallelism, especially in the chapters written from Sonny's perspective. Out of all the texts analysed in this dissertation, the four short stories by King contain the greatest concentration of oralisation features. There may be a few reasons for that. Firstly, an average short story is closer in length to a typical oral story, which could make it a more suitable genre for oralisation. Secondly, heavy oralisation requires a lot of creativity on the author's part and it may be seen as risky from a publishing standpoint, since the text will likely be rather unapproachable for mass readers. In the four stories, King is very deliberate with the use of punctuation, grammar and text formatting. This likely requires more effort than writing a short story with the use of typical print conventions. Writing an entire novel in this style would therefore be a significant commitment that may not resonate with a wider audience. Finally, it is important to note that this particular collection of short stories was inspired by the aforementioned collection of traditional stories told by the Okanagan Elder Harry Robinson and transcribed Wendy Wickwire. The features of oralisation in *One Good Story, That One* are at least partially the result of King's wish to recreate Robinson's storytelling style.

The narrative copiousness can be found in other Indigenous texts as well. Sindiwe Magona uses a similar type of language in her novel, *Chasing the Tails of my Father's Cattle*:

14) I have stopped following the changes of the moon. I have stopped; I no longer follow the moon's constant changes. I no longer keep time with the moon. I have stopped, wildly did her heart sing. Wildly, daily, it sang. (Magona 2015: loc. 120-127)

15) Lips slowly spread sideways, ever so slowly, as though the flesh were made of tiny, tiny indiscernible lines that slowly, ever so slowly faded and, as they did, also stretched infinitely, disappearing right before his eyes. (…)

Slowly, gradually, the now sad eyes filmed over. (…) Then softly, gently, the beloved head turned just a little to the side (…)

Slowly.

Slowly.

Slowly.

(…) Now, still slowly, softly, her head turned… turned… turned and neck loosened, slowly loosened. (Magona 2015: loc. 430-437)

The two examples above demonstrate how repetition can be used to create two completely different narrative moods. In example (14) the reader can feel the excitement and happiness of Miseka who learns that she is pregnant. The emotion is captured in short, abrupt sentences and the repetition of words, such as *no longer*, *wildly* and *sing*. Example (15) shows the death of that same character after childbirth. In this case, the mood is sombre but calm. The repetition of the words *slowly* and *softly* combined with longer, stretched sentences capture atmosphere and the life gradually leaving Miseka's body. In both cases, Magona uses the repetitions to make the scenes feel respectively faster and slower, dictating the intended speed of the narrative. This type of language is used very often throughout the entire novel.

Matlwa takes advantage of similar strategies to set the scene for her novel *Spilt Milk* (2010):

16) After all the excitement, after the jubilation, after the celebrations, after they had finished with the laughing, the sweet tears of joy, after they had sobbed in pure gladness, after they had yelped in ecstasy, after they had snivelled at the beauty of it all, after they had lit candles in reverence of the time, after they had knelt down on their knees and kissed the ground, after they had exclaimed to all and sundry

the victory they had won, after they had howled at the mastery of their success, after they had thrown their fists into the air, after they had roared with triumph and screeched at the supremacy, after they had torn down old street signs (…) There would be no more speaking, no more arguing, no more planning, no more deliberating, no more theorising, no more hypothesising, no more complaining, no more moaning, no more shouting, no more screaming, no more words, no more. There had been enough talk. It was now time to work. (Matlwa 2010: loc. 35-53)

The author employs the repetitions to acknowledge the horrors of the apartheid and the joy that came with dismantling the system. At the same time, however, she clearly emphasises that her story will focus on what comes *after*: the need to educate a new generation of free South Africans that will rebuild the country. The copiousness is not arbitrary. The repetition of the words *after* and *no more* establishes the main themes of the entire novel. This oratory technique is also recognised by Kaltemback (1997: 50) in her analysis of *Ravensong*, where she refers to it as "inflated enumeration".

Copious language is also utilised by New Zealand Indigenous authors. In chapter 8 of *Potiki,* Toko recounts a fishing story that took place when he was five years old. The narrator repeatedly comments on particular details of the story, explaining whether he actually remembers them or has heard about them later from other people:

17) This story has been told to me (…) But it is also a remembered story. (…) That's what I remember very clearly about that night. (…) I do not remember that, but I've been told. (…) They were all enjoying themselves I remember – and I've been told (…) I do not remember the cold but I know it is true (…) Tangimoana has told me, but I have no memory of that. (…) (Grace 1986 loc. 571-596)

A lot can be said about the usage of stories within stories in *Potiki* and other texts as it provides excellent opportunities to describe the actual process of storytelling. This feature of oralisation is further discussed in chapter 5 of the dissertation. The repetition in example (17) is especially interesting because it highlights the importance of crediting the original source of the story, which is present in many Indigenous cultures. However, the copious language becomes even more evident when Toko recounts a story told by his Granny:

18) Galloping, galloping on our horses on the low-tide sand. Well there is a kehua there that day, on that little rock, and that kehua give my brother's horse a very big fright. Yes, the horse see a very big kehua there on the little rock sticking up in the low water just in front of here. Well. The horse get very wild you see, very wild. The horse get a very big fright. My brother fly out in the air you see, because of the big kehua make his horse very wild. And down, down, and splash in the small water. And bang. His head break on that rock there with a big kehua on it. My poor brother, ka pakaru te upoko. (Grace 1986 loc. 701-708)

This fragment, albeit short, is strongly reminiscent in terms of language of King's short stories. It combines many features of oralised literature: copious language, the use of an Indigenous language, filler words, short sentences, onomatopoeias, purposeful grammatical errors, direct reference to the listener and a story within a story. All of those features may well be broken down and discussed separately but it is fragments like this one that demonstrate how they combine and amplify one another in heavily oralised texts.

4.1.4. Replication of pauses

As established before, when changing the medium from speech to writing, many aspects of a narrative are lost. Nevertheless, authors also gain new tools. Information can now be expressed in a visual way through covers, fonts, typefaces, casing and division into chapters, paragraphs and even sentences. Typographic spaces, punctuation marks and line breaks are written equivalents of pauses and intonation in speech. It is generally believed that they were invented in order to indicate how a text should be read out loud (Mieszkowski 2019: 8). In contemporary standard English, there are many rules governing the usage of these features, since they also serve organisational and grammatical purposes. However, some Indigenous authors use spaces, line breaks and punctuation in unconventional ways that may actually be closer to their original functions.

19) Alright.

> You know, I hear this story up north. Maybe Yellowknife, that one, some-
> where. (…)
> So.
> You know, they come to my place. Summer place, pretty good place, that one.
(King 1993: 3)

20) Okay. Here comes that story again.

Granny falls and hurts her leg. So, that leg is pink. Then it looks blue. Another time it is black. Yellow for a long time. That leg. Granny's leg. (King 1993: 21)

Thomas King oralises his short stories with the use of filler words, such as *alright*, *so* and *okay*, oftentimes followed by a full stop and a line break. These features could also be ascribed to the broader postmodernist literary space. They result in fragmentation and seeming randomness of the texts, which are characteristic aspects of postmodernist prose. Another Indigenous text that features lots of line breaks and experimental text formatting is *the bone people* (1983) by Keri Hulme:

21) He smiles hugely at him to show

    that

       every

          thing

            is

              all (Hulme 1983: 219)

22) Nothing happens.

The sea rolls in, the sea rolls out.

A gull keens over the island.

Kerewin sits unmoving, watching him.

The green fly gives up its search and buzzes away.

Nothing happens.

The wind blows a little: he feels it shift his hair.

His feet are numb with cold.

I've hurt my thumb. (Hulme 1983: 236)

Hulme's novel is very experimental and although it does successfully replicate some of the characteristics of oral tradition, it is difficult to say with certainty whether these aspects of the text are indeed intended as experiments at oralisation, especially since line breaks and typographic spaces are also used to transition between narrators as well as between dialogues and internal monologues. The multiple narrators and fragmentation make *the bone people* closely aligned with general trends of postmodernism. At the same time, the novel is steeped in Māori culture, language and mythology which work in conjunction with the ever-present typographic spaces and do bring the novel closer to oral tradition.

King seems to use full stops to indicate short pauses and line breaks to show longer pauses as if the story was told, not written. To a reader not accustomed to this style, the abundance of full stops may make the text seem disjointed or choppy. Unless they purposefully seek out experimental literature, readers are generally used to certain well-established conventions of writing. In the context of language teaching and acquisition, Zhang (2013: 835) argues that "written language tends to use longer and more complex sentences". The utterances in spoken language are, on the other hand, shorter and simpler syntactically. Although this tendency does not necessarily have to apply to oral tradition, which is a specific form of spoken language, it could provide the means of measuring the extent to which the sentence structure in any given Indigenous text is oralised. The recommended average sentence length in English varies depending on the source. For readability reasons, *Oxford Guide to Plain English* recommends an average of 15-20 words (Cutts 2013: 2). Many works of fiction fall within or close to this range: *The Sun Also Rises* has the average of 20.4 words per sentence, while *The Great Gatsby* – 14 (Juola and Ramsay 2017: 268). For short stories, E. A. Poe's "Purloined Letter" averages 20 words per sentence, Margaret Atwood's metafictional "Happy Endings" – 15.5 and Mark Haddon's "The Pier Falls" – 15.8. The next step would be to compare these scores with the average numbers of words per sentence in transcribed Indigenous stories. In order to do that, I have counted the number of words as well as the number of sentences in four transcribed Indigenous stories.

Table 1: Average number of words per sentence in transcribed Indigenous stories.

Story title	Storyteller	Indigenous peoples	Number of sentences	Number of words	Average words per sentence
"The Flood"	Harry Robinson	Okanagan	131	989	7.5

"Coyote Disobeys Fox"	Harry Robinson	Okanagan	242	1989	8.2
"The Grave Robber"	Sikhwelesine Ngcobo	Zulu	158	1586	10
"A Boy Goes After A Nyanyabulembu"	Sarah Dlamini	Swati	97	1269	13

The division of an as-told-to story into sentences depends on a transcriber's interpretation of storyteller's pauses, which is why the numbers in the table above may not be conclusive. However, since all stories examined average below 15 words per sentence, the method remains a promising gauge for this oralisation feature. The table below presents the average words per sentence in four short stories by Thomas King:

Table 2: Average number of words per sentence in selected short stories by Thomas King.

Short story title	Number of sentences	Number of words	Average words per sentence
"One Good Story, That One"	323	1749	5.4
"A Coyote Columbus Story"	194	1662	8.5
"Totem"	122	1309	10.7
"Borders"	324	3778	11.6

"One Good Story, That One" and "A Coyote Columbus Story" have been previously identified as containing more oralisation features than the other short stories in King's collection. Even though this is corroborated by the numbers above, it is important to note that the average number of words per sentence in the more conventional stories like "Totem" and "Borders" is still consistently lower than in non-oralised prose. "One Good Story, That One" is a definite outlier with only 5.4 words per sentence. King's Coyote stories are the most striking and overt examples of oralisation but counting the average number of words per sentence can provide insight into the style of other Indigenous works as well.

Table 3: Average number of words per sentence in selected short stories by Makhosazana Xaba and Patricia Grace.

Short story title	Author	Number of sentences	Number of words	Average words per sentence
"The Pictures"	Patricia Grace	359	2 620	7.2
"Between Earth and Sky"	Patricia Grace	145	1 134	7.8
"Running"	Makhosazana Xaba	534	5 076	9.5
"People of the Valley"	Makhosazana Xaba	461	5 432	11.7

Once again, the selected short stories have low average numbers of words per sentence. Patricia Grace's short stories have similar average sentence length to King's, but it is worth noting that she achieves that in a much different way. King's sentences are

consistently short throughout "One Good Story, That One". Only two sentences (0.6% of all) in the entire text are longer than 20 words. In contrast, Grace's sentence length varies a lot with 21 sentences (5.8%) in "The Pictures" counting 20 words or more, three of which are actually over 30 words long. The low average in Grace's short stories comes from her heavy usage of dialogues and general avoidance of dialogue tags. Makhosazana Xaba seems to consistently oscillate around 10 words average per sentence, which is still below the average for a typical non-Indigenous work of fiction. The sentence length and structure in those Indigenous short stories is therefore demonstrably oral.

The length of a novel usually allows authors to use more varied language with some parts focusing more on dialogue and others featuring longer descriptions. The table below shows the average number of words per sentence in several of the selected Indigenous novels.

Table 4: Average number of words per sentence in selected Indigenous novels.

Novel title	Author	Number of sentences	Number of words	Average words per sentence
The Back of the Turtle	Thomas King	11 604	107 636	9.2
the bone people	Keri Hulme	17 073	170 991	10
Monkey Beach	Eden Robinson	9 697	99 151	10.2
Split Tooth	Tanya Tagaq	2 888	31 659	10.9
The Heart of Redness	Zakes Mda	8 715	99 965	11.5
Spilt Milk	Kopano Matlwa	3 359	44 310	13.1
Potiki	Patricia Grace	4 022	57 895	14.4
Jonny Appleseed	Joshua Whitehead	3 557	57 966	16.3
Rangatira	Paula Morris	4 295	75 031	17.4

The first thing to note looking at the table above is that not every Indigenous author uses short sentences in all of their works. A lot depends on the writer's individual style and their approach to a specific project. Novels such as *Rangatira*, *Jonny Appleseed* and *Potiki* are much closer to the typical average word count but they still include other oralisation features. On the other hand, *Split Tooth, Monkey Beach, the bone people* and *The Back of the Turtle* are all great examples of how the short sentence length may be used in long prose.

4.2. Use of Indigenous languages

The use of Indigenous languages in English-language texts is one of the most common features of oralisation, although this usage varies greatly in implementation and intensity. As mentioned in chapter 2, the status of Indigenous languages differs greatly from one country to another. Under the Maori Language Act of 1987, te reo Māori was recognised as one of New Zealand's official languages. Soon after, the language was used in the New Zealand Parliament for the first time. The strong position of the language can be exemplified by the fact that in many official speeches made by politicians, the country is referred to by its original name – Aotearoa – with some political parties campaigning to officially change the name in the future. In recent decades, there have been also increased efforts to revitalise and promote the language. As such, te reo Māori seems to be on its way to achieve a status similar to English in the country.

The same cannot be said about Indigenous Canadian languages. None of the over 60 Indigenous languages spoken in Canada have been recognised as official. If there are any parallels to be drawn between the politics of language between the two countries, it is that the status of te reo Māori in New Zealand somewhat resembles the status of Quebec French in Canada, even though French is an imperial language. Despite being much more linguistically diverse, Indigenous language speakers in Canada make up less than 1% of the country's population (Statistics Canada 2017). This translates into lower political capital to advocate for the recognition of their languages. The exceptions here are Nunavut and Northwest Territories, which have their own independent governments and have expanded their list of official languages to include Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun (both territories) as well as Chipewyan, Cree, Gwich'in, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey and Tłı̨chǫ (only Northwest Territories). Indigenous peoples of Canada are less homogenous, both culturally and linguistically, which is why using a particular language in a text may be used to anchor it in a specific culture. In terms of the number of Indigenous languages and dialects spoken, South Africa is more similar to Canada, but its language policy is closer to that of New Zealand. There are eleven official languages in South Africa, nine of which are Indigenous. Although English is still a lingua franca in urban areas, all nine Indigenous languages have significant numbers of speakers (with isiZulu and isiXhosa even surpassing English and Afrikaans) and are used in many areas of life, including Parliament proceedings. The dominance of English in this context is in fact the

direct result of the Indigenous linguistic diversity that necessitates a common means of communication. The phenomenon of code switching, where a speaker abruptly changes language mid-conversation or even mid-sentence, is also commonplace. In addition to the nine official languages, there are many smaller Indigenous languages in the country. The Pan South African Language Board is an organisation established to protect and promote South African linguistic diversity.

In an interview with Haley Cullingham, Lee Maracle (in Cullingham 2016) explains the importance of speaking one's native language: "[a]nd I think that's why the Six Nations have a constitution that guarantees you your original language. And it's a thousand years old. So for a thousand years we've known this. That the body speaks to itself. And it speaks the original language. It won't give it up." The loss of language by Indigenous peoples has been one of many negative consequences of Canada's and New Zealand's colonial past. "My body speaks Halkomelem. I know because I still dream in it", says Maracle. But even though many Indigenous peoples fight to ensure that their languages receive the status and attention they deserve, English remains an oppressive, dominant force in the background. Despite South Africa's multilingualism, learning English is still crucial if one wishes to find decent employment. Thanks to recent efforts and initiatives to support Indigenous languages and cultures in all three countries, more and more children have access to their ancestral tongues. However, there are several generations who grew up without that possibility. There is a profound sense of loss expressed by some authors from those generations through literature. Characters mourn their inability to understand the language of their ancestors or focus their efforts on re-establishing the broken link with the past. In some cases, adopting the coloniser's language is seen as the only choice to move forward:

23) My mother never speaks to me in Inuktitut anymore. Residential schools have beaten the Inuktitut out of this town in the name of progress, in the name of decency. Everyone wanted to move forward. Move forward with God, with money, with white skin and without the shaman's way. It made me wonder what I was not being taught. It made me wonder why the teachings I was receiving felt like sandpaper against my skin. It made me sad to have Inuktitut slip away. It lives under my subconscious just like the secrets of the teacher do. (Tagaq 2018: loc. 458)

24) It also seemed to me that English and Afrikaans are God's languages. Mastering those two languages in our country had since become the only way to avoid the poverty of twilight zones like Soweto. (Mhlongo 2004: loc. 1851)

25) We were busy telling and retelling the stories and histories of a people and a place, and learning or relearning a language that was our own, so that we could truly call it our own again. (Grace 1986 loc. 1410)

26) And an elder rising to make yet another speech in a language a mother did not understand. (And yet he is part of me, my heritage; probably related to me. Yet he speaks his tongue and I understand only another. Yet they are gathered here …? to help a mother farewell her tragically gone daughter?) (Duff 1990:120)

In many ways, Indigenous languages could be seen as colonised by English. The lingua franca may naturally feel overwhelming as it rarely leaves enough space for minority languages to flourish. That is why the questions of Indigenous languages, their loss and reclamation remain vital for many Indigenous texts, even those written primarily in English. Tanya Tagaq devotes a page of *Split Tooth* to a table presenting the Inuktitut syllabary and follows it up with a poem written in the script. Many other authors employ similar strategies to introduce their Indigenous tongues into their works.

4.2.1. Single words

The most straightforward way in which the selected authors use Indigenous languages is by sprinkling the text with Indigenous vocabulary. This feature varies from text to text in frequency and implementation, especially since not using translations, glossaries and italics has at times been interpreted by critics as a political statement.

In the selected Indigenous Canadian texts, the feature is quite common. In *Ravensong*, Lee Maracle marks the occasional usage of Halkomelem words with italics:

27) It's how we are, *siem.* It is the proud of our women, *siem.* We are providers, mothers, tireless workers, *siem.* Wolf makes do with what is at hand, *siem.* There are no beggars among the wolf clan, siem. (Maracle 1993: 18-19)

28) Sadie was the *ta'ah* of all of them. A grandmother who loved each child. (Maracle 1993: 94)

29) Everyone seemed to be bent on cutting, gutting and staking fish to dry; *shtwhen*, they called it. (Maracle 1993: 126)

There is no glossary in *Ravensong,* but the Halkomelem words are rare and in most cases they are easily understood from context. The final usage of the word *siem* in example (27) is the only one not italicised, likely due to a printing error. *Siem* is also the only word in these examples which could potentially cause some confusion for a non-Indigenous reader, although its repetition, placement at the end of the sentence and within dialogue directed at a gathering of people implies an honorific term, which it in fact is.

Many of the other selected texts employ similar strategies when using Indigenous words with a few notable differences. Firstly, there are significantly more Indigenous words used in *Monkey Beach, Jonny Appleseed* (2018) and *Split Tooth* than in *Ravensong:*

30) *Ka-tee-doux Gitk'a'ata*, the Tsimshians of Hartley Bay, live at the mouth of the Douglas Channel and surrounding areas just north of the island. (Robinson 2000: loc. 51)

31) We scanned the ground for the serrated, broad leaves of thimbleberry and salmon-berry shoots, *q°alh'm*. (Robinson 2000: loc. 981-989)

32) On *wa-mux-a*, the day winter shook out his cape, the snow fell in big flakes, but later the sun came out and melted them all away; that was winter going home. (Robinson 2000: loc. 1197)

33) Oolichan is the Chinook word for the fish, but in Haisla they're called *jak'un*. (Robinson 2000: loc. 1245)

34) He made what we called *shnet* from raisins, yeast bran, old bannock and sugar. (Campbell 1973: 24)

35) I liked to stay up late after everyone went to bed and watch Queer as Folk on my kokum's TV. (Whitehead 2018: loc. 71)

36) Heck, boy, your feet tell the story of opaskwuwipizun."

"The opa-what?"

