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How are regional agendas in literature affected by the workings of a late capitalist book market, and how do writers and publishers deal with the expectations of global rather than local readerships? In this essay, I wish to exempraliry address these questions by investigating the dissemination of Maori writer Witi Ihimaera's most popular novel to date, <u>The Whale Rider</u>. My particular focus in this context will be on how certain magical realist ideologies that are often deeply rooted in <u>local</u> communities and traditions are adapted to the deterritorialised logic of the <u>global</u>. But for starters, let me begin with a personal anecdote.

In summer 2005, I taught a course on magical realism at the University of Tübingen which I kicked off with Ihimaera's <u>The Whale Rider</u>. The short novel is indeed more complex than its deceptively simple surface as a piece of young adult fiction suggests, and promised to provide a fine introduction to some of the aesthetic and ideological complexities of magical realist discourse. In the first session of class, however, it immediately turned out that this choice comes with the (seemingly) ordinary impracticalities of teaching: there was not one, but there were four different editions of <u>The Whale Rider</u> in the classroom, all with different page numbers. My own copy was a so-called "Movie Edition" distributed by New Zealand's Reed publishing house, which I had bought in Australia where I taught the semester before. Most of my students in Tübingen had purchased a current Heinemann UK hardback version which I advised them to get in the course announcements; two students bought a slightly cheaper Harcourt Educational edition that is mainly produced for the American market, and one student copied the original 1987 NZ Heinemann/Reed edition from our library. Still, the first teaching session ran rather smoothly, and it was only during the second session that I realised that something was definitely odd.

I introduced this session with a brief lecture on the politics of language in postcolonial fiction, and on Ihimaera's use of the Maori language in <u>The Whale Rider</u> in particular, only to realise that my students were staring at me with blank eyes, obviously having no idea what I was talking about. After seconds of embarrassed silence, I decided to read out a longer passage from the novel to back up my argument -- and to cut a longer story short, it turned out that except for the one student with the original 1987 version, none of the others had read the body of text that I had read; and after

more thorough investigation, we found out that the textual and paratextual organisation of all four editions of The Whale Rider differed significantly. As I wish to show in this essay, these differences particularly matter when it comes to the ideology of Ihimaera's brand of magical realism, and serve as a seminal case study about the relations between local cultural practice, narrative strategy, and the distribution of postcolonial bestsellers on the global market.

This essay comes in three parts: I will start by first trying to unravel some of the confusions around the term magical realism which is, I think, rather unsatisfactorily discussed in more recent literature. This is necessary not least to more specifically locate Witi Ihimaera's particular magical realist ideology which will form the focus of the second part. In a third part, I will then pick up my introductory anecdote and turn to the peculiar publication history of The Whale Rider, looking more deeply into the changes that the novel underwent upon reaching larger market segments after the outstanding worldwide success of Niki Caro's film adaptation in 2002 almost overnight catapulted Ihimaera and The Whale Rider to international fame.

1. Magical Realism

Let us begin then by clearing some theoretical ground concerning the term 'magical realism'. One of the core problems that makes its critical discourse so confusing is that magical realism has various historical trajectories which, to make things worse, not only vaguely interrelate, but have evolved from various translations from German into French into Spanish into English and back again. As Maggie Bowers outlines in a recent survey in the Routledge New Critical Idiom series, there are at least three different fields of association with the term, which Bowers suggests to distinguish by referring to magic realism, marvellous realism, and magical realism respectively.[1]

Cases of magic realism, in this sense, trace their aesthetic and ideological roots to the German art critic Franz Roh who, as most critics agree, coined the term "Magischer Realismus" in 1925 with reference to post-expressionist painting. The gist, here, is that Roh advocates a return to painterly realism which nevertheless captures the mysteries of life. Roh's view that "mystery does not descend to the represented world, but rather hides and palpitates behind it"[2] thus vaguely relates to notions of marvellous realism as developed in Latin America in the 1940s. The foundational text, here, is Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier's essay "On the Marvellous Real in America," first

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[1] Maggie Anne Bowers, Magic(al) Realism (London and New York: Routledge, 2004): 2--3.