"Your feet are the story of when ducks begin to molt—the full moon in July." (Whitehead 2018: loc. 1437)

37) His finger continued to prod me, it felt like a leech suckling on the rump where nikâwiy cut me free. (Whitehead 2018: loc. 328)

38) You's napêwisk-wewisehot, m'boy, Two-Spirit. (Whitehead 2018: loc. 594)

39) *Môniyâw*, I thought, so disillusioning. (Whitehead 2018: loc. 686)

40) Naja is in the back of my amoutik and Savik is cozy in a down bag suit. (Tagaq 2018: loc. 1557)

41) A magnetic strip is bolted to the kitchen wall to hold the uluit. (Tagaq 2018: loc. 1420)

42) People come over and bring food. Auntie brings fresh muqtak and uujuq. (Tagaq 2018: loc. 1349)

43) I am halfway out when my atigi cover tears. (Tagaq 2018: loc. 914)

There is a noticeable pattern as to which Indigenous words are most often included in these Indigenous texts. These are usually nouns of cultural significance, especially species or parts of animals and plants (31, 33), names of peoples or societal units (30, 39), culinary or clothing terms (29, 40, 41, 42, 43), times of day/year (32, 36) and words for family members as well as greetings and terms of address (27, 28, 35, 37, 38). These noun categories often do not have readily available English equivalents and even if they do, the English word does not express the meaning fully. Neither of the three novels use glossaries to explain Indigenous vocabulary. Robinson, similarly to Maracle, makes her text more accessible to non-Indigenous audiences by marking the Haisla words with italics and explaining their meaning in text. Whitehead and Tagaq do not use italics (example 39 is italicised only because it is an internal monologue). Guessing the meaning of Cree and Inuit words in their novels is significantly more challenging, albeit not impossible. Notably, *Jonny Appleseed* and *Split Tooth* were both published more recently, which may point to the reason why this oralisation feature is used differently in those novels. Firstly, as hinted at by Patricia Grace (in Dudding 2016), Indigenous authors used to face significant pressure from publishers and literary awards administrators to make their texts as accessible as possible to the majority, English-speaking audience. Secondly, in the era of the Internet and online dictionaries, foreign words, even in rare Indigenous languages, are no longer inaccessible to readers. Even if a reader lives in the countryside without access to a library, they can still easily look up the meaning of the Cree word *nikâwiy* and see

that Whitehead refers to the main character's mother. This was not necessarily the case at the time when *Ravensong* and *Monkey Beach* were published.

The use of Indigenous languages in *Jonny Appleseed* and *Split Tooth* is similar to the way they are employed in Māori texts, such as *Rangatira*, *Once Were Warriors* and *Dream Sleepers and Other Stories* (1980):

44) They began with what looked like a tutu ngarahu, but without weapons this was meaningless, and each haka ended with the high leap of the peruperu, no matter what kind of haka had proceeded it. (Morris 2011: loc. 1569-1578)

45) Instead he was taken by the patupaiarehe – sprites, they call them in English – and held there forever. (Morris 2011: loc. 1377)

46) Perhaps I went to sleep then, or maybe I followed Granny to the kitchen and watched her heating the fish in a pot of milk, and mixing the dough for the paraoa parai and floating the dough pieces in a pan of fat. (Grace 1986 loc. 682)

47) Oh, kia ora! Jake being greeted in Maori, the language of his physical appearance, his actual ethnic existence, and yet they could be speaking Chink-language for what it mattered. (Duff 1990:64)

48) And bits of the meeting house, the wharenui, its carved gables visible through the skeleton trees. (Duff 1990:101)

49) As late as the 1960s, we had to catch a fishing boat from the harbour wharf to reach the family urupā, near the old pā site. (Morris 2015: loc. 73)

50) Some of his whanaungas lived here but he couldn't see any of them today. (Duff 1990: 54)

51) Great tools the Maori man had for his carving these days, tools for his new wha-kairo, but there you are, a man had to eat. (Duff 1990: 55)

52) Often she made whariki — the mats we used to line our homes and sleep upon. Or kete — those were quick and easy to make, and sturdy, for gathering our food or carrying things from one place to the next. (Makereti 2018: loc. 101)

53) "Tihe mauriora to you too, urchin." (Hulme 1983: 163)

Duff uses only a few te reo Māori words in *Once Were Warriors* since the main characters in the novel do not know the language. Neither of the seven texts uses italics to differen-tiate te reo Māori from English, although Grace does include a glossary at the end of

Dream Sleepers. It is important to note, however, that using te reo Māori words in New Zealand literary texts is overall slightly less marked than using a First Nation language in Canadian texts. Many te reo Māori words have already been integrated into New Zealand English as borrowings. Patricia Grace explains that "we just grew up using certain Māori words in English sentences so that's what I've used in my writing. It's because I wanted to be true to the characters and the way they spoke, not from any sense of wanting to alienate readers, which I've been accused of" (Grace in Dudding: 2016).

In the selected South African texts, the feature is also very prominent. Its employment varies from author to author with a general tendency to provide explanations and translations in text or to make meaning discernible from context:

54) (…) says NoPetticoat as she adjusts her *qhiya* turban and puts a shawl over her shoulders. (*Heart of Redness* 6)

55) "I came to ask for *ityala* . . . for credit. . . I need a tin of beef. (…) "You see," he says, "your ityala is already very long. (*Heart of Redness* 9)

56) Both Twin and Twin-Twin were among the *amakhankatha*—the men who taught the initiates how to be men. Xikixa was the *ingcibi*—the doctor who cut the foreskin. (Mda 2000: 14)

57) Was I going back to that life of wolf-whistling the ladies who passed by in the street, calling them izifebe (prostitutes) if they did not respond the way we liked? (Mhlongo 2004: loc. 24)

58) Its Shangaan title was *Nghoma ya makhalibode*, *The song of cardboard boxes*, and it went like this: (Mhlongo 2004: loc. 348-354)

59) I was so used to spending week days at home with my Ntatemoholo, my mother's father. (Mashigo 2016: loc. 155)

60) Baba had been teaching her how to drive before he went off to be healed by *amadlozi*. (…) *'Amadlozi* are the people who have passed on and look after us. (Mashigo 2016: loc. 325-332)

61) She hated the fact that her house smelt of nothing. Not of *sebete*, gravy and pap cooking on the stove, not of Domestos on clean tiles, not of children jumping on a bed, not even of the sun. (Matlwa 2010: loc. 970)

62) That is why a woman in Miseka's condition was said to be 'carrying' or 'in difficulty' – uthwele or uxakekile. (Magona 2015: loc. 181)

63) Manala knew inkwakhwa when she saw one. But still, a snake is a snake. (Magona 2015: loc. 886)

64) Her mama would be surprised, as she always was. "Awakhula ntombazana!" she would say, clapping her hands and simultaneously planting a kiss on her forehead. (Xaba 2013: loc. 669)

South African texts use Indigenous words much more frequently and they are not limited to nouns or any specific word category. The authors, especially those younger ones of mixed ancestry, often use words from several different Indigenous languages. Mashigo, for instance, uses in *The Yearning* vocabulary from both isiZulu and Sesotho, most likely since those are the languages spoken in her family. The explanation of a word's meaning, however, is often provided only a few paragraphs after it is used (60). Mashigo and Matlwa also consistently use italics to mark non-English words (60, 61) but Mashigo does not do that with words for family members (59). Zakes Mda uses a unique strategy in *The Heart of Redness,* as he marks only the first usage of a word (55). Whenever those words appear in the text again (and they often do), there is no italics and no translation. Magona, Mhlongo and Xaba treat Indigenous languages as a natural part of their characters' idiolects and do not differentiate them from English (57, 58, 62, 63, 64).

4.2.2. Phrases and sentences

In some cases, Indigenous authors decide to go beyond singular words and introduce entire phrases, sentences and even paragraphs in their Indigenous languages. Extensive use of this feature may be seen as alienating for the majority reader, however, authors explain that they simply wish to stay faithful to their characters and the way they speak. The fact that long fragments of text in Indigenous languages are most often used in dialogues seems to corroborate this argument.

Out of the Canadian novels mentioned thus far, *Jonny Appleseed* uses this feature to the greatest extent, culminating in chapter XVII:

65) The song of the round dance grows louder in my ears, unfiltered by the tongue that scrapes and cleans me—wabanonong manidoo owaabamaan anishinaabek. (…) I

feel something hard press against the small of my back—zhaawanong manidoo owaabamaan anishinaabek. (…) Then his claws press into the tips of my fingers, piercing them, blood and foam leaking out from my fingertips—ningaabii'anong manidoo owaabamaan anishinaabek. (…) A woodpecker sits high in a tree and riddles the trunk with a beat that dubs the round dance—kiiwedinong manidoo owaabamaan anishinaabek. (…) A woodpecker sits high in a tree and riddles the trunk with a beat that dubs the round dance—kiiwedinong manidoo owaabamaan anishinaabek. (…) Kâkike, he huffs, kisâkihitin kâkike. (Whitehead 2018: loc. 882)

Chapter XVII is very short but interspersed in between the fragments cited above, there are several more singular words in Cree. The words of the rhythmic song that accompanies the round dance are written in Ojibwe. The combination of these two languages reflects Whitehead Oji-nêhiyaw (Oji-Cree) ancestry. Using entire phrases and sentences in two different Indigenous languages within one text admittedly provides a significant challenge for a non-Indigenous reader to overcome if they wish to fully understand the meaning of the text. However, the use of language is justified by the fact that it is employed in one of the most intimate scenes for the main character. In the chapter, Jonny tells the reader about a recurring dream, in which he walks around naked in the mountains praying to god. A Cree round dance song is playing in his head when he encounters a bear spirit and the two have a sexual intercourse and Jonny reaffirms his identity as Two-Spirit. It is a profound, private character moment which requires the usage of the languages with which Jonny is most intimately connected. Both the language and the scene itself may be therefore seen as alienating for a reader unfamiliar with Cree and Ojibway cultures. At the same time, the scene highlights the deep spiritual roots of the two-spirit identity, which differentiates it from transgender identities seen by some Indigenous people as "more white". A similar strategy is also employed in *Split Tooth*, where the narrator has a sexual encounter with a humanoid fox.

In the selected New Zealand texts, longer te reo Māori phrases are sometimes used in *Rangatira* and *Once Were Warriors* but the feature is definitely taken to another level in the dialogues of South African texts, such as *Dog Eat Dog*, *Chasing the Tails of my Father's Cattle*, *The Yearning* and *Spilt Milk*:

66) `Hey wena msunukanyoko ng'the ugibele kuleya taxi ebomvu mangabe uya ePro-tea hay' kulena maan. Hey you, your mother's cunt! I said board the red taxi if you are going to Protea and not this one,' shouted one of the queue marshals. (…) `Manj' ung' thukelani, pho? But why insult me like that?' asked the shocked com-muter. (…) Angith' awuzwa la emandhleben' wakho. Because you are deaf' (…) `Ingan' ngiya kuzwa manje. But I am hearing you now.' (Mhlongo 2004: loc. 703-707)

67) 'He, wethu, ubuthezelwa ngubani kangaka khona?' was Manala's first observa-tion. 'Girl, who fetched firewood for you? Such a heap too?' (Magona 2015: loc. 222)

68) 'Anjalo kaloku won'amaqaba! Aqhub' eyakwahedeni!' answered her deputy, the woman who took her place and led the Manyano meetings in her absence. 'Such are the ways of the red ones. Their ways are the ways of the heathen, the ways of darkness.' (Magona 2015: loc. 714-720)

69) *Get in the car. Have you lost your mind, Thixo mntwanandini!*" (Xaba 2013: loc. 1073)

70)   Khululeka Masande, khululeka here on Vukavuka Community Radio sikhuluma zonke izilimi. Lithini-ke elakho Masande?

Thuli, ngivumelana nalo othi konakele esigodini sakwethu. Kwazi bani ukuthi wawuqala nini lomkhuba uMatron Langa? Kwazi bani ukuthi zingaki izibeletho zabafazi bawo wonke amathafa lawa eziphelele efrijini yakwakhe? Elami nje lithi akekho umuntu ongenza into enje engaguli, UMatron Langa uyagula, ugula ngek-handa? Sithi sinomhlengikazi nje kanti nguye qobo ogulayo. Ngiyaphela lapho Thuli.

   Wow, thanks Masande. Now that's an interesting perspective. No one has said this so far. Masande says only a mentally sick person can do what Matron Langa allegedly did. (Xaba 2013: loc. 1274-1283)

71) A moment of silence and then a sigh, 'One day when I'm dead *ke bona batho ba tla ho hlokomelang.* Shoo, I raised *ngwana o* selfish, *watseba.* I wonder if *ntate wa hao* could hear you, what would he say?' (Mashigo 2016: loc. 285)

72) (…) who never forgot to remind everyone of her true royal breeding by repeating at the slightest provocation: *Undijonge kakuhle, ndiyintombi kaMei mna.* Don't mess with me, I am Mei's daughter. (*Sometimes there is a Void*)

73) "*Bobhuti yintoni? Kwenzeke ntoni?*" Mohumagadi eventually had to ask. (Matlwa 2010: loc. 1498*)*

74) He aha te mea nui i te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata. He believed in it. (Grace 1986 loc. 766)

75) One night, I looked through my book for something to say over her, a prayer for someone of troubled mind. E Ihowa, ko koe te Matua o nga mahi tohu, te Atua hoki o nga whakamarietanga katoa … (Morris 2011: loc. 485)

76) Beth listening quite intently now … *Hei tuupoho ake te wahine a tangi aurere nei: Making glad the hearts of women who bitterly lament …* (Duff 1990: 123)

77) "Aue, aue… okay, tamaiti, okay…" he strokes Simon's hair away from his eyes, and kisses him. "Taku aroha ki a koe, e tama." (Hulme 1983: 171)

Both Magona and Mhlongo write out extended dialogues in Indigenous languages. Magona's novel is set in a rural Xhosa village, so she uses mostly isiXhosa. Mhlongo's story takes place in the city and in townships where many languages can be heard. His novel features dialogues in isiZulu, Sesotho and Tsotsitaal among others. These dialogues are most often followed immediately by English translations. Both authors go to great lengths to represent Indigenous languages in their texts without limiting non-Indigenous readers' understanding of the dialogues. This harkens back to Grace's comment about authenticity of dialogues. South Africa is a very multilingual country with 11 official languages, 9 of which are Indigenous. Unlike in Canada and New Zealand, English is the mother tongue of only under 10% of the population. Although it is used as a lingua franca and understood by most citizens, it is certainly not the most commonly used language. It is this inferior position of English in the South African society that allows for other languages to challenge its literary dominance as well. The dialogues in *Dog Eat Dog* and *Chasing the Tails* are translated but the translation is secondary to the words that are actually spoken by the characters. Thanks to the fact that all South African languages use variations of the Latin script and roughly follow English spelling conventions, it is possible for non-Indigenous people to hear the sound of those languages, either in their mind or if they decide to read them out loud. *The Yearning* (71) uses this feature in a different way, though. Although only on few occasions, Mashigo's dialogues mimic her characters' code switching. This, once again, makes the dialogues more authentic. With 11 official languages in the country, most South Africans learn several of them growing up, which is why code switching

is something common and natural. Mashigo opts not to provide translations for these conversations and there are sometimes not enough context clues to infer the meaning of the italicised words. If the feature was more widespread, it would be very challenging for a non-Indigenous reader to understand what is happening in the story. However, the code switching is always marked by italics, limited to only a few instances and usually involves only filler words, which offsets the lack of translation. In the case of *Running and Other Stories*, the number of Indigenous vocabulary depends on the story. Most often these are singular words or simple phrases (69) with the notable exception of the story "People of the Valley". This story is written as a raw transcript of a radio talk show. People are able to call in to present their opinions about local news. Aside from many other features of oralised literature present in this story, there are also extensive statements in isiZulu, sometimes mixed with English. The host of the show then briefly summarises those passages in isiZulu, presumably for listeners (or readers) who do not speak the language (70). Kopano Matlwa employs similar strategies in *Spilt Milk* (73), although Indigenous vocabulary is not quite as common in this text as in the other ones.

Keri Hulme's *the bone people* also feature a lot of mixed te reo Māori-English dialogues. The novel includes a comprehensive glossary in its final few pages. Originally published in the 80s, *the bone people* is the oldest of the selected New Zealand texts, which supports the idea that more recently authors have been less worried about potentially alienating their non-Indigenous readers. That being said, the title of the novel itself is an interesting example of translating a te reo Māori phrase into English. Knudsen (2004: 12), explains that it is "a pun on the Māori proverb '*e gna iwi o gna iwi,*' in which syntax suggests the double meaning of 'the bone of the people' and 'the people of the bone.' With its ambiguity, the title hints at the unity between past and present." The phrase is translated and commented upon in the glossary but its true significance for the novel is easily missed without some cultural insight.

4.2.3. Purposeful misspellings

While purposeful misspellings are not explicitly related to the usage of Indigenous languages, they are included in this category because they involve manipulation of English spelling. The function of this feature may be to present English words from an oral

perspective. Characters who misspell (or mispronounce) these words are not fluent speak-ers of English or, as in the case of *Ravensong*, they speak with a strong accent:

78) Ts Inklish ah-right. (Maracle 1993: 47)

79) Da rest jiss went bad. (Maracle 1993: 170)

80) The old snake wouldn't take me dere. (Maracle 1993: 171)

Since the story of *Ravensong* is told entirely in English, it is sometimes difficult to say with certainty (unless explicitly stated) whether characters speak English or if their In-digenous language is automatically translated by the narrator. Whether or not the charac-ters actually speak English in these dialogues, the purposeful misspelling is an interesting oralisation technique. The misspelled words may be difficult to identify at first but since the pronunciation is largely preserved, their meaning becomes apparent if they are read out loud. Even if just for a moment, Maracle is inviting the reader to rediscover the aural qualities of language and experience the text from Stacey's mother's perspective. There are several other authors who also use purposeful misspellings in a similar manner:

81) 'I hafn't got it Miss.' (Grace 2002: 9)

82) Must tell you about DECIDING DAY innaminit. (Grace 2002: 28)

83) (…) and even though she thinks I've got no brayne of my own. Little does she know that I often wish now that I'd fayled. (Grace 2002: 29)

84) No wonder I'm not good at maths (not like Lenny who's got a mthmtcl brayne. What say we save up for a srfbrd and Lenny can be the treasurer). (Grace 2002: 33)

85) Well there is a kehua there that day, on that little rock, and that kehua give my brother's horse a very big fright. (Grace 1986 loc. 701)

86) The driver of the ambulance spoke to Mme for a long time as the neybars helped carry Papa into the house. (Xaba 2013 loc. 175)

87) *Mos dan that's what the new South Africa is all about, neh, of which it's working for our khawntry.* (Xaba 2013 loc. 1380)

88) Parents too drunk or half the time missing, boozing up somewhere, at the pub, in another blimmin town some ofem, where they'd ended up in their drunken state

and with a whole tribe of kids left at home with not a brass razoo to feed emselves on. (Duff 1990: 14)

89) "Stuhupid beast" (Hulme 1983: 162)

90) "Hi was jist lookin' 'round to see hif hi could spot a hindian. Don't trust dem hindians!" (Campbell 1973: 24)

91) Call the man Ah-damn. (King 1993: 6)

Examples (82-84) come from Patricia Grace's short story "Letters from Whetu", which consists of four letters written by the boy Whetu to his friends while he was bored during his classes at school. On the one hand, the narrative is doubly embedded within written tradition, first being a short story and second a letter. On the other hand, since the narrator is a child who has not yet learned to employ all Western writing conventions, it gives Grace a good reason to ignore them and oralise the text further. She does something similar in *Potiki,* where she writes an elder Māori character's dialogue with grammatical mistakes, since English is not the elder's first language (85). The same strategy is employed by Makhosazana Xaba in her story "Prayers" (86), which also takes the form of a letter, this time written by a young girl. Children learn how to speak much earlier than they learn how to write. What follows, their first attempts at writing texts should imitate speech much closer. Although this feature is not specifically related to oral tradition, it references oral origins of language. Finally, in "One Good Story, That One", the identity of Ah-damn (91) as the Biblical first man is much more readily apparent if the reader speaks his name out loud.

A variation of this technique is also used by Joshua Whitehead in *Jonny Appleseed*, where he decides to transcribe one of his characters' dialogue lines in an unusual manner:

92) "So-where-you-kids-headed-eh?" she said. She always spoke like she was in a hurry, rarely taking breaths between words. It always confused anyone who wasn't from the rez. (…) "Oh-that's-the-ol'-gay-bar-eh?" (…) "I-heard-they-play-the-best-music," (…) "Maybe-yeah-I'll-have-to-see-okay-gotta-few-deliveries-to-make-yet."(Whitehead 2018: loc. 1615)

This particular character named Peggy appears only in a few chapters of the novel, but all of her dialogues use hyphens instead of spaces to indicate her unique way of speaking. Although the words themselves are not misspelled, Peggy uses a lot of filler words, contractions and shortenings and her dialogues ignore most rules of English punctuation. The narrator indicates in the example above that Peggy's idiolect may be confusing for people from outside the reserve, but it is certainly also confusing for unsuspecting readers.

It is also important to mention, that historically, speaking English with an accent has been another source of discrimination against Indigenous peoples. This is clearly exemplified in *Halfbreed,* where Maria Campbell recounts her experiences at school:

93) "Look at her! She is so stupid she can't even say 'this' instead of 'dis'." (Campbell 1973: 88)

Trapped between different cultures and languages but not being fully accepted by any of them, the Métis people, perhaps even more than other Indigenous Canadian peoples, felt the linguistic struggles and tensions in Canada.

4.2.4. Indigenous languages of Thomas King

The use of Indigenous languages is the most common and widespread feature of oralisation. Out of all the texts analysed in this dissertation, the only ones that do not include this feature are *The Back of the Turtle* and, perhaps, *One Good Story, That One*, both written by Thomas King. Those familiar with the latter book may object to this statement. After all, the title short story of the collection contains plenty of Indigenous vocabulary:

94) Dog come by, says A-ma-po.
Raven come by, says Ne-co-tah.
Coyote come by, says Klee-qua.
Snail come by, says E-too.
(…)
Coyote come by maybe four, maybe eight times. (…)
Says Piisto-pa.

Says Ho-ta-go.

Says Woho-i-kee.

Says Caw-ho-ha.

Ha, ha, ha, ha.

Tricky one, that coyote. (King 1993: 8-9)

Davidson, Walton and Andrews (2003: 56) identify the language as Cherokee. It would make a lot of sense, after all King is part Cherokee. Bailey (1999: 51) refers to the language as Blackfoot. That is also plausible, since King commonly uses Blackfoot characters in his fiction. In the story, the Elder storyteller tricks anthropologists who want to listen to a traditional tale. He/She tells them a version of the Biblical Genesis re-interpreted through Indigenous lens. The subject matter of the story makes Atwood (1990: 250; emphasis in the original) more cautious: "Perhaps we have been taken for even more of a ride than we realize. How do we know what all those Indian words *really* mean? We don't, and that is very much one of the points." In truth, the animal names used by King do not seem to correspond to animal names in either Cherokee or Blackfoot. This puts a non-Indigenous critic, such as myself in an awkward, though certainly amusing position. Indigenous languages in Canada and the US are very diverse, so it is impossible for an outsider to determine with absolute certainty whether or not the words in "One Good Story, That One" have been invented by the King himself. But perhaps Atwood is right in that understanding everything is not really the point here. Even if the words do not come from any real language, they can still function as an Indigenous language for the storyteller. Indigenous methodologies emphasise the importance of humility and the recognition of limitations on scholars' part. In this case, we critics may have been thoroughly tricked by Coyote just like the anthropologists in the story.

King's avoidance of Indigenous vocabulary in other stories of the collection and in *The Back of the Turtle* may seem surprising. However, it seems to be a very deliberate choice. Using an Indigenous language in a narrative may serve as a link to a more specific Indigenous group and oral tradition. King's characters are usually clearly identified as Indigenous (the narrators refer to them as Indian) but their specific ancestry is often left ambiguous. In *The Back of the Turtle*, the reader learns very early on that the story takes place close to an Indigenous reserve in Lethbridge, Alberta. However, the fact that the main characters are of Blackfoot ancestry is mentioned only once in the entire novel, as

a passing comment. In the short stories, tribe or band affiliation is usually left unknown with the notable exception of "Borders", which deals specifically with the division of the ancestral Blackfoot land by the American-Canadian border.

The lack of Indigenous languages may simply stem from King's unfamiliarity with the Blackfoot language. This could be supported by the fact that he does use some (albeit not much) Cherokee vocabulary in one of his earlier novels, *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993), which is partially set in the US. Nevertheless, the general ambiguity of the characters' ancestry seems to suggest something more. King's position as an Indigenous author connected with both Canada and the US gives him access to different Indigenous storytelling traditions from across the continent. Many of his works seem more universal as he highlights common elements in North American oral traditions. This universality would not been possible if he prioritised one Indigenous language over others. King's use of English is clearly filtered through his knowledge of Cherokee, at least in part. The storyteller in "The One about Coyote Going West" is referred to as both *he* and *she*. Similarly to some First Nation languages (e.g., Cree), Cherokee does not distinguish between *he*, *she* and *it* (Joyner 2017: 8).

4.2.5. Linguistic tensions

The scarcity of Indigenous words and the accessibility of their meaning does not mean that there is no tension between English and Indigenous languages in the texts. Stacey is one of the only characters in the *Ravensong* who is fluent in both Halkomelem and English and the struggle between the two is sometimes represented in her thoughts:

95) She let her mind drift around the habits of white town, their strange customs. It made better sense in English than in her own language. The lack of connectedness between white folks was difficult to express in her language. (Maracle 1993: 17)

96) The very word "child" in the language of the villages conjures images of infinite grandchildren climbing mountains, heroically traversing thousands of years of the emotional entanglements life presents. The word rain images woman-earth, the tears of birth and endless care-giving. In English, rain is just water collected on dustballs too heavy to remain floating in the atmosphere. Stacey guessed that was

why every speaker was certain everything sounded better in their own language. (Maracle 1993: 21)

Through Stacey, Maracle highlights the existence of a cultural barrier between the two communities that is reflected in the language they use. In example (96), she does not teach the readers any Indigenous words but arguably achieves an even more profound effect by describing the connotations behind the words for *child* and *rain* in her language, connotations which would otherwise be entirely inaccessible for non-Indigenous readers.

By learning English, the main character made the first step towards understanding the other community. Stacey's dream is to start a school for Indigenous people and share her knowledge with others. Adults perceive her as a symbol of hope for a better future. Towards the end of the novel, Stacey's mom asks her to teach her how to read. Stacey does so using her history textbook:

97) You know, I always wanted to know some of their stories. I don't understand them people at all—how they live, what they do. Their stories must tell you something about them, eh? (Maracle 1993: 146)

98) Stacey grabbed a history book from her bag of treasures and flipped the pages until she came to the story of the Ming dynasty. (…) Stacey found it amazing that these two women responded so much alike to the words. The story of the dynasty, the wars, brought tears to their eyes despite the tempered and dull language it was framed in. (Maracle 1993: 176-177)

Within a few days, Stacey teaches her mom and her friend how to read. Acquiring literacy is shown as necessary to better understand the other side. This could be seen as analogous to the process of writing an oralised text. The blending of oral and written may serve as a connecting tissue between the two narrative modes. The importance of storytelling as a theme in oralised prose, which is also exemplified in these fragments, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Another interesting detail in from the scene above is the ease with which the two adult women learn how to read:

99) On the third day she asked Stacey how come it took so long for her to learn to read. She told her mom that white kids don't remember things very well, so they had to have them repeat things year to year, day to day. The point was not so much reading but remembering what you had read. (Maracle 1993: 177)

100)　　　Instead she asked Stacey how come she didn't read out loud all the time. Stacey tried to persuade her mom that she could read silently. This was a difficult concept for her mom to grasp. (…) In desperation, Stacey resorted to their language, but that didn't work. (Maracle 1993: 177)

Fragment (99) seems to point towards what Ong and other scholars claimed about primary oral people having supreme memory to literate people, who are over-reliant on writing. Fragment (100) in turn demonstrates the power struggle between the two modes of communication thought a primary oral person's unwillingness to deprave language of its inherent aural characteristics.

　　Not providing translations for Indigenous words requires non-Indigenous readers to take initiative and do a bit of research in order to access the full meaning of the text. In this scenario, the feature clearly places the reader in an outsider position, where they do not have access to the full meaning of the story unless they are willing to put some effort into educating themselves. In the case of *Monkey Beach,* this educational aspect is more accessible and clearly defined:

101)　　　Haisla has many sounds that don't exist in English, so it is not possible to spell the words using English conventions. The language of the people in Kitamaat Village is commonly called Haisla. The actual word for the Haisla language is Xa'islak'ala, to talk in the manner of Xa'isla. To say Xa'isla, touch your throat. Say the German "ach" or Scottish "loch." When you say the first part, the "Xa," say it from far back in your throat. The apostrophe between the syllables signals both an emphasis and a pause. Say "uh-uh," the way you'd say it if you were telling a child not to touch a stove. Put that same pause between the first and last syllables of Xa'isla. Haisla is difficult for English speakers to learn partly because most English sounds are formed using the front of the mouth, while Haisla uses mainly the back. (Robinson 2000: loc. 2613)

This passage shows that Robinson wrote *Monkey Beach* with non-Haisla speakers in mind. It invites the reader to better understand the foreign culture in which the story is set. In the educational context, Whitehead provides the reader with an incentive to learn more by locking parts of his novel behind a language barrier, whereas Robinson takes the initiative to inform the reader about linguistic differences between English and Haisla to help them access the meaning of her text more fully. Some authors, especially South African ones, use Indigenous vocabulary so often that the reader naturally learns their meaning throughout the course the novel. Mda's technique of not italicising words that have been used previously additionally informs the reader that a piece of vocabulary has appeared (and likely been translated) before, which may encourage them to return to a previous part of the text.

The struggle between Indigenous languages and the language of the colonisers is also an important theme in *Dog Eat Dog:*

102)   *How does Zulu sound to God?* I asked myself. *Is it aggressive or romantic? 1 can hear every preacher saying that there is only one God we must direct our prayers to. But does he have good interpreters like the woman in the train interpreted the preacher's Sesotho? Does The Man understand tsotsitaal, or are we just wasting our time praying to Him in that language?*
I was convinced that God was white, and either English or Afrikaans, simply because it had taken Him so many years to get an interpreter to translate exactly what the blacks and the poor wanted in their endless prayers. (Mhlongo 2004: loc. 1851)

Just like prayers in isiZulu may not be able to reach god, a novel in this language may be ignored by the world. The ironic fragment can therefore be understood as a broader commentary on the exalted status and power of English compared to Indigenous languages.

The educational interludes in *Monkey Beach* are reminiscent of life writing rather than fiction. Non-fiction genres allow Indigenous authors to directly address issues such as tension between languages without the need of weaving them into a fictional plot:

103)   Grandma always spoke in English when she was mad at us, whereas on all other occasions she spoke in her native isiXhosa. We came to regard English as a language of anger. (Mda 2011: 2)

Use of Indigenous languages seems to be one of the most widespread oralisation features. The Indigenous authors from Canada, South Africa and New Zealand may write most of their literary works in English, but their ancestral languages, the languages of oral traditions, are still present within their works in many different ways.

4.3. Other features of oralised literary styles

An inventory of oralisation features can never be complete. Oralised literature is an expression of an author's creativity in implementing qualities and elements of their oral traditions in writing. Some of the features are common and can be noticed in texts by different authors from distant parts of the world. Others, however, are unique to specific cultures, authors or even texts. This section is devoted to the oralisation features that were less common in the analysed prose but which are still important threads in the fabric of oralisation.

4.3.1. Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia as a literary device is interesting because it mimics the principles of oralisation on a smaller scale – it is a written word that is supposed to evoke a sound, rather than a meaning. Onomatopoeias are not arbitrary but iconic, which makes them unique compared to most other words used in the English language. In oral tradition, the usage of sound effects depends largely on the storyteller, but it definitely enhances the performative aspect of storytelling. Frequent use of various types of onomatopoeia in oralised literature is yet another feature that emphasises the aural origins of storytelling.

104)　　　Listening. Heart pounding. The piano going tinkletinkle tatatata. Hey-hey, watch me, watch me, this is Sugar Ray's Bolo punch … ooooooo! caboom! HAHAHAHA! In stitches. In an uproar. At the act bein so, uh, so true. Hey, what about this: ba-boom-boom-daka-duk-duk-kapow! (Duff 1990:142)

105)　　　Wham-wham, hammer-hammer.

Sonny slides his hammer out of the belt and taps the plastic dispenser door.

Tap, tap, tap. (King 2014: 354)

106) When such questions cropped up, the villagers of Zenzele, tongues a-wagging, the two or three who confined themselves to only listening, would shake their heads, roll their eyes, and cluck at the back of their mouths, far back where tongue meets throat, at the tender upper roof where such sounds are made. Sounds that speak louder than any word can ever do. Sounds not even the magic of the written word brought by the skinless ones could capture. Far back at the roofs of their mouths, where the palate is soft as dough, the villagers of Zenzele could go cluck cluck cluck. And did go:

Cluck cluck cluck! (Magona 2015: loc. 73)

Of all of the discussed texts, Duff's *Once Were Warriors* (104) is the most inventive when it comes to the number and intricacy of onomatopoeias. Combined with frequent phonetic spelling of words and seamless, stream-of-consciousness transitions between narration and dialogue, the novel truly reads like an unpredictable recording of sound rather than a conventional text. The fragment from *Chasing the Tails* (106) is also revealing in its description of sounds that cannot possibly be conveyed in writing. Onomatopoeia may be a simple, minor oralisation feature but it is usually used in tandem with songs or repetitions and enhances their effect.

4.3.2. Demonstrative adjectives

The use of demonstrative adjectives, or what Kaltemback (1997: 50) calls "accusing noun phrases", is another interesting oralisation feature employed by some authors. Placed before nouns (sometimes names), demonstrative adjectives are another expression of copiousness in oral storytelling. Additionally, frequent use of *this* and *that* can partially close the distance between the narrator and the reader. The narrator seems to be pointing to very specific objects and characters, making the story more tangible. It is a simple way to convey some aspects of the communal, participatory nature of oral traditions.

107)   Those ones pretty young, go to sleep pretty quick. (…) That one has a camera. (…) These are good men, my friend says, those come a long ways from past Ta-pe-loo-za. (…) How about a story, that one says. (…) These ones don't know Jimmy. (…) Those ones like old stories (…) Those ones have tape recorders, he says.

 (King 1993: 4-5)

108)   We do not complain if this son of Ximiya cries for beautiful things (…) I am saying that this son of Ximiya must grieve. This descendant of the headless one must lament. (Mda 2000: 72)

King and Mda are the two authors who use this technique to a greater extent. Since over-using demonstrative adjectives is rather non-standard in literary English, other writers opt for alternative ways to transform their readers into listeners. The origins of this feature may once again be found in Indigenous languages. Joyner explains that Cherokee uses three types of demonstrative adjectives:

> *The word "ᎢᎣᎯᏴᎾ" is used to refer someone or something that is usually out of reach. "That him. That her. That them."*
> *The word "ᎭᎠ" is used to refer someone or something that is usually within reach. "This him. This her. This them."*
> *The word "Ꮎ" works like a combination of the English words "the" and "that/those".*
> (Joyner 2017: 57; italics in the original)

This insight into Cherokee grammar provides a possible motivation for King's practice to substitute English definite articles for demonstrative adjectives. According to Bourquin (1949: 10), isiXhosa, which is Zakes Mda's native language, also uses demonstrative pronouns and adjectives "much more extensively" than English. One of the over 40 different demonstrative pronouns often precedes nouns instead of an article. The Indigenous languages can therefore be present both in grammar and vocabulary of oralised literature. It is certainly possible and likely that there is much more influence from Indigenous languages into English in the selected texts, though identifying them would require more intimate knowledge of the languages.

4.3.3. Breaking the fourth wall

The fourth wall as a performative or narrative convention stands directly against the nature of many oral traditions. Oral performance and storytelling cannot exist in the absence of an audience, since the listeners play a vital, active role in the narrative process. As exemplified in Chapter 1, listeners are oftentimes encouraged to react and comment during the story and join in the chanting of songs and refrains. The storyteller tells the story directly to a group of people and adapts it depending on the composition of their audience. In comparison, the asynchronous, silent process of reading a text seems cold and detached. In order to remedy that, the narrators sometimes resort to breaking the artificial fourth wall by speaking directly to the readers or asking rhetorical questions. It may also be one of the reasons why so many of the analysed texts (15 out of 21) are narrated in 1st person, in some cases even when using several focalisers.

109)   Listen, miracle of the future. You strange possibility, my descendant. I know you are embroiled in your own concerns, but hear me. (…) You are my greatest imagining. So listen.
I have a story for you. (Makereti 2018: loc. 32)

110)   We Maori can become Christians; we can learn to speak English. Look at me, old as I am, speaking it now every day when I visit the Bohemian. (Morris 2011: loc. 2614)
But no, this can't be the way it happened. I have the order of things wrong, I think (…) (Morris 2011: loc. 2808)

111)   Since the rebuke of the elders, Bhonco, son of Ximiya, has changed. He now laments the sufferings of the Middle Generations. He still cries for beautiful things. But he does not believe in not grieving anymore. We cannot say he believes in grieving, for as an Unbeliever he does not believe. (Mda 2000: 91)

112)   My parents named me after my dad, a residential school survivor, alcoholic, and would-be country star. I never heard from him again after he left. We found out later that he died in a fire on another rez. I really don't care. People don't forget those stories, you know? (Whitehead 2018: loc. 100)

113)   Contacting the dead, lesson two. You are in a large mall near closing time. It's Christmas Eve. You turn away for just a moment, look back and your toddler is gone. (Robinson 2000: loc. 2430)

114)   We are the glorious manifestation of the power of the universe. We are the fingertips of the force that drives the stars, so do your job and FEEL. (Tagaq 2018: loc. 128)

115)   I told you about Cousin Bernard who didn't complete the training and was therefore rendered insane by the ancestors. (Mda 2011: 216)

116)   This one is about Granny. Reserve story. (King 1993: 21)

An active narrator makes it feel as if they were going through the story together with the reader. Indigenous authors recognise that they are telling a story to a group of people and make the effort to try to connect with these people through phatic expressions despite the limitations of writing. Dvorak (1998: 3) argues that King (in example 116) establishes connection with the reader by placing "the story into the domain of the already mentioned, the known and familiar." Granny is presented to the reader as a familiar character and the reserve story as a well-known genre.

Recognising features of oralisation is vitally important for understanding certain Indigenous texts and, to some extent, Indigenous literatures themselves. The very presence of oralisation in Canadian writing signifies the failure of the horrendous residential school system that attempted to eradicate Indigenous traditions and forcefully assimilate people into the dominant culture. The way oral and written elements are blended together in South African texts symbolises the defeat of the racist apartheid system that aimed to divide and conquer Indigenous South Africans and keep cultures separate. The themes used in New Zealand literatures delineate paths of resistance, reclamation and reconciliation for the Māori peoples. Most importantly, oralised literature stands witness to the success and perseverance of countless Indigenous cultures, traditions, customs and beliefs, which survive and thrive in this new medium despite many efforts by the colonisers to discard and discredit them.

Chapter 5: Ontological and epistemological oralisation features in 21 Indigenous texts

Whereas Chapter 3 was focused on oralised style and the question of *how* the stories are told, this Chapter will delve into the plot of the narratives to ask *what* the stories are about. Features of oralised literary plots are designed to reflect aspects of Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies and beliefs as well as character archetypes specific for particular oral traditions. As emphasised before, oralisation features are not independent from each other and thus features of oralised literary plots have a lot in common with the features of oralised styles. Sometimes the same features are used in different ways to help demonstrate various aspects of oral traditions. The boundary between features of plot and features of style, as any literary classification, is not set in stone, especially since young Indigenous authors constantly find new, creative ways of representing their oral traditions in writing.

5.1. Circular time

As discussed in Chapter 2, many Indigenous cultures perceive time as cyclical or spiral, rather than linear. This understanding of time is oftentimes reflected in stories through blending the past, present and future events. Reading oralised texts with the circular conception of time in mind can help the reader notice important patterns that form the literary themes. A few examples of this feature have already been mentioned, since the circular time is usually established through repetition. In *The Yearning,* the repetitive song that haunts Marubini symbolises the repressed trauma of the past. At the same time, it is a sign of her awakening to her gift, "the Calling" of the ancestors, which had also been given to Marubini's father before. The main character's past influences her present as she is forced to face and relieve the memories. The ending of the novel suggests that either she or her brother will follow in their father's footsteps to become a *sangoma*, a traditional healer and continue the cycle. Children taking over the roles of their parents is also the main theme in *Chasing the Tails of my Father's Cattle*, where Shumikazi rebuilds her father's fortune even though she has to go against the tradition that forbids women from owning cattle.

Another narrative technique to depict the cyclical nature of time are recurring events. This feature is essentially a complex form of repetition. In *Ravensong,* this is established through waves of epidemics that affect the Indigenous community:

1) 1840 – 100 dead childless children, smallpox. 1885 – 37 dead childless children, diptheria. 1905 – 57 dead childless children, measles (…) 1918 – 93 dead childless children, influenza. (Maracle 1993: 198)

The readers witness Stacy and her community struggling against one pandemic only to learn in the epilogue that it was one of many that came before and after, ultimately leading to the destruction of the Indigenous community. Similarly, *The Back of the Turtle* deals with the return of life to an area poisoned in the aftermath of a human-caused environmental disaster. The cycle of death and rebirth is symbolised by the return of turtles to the nearby beach and the return of Indigenous peoples to the reserve:

2) With any luck the small baitfish would begin to appear. Barnacles, urchins, crabs, and then the larger predators. He'd watch for the birds. The seagulls would be first. They always liked to arrive to a party early.
Perhaps even the turtles would return. (King 2014: 345)

At the same time, the area is threatened by another disaster caused by the same company when an abandoned ship filled with toxic substances drifts towards the shore. The word *back* in the title of the novel can be understood as the shell but also the return of the turtle. The cyclical theme of leaving and returning lies at the very core of the novel. Each of the main characters has something they need to regain or return to: Gabriel returns to his people and the reserve, Sonny returns to society and Mara to painting. The cyclicality of events highlights the journeys of the characters and ties the narrative together.