[2] Franz Roh, "Magic Realism: Post-Expressionism" (1925; excerpt tr. Wendy B. Faris from Fernando Vela's 1927 Spanish tr. of Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei), in Lois Parkinson Zamora & Wendy B. Faris, ed., Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community (Durham, NC and London: Duke UP, 1995): 15.

published in 1949, in which he argues that the discourse of the 'marvellous' in the Americas differs sharply from European variants of the gothic, fantastic or surreal. In the Americas, the interpenetration of the magical and the real is a product of what Carpentier refers to as "mestizaje"; the clash of European, African and Amerindian cultures and cosmogonies has brought forth such highly syncretistic cultural practices that from an 'enlightened' Western perspective, they indeed seem "marvellous." Importantly, however, for Carpentier the marvellous does not categorically differ from the 'real', but "arise[s] from un-expected alterations of reality […] or an amplification of the scale and categories of reality." Carpentier consequently insists that "the marvellous presupposes faith,"[3] and that the writer needs to partake in the ritual and communal practices (e.g. of voodoo) and believe in them in order to faithfully represent marvellous reality in writing.

Carpentier's idea of representing an ontological real maravilloso thus ideologically differs in many ways from the concept of realismo mágico which began to gain currency in the 1950s in relation to Latin American fiction, and which is today most commonly and fashionably associated with magical realism. In Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris's inclusive definition, magical realist writing is distinguished by the fact that "the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence -- admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of realism."[4] Over the course of the 1980s and 90s, this notion of magical realism as a discursive practice has been increasingly associated with the postmodern project as a genre that effectively subverts Western logocentrism,[5] and not unsurprisingly, it is in this capacity that magical realism has also most frequently been enlisted for the postcolonial project. Maggie Bowers remarks:

> Magical realism has become a popular narrative mode because it offers the writer wishing to write against totalitarian regimes a means to attack the definitions and assumptions which support such systems (e.g. colonialism) by attacking the stability of the definitions upon which these systems rely.[6]

It is my contention, however, that this is only part of the truth. While some postcolonial uses of the magical realist mode certainly partake in the subversive, postmodernist fashion, many others tend towards an affirmative cultural mode more in line with Carpentier's model of the marvellous.

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3 Alejo Carpentier, "On the Marvellous Real in America." ("De lo real maravilloso americano," intr. of Carpentier, El reino de este mundo, 1949; tr. Tanya Huntington & Lois Parkinson Zamora), in Zamora & Faris, ed., Magical Realism, 86.
4 Lois Parkinson Zamora & Wendy B. Faris, "Introduction: Daiquiri Birds and Flaubertian Parrots," Zamora & Faris, ed., Magical Realism, 3, emphasis in the original.
5 Zamora and Faris emphasise that "magic is often given as a cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize accepted realistic conventions of casuality, materiality, motivation." Zamora & Faris, "Introduction: Daiquiri Birds and Flaubertian Parrots," 3.
6 Bowers, Magic(al) Realism, 4.

Moreover, we are not dealing with a mutually exclusive choice, here, but with a continuum of literary practices which extends between oppositional ideological ends. It is neither helpful to conflate these ends nor to conceive of them as a binary opposition; rather, certain narrative procedures that are characteristic of magical realist discourse are being shared across the continuum outlined below, while ideological ends may still significantly differ.

magical	←	→	marvellous
doubt	←	→	belief
subversion	←	→	affirmation
cosmopolitan	←	→	communal
play	←	→	ritual
alterity	←	→	identity
hybridity	←	→	syncretism

Two examples of writers and texts that are most frequently associated with magical realism in the anglophone world may serve to illustrate the opposite ends, here. Salman Rushdie's <u>Midnight's Children</u>, for instance, clearly tends towards the left side of the outlined continuum. It presents readers with what Wendy Faris calls "irreducible elements" of magic[7] -- say, the outstanding telepathic powers of Saleem Sinai's majestic nose. At the same time, however, it is quite obvious that Rushdie does not expect readers to really believe in the magic he evokes, but that the penetration of the magical into the real world is part of a larger strategy of shedding <u>doubt</u> on 'official' narratives of the real. This <u>subversion</u> of the received stories we live by is mostly <u>cosmopolitan</u> in outlook, both in terms of setting -- much of Rushdie's fiction is set in metropolises like Bombay, Delhi, Karatchi, London or New York -- and in terms of the supposed outlook of the implied author; and it works by a largely <u>playful</u> undermining of conventional identity constructions, highlighting the instability of processes of signification in the encounter with other stories and their <u>alterity</u>. In Rushdie's fiction, the received symbols of the nation (or religion, for that matter) are constantly challenged by idiosyncratic subjective narratives which refuse to comply with official versions, and thus celebrate a Bhabhaian notion of cultural <u>hybridity</u>.