Although the cyclical nature of time is present and emphasised in many of the discussed novels, nowhere else is it more striking than in *The Heart of Redness.* The novel consists of two narratives: the modern-day story of Zim and Bhonco and the 19th century story of Twin and Twin-Twin, detailing the events of a real historical event – the Xhosa cattle-killing movement, which involved many of the Xhosa people slaughtering their cattle in accordance with the words of the prophetess Nongqawuse. The act was supposed

to grant the people the strength necessary to defeat the colonisers. Unfortunately, as a result, many Xhosa people starved to death. *The Heart of Redness* explores the still raging conflict between the prophecy Believers and the Unbelievers. The characters in the modern-day narrative are the descendants of the characters in the historical one and follow the same ideologies. The story alternates between the two timeliness but there is little indication when these shifts occur. The past and the present blend together more and more the further the narratives progress. Some characters from the present timeline, e.g., Qukezwa, Heitsi or Twin, share the same names as their ancestors, which makes it even more challenging to quickly recognise when a given section of the novel takes place. The characters' behaviour also echoes that of their ancestors. As the heads of their respective families and leaders of the Believers and Unbelievers, Zim and Bhonco continue the centuries-long conflict. Bhonco inherits "the scars of history", which itch every time he gets angry at the Believers. The readers witness the same scars first appear on Twin-Twin's body when he is attacked under the suspicion of sorcery. Zim revives the forgotten traditions of the Believers, including shaving off his eyebrows and cleansing rituals. By alternating between timeliness, Mda is masterfully guiding the reader through the cyclical time, highlighting similarities and making the concept easier to understand even for readers who are not used to such narrative techniques. The author gradually allows the two timelines to blend together more and more until the final scene involving Qukezwa and Heitsi, where (due to characters sharing the same names) it is impossible to say whether the events take place in the present, the past or both. The effect is emphasised through achronological narration, which is also present in several other novels, including *Monkey Beach* and *Rangatira*. The epilogue to *the bone people* is actually put at the very beginning of the novel, although it is impossible to fully understand without reading the rest of the story first. Mda's own memoir, *Sometimes there is a Void*, is also achronological, as the author travels through the country with his daughter and recalls different events of his life. Finally, *The Back of the Turtle* navigates between narration in present tense (when Sonny is the focaliser) and past tense.

The circular perception of time can be a window onto some Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. One interesting example of that is the description of time found in *Potiki:*

3) It was a new discovery to find that these stories were, after all, about our own lives, were not distant, that there was no past or future, that all time is a now-time, centred in the being. It was a new realisation that the centred being in this now-time simply reaches out in any direction towards the outer circles, these outer circles being named 'past' and 'future' only for our convenience. The being reaches out to grasp those adornments that become part of the self. So the 'now' is a giving and a receiving between the inner and the outer reaches, but the enormous difficulty is to achieve refinement in reciprocity, because the wheel, the spiral, is balanced so exquisitely. These are the things I came to realise as we told and retold our own-centre stories. (Grace 1986 loc. 463)

This balance of giving and receiving, past and future, translates to all aspects of life in the novel. Hemi works hard to cultivate the land and the land pays back with nutrition. The community is built on mutual help, those who are helped today will be helpers of tomorrow. All ends are beginnings, which is beautifully symbolised with the carving of Toko's face towards the end of the novel in the empty spot left by the carver in the prologue.

Another novel that provides a different perspective on time is *Split Tooth*:

4) They say time is relative. It is. Humans have misunderstood time. Time is not rushing by. Time does not obey the clock. Time obeys physical laws like matter does, but it can control matter as well. Time is Matter. Time is alive. Time is aware. Time has weight. Time mates with gravity to put you back into the earth. You do not travel through time; time travels through you, drives you. Time is your conductor; time is your demise. Time sleeps beside me as I lie on the surface of the ice to help my heartbeat slow and body temperature drop. (Tagaq 2018: loc. 950)

5) Time has a way of eternally looping us in the same configurations. Like fruit flies, we are unable to register the patterns. Just because we are the crest of the wave does not mean the ocean does not exist. What has been before will be again. We are reverberations of our Ancestors and songs of our present selves. It is very quiet in the future, as it is in the deep past. (Tagaq 2018: loc. 1052)

Interestingly, Tagaq invokes the ideas of theoretical physics to support her claim that the mainstream perception of time is an illusion. In some ways, the relatively recent

discoveries which challenge the inveterate Western ideas about the world (e.g., in the field of quantum physics) are more in line with Indigenous philosophies and spiritualities. The interconnectedness of past and present is shown more directly in the novel when the narrator is able to see another character's past by sleeping next to her.

Sometimes, the circularity of time might be hinted at through visions of the past or premonitions of the future. In *Monkey Beach*, the main character Lisa is visited by a red-haired spirit anytime a tragedy is about to happen in her family. This ability is similar to the gift of foresight displayed by Toko in *Potiki* and Celia in *Ravensong*. At the start of the novel, Celia is even able to witness a scene from the past – one of the first moments of contact between her ancestors and Europeans. In *Rangatira*, when the Māori party sails for England, one of them, Reihana, has an ominous dream:

6) 'I dreamed that my left hand was twitching (…) I was very afraid. You know what this means. Some harm will come to us.' (…) It's true that times are changing, but as all the talk this week about the spirit waka attests, we still take signs, and dreams like Reihana's, very seriously. We know that they carry warnings. (…) The ship was not wrecked on that voyage, of course, because here I am now, more than twenty years later. But Reihana's vision was right. Many things were to part us, including death. (Morris 2011: loc. 465-475)

Although from a non-Indigenous perspective these visions would likely be classified as supernatural, the ability to sense future events is in many cases an important part of Indigenous cultures and is treated with a great deal of respect. Perhaps it is best demonstrated by the fact that it is also referenced in non-fiction:

7) Cheechum had the gift of second sight, although she refused to forecast anything for anyone. (…) Once, when we were all planting potatoes and she and I were cutting out the eyes, she stopped in the middle of a sentence and said, "Go get your father. Tell him your uncle is dead." (…) She often had this kind of foresight and would tell Mom and Dad days before someone died or something happened. (Campbell 1973: 19)

In many of the discussed texts, there are elements which from a non-Indigenous perspective could be classified as 'supernatural'. However, these beliefs are strongly grounded in spirituality and are closer to religion rather than magic or fantasy. As discussed later in the chapter, this is also one of the differences between magic realism and mythic verism.

5.2. Songs and music

As established before, music is an important part of many oral traditions. Storytellers often seamlessly transition from speech to song, incorporating melodic refrains into their narratives. Scheub mentions the importance of dance and music when discussing examples of traditional San stories:

> Whether the storyteller is an active performer or not, the body will play its role in the development of the metaphor. The music of the voice is also significant, sometimes actually evolving into song. Oral languages are frequently tonal; storytellers will exploit those tonal qualities, exploring the implicit poetry. The storyteller makes full use of the rhythmical qualities of the language, developing his own rhythms when necessary. (Scheub 2010: 96)

Dance and song are both incredibly difficult to represent in the written form. It may therefore be surprising to see how integral a role music plays in many oralised texts. The aforementioned *Bana ba sekolo* song, which appears in *The Yearning* is a great example of this feature. It is an integral part of the story that through repetition ties the events together. Understanding the meaning behind the song serves as the main plot point in the novel. After Marubini's kidnapping, her father performs a ritual to make her forget the painful memories. The song is therefore a clear link between realistic and magical elements of the narrative – an example of mythic verism. This blend of the realistic and the mythological (discussed further in the chapter) is another characteristic feature of many oral traditions and by extension oralised literatures. As far as the melody itself is concerned, Marubini describes it as "Sesotho words, sung to the 'Frere Jacques' tune" (Mashigo 2016: loc. 432). Choosing a well-known melody ensures that most of the readers will be able to 'hear' the song while reading.

Music is a very important part of life for all three main characters of *the bone people*. The novel includes several fragments of songs in English and te reo Māori. The example below comes from chapter 6:

8) The little brown man from the floor smiles sadly at him. He seems to be at the edge
of the bunk.

> Can you do anything?
>
> No, he can't. He's not really here,

but the ghost is singing

> *E tama, i whanake*
>
> *I te ata o pipiri*

He is falling asleep and the words are muddled with grief

> *Piki nau ake, e tama*

It sounds thinly in his ears as the roaring night comes nearer still

> *ki tou tini i te rangi* (Hulme 1983: 251-252)

The fragment comes from one of many traditional Māori *waiata oriori* or lullabies. Jenkins and Harte (2011: 12) explain that these songs were composed for children by their grandparents to enforce their connection to their family and the spiritual world. They were sung repeatedly in the first few years of a child's life to the point that the lyrics became familiar to all members of a given community. The specific *oriori* referenced in the novel is *Nohomaiterangi of Ngati Kahungunu* and it speaks of a father who has to reconcile the desire to protect his sons with the need to train them as warriors and prepare them for war. This striking juxtaposition of love and violence is very fitting for the story, as one of the main characters, Joe, struggles with outbursts of anger during which he ends up seriously hurting his adoptive son, Simon. The fragment of the *oriori* is translated into English and described as "an old lullaby" in the novel's glossary. However, the more nuanced context can be understood only to those familiar with the *oriori* genre and the specific song.

    Spilt Milk features a school song with lyrics in three Indigenous languages as well as English:

9) *We are the school of excellence*
Despite the time of turbulence
Unafraid of impediments

Destined for success

Sekolo sa Ditlhora, Sekolo sa Ditlhora

Sekolo sa Ditlhora

Destined for success!

"Re dikilwe thoko tsohle

Mme ga re pitlaganywe

Re a phoraphora

Mme ga re gakanege

Re a tlaiswa

Mee ga ra lahlega

Re digelwa fase

Mme ga re senyege." (Matlwa 2010: loc. 153-161)

The entire song of six stanzas is sung at the beginning of the novel and then again before the climax. The song is therefore another example of repetition and the use of Indigenous languages. The parts in Shona, Sesotho and isiXhosa are not translated. The song encapsulates the main theme of the novel: the hopes associated with a new generation of children brought up in post-apartheid South Africa. But music has been a part of South African cultures since long before, as shown in *Chasing the Tails of my Father's Cattle.* The novel describes the daily life of people in a rural community in the 1930s:

10) There she heard the song of lament from the heavy hearts of women whose husbands had gone eGoli, there to be swallowed by the cavernous earth's belly housing gold. Wasenza, wasibulala

    Umntu owaveza iGoli

    Sehlukana neentsana zethu

    Ngenxa yelizwe esingalaziyo!(Magona 2015: loc. 1252)

11) When her daughter said the firewood was the gift of the red women, Manala broke out in ululation. Clapping her hands and dancing, she went:

    Khanikhangele! Khaniqhwabele! Nibulele!

    Khanikhangele! Khaniqhwabele! Nibulele!

    Sinjenjenje, sibahle nje; sizityebele.

Hay' inene Ngaphakath' apha, sizityebele, sizonwabele, sibahle ngqo! (Magona 2015: loc. 218)

12) As she sang the praises of the Ngwanya clan, Manala stretched her hands toward the little girl, her granddaughter. (Magona 2015: loc. 895)

13) The singing, the clapping, was not accompanied by dancing. This time there is no dancing. The song calls on the spirits and the sangoma quietly awaits their coming. (…) In accompaniment to the soft rise and fall of her one-arm wing, the music dies down. Slowly, evenly, deliberately it dies down. The song 'comes down', as the saying goes. It comes down till it is a mere murmur, a low guttural sound, voiceless and unvoiced. (Magona 2015: loc. 1528)

The novel features many different types of song and melodic poetry. Some of them, e.g., praise poems, are traditional South African genres. Songs are sung in celebration and mourning as well as to simply pass time. The lyrics are written in isiXhosa and translated into English. It is common for a character to break into song, which shows just how important music is for Indigenous communities of South Africa.

There are many similar examples of verbal music in the discussed texts. Some notable ones include:

14) Rina and Joyce pulled us up to join in the action songs, which I found I had not forgotten:

> 'Titiro ki a Rona
>
> Ki runga i te rangi
>
> Mo te riri
>
> O te marama e,
>
> Titiro ki te rakau
>
> Mau i te ringaringa
>
> Ki runga
>
> I te rangi e….' (Grace 1986 loc. 353-362)

15) And then, as the time came for rest, the speeches turned to song. I cannot describe the deep comfort I took then from the waiata. (Makereti 2018: loc. 514)

16) After the haka, the men on stage, quite out of breath, performed a maudlin waiata, while the audience chattered and grew restless. (Morris 2011: loc. 1578)

17) The speaker breaking into a waiata, lament for something precious lost. Others joining in. And so collectively compelling they had a wretched mother's head lifting … Drawn to it.

… three, four … eight ofem. Chanting. The notes hardly changing. Yet as sad as anything Beth'd ever heard. (Duff 1990:123)

18) A little anxious perhaps, and as he shuffled along, he began to sing. He started with a flag song but couldn't find the lead, kept getting it mixed up with an honour song, so he switched to a round dance. (King 2014: 205)

19) Together they sang the song of Heitsi Eibib, the earliest prophet of the Khoikhoi. (Mda 2000: 23)

20) There was a particular song that my father used to sing when he wanted to tell a troublesome tenant to leave our home. Its Shangaan title was *Nghoma ya makhalibode*, *The song of cardboard boxes*, and it went like this:

Ayi gube ya makhalibode	(Take your carboard boxes and leave my house)
I khale mi hi nyagatsa	(It is long that you been troubling us)
Aho chava ku mi hlongola	(We were afraid of chucking you out)
Hi nghoma ya makhalibode	(This is the song of the cardboard boxes)

(Mhlongo 2004: loc. 353)

21) Arqsarniq. I sing for you. Humming shakily at first, thin tendrils of sound. The trepidation dissolves and a throbbing vibratory expulsion of sound emerges. Thicker, richer, heavier. Sound is its own currency. Sound is a conduit to a realm we cannot totally comprehend. The power of sound conducts our thoughts into emotions that then manifest in action.

Sound can heal.

Sound can kill.

Sound is malleable. Sound can be a spear or a needle. Sound can create the wound and then stitch it. Sound can cauterize and materialize. No one can hear my song but the Northern Lights. (Tagaq 2018: loc. 498-507)

22) [My song], of course, was about Keneiloe. I didn't tell you that her name is Sesotho for 'I have been given'. And so I sang: *Keneiloe ngwanana e motle. Lebitso la hae ke Keneiloe. Keneiloe wa me, wa me, ke wa me. Ke mo rata ka pelo yaka yohle*. I

have been given (a pun on her name) a beautiful girl. Her name is Keneiloe. She is
my Keneiloe; (Mda 2011: 70)

The action song (or waiata-ā-ringa) in (14) is another traditional Māori genre, a song accompanied by hand gestures. Similarly, flag songs, honour songs and round dances in (18) are important genres of song and dance practiced across many Indigenous communities of North America. In *The Heart of Redness* (19), songs are shown to be one of the primary devices for preserving Indigenous history in South Africa. Example (20) from *Dog Eat Dog* shows how music can be used functionally in everyday situations. Finally, the power of music is once again emphasised in *Split Tooth* (21). This comes as no surprise since Tanya Tagaq is famous for her blend of electronic music and traditional Inuit throat singing. In the words of Bickel (2020: 130), "Tanya embodies and gives voice to the ancient wisdom of the foremothers, the land, sky, water and the animals of the north." Example (22) from Zakes Mda's memoir is particularly interesting because, in addition to being a song, it comments on the constraints of the English language. Mda opts to provide explanation for the pun in the lyrics to accommodate non-Indigenous readers.

Another traditional Indigenous music genre – *umngqokolo*, or Thembu overtone singing – is referenced in *The Heart of Redness*. Jacobs (2002) explains that this genre of music has its roots in the KhoiSan culture and consists of many overlapping rhythms and melodies. Jacobs argues that the structure of the novel with its intertextuality and overlapping timelines, mimics the musical structure of *umngqokolo*. This, in turn, would make *The Heart of Redness* a fascinating example of Indigenous musicalisation and, more specifically, in the words of Wolf (1999) formal and structural analogies. The two timelines could be seen as two tones that come together in harmony at the end of the novel. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that both Qukezwas are singing on the beach in the final scene. Jacobs goes even a step further and interprets the frequent use of isiXhosa words as another analogy to the musical genre. The overlapping languages, timelines and storytelling traditions all contribute to both oralisation and musicalisation of the text.

5.3. Mythic verism

Many of the discussed texts are classified by the publishers and various book review websites as magical realism. It is easy to see why – in many cases the novels and stories feature mythical or supernatural characters and events. It is notable that these mythic elements are often in the background, described as natural parts of the world. For instance, the aforementioned premonition abilities exhibited by Celia in *Ravensong*, Reihana in *Rangatira* or Marubini in *The Yearning* serve as foreshadowing for the plot but are not by themselves key plot points. The mindsets of the characters may also be surprising for non-Indigenous readers in that they seem to readily accept the existence of supernatural forces in their lives. Very rarely is there any doubt or disbelief. The following discussion of mythical elements presents examples of mythic characters and supernatural events in the selected texts.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, perhaps the most famous mythic character in Indigenous Canadian oral traditions is the Trickster. Depending on the oral tradition, the Trickster is known by different names. They appear in *Ravensong* as Raven, in King's short stories as Coyote and in *Jonny Appleseed* as Nanabush/Whisky Jack.

23) "Be patient," cedar admonished Raven. "There isn't much time," Raven responded. "These people are heading for the kind of catastrophe we may not survive. You, cedar, should think before you speak. You will be the first to perish." Cedar shivered then wept in time with the rain. (Maracle 1993: 44)

24) This one is about Coyote. She was going west. Visiting her relations. That's what she said. You got to watch that one. Tricky one. Full of bad business. (King 1993: 69)

25) We ready ourselves to find a promised land on the other side with the Fur Queen and Whisky Jack waving us home (…) we are all due—a thunderbird and Nanabush both. (Whitehead 2018: loc. 430)

Raven serves a much more different role in *Ravensong* than Coyote does in King's short stories. She foreshadows a devastating epidemic that is to destroy the Indigenous community outside Maillardville. The novel implies that Raven is the one to cause the epidemic to bring the two communities of the town closer together. Although there are some

humorous aspects to the character (like her banter with Cedar), overall Raven comes across as much more sinister than King's Coyote. Maracle herself explains the role of Raven in Coast Salish culture:

> Raven is referred to a lot as trickster, which I think is a simplification of who Raven is for us. Raven is the harbinger of social transformation. Raven sings when the world itself is amiss. (…) And what Raven does when she sings is tell us that it's time, that the time is coming and to listen to what's going on in a whole bunch of different ways – listen to it spiritually; listen to it emotionally; listen to it intellectually; listen to it physically; listen to what's going on – listen to it socially, and personally, and in family ways; listen to it in a number of different ways. (Maracle in Kelly 1993: 85–86)

Raven definitely does bring change in the novel. This change is in many ways negative and drastic but the characters in the novel do not seem to blame Raven specifically, as evident by the closing "Not enough Raven" in the epilogue. If Raven symbolises change and transformation, it could be inferred that the people themselves (both Indigenous and not) did not have enough drive (enough Raven) to adapt to new realities. Raven in the novel is accompanied by another mythic character – Cedar. Cedar is of a gentler disposition and attempts to dissuade Raven from her plan to forcefully push the communities together. Cedar trees are very important in the lives of many Canadian First Nations. Coast Salish people use the tree for manufacturing of tools and traditional medicine. They also believe that the trees contain spirits (Huang 2009). Maracle (in Kelly 1993: 87) sheds some light on the character of Cedar in her novel: "Cedar becomes the house in our culture. Cedar represents our sacred house. Cedar represents all that is conservative and traditional, I guess. And Raven represents the spirit that just wants everything to move and shift and change and loves chaos." With the epilogue of *Ravensong* recontextualising the entire novel as a story within a story, it is possible that the characters of Raven and Cedar are fictional and have been introduced by the narrators as storytelling devices.

Another notorious trickster character is Coyote, who appears in many of Thomas King's short stories. A mythic hero/villain/antihero in many Indigenous oral traditions across Canada and the US, Coyote is a character whose very presence in a text makes its analysis befittingly tricky for a non-Indigenous critic. Out of the four heavily oralised short stories in King's collection, three feature Coyote. It is almost as if the trickster destabilised the Western writing conventions with their appearance. Truchan-Tartaryn and Gingell (2006) also note how challenging a critical response to Coyote short stories can be and decide to write a large part of their article in a conversational style, allowing

Coyote themself to comment on the critics' analysis and make fun of it. Even they admit, however, that "[w]hen it comes to analysing text, there are some things a person just can't say in a textualized oral style" and suggest that "[c]ritical response to King's storytelling may need to be as poly-vocal as the collection itself if the spirit of the book is to be respected" (2006: 3-4). What is more, the reader is not dealing with a single Coyote in *One Good Story, That One*. There is Coyote and Old Coyote as well as small letter coyotes, which are animals, only they pilot a giant spaceship in one of the stories. For the purposes of oralisation, King's Coyote plays a trick on the readers and turns them into listeners. The collection opens with the heavily oralised title story. A reader, who may have thought they were opening a regular book, suddenly finds themself in the middle of an oralised text. It is not one story as the title seems to suggest either, there are ten of them. At the end of the title story, a group of anthropologists leave the storyteller's home unaware that they have just been tricked by Coyote. This is shown by the storyteller cleaning coyote tracks on the floor (10). However, what the reader is not explicitly told is that there are also coyote tracks all over the book, on the title pages for each story (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Title page of the short story "Totem" with Coyote tracks

These markings resemble coyote silhouettes but the style, in which they are drawn and the uneven lines brings to mind animal tracks. This little detail is also noticed by Truchan-Tartaryn and Gingell (2006: 1), who state that "King introduces Old Coyote, then lets him make tracks all over the pages." And if the tracks imply trickery, then the reader is most definitely tricked with ten stories that subvert expectations even as to the very conventions of writing. The surrealist and experimental nature of King's Coyote stories may imply another link to postmodernism but the trickster character has been present in Indigenous oral traditions since long before the 20th century. In fact, Coyote stories told by Harry Robinson in *Write it on Your Heart* are very similar to King's in terms of style and theme. In Robinson's "Coyote Plays a Dirty Trick", Coyote tricks Young Coyote to climb a magical tree all the way to the Moon. Robinson makes a point that this happened long before Neil Armstrong. Coyote is not an original character of King's, but the author invites the

trickster into the medium of writing and allows them to influence the direction and style of the text.

In *Jonny Appleseed*, Whisky Jack as well as several other mythic characters are only mentioned briefly and appear in dreams or visions. Example (24) also mentions the Fur Queen, which is a reference to another Cree novel, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998) by Tomson Highway. The Fur Queen is one of the forms taken by the shapeshifting trickster in the novel. Both Joshua Whitehead and Tomson Highway identify as two-spirit, having both feminine and masculine spirit. The gender fluidity and shapeshifting nature of Whisky Jack and other Indigenous trickster characters make them important for two-spirit people in North America. Being of Oji-Cree (Oji-nêhiyaw) ancestry, Whitehead also invokes Nanabush – the Ojibwe trickster. A thunderbird is another mythological creature, which appears in several North American Indigenous traditions, including Ojibwe. Some of the other mythic characters mentioned in the novel are the Wendigo and Sky Woman.

Split Tooth recounts the Inuit legend of Sedna or Takannaaluk:

26) Sedna the Sea Goddess came before Christianity. (Tagaq 2018: loc. 746)

In the legend, Sedna becomes a vengeful Goddess after being drowned in the sea by her father. The drowning was supposed to be the punishment for having sex with a shapeshifter, who turned into a dog. In some ways, the narrator's story in the novel is similar to that of Sedna's. The narrator has a sexual encounter with a fox and then becomes pregnant with the northern lights. Tagaq also personifies natural phenomena such as Snow, Wind or Time by spelling them with capital letters and giving them agency. This contributes to the mythic character of the novel. There are mentions of mythic creatures in the remaining Indigenous Canadian texts as well. In *Monkey Beach* Lisa is able to see spirits and one particular red-haired tree spirit visits her when someone she loves is in danger. The elusive *B'gwus* (Haisla for Sasquatch) lurks in the forests at the nearby Monkey Beach, where the story reaches its conclusion. Maria Campbell's Cheechum in *Halfbreed* tells a story of her meeting with little people. The mythic creatures are alive and present in these texts because the real and the mythic are one and the same.

This type of narrative is not exclusive to Indigenous Canadian authors. Examples below show the presence of the mythic in Indigenous South African and New Zealand texts:

27) "There is a *tokoloshe* that is terrifying that scared man," (…) us. This was obviously just a small, mischievous *tokoloshe*. It would have caused a lot more damage if it was truly malevolent. We burned some plants that I had never seen before. (Mashigo 2016: loc. 770)

28) It is rumored that Bhonco is about to enlist the assistance of the *uthekwane*, the brown hammerhead bird. With its lightning it will destroy Zim's fields, or perhaps his homestead. But some people laugh the whole matter off. They say it is an empty threat. Bhonco does not know how to talk with birds. Only Zim can talk with birds. (Mda 2000: 197)

29) They said he had dreams about events before they occurred. Many people were afraid of his powers. Some even said he had been sent to Johannesburg to perform his magic by his Zulu ancestors because Johannesburg needed this kind of magic. (Xaba 2013: loc. 1866)

30) But you yourself, you did not die of a sickness, you died of a kehua. (Grace 1986 loc. 1661)

31) He was reputed to be a powerful *ixhwele* – medicine man – and I feared that he was going to harm my father with his wizardry (…) She painted a vivid picture of a stick that he used to cast spells, which was also capable of transforming into a snake. (Mda 2011: 17)

The examples above show the interconnectedness between peoples' everyday lives and spiritual or supernatural experiences. The plots of all of the texts discussed in this dissertation are overall rather grounded and realistic (perhaps with the exception of King's short stories). They do not require the reader to accept the supernatural in order to explain the events. In many cases, it would be fairly easy to attribute the spiritual experiences of the characters to trauma or superstition. However, for readers unfamiliar with Indigenous worldviews and beliefs, each of these texts provides an invitation to look at the world through a different lens. The generational knowledge and wisdom preserved through oral traditions have already made many invaluable contributions to humanity's scientific knowledge (Doebel 2000). Indigenous epistemological perspectives can broaden one's horizons and provide new frameworks for dealing with problems.

One of the most striking examples of how the mythical blends with the realistic in Indigenous literature comes from *the bone people*. Throughout most of the 446-page novel there is no mention of the mythic or the supernatural. It is a heart-breaking and touching story of three people's struggle with violence, addiction and their own pasts. The novel is divided into four sections and the final one begins with Joe, who finishes his prison sentence after hurting his adoptive son in a fit of alcoholic rage. His child has been taken away, his only friend is missing and Joe is roaming around aimlessly at the lowest point in his life. That is when he meets a Māori *kaumatua* (elder), who claims to have been waiting for him since before Joe was born. It is through this character that the story explores traditional Māori knowledge and beliefs:

32) "When one dies, one must journey. The journey is well-known. You must know it. One goes north to Te Rerenga-wairua, down the grey root of Akakitererenga, onto the rock platform and into the sea. Into the seahole that leads into Te Reinga."
"It is all myths and legends," says Joe, "and I never liked any of it." (Hulme 1983: 354)

33) There are three versions of what happens to you after death. If you go to Te Reinga, it is held that you live as you did here. Eventually, you die again. And then the rot sets in. If you get past the spirit-eaters, Tuapiko and Tuwhaitiri, *if* you get past them, there is underworld after underworld, each less pleasant than the last. In the end one of all you get a choice. The choice is to become nothing, or to return to earth as a moth. When the moth dies, that's you gone forever — just putting off the evil day, hei? (Hulme 1983: loc. 354)

Although some of the concepts are explained within the novel, prior knowledge of Māori culture is necessary to fully understand what the elder is talking about. Te Rerenga Wairua is the northernmost point of New Zealand, believed to be gate to the underworld (Te Reinga). Tuapiko and Tuwhaitiri are guardians of the underworld, who capture and destroy burdened souls. The elder reveals that he is close to death and wants Joe to inherit his task:

34) I guard a stone that was brought on one of the great canoes. I guard the canoe itself. I guard the little god that came with the canoe. The god broods over the mauriora,

for that is what the stone is home to, but the mauri is distinct and great beyond the little god... the canoe rots under them both... aie, he is a little god, no-one worships him any longer. But he hasn't died yet. He has his hunger and his memories and his care to keep him tenuously alive. (Hulme 1983: 363)

The introduction of mythic elements so far into the novel may be as surprising for a reader as it is for Joe, who soon finds himself rescuing a *mauriora* stone disk from an earthquake. Hulme explains in the book's glossary that *mauri* or *mauriora* translates to "life principle" and is a "material symbol (…) protecting the mana (power/vitality) of people, birds, land, forests". Māori oral tradition speaks of the arrival of Māori people in Aotearoa from a place called Hawaiki on great canoes or founding canoes. This oral history is still alive today with some iwi (e.g., Te Arawa) tracing their ancestry to specific canoes. As in the case with many Indigenous narratives, the novel's ending is rather ambiguous, although it is safe to assume that by rediscovering his Māori heritage, Joe is finally able to turn his life around. The mythic elements themselves do not play a large role in the story, besides being the catalyst for his change. Their inclusion may be a bit unexpected but seems fitting in an experimental novel filled with poetic language and features of oralisation. Contemporary Indigenous narratives are often tales of individual and communal healing through rediscovery of Indigenous tradition and spirituality. This theme is also present in *The Back of the Turtle*, *Monkey Beach*, *The Yearning*, *Potiki* and *Once Were Warriors*. In all of those stories, ancestral wisdom is shown to be able to help reverse the damage caused by colonialism but often also capitalism and threats of modern life, such as alcoholism or drug abuse.

5.4. Oralised metanarratives

Perhaps the most straightforward way to convey characteristics of oral tradition in writing is to describe the storytelling process directly. All of the texts discussed in this dissertation feature Indigenous characters, many of whom witness and participate in their respective oral traditions. By describing such oral performances, authors are able to explain, through the narrators, all of the elements of oral traditions that are so easily lost in translation from speech to writing. Analysing these descriptions provides a lot of insight into the

characters' cultures but also serves as a new lens through which the text as a whole can be perceived.

35) When we were put to bed the grown-ups would gather outside and an old grandpa or grannie would tell a story while someone built up the fire. Soon everyone was taking turns telling stories, and one by one we would creep out to sit in the background and listen. (Campbell 1973: 35)

36) "But even Blake don't hold a candle to 'The Woman Who Fell from the Sky.' We tell that story here each year as a reminder." (…) "Aye," said Crisp, jumping in without further encouragement. "It could have been night or perhaps it was day. No difference, no difference, and somewhere high above this plane, somewhere in the black realm of space, on another world, a woman was digging for tubers. And where do we find the best of the tubers?"

"Under old trees," said Mara.

"Exactly!" shouted Crisp. "So our woman searches until she finds the oldest and largest in the forest and she sets to digging her hole. She's a strong woman, she is, and she digs and she digs and she digs, until …?"

"She digs a hole into the sky," said Mara.

"Put your back into the telling!" howled Crisp. "For it's an uncommon dig by an uncommon woman."

"She digs a hole into the sky," shouted Mara, and she reached across and poked Gabriel in the thigh with her foot.

"And what's a woman to do when faced with such an aperture? Why she looks into it. That's what she does. She looks and leans in. She looks and leans in further. She looks and leans in even further. And then …"

Crisp paused and waited. Mara poked Gabriel a second time.

"She falls in!" Mara's and Gabriel's voices filled the meadow.

"She falls in!" Crisp raised himself out of the pool until you could see his penis floating on the surface and the tops of his goat thighs. And then he fell back into the water and disappeared. (King 2014: 222-224)

37) "You're telling it wrong," Ma-ma-oo had said once when she was over for Christmas dinner. (…) Ma-ma-oo's version was less gruesome, with no one getting shot and the first trapper just seeing the b'gwus crossing a glacier, getting scared and

running back to the camp. Me and Jimmy liked Dad's version better, especially when he did the sound effects. (Robinson 2000: loc. 103)

38) When she was on a roll with some story or other she stood up and assumed the beauty and cadence of Speaker. Her eyes were large and shaped like Raven's, snappy and black, her skin dark but her hair auburn, almost red. She kept it sleek and tied back away from her handsome face. She was beautiful when she spoke. Her gestures were expressive, perfectly timed and graceful. (Maracle 1993: 98)

39) Roger is a Lakota, unlike my mother, who is Cree, so his stories always differed from ours. But I liked what he had to tell us. When he had his gallbladder removed as a kid, his mother told him the importance of his belly button. His people call it the chik'sa and revere it as a sacred body part. (Whitehead 2018: loc. 2207-2218)

40) They came especially to listen to his stories which were of living wood, his stories of the ancestors. He told also the histories of patterns and the meanings of patterns to life. He told of the effects of weather and water on wood, and told all the things he had learned at the elbow of his tutor, all the things he had spent a lifetime learning. (Grace 1986 loc. 84)

41) The older people began to tell stories, starting as they always do with whakapapa. Yes, my reader, I can see the question behind your eyes. What is whakapapa? It is a magnificent cloak that connects each person around the fire to each other person and the places they are from. It is kinship to the mountains and waters and lands. It is who one is, who one is connected to, who one's ancestors are. (Makereti 2018: loc. 485)

42) The speaker intoned on. And it, his voice, sort of moved in and out of a woman's hearing, like a tide, a wave lapping the shore, ebbing, coming back again. A rhythm. No denying that; there's a definite pattern of beat in the way he's talking. (Duff 1990: 122)

43) Camagu amuses himself by watching a teenage boy whose hat has made him very popular with a group of children who are surrounding him. (…) It has many horns that fascinate the kids. He tells them that the horns grew because his grandmother told him folktales during the day. Such stories are supposed to be told only at night. "Every time she told me a story a horn grew," he tells his captive audience.

(…) Tomorrow more stories shall be told, seasoned as usual with inventive spices by whoever is telling the story at the time. (Mda 2000: 149)

44) As soon as the story ended he would say, 'Okay Marubini, ask your questions now.' I loved the fact that he never forgot to say '*story sa rona*' − it wasn't just another radio drama, or his favourite story, but *our* story: *story sa rona*. (Mashigo 2016: loc. 572)

45) "Please tell me a story, Ma."

"Kwasukasukele," she began.

"Cos' cosi," Nontshisekelo responded typically.

"Kwakukhona," she continued as she rifled through her brain files for a story. This traditional structured way of starting a story was very helpful, she thought for the first time. (Xaba 2013: loc. 768)

In (35) Maria Campbell describes storytelling as an important communal event involving several Métis families exchanging their tales. (36) is a great example of a creation story found in many Indigenous Canadian cultures. The characters in *The Back of the Turtle* take turns retelling fragments of the story, complete with interruptions from the listeners, repetitions and gesticulation. This story reads remarkably similarly to some of the transcripts of oral tradition cited in Chapter 1. Example (37) shows the differences in telling a story between different storytellers, something that is challenging to convey in writing. In (38) and (42) Maracle and Duff focus on the person of the speaker, describing in detail how they look and move when telling a story and how they embody the characters in those stories. The epilogue of *Ravensong* also recontextualises the entire novel as a story told by the main characters to Stacey's young nephew. Example (39) from *Jonny Appleseed* stresses the distinctiveness of stories in different cultures. In other examples, readers can learn that stories in certain Indigenous cultures require a specific type of introduction (41), are reserved for particular times (43), or for particular people (44). The storyteller in (45) comments that the traditional isiZulu story introduction serves a practical function – it allows the speaker a brief moment to gather their thoughts and choose a story to tell.

Ravensong demonstrates the function of stories in a traditional Indigenous Canadian community. When it turns out that Stacey's father, Jim, cannot have children, Grandpa Thomas, an Elder in the community, tells Stacey's parents "a story about twin brothers, one the father of children, the other the woman's husband" (Maracle 1993: 101). The couple follow the solution presented in the story. When many years later Stacey learns that her biological father is Jim's twin brother Ned, she is very upset with her

mother and goes to visit another Elder, Ella, for guidance. Ella counters Stacey's anger with another story, a story of Snot Woman, whose loyalty to her husband was tied to his ability "to gratify her passions" (Maracle 1993: 105-106). The story is well-known to Stacey but this specific retelling makes her realise that she has no right to judge her mother. In these two examples, Maracle highlights the power of storytelling to guide and change people's hearts.

As mentioned before, these examples of metanarratives can sometimes shine a new light on a text as a whole. In King's case, understanding the story of The Woman Who Fell from the Sky is absolutely crucial to understand *The Back of the Turtle*. The Woman Who Fell from the Sky is the title on Gabriel's folder of notes about GreenSweep, a genetically modified bacterium which in the novel led to the destruction of life in Samaritan Bay. As one of the creators of the bacterium, Gabriel feels personally responsible for the tragedy but the title also symbolises hope for rebirth and revival, both for the area and for Gabriel. After all, the story referenced in the title is a creation story. On the other hand, it is also suggested that a woman falling from the sky can be a source of destruction akin to a meteor. It is also revealed that it was the original title of the GreenSweep project. The Indigenous story mirrors the plot of the novel to an extent. However, in a typical King fashion, *The Back of the Turtle* is also filled with other references. Ridington (2015) notes that many names and characters in the novel are of Biblical origins. Mara is compared to Mary, the mother of Jesus, who in the novel is represented by Sonny. Sonny's absent father (Dad) is God. Gabriel tries to commit suicide by climbing on the rocks called the apostles. The novel is filled with more and less subtle references to Indigenous and non-Indigenous stories. In the prologue, Crisp shares an apple with Master Dog, calling it "the stuff of creation". Sonny uses barbed wire to build a tower and refers to it as "the Tower of Thorns". Ridington also compares Sonny to Thor, another son of God, who just like Sonny wields a hammer. What is more, King references his own works (the dog Soldier appears in *Truth and Bright Water*) as well as pop culture (*The Sound of Music*). Through these and many other references, *The Back of the Turtle* places itself firmly as part of Indigenous but also global storytelling traditions. Just like speakers in oral traditions, the novel takes elements from past stories and recontextualises them in a more contemporary setting. Thus, the Woman Who Fell from the Sky becomes a story about cultural revival and environmental protection. In King's words, the novel is interfusional because it draws from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous stories, just like it does from

oral and written storytelling traditions. What is even more interesting, *The Back of the Turtle* is not the first of King's works to feature a retelling of that particular creation story. In *The Truth about Stories* (2003), King tells a much longer version of the story, adding more details, giving the Woman a name and emphasising the communal aspects of story-telling. Although the story beats remain the same, the author provides a unique spin on the narrative to make it better conform to the respective themes of the two texts.

This multicultural intertextuality (or perhaps inter-narrativity) is also at the fore-front of Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*. The title itself is an obvious homage to *Heart of Darkness*. Throughout the story, there are several elements that further invoke Con-rad's novel, like the twinned narration, the brutality of the war between the British and the amaXhosa or the idea of redness (covering skin with red ochre) as backwardness. At the same time, *The Heart of Redness* invokes the history of cattle killing and mythological stories like that of the prophet Heitsi Eibib, who splits a river in half in a story remarkably similar to that of Moses. The parallels between all these narratives and the layered themes can only be understood by readers familiar with both sides, oral and written.

The feature is realised in a slightly different way in Xaba's *Running and Other Stories*. The first and the last short story in the collection are direct references to the clas-sic South African short story "The Suit" (1963) by Can Themba. "The Suit" tells the story of Philemon, who catches his wife Matilda in bed with another man. The lover escapes leaving behind his suit. As a form of punishment, Philemon forces his wife to pretend that the suit is an important guest in their house: she has to serve meals to the suit and go on walks with it. After months of humiliation and mental abuse, Matilda takes her own life. Xaba's stories, "Behind *The Suit*" and "*The Suit* Continued: The Other Side", recontex-tualise the original and present it in a different light. "Behind *The Suit*" is a letter written by Mondliwesizwe Mbatha, who reveals himself to have been Philemon's lover before and during the events in "The Suit". The reader learns that Philemon was homosexual and that he also committed suicide some time after his wife's death. The original story initially idealises Philemon as the perfect husband, who goes mad after he learns of his wife's betrayal. Although he is ultimately the one responsible for Matilda's death in both cases, "Behind *The Suit*" adds another layer of complexity to the story and makes Philemon look like a hypocrite. On the other hand, the entire idea to humiliate Matilda comes from Mon-dliwesizwa, who is jealous of the woman. This interpretation is once again flipped on its head in "*The Suit* Continued: The Other Side", which tells the original story from

Matilda's perspective. The final short story in Xaba's collection reveals that both Philemon and Matilda were in homosexual relationships and the marriage was just a front to keep them safe at the time when same-sex relationships were illegal in South Africa. Matilda's partner, Gladys, wants her to divorce Philemon so that they can leave together for a bigger city but Matilda knows that Philemon would never agree to this out of fear that his secret could be revealed. Gladys' plan is for Matilda to get pregnant with another man, which would serve as proof of Philemon's heterosexuality. The plan backfires when one of the neighbours notices a strange man visiting Matilda in her husband's absence and notifies Philemon. The weight of Philemon's behaviour is reduced when the reader learns that the main reason for Matilda's suicide was the fact that Gladys abandoned her and left the town.

The way the story evolves throughout its different iterations is very reminiscent of oral tradition, where the same premise can change drastically depending on the storyteller, the audience and the current events at the time it is told. Can Themba's original short story explores the themes of marital fidelity, depression and mental abuse in 1950s South Africa and it made huge impact on the literary scene at the time. Xaba's modern retellings of the story recontextualise it by introducing more current themes, such as homosexuality and feminism. Importantly, Xaba gives Matilda the agency to tell her side of the events. Despite being the central character in the narrative, her voice was noticeably absent in the original version of the short story. Xaba takes a classic piece of South African literature and reimagines the plot to shed more light on issues that are important in the present day. "The Suit" is no longer fixed in writing in a single form – it exists in several versions with different storytellers, just like orature does

Chapter 6: Interpreting oralised Indigenous prose: readings of *Potiki, The Back of the Turtle* and *The Yearning*

The final chapter of this dissertation is devoted to a more detailed analysis of three selected novels: *Potiki* by Patricia Grace, *The Back of the Turtle* by Thomas King and *The Yearning* by Mohale Mashigo. The analysis aims to demonstrate how the features of oralisation work together within a text and how critical focus on oralisation can lead to a more complete interpretation of the said text. The three novels have been selected due to the variety of oralisation features that they exhibit. Unlike in the previous chapters, where the analysis was largely organised by countries, in this chapter I adopt the chronological order to highlight the transition from an older text, written at a time when oralisation was not yet so often used, to the more recent works of literature that use oralisation in conjunction with other narrative strategies to tackle contemporary issues and themes.

6.1. Potiki

Patricia Grace's *Potiki* tells a story of the Tamihana family and their fight against developers who want to take their land. The novel uses several narrators and focalisers. The prologue tells a story about an old carver, who is working on his last project, a *wharenui* – meeting house. The carver breaks the cultural rule by carving a *poupou* with his own likeness. The carver is at the end of his life and, since he has no family, he fears being forgotten. Unable to finish the sculpture before his death, he states that it shall be finished by someone else in the future. The first few chapters of the novel are ordered somewhat achronologically but they introduce the main characters: Roimata and her husband Hemi, their children James, Tangimoana and Manu as well as Hemi's mentally disabled sister Mary. One day, Mary walks into the sea and gives birth to a baby boy, even though nobody knew she was pregnant. Roimata and Hemi decide to raise the child as their own, naming him Tokowaru-i-te-Marama or Toko for short.