A good example for the other end of the spectrum is Toni Morrison's best know work, <u>Beloved</u>. Just as Rushdie's novel, Morrison presents us with an "irreducible element" of magic, i.e. Beloved's ghost -- but in contrast to Rushdie, this magic is set as an ontological given which readers will find much harder to simply shrug off. Certainly, the characters in <u>Beloved</u> firmly <u>believe</u> in the existence of ghosts, and Morrison has repeatedly emphasised in interviews that the functioning of black

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[7]   Wendy B. Faris, <u>Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative</u> (Nashville, TE: Vanderbilt UP, 2004): 5.

communities in the US has been firmly rooted in such belief. I also doubt that Morrison is too interested in undercutting, or 'writing back to' white predecessors.[8] Rather, she is concerned with affirming a distinctly African American mythological and aesthetic tradition to support the cohesion of a black community in the present -- hence Morrison's repeated affirmation that her primary target audience is her "people" or "tribe."[9] The importance of communalism in Morrion's work is highlighted in Beloved, for instance, in Morrison's choice to relocate the setting of her major source -- the historical case of Margaret Garner -- from downtown Cincinnati to the semi-rural outskirts of the city. Here, the magic is overall less ludically than ritually framed, as shown in the communal exorcising scene in the end. At the end of the day, the ideology of Beloved is very much about the fashioning of a collective identity for the African American community, which envisages a culture that draws upon African as much as Euro-Christian elements, but merges them into a sycretistic whole.[10]

Most texts, however, that are labelled magical-realist sit somewhere in-between the ideological camps from the start.[11] This is also true for Witi Ihimaera's The Whale Rider, which refuses an entirely unambiguous attribution to one or the other camp. Still, it is rather safe to say that in its original political scope, The Whale Rider tends more towards the right side of the continuum outlined above, and is in this sense closer to a novel like Beloved than to, for instance, Midnight's Children. The Whale Rider is originally about belief as much as about fantasy, and evolves around a rural community, its cultural rituals, and the quest for an affirmative syncretistic identity in times of cultural crisis.

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[8] See Lars Eckstein, Re-Membering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Cultural Memory (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006): 177--233.

[9] Thomas LeClair, "The Language Must Not Sweat: A Conversation with Toni Morrison" (1981), repr. in Danielle Taylor-Guthrie, ed., Conversations with Toni Morrison (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1994): 26.

[10] Having said as much, it is important to point out that the neat distinction between Rushdie and Morrison becomes far less clear cut when we leave what could be termed 'implied readerships' aside, and turn to real reader responses on the global market. Such readers of course do not necessarily comply with the ideal magical realist ideology as briefly sketched above, but read according to their own cultural dispositions and preferences. Thus some of the trouble that Rushdie ran into with The Satanic Verses certainly has to do with the fact that many took Rushdie's magic very seriously as a matter of faith; conversely, if one engages with the academic reception of Morrison's Beloved, one will quickly find that only a minority of critics investigate its core mystery in terms of African and Afro-Christian mythology and ritual, while Derrida and Lacan are part of the stock repertoire.

[11] Take the arguably most famous and formative of all magical realist novels, Gabriel Garcia Márquez's One Thousand Years of Solitude which, I believe, falls squarely right into the middle of the magical and the marvellous.

2. <u>The Whale Rider</u>

The novel opens with the foundation myth of Whangara, a village on the East coast of New Zealand, told by an anonymous storyteller in third person. According to the legend, the ancestor of the tribe did not arrive in a canoe from the ancestral homeland, Hawaiiki, but came riding on a whale. Also called Paikea, the whale rider, he shot spears of life-essence into the dormant land and thus initiated the history of the people. From here, the novel oscillates between two narrative strands set in the present: the first is printed in italics and comes as a third person omniscient animal tale; it follows a herd of whales and their ancient leader, who, as it soon transpires, is no other than the mythical bull whale whom Paikea rode to the shores of Whangara. On their way from Patagonia to the Arctic Sea, it becomes evident that the old bull is no longer capable of securely guiding his herd through the perils of the twentieth century (such as mass whale hunting or nuclear testing), and instead nostalgically craves for the friendship with Paikea in his youth.