Although very weak physically, Toko appears to have the gift of premonition and senses bad intentions of Mr Dolman, who wishes to purchase Tamihana's ancestral land to construct an access road to a new tourist resort. The Indigenous community repeatedly

reject Dolman's offers making him more and more furious. Eventually, the company proceeds with an alternative plan to build the access road around the Māori land, but the developers order workers to dam the nearby creek, which floods the Tamihana's land, ruins crops and damages the *urupa* (ancestral burial grounds). The tragedy brings the tight-knit community even closer together. People from the neighbouring Te Ope family come to help rebuild what was destroyed. Several of the Māori workers employed by Mr Dolman want to quit their jobs after learning what has happened, but the Tamihanas convince them to continue working and warn them of any future dangers. Although there is an official investigation, it does not determine the developers' guilt. Soon after, Toko wakes up in the middle of the night to the sound of screaming and realises that the *wharenui* is on fire. Despite the long struggle to put out the fire, the meeting house is destroyed and only the *poupou* of the carver survives the blaze. Again, help arrives from all parts of the country and the construction of a new *wharenui* begins. James learns the art of carving from a Te Ope Elder. The new meeting house is completed and it includes a special ramp and door for Toko, who at this point needs a wheelchair to move. The peace of the family does not last long, however, as someone sets up an explosive by Toko's door, which leads to his death. When the construction workers learn what has happened, they rebel against their employer, destroying the road and driving the machines into the sea. James finishes the only surviving *poupou* by adding Toko's likeness below that of the carver. In the final part of the story, the reader learns that Tangimoana went to law school and eventually won a court case against the developers.

6.2. Oralisation features in *Potiki*

Potiki tells a story of many cycles. Destruction is followed by rebuilding, death by rebirth and sorrow by joy. Patricia Grace imbues the novel with many elements of the Māori culture, tradition and beliefs, which oftentimes manifest as oralisation features. The title of the novel means *youngest child* and it points to Toko as one of the most significant characters in the story, though the reader first has to learn about the circumstances of his birth. The novel is deeply grounded in Māori philosophy and traditional knowledge. Wohlfart (2018: 264) proposes to interpret *Potiki* as *kete o te wānanga* (baskets of knowledge). This concept derives from a Māori legend, in which Tāne, the god of forests,

climbs up to the twelfth heaven in order to receive the baskets for mankind. The baskets contain the knowledge to help mankind, the knowledge of rituals, memories and prayers and the knowledge of evil respectively. *Potiki* describes the harm done to the Māori people, particularly the histories of land theft and discrimination, but it also shows a path forward with the help of traditional values. In this way, the novel is a basket of knowledge that preserves and spreads Indigenous wisdom though oralised stories.

The prologue begins with a chant which, as Knudsen (2004: 3) notes, is in accordance with the *marae* protocol (the protocol of hospitality and welcoming guests). The chant invokes the image of a spiral ("from the centre, (…) to an outer circle" Grace 1986: loc. 43), which is an important symbol both in the novel and in Māori culture as a whole. It ends with the phrase *Tihe Mauriora*, roughly translated to *the sneeze of life*. This phrase is particularly significant, because it also serves as a call to claim the right to speak. It recontextualises the novel as a traditional welcoming ceremony, in which the reader is a guest and they *listen* to speeches and stories told by the hosts. Most of the chapters are narrated in 1st person by either Roimata or Toko with their names also serving as titles for the chapters. In this way, the structure is somewhat reminiscent of a theatrical play – the chapters being extended dialogue lines and the titles signifying who is speaking.

Wohlfart (2018: 263) highlights Roimata's role as a cultural mediator. Early on in the novel, the reader witnesses Roimata return to the community which raised her after working away for a number of years. Being familiar with both the Māori culture and Europeanised New Zealand, Roimata is the perfect narrator for the novel, which also navigates two cultural realities. The third and final speaker in the novel is the narrator, who sometimes tells stories themself and sometimes uses Mary, Hemi or James as focalisers. The multiple 1st person narrators make it seem like *Potiki* is a story told to the reader by the entire community. The very structure of the novel is therefore oralised in adherence to Māori customs and oral tradition.

Ramsay-Kurz (2007: 232) focuses on the mentally disabled character of Mary, highlighting her significance to the story. Mary is unable to communicate in a regular way but throughout the novel she is heard singing. She is also the one to save the last remaining *poupou* from the burned meeting house when everyone else is struck by grief and despair. The person who by Western standards would likely be seen as the weakest member of the community is the one who shows the most strength at a time of need. Roimata remarks how "Mary was the closest to (…) Jesus (…), being never calumnious,

nor detractful, slanderous, murderous, disobedient, covetous, jealous nor deceiving" (Grace 1986, loc. 155). Since Mary does not get the chance to narrate her own chapters in *Potiki*, Ramsay-Kurz suggests that her story is hidden, "heard only by those who listen to the whispering of the *wharenui*". Disabled characters seem to be at the centre of the community. Toko needs a wheelchair to move and his needs are accommodated when a ramp and a special door are added to the new *wharenui*. The novel focuses more on Toko's wisdom and Mary's hard work as key contributions to the life of the community. The two characters are never ostracised due to their disabilities. Hickey (2008: 64) notes that in many Indigenous cultures, disability has a spiritual dimension and can even be seen as a manifestation of a special gift or power. In those cases, the disabled people enjoy higher status in the society. At the same time, Hickey admits that the attitudes to disability in the modern day and age are community-dependent, e.g., some Māori people object to guide dogs being present on *marae* to assist blind members of the community. Nevertheless, in Patricia Grace's *Potiki*, the focus is on the unique *abilities* rather than disabilities of the characters.

Throughout the narrative, the reader is often reminded that the novel incorporates a number of stories:

> There was once a carver who spent a lifetime with wood (Grace 1986 loc. 43)
>
> I know the story of my birth. When I was born my borning mother was not much older than me, and now I am older than she is. (Grace 1986 loc. 510)
>
> I know the story of when I was five. The story has been told to me by my mother Roimata, my father Hemi, my sister Tangimoana, and my brothers James and Manu. But also it is a remembered story. Five is old enough to remember from, and five is not very long ago. (Grace 1986 loc. 571)
>
> I have my own story about when the Dollarman came. Our stories were changing. It is a story of a feeling and a knowing. (Grace 1986 loc. 1252)
>
> There is one more story to tell which I tell while the house sleeps. And yet the house does not sleep as the eyes of green and indigo brighten the edges of the world. There is one more story to tell but it is a retelling. I tell it to the people and the house. I tell it from the wall, from where yesterday and tomorrow are as now. I know the story of my death. I tell it from the tree. (Grace 1986 loc. 2377)

The majority of these fragments come from chapters narrated by Toko, which always begin with an introductory paragraph where Toko explains what the next story will be about and who he learned it from in accordance with the Māori storytelling protocol. These chapters are also more heavily oralised, as Toko uses frequent repetitions, short sentences and rhetorical questions. Dialogue tags are rarely present with some

conversations spanning several pages without the narrator's interference. When talking about her youngest child, Roimata says that "all stories belong to him" (loc. 445). The birth of Toko is foretold in the prologue, as he is the son of the childless carver. His mother, Mary, gives birth in the sea and the family is not sure who the child's father is. Toko is unusually wise for his age, he is given permission to speak to adults and his death or martyrdom is ultimately the cause for the broader community coming together. In Chapter 7, Roimata compares Toko to a cicada (*kihikihi*), already old when he is born. Granny Tamihana echoes that sentiment, calling him Little Father. The boy's connection to his ancestors is further emphasised by his full name, Tokowaru-i-te-Marama, which he inherits from his great-granduncle. The name itself can be translated to "eight in one month" and refers to the eight victims of a sickness that affected the community at the time when Toko's great-granduncle was born.

Stories are shown to be a powerful force of change in the novel. In Chapter 12, Toko recalls the story of Te Ope's legal battle to reclaim their land. During that time, the Tamihana family provided support for their neighbours and built strong bonds with them. The reader is able to witness the sequel to that story when the Te Ope people come to help after the flood and the fire on Tamihana's land. Toko is too young to have witnessed what he calls "the first part of the story", but he learns about it from Roimata. Stories are therefore shown to also carry the sense of community between *iwi*. This speaks to the power of storytelling to enact a real world change. Many of the Te Ope people only know about their relationship with the Tamihanas through stories. The knowledge of those stories is what motivates them to help their neighbours in a time of crisis and repay the debt.

Wohlfart (2018: 264) notes that the name Te Ope can be translated to *army* or *war party*. He suggests that the people of Te Ope and the land reclamation theme could be seen as an example of the Tumatauenga concept and therefore a part of the *Potiki* basket of Indigenous knowledge. In Māori mythology, Tumatauenga was the god of war and is seen as the patron to anyone who fights for justice. *Potiki* was first published during a time of a major political shift in New Zealand, 11 years after the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal. Since *Potiki* is one of the first Māori-written texts to challenge the dominant, Christian-based philosophy in New Zealand, the book itself could be seen as an example of Tumatauenga. The novel has been very influential as it carved out space for Māori literature in English and blazed a trail for later authors. The success of *Potiki* has shown that Māori literature does not have to adhere to non-Indigenous standards of

writing in order to be published and read. Therefore, the Tumatauenga applies to the text on multiple levels: the Tamihanas' fight for justice, the novel's efforts towards developing Māori literature in English and the struggle between the oral and the written, resulting in oralisation.

Another concept examined in the novel is the idea of development. Walker (2005) stresses the fact that Māori and Pakeha may understand development in vastly different ways. The businessmen in *Potiki* attempt to convince the Tamihana family that development is inherently linked with economic growth. For that growth to happen, however, the Indigenous people have to sacrifice their land and culture. Efforts to preserve their *urupa* and *wharenui* are therefore falsely equated with hindering progress:

> 'Well now, you've said that the developments here would be of no advantage to you. I'd like to remind you of what I've already said earlier. It's all job-creative. It'll mean work, well-paid work, right on your doorstep, so to speak. And for the area … it'll bring people … progress….'
> 'But you see, we already have jobs, we've got progress ….'
> 'I understand, perhaps I'm wrong, that you're mostly unemployed?'
> 'Everything we need is here. This is where our work is.'
> 'And progress? Well it's not … obvious.'
> 'Not to you. Not in your eyes. But what we're doing is important. To us. To us that's progress.'
> 'Well maybe our ideas are different. Even so you wouldn't want to stand in the way….'
> (Grace 1987 loc. 1165)

The developers (ironically) fail to understand any concept of progress and development that does not match their preconceived ideas about economic profit. Walker (2005: 220) argues that the Māori concept of development is measured "in terms of culture, language and community values". This type of progress is shown in the novel through Hemi's re-establishment of the gardens, Roimata's return to the community and the birth of Toko, who adopts the role of a traditional speaker/storyteller.

Mr Dollarman tries to persuade the Tamihanas that they are making a mistake and being unreasonable, but Grace cleverly uses oralisation strategies in the dialogue to show just the opposite. The lack of dialogue tags in the fragment above allows the reader to quickly move from one line to the next, as if they were witnessing an actual conversation. Dollarman's lines are full of ellipses, which indicate pauses in speech, hesitation and defensive tone. This is clearly contrasted with short, sharp sentences of his interlocutor. These lines exude confidence and resolve. There is no doubt which idea of progress is the correct one in this exchange. Due to the lack of speaker tags, the reader does not even

know who exactly is speaking on behalf of the Tamihanas. It is certain, however, that they are an experienced orator who speaks for the entire community. This example shows how oralisation can be used to enhance various literary themes and promote a more complete understanding of a text.

As many critics noted before (Deloughrey 1999, Knudsen 2011, Wohlfart 2018), the narrative beats of *Potiki* parallel the story of Christ but also of the legendary Māori demigod hero, Māui. According to one of the myths, Māui fished out the North Island of New Zealand from the sea. In Chapter 8 of *Potiki*, Toko surprises his family by catching a giant fish at the age of only five. Knudsen (2011) notes that Toko's death is also reminiscent of that of Māui. In Māori oral tradition, Māui tries to defeat the Goddess of Death, Hine-nui-te-pō, by crawling inside her toothed vagina but he is killed in the process (Perris 2018: 366). Toko's death is similarly described in the novel as passing through "the toothed aperture" (Grace 1986 loc. 2410). Parallels with the New Testament include Mary's immaculate birth and Toko's wisdom even at a very young age. Deloughrey (1999: 61) observes that "Grace appropriates the narrative of Christ (…) and by intertwining this narrative with the Māui myth (…) she draws these diverse narratives from great spatio-temporal distances and localizes them in the current cultural space of Aotearoa." The novel is therefore a blend of two, culturally significant narratives and two modes of storytelling – oral and written.

As mentioned before, the events in the novel follow a spiral pattern. The Tamihana iwi face three disasters – the flood, the burning of the *wharenui* and the murder of Toko. Each of these crises is graver than the former and results in outpouring of help from the Te Ope iwi, activists and eventually construction workers themselves. The image of the spiral appears in many Māori works of art, including the Māori flag, *Tino rangatiratanga* (Fig. 2).
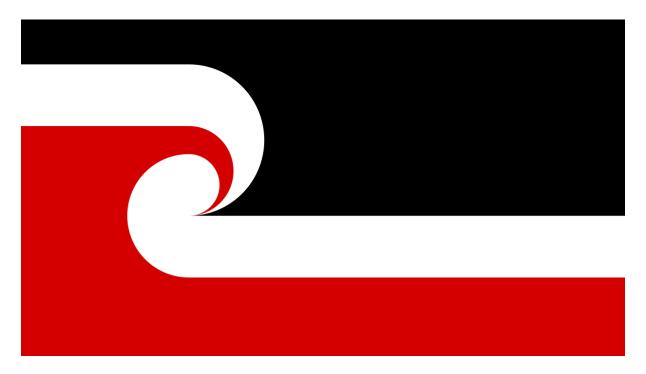
Fig. 2: Tino Rangatirata; the Māori nation flag with the characteristic spiral design.

This spirality is directly commented upon at several points in *Potiki*:

> It is as though a child brings about the birth of a parent because that which comes from under the master's hand is older than he is, is already ancient. (Grace 1986 loc. 50)

> [T]his now-time simply reaches out in any direction towards the outer circles, these outer circles being named 'past' and 'future' only for our convenience. (Grace 1986 loc. 463)

> And this train of stories defined our lives, curving out from points on the spiral in ever-widening circles from which neither beginnings nor endings could be defined. (Grace 1986 loc. 500-508)

> The dull, hard sound of when my father Hemi whacked my big fish with the heavy stick came back to my mind. And the life of the long-ago Toko and the life of my big fish seemed somehow to come together. There was a big kehua there. (Grace 1986 loc. 715)

On multiple occasions, the novel invokes images of movement from the centre to outer circles of a spiral, just like the chant in the prologue. Knudsen (2004: 5) notes that "[t]he traditional Māori conception of development as a form of spiralling progression is frequently encountered as a major inspiration in contemporary Māori literature (…) because it offers a perspective from which Māori culture is seen to carry, intrinsically, the seeds of its continuing renewal." Indeed, the survival of the Tamihana family can be largely attributed to Māori values of mutual help in times of need. The path to a just resolution of the conflict comes from within, when Tangimoana decides to become a lawyer. Knudsen also explains that the Māori conception of a spiral is based on interrelations rather than dichotomies. Deloughrey (1999: 60) also highlights the importance of the Māori

conceptions of time in the novel, suggesting that "Grace employs a spiral temporality where past and future time is narratively re-experienced in what she terms the 'now-time, centred in the being'." In *Potiki,* Māori and European storytelling conventions and languages are used together to create a hybrid but coherent work of oralised literature. Similarly to the later discussed *The Back of the Turtle* and *The Yearning,* mythic elements are also seamlessly integrated into the story in the form of prophecies and premonitions. The larger Māori cosmology is constantly present in the background of the story with mentions of entities such as *kehua* (spirits) or Tāwhirimātea (the god of weather in Māori mythology).

Both King's and Grace's novels mix stories from oral traditions with elements of Christian beliefs. King remarks that a similar technique is employed by the pioneering Indigenous American author Scott Momaday (Kiowa) in *The House Made of Dawn* (1968):

> For N. Scott Momaday, the answer, in part, was to write a novel in which aspects of an unfamiliar universe stood close enough to parts of a known world so that the non-Native reader, knowing the one, might recognize the other. Ironically, Christianity, which had been a door barred against Native–non-Native harmony and understanding, suddenly became an open window through which we could see and hear each other. (King 2003: 108)

Christian stories and cosmology, although oftentimes forced upon Indigenous populations around the world, are now used as a means of communication between Indigenous and Western cultures. Establishing such a link is complicated, as it requires an author to navigate the power struggle between the oral and the written, the Indigenous and Western beliefs. Ramsey-Kurz (2007: 225) notes that "Grace seems to comprehend cultural appropriation as a process in which her people have not been mastered by Western modes of thought and expression but have learnt to master them." On the one hand, the use of Christian elements by Indigenous authors could be seen as their way of extending a hand towards non-Indigenous readers in an act of reconciliation between cultures. Wohlfart (2018: 264) notes that "this also expresses the compatibility of Māori and Pākeha cultures and their potential to grow together." On the other hand, it cannot be understated that Christianisation has been an integral part of colonisation in all three of the discussed countries. Biblical stories have enjoyed a very privileged position in New Zealand. By mixing Māori and Christian mythologies, Patricia Grace elevates the former to give Toko, a Māori child, status equal to that of Jesus. Instead of harmony and reconciliation, this

interpretation would emphasise the continuous power struggle between the two cultures in New Zealand: Christ has to cede some cultural territory to a hero from Māori mythology, even though the two belief systems are not recognised as equal. Just like the oral and the written, however, the two worldviews do not have to be seen as mutually exclusive. Resistance and power struggle can lead to compromise and agreement, tentative though they may be. This could well be the most fitting interpretation, considering the political developments of the last few decades in New Zealand, which seem to be aimed at recognition and rectification of historical wrongdoings. *Potiki* has for a long time been considered a classic of New Zealand literature and many critics have analysed the references to Māori culture in the novel. Nevertheless, reading the story through the prism of oralisation shows the extent to which Western and Māori worldviews, languages, beliefs and narrative styles are interwoven into a single fabric. As an older text, *Potiki* was one of the early examples of oralised literature. It pioneered some of the most recognisable oralisation features, which were later built upon in other works.

There are quite a few similarities between the literary styles of Patricia Grace and Thomas King. Both authors began their literary careers at the end of the 20th century. Just like Grace for Māori literature, King is one of the first Indigenous Canadian/American author to create oralised literature. The analysis that follows focuses on one of his more recent novels, *The Back of the Turtle*.

6.3. The Back of the Turtle

Thomas King's fourth novel tells the story of the fictional Samaritan Bay and Smoke River reserve located in British Columbia. Similarly to *Potiki*, the novel is told from several perspectives through the use of different focalisers. Once a popular tourist destination, the area has been largely abandoned after the Ruin – an environmental disaster in which the company Domidion inadvertently released toxic defoliant called GreenSweep into the river, leading to the death of hundreds of people. Domidion has a history of prioritising profit over anything else. Not long before, the corporation had decided to stop searching for its barge filled with biohazards and the remaining stock of GreenSweep, which is lost at sea. In the aftermath of the Ruin, Samaritan Bay was devoid of life, including turtles, which used to lay eggs on nearby beaches and thus had been the main

tourist attraction of the area. In an ironic twist, Gabriel Quinn, one of the scientists responsible for creating the toxic defoliant, turns out to be an Anisinabe man whose family died during the incident. Racked with guilt, Gabriel travels to Samaritan Bay to commit suicide by drowning, but his plan is spoiled by the sudden appearance of a group of people, who are thrown onto the rocks by the ocean. Gabriel decides to help the unexpected visitors, though they seem to disappear shortly after. He develops a friendship with Mara Reid and Nicholas Crisp, two of the few people who still live in the area, as well as a dog, which he names Soldier. At the same time, Gabriel's boss, Dorian Asher, begins to investigate Gabriel's disappearance, worried that the scientist may reveal incriminating information about his corporation. Due to the company's disregard of environmental safety procedures, an oil spill occurs in the Athabasca sands and creates yet another crisis. There are also reports that Domidion's barge filled with toxic waste was spotted near the Canadian coast. During the course of the story, Gabriel develops romantic feelings for Mara, but he cannot bring himself to tell her that he is responsible for the death of her loved ones. There are signs that life is returning to Samaritan Bay: first algae start growing in the ocean, then the first turtle returns. A boy named Sonny, who lives alone in an abandoned hotel, builds a tower on the beach to serve as a beacon for the animals and people returning home. Gabriel eventually reveals the truth to Mara and once again tries to commit suicide, but she stops him. Soon after, the barge transporting GreenSweep appears on the shore of Samaritan Bay and the entire community come together to push the giant ship back to the sea. The novel ends on an ambiguous though hopeful note, as the area is showing more and more signs of recovery.

6.4. Oralisation features in *The Back of the Turtle*

Although at first glance, *The Back of the Turtle* may seem like a fairly straightforward novel, the narrative is actually filled with symbolism and many layers of meaning, woven together with oralisation features. Ridington (2015: 164) notes the importance of intertextuality in the novel, particularly references to Indigenous mythologies and the Bible but also King's other works and literature in general. The name of the town, Samaritan Bay, invokes the parable of the good Samaritan from Luke; Gabriel is the name of one of the archangels, but his younger sister calls him Riel, which is a clear reference to Louis

Riel (Ridington also suggests Gabriel Dumont, who was another historical leader of the Métis people); Mara may be the novel's Mary; the absent Dad is God, which makes Sonny the son of God, possibly Jesus but perhaps also Thor from Norse mythology, since Sonny wields a hammer; the ship carrying barrels of toxic GreenSweep is called the *Anguis* (Latin for *snake*). Most names in the novel can evoke both positive and negative associations. Crisp remarks upon learning Gabriel's name:

> The Indians do such a thing, I'm told. Collect names as they're earned or as they appear. (…) Gabriel! (…) Now there's thunder and storm. The best-loved of the four angels. The one chosen to announce the birth of John the Baptist and to reveal the Qur'an to Muhammad. It's Gabriel what tells Mary about the road ahead. (…) Dante made Gabriel the chief of the angelic guards placed at the entrance to paradise. Did ye know that? And if the creative arts are your butter and jam, there's a movie called Constantine what has a Gabriel who betrays heaven and joins forces with the Dark Lord. (King 2014: 35-36)

Gabriel is partially responsible for the deaths of his family and it is up to the other characters (and the reader) to decide whether he has earned all the positive connotations that come with his name. By placing deliberate focus on the names of the characters at the start of the novel, King signals that *The Back of the Turtle* is built upon layers of previous stories. Familiarity with those Indigenous and non-Indigenous stories (or lack thereof) will ultimately impact the reader's understanding of the novel's complexity.

The title of the novel evokes a version of a well-known story, which is told in several Indigenous cultures in Canada and the US. According to the story, the world is located on the back of a giant turtle, floating through space. King retells it at the start of every chapter of his *The Truth about Stories* (2003). What is more, Turtle Island is the name given to the North American continent in some Indigenous cultures. The idea that the entire world is precariously placed atop a turtle's shell immediately invokes the feeling of delicate balance. Without the turtle, the world does not have any support and therefore is doomed. One of the main themes of the novel is an exploration of humanity's repeated disregard for that balance and its consequences. Any threat to turtles in *The Back of the Turtle* can be thus interpreted as a threat to the entire world.

In the prologue of the novel, Nicholas Crisp shares an apple with Master Dog while remarking, "Tis the stuff of creation" (King 2014: 1), hinting to the reader that they are about to read a creation story. Crisp is an interesting though enigmatic character. Ridingdon (2015: 163) suggests that his name could be a reference to a 17th century wealthy English merchant, involved in trading with the colonies in Asia and Africa. Crisp speaks

in old-fashioned, formal English, which in some aspects resembles Biblical language. Crisp's idiolect and the apple he eats are the first of many references to Christian mythology in the story. From the very first sentence, King begins unfurling layers of intertextuality and symbolism that coalesce into a single cohesive whole.

The novel proper begins with Gabriel climbing the rock formation called the Apostles, determined to commit suicide by drowning when the tide comes. Instead, he rescues two Vietnamese families, the crew of the *Anguis,* who swam to shore from the stranded ship. This opening scene establishes the main cyclical theme of the narrative: death followed by rebirth and recovery. Gabriel wants to end his life, but he saves lives instead; Samaritan Bay is destroyed by GreenSweep but life in the area recovers: "A hand thrust out of the water, then an arm, fragile, a slender branch caught in a flood. And then a pool of black hair, floating around a child's face" (King 2014: 7). By the end of the novel, the same families decide to settle in Samaritan Bay and start a new life there.

The symbolism of water is another very important element of the story. The way Gabriel saves the cold, naked people from the ocean is reminiscent of childbirth – an actual beginning of life in water. It also evokes the evolutionary beginning of all life in the oceans. In Chapter 70, Crisp remarks while telling the story of his first meeting with Master Dog: "[The story] starts as life herself starts. In the water" (King 2014: 386). According to the story, one day Crisp went for a swim in the ocean and almost drowned, but the dog Soldier appeared out of nowhere and the two fought waves for hours before being washed ashore. Soldier is also the name of the dog from another one of King's novels, *Truth and Bright Water* (1999). In that story, the dog dies but he seems to be reborn in the waters of Samaritan Bay. Finally, those scenes can also be compared to the arrival of the Woman Who Fell from the Sky to our world: "[The storyteller] had spent time on why the woman was digging in the first place and how her clothes were torn off as she fell through the sky, how she arrived on the water world cold and naked, how the water creatures gathered around to keep her warm, and how the labour had been long and hard" (King 2014: 231). In the novel, the story is told by Crisp and Mara to Gabriel while they bathe naked in the hot springs. King continues to tease the reader with images of water as well as Biblical references, when Mara compares the hot springs to the garden of Eden. In this case, the story of Adam and Eve is cleverly reversed: Gabriel enters the pool in his underwear but when he realises that his friends are naked, he gets embarrassed and surreptitiously removes his final garment. The repetitive visions of water as giver and taker

of life spread even beyond the novel to other works by King, such as *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993) or the aforementioned *Truth and Bright Water* (1999). Paired with the frequent references to other stories, myths and historical figures, this feature highlights the continuity of storytelling on a global scale.

The Back of the Turtle is told from the perspective of five focalisers: Sonny, Crisp, Mara, Gabriel and Dorian. Sonny and his Dad first appear in King's lesser known short story "The Garden Court Motor Hotel" (2004b), which might also be where the idea for the novel came from. In the story, Sonny is in charge of the hotel, because it is Sunday and his Dad is resting. Suddenly, a naked Indian woman falls from the sky into the pool, looking for turtles to fix the world. Perplexed, Sonny explains to her that there have been no turtles in the area for a long time. The story, albeit very short, mirrors some of the narrative beats in *The Back of the Turtle*. Sonny is the only focaliser in the novel whose chapters are narrated in the present tense. What is more, Sonny's chapters are characterised by heavy stylistic and typographic oralisation. They are full of onomatopoeias, repetitions, wordplays, line breaks and rhetorical questions.

> Sonny sits in his hole and waits.
>
> Wait. Wait. Wait.
> Sonny likes his hole. (King 2014: 196)
>
> 'Heriquin.'
> New word discovered by Sonny.
> But then 'mannequin' should be 'himiquin'?
> Wham-wham, hammer-hammer (King 2014: 102)
>
> It's a Sonny day in the neighbourhood. (King 2014: 180)
>
> Sonny misses walking the turtles at the beach. He misses protecting the babies. If he were a baby turtle, he is sure that he would want to be protected.
> Who will protect Sonny?
> Sonny shouts this at the wind and the water. He shouts this at the sand and the bleached turtle shells.
> Who will protect Sonny? (King 2014: 181)

Because Sonny refers to himself in the 3rd person and his monologues are not indicated by inverted commas, it is actually impossible to determine whether his chapters are narrated by a 3rd person narrator or Sonny himself. King masterfully meshes oralised storytelling style with famous quotes and lessons from the Bible in those chapters. It is possible that the name *Sonny* is also a reference to the Latin word *sonus* meaning *sound*, especially since the density of stylistic oralisation features in the novel increases significantly whenever Sonny becomes the focaliser. This strategy is quite similar to the one employed by

Patricia Grace in *Potiki*, where chapters narrated by Toko contain more oralisation features.

In the novel, Sonny is in charge of the Ocean Star Hotel (the advertising slogan of which, "Follow the Star", is a reference to the Star of Bethlehem). Sonny believes that his Dad, likened to Christian God, is inside one of the hotel rooms, resting, despite the fact that he presumably has not seen him in years. God was absent when the Ruin came and now Sonny is lost and confused, unable to fix the world by himself. In the beginning of the novel, he is still closely aligned with Christian teachings – he wants nothing to do with Crisp or the Indigenous characters. When hearing the sound of a raven, an important figure associated with the Trickster in many Indigenous mythologies, he recalls: "Throw rocks at that bird, Dad used to tell Sonny. Aim for the beak. No point in being subtle" (King 2014: 29). His Christian upbringing places him in direct opposition to Indigenous values. Sonny tries to follow Dad's teachings throughout the novel, but his own conscience and worldview are more in line with Indigenous cultures. He never acts on Dad's calls to violence, he appreciates the natural world and, in his loneliness, he is desperately in need of the community. Sonny's true character is highlighted with the use of oralisation features in his chapters, which foreshadow his eventual shift from a Judeo-Christian to an Indigenous-based worldview. In the latter part of the novel, he breaks into God's room and upon seeing that it is empty, finally joins the other characters and becomes a part of the recovering community. The completion of Sonny's transformation is symbolised by him wearing Gabriel's raven feather jacket and playing the drum. His help is essential in pushing away the *Anguis* and saving Samaritan Bay from another disaster.

A significant portion of the novel is devoted to depicting events from the perspective of Dorian Asher, the CEO of Domidion. Dorian is supposed to serve as a villain, someone to root against, since he is the face of the company responsible for most of the difficult issues and destruction in the novel. Nevertheless, despite his executive position, Dorian is never in control of the situation. Throughout the novel, he is forced to respond to crisis after crisis but his attempts always result in failure: he cannot shift the blame for the Athabasca incident, he is unable to find Gabriel and when he agrees to a TV interview, his answers to journalist's questions only cause Domidion stock to sink deeper. At the same time, his wife decides to leave him and his health deteriorates to the point that he suspects he might die soon. King humanises the character in order to show that the blame for the destruction of the environment does not lie with any single person but rather in the

system as a whole. Dorian is not an evil caricature of a ruthless businessman but a realistic, complex and human character. Towards the end of the novel, when Domidion's downfall seems inevitable, the reader may even sympathise with Dorian to an extent, although these feelings will probably be short-lived, as in the end, a presidential assassination attempt grabs the newspaper headlines and everyone seems to forget about Domidion's sins. The ending is rather ambiguous: Samaritan Bay is on a route to recovery but those responsible for the crises (except perhaps Gabriel) avoid any consequences. Dorian buys a new house and it is suggested that his wife wants to return to him. If the reader felt any sympathy towards the character, they may feel a bit flustered. The villain is not punished. The evil corporation wins. Everything returns to the status quo. A sweeping, systemic change is needed to prevent future catastrophes, although there seems to be no hope for such measures to be introduced. Dorian's downfall and recovery are part of the repetitive, circular timeline of the narrative. In some ways, his story parallels that of Gabriel. However, whereas Gabriel's circle allows him to rediscover his Indigenous roots and move forward, Dorian is stuck in an endless cycle of environmental destruction dictated by corporate greed, with little hope for meaningful change.

Fraile-Marcos (2020) identifies Dorian's attempts to salvage his company as post-truth strategies. The CEO of Domidion tries to frame Gabriel as a mad scientist, he spreads conspiracy theories about environmental groups that oppose him, he engages in greenwashing by financing meaningless 'environmentally-friendly' initiatives and appeals to emotions by claiming that the disasters are the necessary price to pay for "the security of the nation and the protection of our children's future" (King 2014: 425). Dorian is shown as very detached from the real world. Living in the confines of sprawling metropolises, his daily life is reduced to cold numbers and material possessions. His capitalist mindset stands in direct contrast to ideas represented by Mara, Crisp and Gabriel. O'Brien (2020: 47) observes how Dorian embraces a "deracinated model of storytelling". He follows the stories of environmental destruction that his company has caused, but he remains in the comfort of luxurious Toronto apartments, trying to control the narrative, while Gabriel physically travels to Samaritan Bay. Dorian's establishment of the Domidion School of Business and Media Communications, which excludes departments of philosophy, history and fine arts "highlights the absence of ethics and aesthetics from the corporate mode of storytelling" (O'Brien 2020: 47). O'Brien also employs Vanessa Watts' (2013: 21) (Mohawk and Anishinaabe Bear Clan) concept of Place-Thought,

which is "the non-distinctive space where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated." This Indigenous view of epistemology and ontology as inseparable show exactly how important it is for Gabriel to go to Samaritan Bay, as it is the only way to fully comprehend and face the story of his mother's and sister's deaths.

In contrast to Gabriel, the CEO of Domidion spends most of his time alone. The person he speaks to the most is his assistant Winter, but as her name suggests, she is even colder and more emotionless than him. At one point, Dorian notes that "Winter's psychological profiles continued to be mildly disturbing, but Dorian knew that, while successful people and the insane often wandered off into dark areas, the Winters of the world could always find their way home" (King 2014: 15). Dorian admits that being a successful corporate executive requires detachment bordering on mental illness. The character features of Dorian and Winter are also reflected in the language of the novel. There are few features of oralisation in Dorian's chapters and sentences are longer on average, whereas Gabriel's and Mara's chapters are often achronological with frequent flashbacks to the characters youth and childhoods. In comparison, Dorian's chapters are much more linear and predictable. If he digresses in his focalised narration, he does so to comment on women's appearance (King 2014: 80), the price or size of material possessions (King 2014: 77) or his standards of style and elegance (King 2014: 214). The lack of oralisation features in Dorian's chapters highlights them by way of contrast in other parts of the novel.

The novel features heavy commentary on human destruction of the environment. Ravaged by guilt, Gabriel covers the walls of his flat with sites of real, human-caused catastrophes: "Chernobyl. Idaho Falls. Chalk River" (King 2014: 23). The sheer number of disasters inscribed on the wall shows the repetitive and cyclical nature of these events. Humanity seems to be unable to learn from its mistakes. Lessons learnt from past horrors survive in the form of stories, but not everyone is able to recognise the power of those stories. Gabriel, an Indigenous character, becomes obsessed with them. The stories drive him to return to Samaritan Bay and, as a consequence, prevent another disaster. O'Brien (2020) also notes the importance of storytelling for Gabriel's personal struggle with guilt. Upon his return to Samaritan Bay, Gabriel witnesses the destruction caused by the defoliant he created. Crisp tells him the story of how it happened. Throughout the novel, Gabriel struggles with whether or not to tell Mara the story of who he is but he cannot bring

himself to do it: "And what exactly would he say? What would he tell Mara? How would he explain his role in the disaster that killed so many and destroyed so much? Where would he find the justification?" (King 2014: 340). While life in Samaritan Bay slowly recovers, Gabriel cannot begin the process of healing until he tells his story. When he does, at the end of the novel, not expecting to be forgiven, he tries to commit suicide again. This time, it is Mara who saves him from the incoming tide. Gabriel's admission of his guilt signifies the beginning of a healing process. The novel ends when that process is still ongoing with Crisp and the dog speculating about the possible future relationship between Gabriel and Mara. Storytelling makes the healing possible and is key to the reconciliation between the two characters, similarly to the way in which personal stories and accounts have served as the foundation for the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in Canada and South Africa and the Waitangi Tribunal in New Zealand.

Cormier (2020: 13) analyses *The Back of the Turtle* as an example of apocalyptic fiction, although he stresses the fact that for Indigenous peoples, colonisation has indeed been a form of an apocalypse and therefore the experiences do not need to be fictionalised. Cormier employs the Algonquian term *bimaadiziwin* (living in health or living a good life) and defines the Indigenous conception of apocalypse as a threat to *bimaadiziwin*. In this case, that threat comes in the form of the *Anguis* filled to the brim with biohazards. Cormier (2020: 15) notes the parallels between one of the final scenes in the novel and the Book of Revelations. King once again subverts the biblical story by describing seven waves (like the apocalyptic seven seals), which help push the ship back to the water. At the end of the novel, the *Anguis* is on its way 'home', to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. For Cormier, this is the sign that capitalists responsible for the disaster will be ironically ruined by their own greed. This, however, seems unlikely. Most of Domidion's business is done in Toronto, further west from the sea. Should another disaster occur, it is common people who will suffer the most.

The Back of the Turtle is a modern creation story made up of many other stories. Some of them come from Indigenous mythologies, others are borrowed from the Bible or from King's previous works. Whereas Patricia Grace blends Biblical and oral tradition references in a clear and consistent way, King bombards the reader with more and less familiar images, treating some of them seriously and subverting others with humour or irony. In many ways this is a part of the author's signature writing style, but the accumulation of references and oralisation features may also have something to do with the time

when the novel was published. Whereas *Potiki* (published in 1986) is an older, almost foundational text of Māori oralised literature, *The Back of the Turtle* (published in 2014) is one of King's more recent works, written at a time when oralised literature in Canada was already fairly well-established. Some of the more contemporary texts, like Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth* and Joshua Whitehead's *Johnny Appleseed* innovate upon the genre by pushing the experimental features to their limits. As King expands on his style, his more recent works could also be seen as part of that group.

All of the characters and story beats used by King seem familiar but are still considerably new, fresh and different. The author adapts these older stories to comment on environmental issues which are most pressing and relevant in the current day and age. As a contemporary Indigenous author, he knows that stories have the power to change and heal the world. This particular story is attempting the herculean task of dismantling one of the core ideas contained in the Book of Genesis, which says that nature was created *for* humans to rule over. In *The Back of the Turtle*, King introduces an alternative view: all living creatures should live in harmony and co-operate to make the world a better place. In order to give the story more power, the author infuses the text with features of oralisation inspired by elements of oral tradition. The rich symbolism allows King to explore global issues while still focusing on a small, fictional community and the stylistic oralisation makes the story entertaining and memorable. Although critics have already noted King's unique oralised style of writing in *Green Grass, Running Water* and *One Good Story, That One*, it is interesting to see that the author continues to further develop this type of writing and making it more complex in his more recent works.

The final part of the analysis is devoted to *The Yearning*, the debut novel by the South African Basotho writer Mohale Mashigo. The author's use of oralisation features gives one a glimpse of how this type of literature may develop in the future. It is clear that the new generations of writers continue creating this type of prose and inventing new, creative ways to represent features of oral traditions on paper.

6.5. The Yearning

Mohale Mashigo's *The Yearning* follows the story of Marubini, a young woman from Soweto of Basotho, Bapedi and Zulu origin. The novel is narrated by Marubini herself,

who frequently tells stories of her childhood, intertwining the past and the present. The readers learn early on that the main character's father was murdered when her mother was pregnant with her younger brother, Simpiwhe. Before he died, Marubini's father had received the Calling to become a *sangoma* (traditional healer). Devastated by the loss of her husband, Marubini's mother was unable to devote herself to bringing up her children. Marubini did everything she could to take care of her brother with the help of her grandfather, whom she refers to as Ntatemoholo (Sesotho word for grandfather). The young girl grew very close to her grandfather and was heartbroken when he passed away. In the present day, Marubini works for a wine company in Cape Town and has a French boyfriend, Pierre, who owns several restaurants. Her relatively peaceful life is suddenly disrupted by a haunting nursery song that plays in her head, leading to fainting spells and seizures. The sudden onset of odd symptoms makes Marubini think of her father, who suffered from inexplicable headaches and pain in his legs when he first received the Calling. The symptoms only stopped when he heeded the call and started studying to become a *sangoma*. The seizure attacks soon become more frequent and now they are accompanied by visions of a shadowy figure, who intends to hurt Marubini. Doctors are unable to help her. Similarly to her father, Marubini also feels a strong yearning for water and on one occasion she is able to heat up an entire lake simply by swimming in it. The visions slowly reveal some long-forgotten memories from her childhood. Marubini decides to talk to her grandmother, who is more knowledgeable about spiritual matters. It is revealed that when she was a child, Marubini was kidnapped and raped by a paedophile. Her father and grandmother performed a ritual to make her forget the traumatic event. Now, the repressed memories are resurfacing in the form of visions and seizures. Marubini goes through another ritual to regain her lost memories. She remembers her father explaining that he has to leave her because he became the owner of the hurt he removed from her memories. In another vision, she sees how her father faked his death and travelled north to bury her trauma in a place where their ancestors used to live long ago. The ending of the novel is quite ambiguous. Marubini and Simpiwhe suspect that their father might be in Cameroon, where Bantu people originate from. In the epilogue, some time has passed and Marubini has a baby daughter named Chari after a river in Cameroon. She reveals that at some point she travelled to the country and met a teacher at that river.

6.6. **Oralisation features in** *The Yearning*

At its core, Mohale Mashigo's debut novel is a story about the relationship between past and present, tradition and modernity. This relationship may be misconstrued as a clash but in fact, the seemingly opposite aspects are interwoven into the single fabric of the novel. The story is narrated by Marubini in a combination of present and past tense. She is constantly haunted by the traumatic events of her past, the death of her grandfather and her father. At the same time, her brother, Simpiwhe, has a strong connection with the future, as he is able to sketch events that are yet to come. Marubini's name means *Ancient Civilisation* and she is given that name because of her dark skin, which makes her look like her distant ancestors: "That's why I gave you that name: Marubini. You were a new beginning for us who had lived long lives and needed respite. Marubini is where our past lies, the place of old from where we once came. You emerged and brought us into the future" (Mashigo 2016, loc. 129).

Both Marubini's link to the past and Simpiwhe's link to the future could be seen as supernatural but these spiritual abilities are shown to be a part of everyday cultural reality of South Africa. This reality may diverge from the Western concept of objective, empirically verifiable truths. The siblings' father, Jabulani, was himself a traditional healer and his connection to the world of ancestors is thought to have passed on to his children, at least to some extent: "According to Gogo, it's too soon to tell if I have the Calling or not. She is convinced the gift has passed on to Simpiwhe" (Mashigo 2016, loc. 1931). The fact that spiritual rituals are performed against the backdrop of contemporary South Africa with its wineries, restaurants and vibrant tourist industry may seem striking for a non-Indigenous reader. However, the novel presents an accurate description of how Indigenous traditions function in the modern day and age. As demonstrated by Grace and King in their respective novels, the role of traditions and myths in Indigenous communities is not much different from the role of Christian practices in Western societies. Nevertheless, due to the fact that Christianity is ingrained in the dominant, coloniser cultures, it is rarely considered in the same categories as Indigenous belief systems.