The second and much larger narrative strand comes in first person mode. It tells the story of the girl Kahu who grows up in Whangara with her great-grandparents, and is told in colloquial style by the girl's uncle Rawiri, a young man in his twenties. Kahu's great-grandfather, Koro Apirana, is the old patriarchal chief of the village and desperately searches for a legitimate successor. Firmly believing in a tradition of male lineage, he treats Kahu with utter contempt from the day of her birth, even though Kahu, as the reader soon finds out, is the true destined heir of Paikea. Magically linked to the ancestor because her afterbirth was buried right where a spear of life-essence hit the ground, she is able to, among other things, converse with whales, and relentlessly loves her dismissive great-grandfather.

The two narrative strands finally converge when after at nearby beach a school of whales had stranded and painfully died, the old mythic bull whale lands his herd right onto the beach of Whangara. The attempt to save the whales becomes a symbolic fight for the survival of the community and its traditions, and it is eight-year-old Kahu who in a tremendous sacrifice swims out into the surf, climbs the ancient whale, and leads the herd into open water again. In the end, Kahu survives, Koro Apirana is cured of his patriarchal stubbornness, and all presumably live happily ever after.

At a first glance, this may sound like exotic fairy tale stuff, despite an obvious gender-and eco-political thrust. What is it then that makes <u>The Whale Rider</u> a magical realist text rather than a mere piece of fantastic entertainment? In my opinion, the answer to this question lies in the novel's ideological and poetical staging of a transcultural conflict in which the elements of magic are given an ontological rather than purely discursive validity, or in other words: <u>The Whale Rider</u> asks for

belief in the magical as much as the rational. In the village meeting house, Koro Apirana accordingly lectures:

> 'You have all seen the whale,' he said. '[…] Does it belong in the real world or the unreal world?'
> 'The real,' someone called.
> 'Is it natural or supernatural?'
> 'It is supernatural,' a voice said.
> Koro Apirana put up his hands to stop the debate. 'No,' he said, 'it is *both*. It is a reminder of the oneness which the world once had. It is the pito joining past and present, reality and fantasy. It is both. It is *both*,' he thundered, 'and if we have forgotten the communion then we have forgotten to be Maori.'[12]

This, for non-Maori readers in particular, may of course not necessarily spoil a certain primitivist or exoticist appeal which critics like Pierre Durix or Timothy Brennan have identified as a frequent danger in the intercultural encounters of magical realist discourse.[13] It is therefore all the more crucial that the original Reed edition of <u>The Whale Rider</u> transposes the transcultural dilemma of modern Maoridom onto the level of narrative language.

In his essay "Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse", Stephen Slemon notes:

> In the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other […], a situation which creates disjunction within each separate discursive system, rending them with gaps, absences, and silences.[14]

In the original version of <u>The Whale Rider</u>, such "gaps, absences and silences" are indeed crucially supported by the poetics and politics of language. Thus, <u>The Whale Rider</u> is interspersed with bits of Maori from the start and in increasing degrees so that towards the end of the novel, entire phrases and indeed dialogues are rendered in Reo Maori. For readers who do not speak Maori (which in 1987 would have still included a large part of the Maori population, too) such words and passages come as obstacles, and indeed produce gaps and silences. The opening paragraph of the novel already serves to illustrate this:

> In the old days, the years that have gone before us, the land and sea felt a great emptiness, a yearning. The mountains were like the <u>poutama</u>, the stairway to heaven, and the lush green

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[12] Witi Ihimaera, <u>The Whale Rider</u> (Auckland: Reed, 2002): 115.

[13] See Jean-Pierre Durix, <u>Mimesis, Genres and Post-Colonial Discourse: Deconstructing Magic Realism</u> (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998) and Timothy Brennan, <u>Salman Rushdie and the Third World</u> (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989).

[14] (Slemon 1995, 409)

rainforest was a rippling <u>kakahu</u> of many colours. The sky was iridescent <u>paua</u>, swirling with the <u>kowhaiwhai</u> patterns of wind and clouds […]. (my emphases)[15]

The first Maori word, "poutama," in English, "steps," is more or less translated in the immediate narrative context; the following words, however, have to be inferred through their syntagmatic relations. While "kakahu" may be rather unambiguously identified as "cloak" in this fashion, processes of syntagmatic inference come to their limits with "paua" and "kowhaiwhai" because here, the gaps and silences really reach beyond the linguistic level to problems of cultural translatability. Thus, the "paua" is a particular type of shell whose iridescent colours the novel evokes, but which also plays a very significant part in Maori art and spirituality. This is even more true of the term "kowhaiwhai", referring to the elaborate traditional scroll painting on rafters in Maori meeting houses; the patterns represent tribal lineage, and thus introduce one of the novel's core themes. This already shows that the use of Maori in <u>The Whale Rider</u> is instrumental in continually unfolding an alternative cosmogony which refuses satisfying expression in the English language, and which readers will either experience as unsettling gaps of comprehension, or, if they are either literate in Maori or actively look it up, will recognise as culture-specific and in several ways untranslatable. It is through this discursive fraction between English and Maori, I believe, that the original edition of <u>The Whale Rider</u> inherently resists easy appropriation into exoticist cliché.

3. The Market

This of course brings us back to the introductory anecdote and the different text versions of <u>The Whale Rider</u> on the global market. How did the changes to the original version of the novel come about, then? While the novel enjoyed a high level of popularity in the Pacific world from the start, so much so that Ihimaera produced a full Maori version published by Reed in 1995 (<u>Te Kaieke Tohora</u>), Ihimaera's work remained little known internationally. This dramatically changed, however, with the surprising worldwide success of Niki Caro's 2002 film adaptation <u>Whale Rider</u>, winner of numerous international prizes and at the time of writing still the most successful New Zealand movie ever.[16] In November 2002, two months after the international premier of the movie at the Toronto Film Festival, Reed New Zealand consequently re-issued the novel for the local book market – both in the original format of 1987, and in a "Movie Edition" (the one I first bought) based on the same text, but with film stills and, significantly, a detailed, four page glossary which

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[15] Witi Ihimaera, <u>The Whale Rider</u> (2002): 10.

[16] This is if we exclude Peter Jackson's <u>Lord of the Rings</u> series, which was almost exclusively US-funded.

translates all Maori terms. The distribution of an "International Edition" of <u>The Whale Rider</u> was quickly undertaken under the auspices of Harcourt Educational publishing of which both Reed NZ and Heinemann UK were an imprint at the time.[17] This globally distributed edition, however, has only been labelled "International Edition" in New Zealand, where Reed released it in 2003 with the following comment:

> After the huge international success of this year's movie adaptation […] editions of the book are being released in the US, UK, Australia, South Africa, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Finland, Japan, China, Argentina and Mexico. To address an international readership, Witi rewrote parts of the work and translated the Maori text.[18]

The international editions distributed by Harcourt in contrast provide no paratextual acknowledgement whatsoever of divergences from the copyrighted 1987 source, nor do the respective homepage of Harcourt or Heinemann comment on this. Most readers of <u>The Whale Rider</u> outside of the Pacific world will consequently be fully unaware that they do not read the novel that Ihimaera originally published.[19]

In the "International Edition", only very few sequences in Maori have been kept, and only in places where an English translation is contextually given. The American Harcourt version additionally provides a short glossary of those remaining terms, which was abandoned again in the British 2005 Heinemann version which has, like the original, no glossary. In both the Harcourt and Heinemann version, most Maori passages have either been translated into English, or deleted where such translation seems to have been impossible. The revised opening paragraph accordingly reads thus:

> In the old days, the years that have gone before us, the land and sea felt a great emptiness, a yearning. The mountains were <u>like a stairway to heaven</u>, and the lush green

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[17] It is important to know in this context that Reed NZ, the oldest Kiwi publishing house, was largely family-owned until 1983 when it sold the last shares to an oversees conglomerate and consequently changed owners various times. They ended up, together with Heinemann UK, as an imprint of Harcourt Educational, which was itself a major division of the notorious London-based Reed-Elsevier group. Ironically, in May 2007 Reed NZ lost the legal rights to their long-standing name after they were sold off to the Pearson-Penguin group, and now go by the name Raupo NZ -- 'raupo' of course being the Maori term for 'reed'.

[18] Reed Publishing, "Witi Ihimaera, <u>The Whale Rider</u>: International Edition," ed. Reed 2007 <http://www.reed.co.nz/title.cfm?titleid=2559> (7 November 2007).