The origin of Jabulani's spiritual connection with ancestors (and therefore also Marubini's and Simpiwhe's spiritual powers) is explained around the middle of the novel: "Your feet are on fire because they are hardly ever in water. You're a water snake, you need water" (Mashigo 2016, loc. 751) and later "After he tells me that he loves me, my

father becomes a snake. A beautiful white and red snake that slithers away and turns into water" (Mashigo 2016, loc. 2240). On several occasions, Marubini talks about her father transforming into a snake and spending a lot of time in water. The choice of snake on Mashigo's part is not accidental. Ophiolatry (or snake worship) has been a very important part of many African cultures, including those of the Khoekhoen, San and Bantu peoples (Hoff 1997, Rakotsoane 1996). The Water Snake (sometimes referred to by its Afrikaans name Waterslang) specifically has been seen as the bringer of rain and fertility by the Bantu tribes, who migrated to Southern Africa from the territories of today's Cameroon. Depending on the culture and the myth, the Water Snake exhibited a variety of powers from controlling water to bringing back the dead to shapeshifting abilities similar to those of Indigenous American Tricksters. The entity was sometimes regarded as a supreme be-ing but oral traditions mention also lesser water snake spirits, responsible for local bodies of water and specific tribes (Rakotsoane 1996: 49-53). These elements tie in well with the events of the novel, as Jabulani learns how to use his powers to help his community (e.g., by expelling evil Tokoloshe spirits) and at the end of the novel is believed to have travelled to Cameroon to connect with the most powerful ancestors. Frenkel (2019: 78) notes that through this narrative connection between South Africa and Cameroon, Mashigo refers to a broader, pan-African Indigenous system of knowledge that is more universal and not limited to a specific South African tribe.

Another important theme in *The Yearning*, which coincidentally also emphasises the circular conception of time, is one of inheritance and legacy. Jabulani's powers pass on to his children. Both Marubini and Simpiwhe are shown to have affinity for water: Marubini heats up a lake with her own body and Simpiwhe is a member of a swimming team. Throughout the novel, elders are responsible for guiding the new generation through both traditional and contemporary realities of life. It is important that the students are someday ready to become teachers themselves: "I changed out of my black gym dress and school shirt and went to play with my friends, to ensure that I would one day be a good teacher of *diketo* to some young girl who finds the game a challenge" (Mashigo 2016, loc. 1167). *Diketo* is one of the 10 officially recognised Indigenous games of South Africa, typically played with pebbles or seeds (Kumalo 2021). Though it is predominantly enjoyed by children, *diketo* is an important part of Indigenous cultures in South Africa. The act of teaching the game to the next generation is also a part of South African oral tradition. Through Marubini's eyes, the reader witnesses several important cultural

events, including a traditional wedding and *lebollo la basadi*, the women's rite of passage. By the end of the novel, the main character is a mother and has enough experience to pass the traditional wisdom to her daughter.

The Yearning presents a non-linear narration, in which memories interrupt present events. Murray (2017) shows that the depiction of temporality in the novel is used to highlight Marubini's trauma: "Neither a simple linear progression or a circular temporal sequence does justice in telling her story as she finds herself vacillating between a traumatic unremembered past and her present (…)" Although Marubini's haunting visions are related to a past event, the memories of that event have been forcefully removed from her mind. What is left is the trauma, which is shown to spread beyond the character's memories and beyond the past to directly affect her present and possibly even deny her future by threatening her life. By taking away Marubini's memories, her father negates her ability to confront the traumatic events. The act of remembering the past is the first step in the process of healing. Mashigo uses non-linear time to describe the process of trauma recovery in a very direct but evocative way. Gasela (2021: 43) suggests that "sacrificing the present to hide the past" in the novel is symptomatic of the issues plaguing South African society as a whole. The communal trauma resulting from the apartheid is still present in people's minds and it has to be confronted, not ignored or forgotten. One way to deal with the trauma is through the healing power of storytelling. This interpretation seems to be supported by the author herself when she says: "This country is such a frustrating place; we bury our stories and memories and wonder why we are in so much pain" (Mashigo in Malec 2018). Here, once again, one can employ Watts' (2013) concept of Place-Thought. Similarly to *The Back of the Turtle, The Yearning* shows that stories are inextricable from physical space. As a young adult, Marubini leaves the township of Soweto and moves to the much more modern and Europeanised Cape Town. This change parallels her leaving the traumatic past behind in order to start a new life. When the past resurfaces, Marubini has to physically return to Soweto in order to rediscover her past and heal. In the same way, her father has to travel to modern day Cameroon in order to learn about the oldest, most powerful rituals, traditions and stories.

Storytelling is shown to be a key way of establishing links between generations and passing on knowledge: "Every year on my birthday, she still calls to tell me the story of how her daughter gave birth 'to a beautiful but stubborn granddaughter'" (Mashigo 2016, loc. 138). The story of Marubini's birth is told twice in the novel. It is an important

tradition that she shares with her grandmother. Similarly, stories are shown to bring her closer to her grandfather and father: "'Instead, he would make us listen to radio dramas in Sepedi. He insisted that I stop doing whatever it was I was doing and come and enjoy the story with him. Those were quite possibly the best times of my life (…)" (Mashigo 2016, loc. 563), "The stories were the only link I had to Baba. His voice was my own when I spoke those words" (Mashigo 2016, loc. 715). For Marubini, stories and oral tradition are the source of connection with the three people in her life who have the most traditional wisdom. Although the main character is already an adult at the start of the novel, it is through those stories and experiences that the reader witnesses her growth and transformation into a person ready to usher a new generation of Indigenous people into the world. The enigmatic epilogue suggests that she has taken a role similar to that of her father's to help and heal people around her with the use of traditional knowledge. Importantly, her learning process does not rely on written word but on stories and oral tradition. Frenkel (2019: 78) suggests that an important part of the healing process (for Marubini as for Indigenous South Africans in general) is "embracing indigenous belief systems as a part of modern black identity."

As far as other oralisation features are concerned, a lot can be said about the usage of language in the novel. As noted in Chapter 4, *The Yearning* presents the modern reality of Indigenous South Africans who grew up in townships and speak a mix of several Indigenous languages and English. This novel, perhaps more than any other discussed in this dissertation, reflects that interplay of languages in most of its dialogues. Bruce-Novoa (1990: 23), a scholar of Chicano literature, speaks of this type of writing as interlingual: "[the languages] are forced into confrontation to form a new interlingual product, the reflection of the cultural synthesis (…)" The seamless transition between English and Indigenous languages in *The Yearning*, though marked with italics, makes it seem less like a confrontation and more like a patchwork quilt where one language fills lexical gaps in the other:

> The young man calls from her front door, '*Ko ko*, do you still have chicken feet left, *magriza*?' I hear her answer, sounding cross: 'I'm not your *magriza, wena mfana*.' (Mashigo 2016, loc. 1737)

> 'I need to use the bathroom.'
> '*Eish mara wena*. Hold it in.' (Mashigo 2016, loc. 1272)

> She was convinced that living in Soweto had ruined my chances of speaking proper Sepedi, and the fact that I used the Sesotho equivalent for grandmother, instead of 'Koko', was a perfect example of my 'diluted' Sepedi. (Mashigo 2016, loc. 949)

The cultural dynamics of modern South Africa with its 11 official languages provides the environment for even more striking interlinguality. In urban centres, like Soweto where Marubini grows up, people of various backgrounds live right next to each other and most children learn to speak odd mixtures of several Indigenous languages with English (or more rarely Afrikaans) serving as lingua franca. This is less striking in rural communities, like the one presented in *Chasing the Tails of my Father's Cattle*, since they usually use one dominant Indigenous language. Reading *The Yearning* as an oralised novel reveals aspects of the story that are otherwise easy to gloss over. Mohale Mashigo's debut work is beautifully written and very complex, and it proudly stands its ground next to works of renowned authors, such as Thomas King or Patricia Grace.

"The truth about stories is that that's all we are", says King at the start of every chapter in *The Truth about Stories* (2003). Although people around the world disagree with each other over politics, money and worldview, everyone enjoys a good story. *Potiki, The Back of the Turtle* and *The Yearning* are examples of the power of stories in full display. The three novels, written by Indigenous authors from distinct cultures, have surprisingly much in common. They are set in three different countries, each of which has its own turbulent history and unique contemporary issues. However, the novels are also similar in the way the authors use features of oralisation to reflect elements of their oral traditions and enhance the style and themes of their writing. In *Potiki*, the reader can see an early example of oralisation: a novel made of stories with frequent use of unmarked Indigenous language and themes of land reclamation revolving around spiral time. *The Back of the Turtle* is a recent work by an author who has mastered his unique oralisation strategies but continues to expand on them: it features layered storytelling with references to both Indigenous and Western cultures, stylistic oralisation full of rhythm, repetition and typographic spaces and a powerful call to avoid a catastrophic climate disaster enhanced by the power of stories. Finally, *The Yearning* is a debut oralised novel by a young author who employs oralisation strategies developed by the previous generations and builds upon them in a non-linear story about trauma and the place of Indigenous customs in modern-day South Africa. All three of the novels emphasise the importance of community as well as the relationship between people and the land. They utilise oralisation features to great effect to highlight particular themes and imbue the stories with the sounds of oral traditions. They also embody the Indigenous North American concept of "all my relations", which in King's (1992: ix) words is "the extended relationship we

share with all human beings (…) the web of kinship extending to the animals, to the birds, to the fish, to the plants, to all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined." Those webs of relations are woven by many Indigenous communities around the world, often through the use of storytelling and, in recent decades, literature. The universal features of oralisation show that regardless of the cultural backgrounds, some threads in those webs are very much alike.

Conclusion

Before the spread of writing, all stories had been oral, which makes oratures the ancestors of literatures. Even though the invention of writing was a relatively recent event in human history, its convenience quickly made it a dominant mode of storytelling in Europe. It is debatable whether writing truly has the power to restructure human consciousness, but it definitely revolutionised the way we tell stories. Over the centuries, written language was imbued with so many different rules and standardised conventions that it became distinctly different from spoken language. The Great Divide theory was born from the assumption that these differences between orality and literacy are fundamental and irreconcilable. However, it failed to recognise that writing is at its core nothing more than an extension of natural spoken language. Instead of the Great Divide, Western literacy has built a brick wall of artificial rules to distinguish itself from orality. Many Western authors adhere to the centuries of conventions that they unwittingly absorb when learning how to read and write. This style of writing is what an average reader expects from an average text. Sometimes, however, the reader is faced with an alternative – a text which knowingly strays away from those conventions – and they can recognise how accustomed they are to typical written narratives. Oralised literature is one such alternative.

The conventions of writing are only as rigid and stringent as the people who enforce them. For centuries, literature was reserved for the dominant cultures in Europe and Asia. Indigenous peoples had little chance to be published and even if they did, they had to adhere to Western rules regarding language, style and plot. Although anthropologists expressed interest in recording traditional myths and tales, more often than not they twisted the original to make it fit their own worldview and sense of aesthetics. It is only in the recent decades that Indigenous storytellers in Canada, South Africa and New Zealand have gained the hard-fought opportunity to speak for themselves. They may be free from the colonisers' censors, but they still face the challenging task of shedding centuries of cultural, linguistic, economic and political influence by another ethnic group. In Canada, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples have survived the government's attempts at forceful assimilation of Indigenous cultures into the dominant one. Although many of the Indigenous Canadian languages and cultures are still threatened by the hegemony of English, there is now a number of Indigenous institutions, associations and initiatives (such

as the Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn, the Métis Nation of Alberta or the Inuit Circumpolar Council among others), which aim to support them and help them thrive. In South Africa, the apartheid government's project of arbitrary cultural and linguistic division, aimed at preserving the 'purity' of non-Indigenous cultures, imploded. Though it can be argued that political colonisation in South Africa is over, the cultural and economic colonisation still continues with the World Inequality Lab reporting that the wealth gap in South Africa has remained largely unchanged since the fall of the apartheid government (Sguazzin 2021). In New Zealand, the Māori people fought bloody wars against the colonisers to protect their land and rights. They now hold significant political power in the country and their language and culture is thriving, but the broken promises of the Treaty of Waitangi continue to have an impact on people's lives and only a fraction of the land confiscated by the government has been returned to its rightful owners.

Indigenous authors recognise writing as an important tool to amplify their voice, but they also understand how limiting the written conventions are for their orature-derived styles. Thus, oralised literature was born. Breaking the conventions of writing is not done as a statement but rather is a natural result of incorporating elements of orature into a text. Although there is no brick wall of conventions between Indigenous orality and literacy, the limitations of writing make the two modes of communication incompatible in some aspects, which requires authors to experiment and compromise in order to reconcile them within a single narrative. Oralisation features resulting from this process are dependent on the author's creativity and specifics of their oral tradition, which oftentimes makes them personal and unique to a given text. Nevertheless, just like oral traditions around the world share similarities, so do oralised literatures as well. Features such as the use of Indigenous languages, repetition, typographic space and line breaks, incorporation of songs or non-linear time are present in Indigenous Canadian, South African as well as New Zealand texts, although their implementation may differ. The features are used to emulate the rhythm and communal nature of oral tradition, the participatory aspects of storytelling and the music and sound effects that often accompany it. The features can also be used to highlight and complement the themes and real-world issues oftentimes discussed in Indigenous prose. This speaks to the power of storytelling to inspire change in the world. Some of that power is relayed through oralisation features.

Experienced writers like Thomas King, Zakes Mda or Patricia Grace have developed their own styles of writing, which oftentimes include heavy oralisation. However, it

is clear to see that the new generations of authors, such as Joshua Whitehead, Mohale Mashigo or Tina Makereti, follow in their predecessors' footsteps and have already expanded upon some of the features and produced their own. This shows that oralised literature is by no means a clearly defined genre and it can never become one. Just like oral tradition, oralised literature is fluid, evanescent and everchanging. It adapts to current realities and to what is expected of it. It never stops evolving and although writing can freeze a story in place temporarily, there will always be another storyteller to thaw it out.

This study is, perhaps fittingly, both selective and broad. It is audacious enough to compare texts from three, completely different cultural, historical and geographical realities and takes a look at a large (for a literary study) corpus of 21 texts by 17 different authors, which includes novels, short stories and life writing. It is clear that the choice of whether or not to implement oralisation features depends ultimately on the authors and their visions of their texts. There seems to be no overall noticeable difference in the usage of oralisation in the three types of texts.

Thomas King and Makhosazana Xaba adjust the intensity of oralisation from story to story and from chapter to chapter. Patricia Grace oralises the dialogues of elder characters more. Mohale Mashigo seamlessly weaves mythology and modern reality into one cohesive whole. Paula Morris does not use that many oralisation features when writing about her own life in *On Coming Home*, but she changes the style in the account of her ancestors' journey to England in *Rangatira.* Oralisation features are well present in narratives set in the past, like *The Imaginary Lives of James Poneke* or *Chasing the Tails of my Father's Cattle,* as well as those discussing the present, like *Spilt Milk* or *Dog Eat Dog*. There are also several texts, such as *The Heart of Redness*, *The Yearning* or *Monkey Beach*, that mix past and present together with oralisation features often serving as the connective tissue between the two. Above all, however, it is clear that all of the discussed texts come from long traditions of storytelling.

Despite its large scope, due to the insurmountable amount of material, the study admittedly omits many authors, genres and works of literature which also deserve attention. As the author of this study, I would love to devote more space in this thesis to poetry and drama, to Jeannette Armstrong, Richard Wagemese and Tomson Highway, to Sol Plaatje, Zukiswa Wanner and Pumla Gqola, to Witi Ihimaera, Hone Tuwhare, Becky Manawatu, Kāterina Mataiara and many, many others. There are new talents and names surfacing almost every day. Some Indigenous authors published new works or their debut

novels during the time of writing this study. Although it was impossible to include all works in this single study, the number of potential texts for future critical endeavours in the field is heart-warming.

Another promising area for future studies is to go beyond Canada, South Africa and New Zealand and examine oralisation in Indigenous American and Australian literatures. This dissertation additionally limits its scope to literatures in English, while Indigenous peoples writing in French, Spanish, Portuguese and other languages presumably likewise oralise their texts. Looking at Indigenous literatures in different languages could well provide insight into the process of oralisation that is otherwise inaccessible.

In this study, I have attempted to explore the many ways in which Indigenous authors inspired by their oral traditions transform European conventions of writing. Their work is an important contribution to the growth of literature as a whole, a contribution that only Indigenous writers can make by sharing elements of their oral traditions with the world. Oralisation can be seen simply as the next stage in the development of storytelling, an expression of Indigenous literary nationalism or an act of reconciliation between the oral and the written which brings us one step closer to mutual understanding. Perhaps it is a combination of the three. What is clear is that oralised literatures deserve to be read and studied with their Indigenous contexts in mind and they must not be disregarded for their departure from non-Indigenous literary standards. Without considering the oral tradition that the texts stem from, a reader will be unable to grasp the text fully.

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.

STRESZCZENIE

Niniejsza rozprawa analizuje wybrane przykłady prozy anglojęzycznej autorstwa indygenicznych Kanadyjczyków, Południowoafrykańczyków i Nowozelandczyków, aby ustalić w jaki sposób wcielają oni w dzieła literackie elementy stylu i fabuły, aspekty rdzennych ontologii, epistemologii oraz wierzeń, jak również archetypy postaci pochodzące tradycji ustnych. Poprzez zastosowanie rozmaitych środków stylistycznych, rdzenni autorzy są w stanie odwzorować wiele charakterystycznych cech tradycji ustnych, które pozornie mogą wydawać się trudne lub wręcz niemożliwe do odzwierciedlenia w formie pisemnej, m.in. uczestnictwo słuchaczy w procesie opowiadania historii oraz rytm mowy opowiadaczy. Chociaż wiele z tych cech jest zależnych od indywidualnych charakterystyk tradycji ustnych w danej kulturze czy społeczności oraz od inwencji twórczej danego autora, niniejsza rozprawa postuluje istnienie uniwersalnych cech, które używane są w podobny sposób w rdzennych literaturach każdego z trzech omawianych krajów. Literatura rdzenna, która odwzorowuje charakterystyczne cechy tradycji ustnych jest nazywana w rozprawie *literaturą oralizowaną*. Poprzez analizę 21 indygenicznych kanadyjskich, południowoafrykańskich i nowozelandzkich tekstów, autor rozprawy stara się określić podobieństwa w cechach oralizacji pochodzącymi z różnych kultur, tekstów i od różnych autorów. Ponadto rozprawa demonstruje w jaki sposób zrozumienie zjawiska oralizacji może przysłużyć się analizie literackiej.

Wykorzystana w rozprawie metodologia badawcza zaczerpnięta jest z rdzennych (Vizenor 1989b, Melbourne 1991, Maracle 1994, Archibald 2008, Blaeser 2016) oraz zachodnich (Ong 1982, Kashula 2002, Allen 2012) badań literaturoznawczych i kulturoznawczych na tematy związane z oralnością i piśmiennością, jak również tradycjami ustnymi w Kanadzie, RPA i Nowej Zelandii (Okpewho 1992, Eigenbrod 1995, McRae 2000). Badanie korzysta także z wiedzy przekazywanej przez Starszyznę grup indygenicznych oraz samych pisarzy, którzy często omawiają związek pomiędzy oralnością a piśmiennością oraz wyzwania związane z odwzorowywaniem elementów tradycji ustnych w formie pisemnej. Na podstawie powyższych źródeł rozprawa przedstawia w dwóch pierwszych rozdziałach zbiór technik oralizacji, które mogą być uznane za podstawowe i uniwersalne, a co za tym idzie mogą być wykorzystywane przez rdzennych autorów z różnych kultur do tworzenia oralizowanej prozy. Techniki te to m.in. powtórzenia, podział wiersza lub odstęp, użycie rdzennych języków, nieliniowy czas oraz

opowieść szkatułkowa. Rozdział 3 przedstawia wybiórczo aspekty kultur i historii rdzennych ludności Kanady, RPA i Nowej Zelandii a także historii kolonizacji w tych trzech krajach, skupiając się na podobieństwach w rozwoju literatur indygenicznych. Rozdziały 4 i 5 wydobywają i analizują cechy oralizacji z 21 wybranych powieści, kolekcji opowiadań i dzieł literatury faktu. Celem tych rozdziałów jest zbadanie podobieństw w użyciu technik oralizacji przez autorów z różnych kultur rdzennych. Rozdział 6 poświęcony jest szczegółowej analizie trzech z 21 tekstów, której celem jest pokazanie w jaki sposób cechy oralizacji mogą podkreślać motywy przewodnie wykorzystywany w prozie indygenicznej oraz jak świadomy oralizacji czytelnik może odkryć nowe warstwy znaczeniowe w tego typu tekstach. Powieści omawiane w tym rozdziale to *Potiki* (1986) autorstwa Patricii Grace (z pochodzenia Maoryska; Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Raukawa oraz Te Ati Awa), *The Back of the Turtle* (2014) autorstwa Thomasa Kinga (z pochodzenia rdzenny Kanadyjczyk/Amerykanin; Cherokee) oraz *The Yearning* (2016) autorstwa Mohale Mashigo (z pochodzenia Południowoafrykanka; Basotho). Autor prezentuje w rozprawie spostrzeżenia na temat interakcji oralności i piśmienności w literaturach indygenicznych i pokazuje jak świadomość cech oralizacji pomaga pogłębić i uzupełnić analizę literacką tego typu tekstów.

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