[19] It is important to note that after Pearson-Penguin swallowed Reed and Reed in 2007, the web presence of the re-named publishing house was restructured and the information about the "International Edition" quoted above disappeared again. It is unlikely therefore that today, any new readers of <u>The Whale Rider</u> anywhere on the planet will be aware of the fact that they do not read the original version.

rainforest was a rippling <u>cloak</u> of many colours. The sky was <u>iridescent</u>, swirling with <u>the patterns</u> of wind and clouds […].[20]

A cursory comparison with the opening of the original version reveals that in the "International Edition," what Stephen Slemon refers to as a magical realist battle between "two opposing discursive systems, with neither managing to subordinate the other"[21] is effectively toned down. This crucially matters with regard to novel's positioning within the magical realist continuum as outlined in the first part: I my view, <u>The Whale Rider</u> significantly slides away from the marvellous side of the continuum in its revised state, as it looses a significant part of its local and cultural grounding in favour of global compatibility. Without the discursive fraction between English and Maori word- and world-making, international readers are encouraged to abandon what for Alejo Carpentier is the very prerequisite of the 'marvellous' in transcultural contact zones, namely faith -- faith, that is, in a Maori cosmogony and tradition that is more than just a projection foil for exoticist Western fantasies. The ontological relevance of the Maori world is thus much more easily relegated to the fictive and fantastic for global readers of the "International Edition" than it is for local readers of the 1987 text.

Who is to blame for all this? The most likely suspects in the scenario, I thought, were the publishers, pushing a 'diluted' version of the novel to boost sales in the wake of the tremendous success of the movie. Surprisingly, though, things apparently do *not* boil down to the marketing instincts of the international publishing industry after all, even if this is hard to verify from the publishers' point of view who did not to respond to my email inquiries. Witi Ihimaera himself, however, generously did share his ideas about revising the novel in a personal email. In his own account, he thus decided to rework <u>The Whale Rider</u> for international publication entirely off his own bat without any interference from Reed, and defends the "International Edition" as a deliberate act of <u>including</u> wider readerships after he had done justice to the politics of Maori writing and publishing with the orginal version of 1987 and the Maori language version of 1995.[22]

It is important to explain in this context that Ihimaera's rewriting of <u>The Whale Rider</u> is no isolated exercise, but falls within the scope of a gargantuan ongoing project in which he revises and republishes most of his early oeuvre. Suffice it to say here that Ihimaera's early work of the 70s tends to construct a rather bucolic and organicist picture of Maori tradition while his later work, beginning with <u>The Matriarch</u> (1986) turns to more complex investigations of Maori identity and

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[20] Witi Ihimaera, <u>The Whale Rider</u> (New York: Harcourt, 2003): 3.

[21] Slemon, Stephen. "Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse" (1990), repr. in Zamora & Faris, ed. <u>Magical Realism</u>, 410.

[22] Witi Ihimaera, "Re: Versions of the Whale Rider," personal email communication (23 September 2007).

modernity.[23] The systematic revision of his earlier work to reflect what he calls an "updated political framework"[24] is indeed an amazing and, I feel, debatable step in itself, taken by a writer whose original early work in particular, together with that of Patricia Grace, is widely cherished as laying the foundation of Maori (narrative) literature in English. In the specific case of The Whale Rider, however, I remain unconvinced that an 'updated political framework' really manages to account for the dominantly linguistic changes. Admittedly, The Whale Rider was written at a time when the standing of the Maori language in New Zealand was still far from secure; in the early 1970s, the body of native speakers of Maori was about to disappear and it was only with the Maori Renaissance that Reo Maori re-gained cultural prominence until in 1987 – the very year that The Whale Rider was first published – it was eventually recognised as an official New Zealand language next to English. True also that fifteen years later in 2002, Maori was so firmly rooted in New Zealand society again that Ihimaera was possibly more relaxed about his language, and by extension, cultural politics at home, and perhaps felt he could spare international readers the pain of having to put up with it. My own verdict remains, however, that Ihimaera thus sacrificed a substantial part of the novel's aesthetic and ideological potential. Whether or not he underestimated his international readers I find hard to judge; I am fairly convinced, though, that rather than the "International Edition," the version that I first read -- offering an extensive glossary of all Maori terms and concepts -- would have been the better choice to go global with.

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