Reflections / Réflexions

Intersections: A Journey

John Baglow *Independent Scholar*

Abstract: This exercise in authoethnography is divided into two parts: first, an impressionistic account of a journey to New Zealand/Aotearoa by the author and his family to scatter the ashes of his partner at Cape Reinga (Te Rerenga Wairua) in a Māori ceremony, and second an analysis of the first part, problematizing the notions of "culture" and "hybridity" and abandoning both in favour of a dialogical approach to difference and the "Other."

Keywords: autoethnography, Māori, culture, hybrids, dialogics, translation

Résumé : Cet exercice en autoethnographie se divise en deux parties : d'abord un compte-rendu impressionniste d'un voyage en Nouvelle-Zélande/Aotearoa de l'auteur avec sa famille pour disperser les cendres de son partenaire au Cap Reinga (Te Rerenga Wairua) dans une cérémonie Maori et, en seconde partie, une analyse de la première partie posant le problème des notions de « culture » et « d'hybridité », puis abandonnant les deux en faveur d'une approche dialogique à la différence et à « l'Autre ».

Mots-clés : autoethnographie, Maori, culture, hybrides, dialogique, traduction

> The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and *therefore* able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another. [Donna Haraway 1988:193]

Introduction: An Autoethnographic Imperative

This article is divided into two parts. The first is a personal account of my journey with my family to New Zealand/Aotearoa, to scatter the ashes of my late partner, Marianne MacKinnon, at a sacred Māori site at the tip of the North Island. The furthest thing from my mind at the time was to produce a narrative, much less a subsequent analysis. I took no field notes; in drafting the account afterwards, I relied entirely upon my very recent memory of events that stood out. The second section is an attempt to theorize various aspects of the narrative. It is the very reverse of John Van Maanen's "confessional tale": it is not an easing of the spirit after suffering from the rigid confines of conventional ethnographic discipline but, rather, an attempt to engage ethnographic concerns after the fact. It is an "impressionist tale" (Van Maanen 1988:73, 101ff), which, with its analysis, is presented as one overall exercise in autoethnography.

Mindful of Donna Haraway's summary demolition of the "god-trick" of objectivity (Haraway 1988:584), I endeavour to make the "I" central to both sections, while at the same time attempting not to make it my theme. This is not, then, what Fine dismissively calls "me-search" (1999:534) but a look through two lenses at issues of "culture," "hybridity" and dialogics, with the latter providing an alternative to the former two and informing the description of a context for individual encounters with Otherness that I call the "dialogic city."

Autoethnography is, in fact, a clear instance of a Geertzian "blurred genre" (Brettell 1997:223; Ellis and

Bochner 2000:742; Geertz 1980). It contains elements of autobiography and literature, as well as social science, and makes use of literary conventions. And through it, a kind of truth, however contingent, is pursued: as Ellis and Bochner put it:

> Narrative truth seeks to keep the past alive in the present. Stories show us that the meanings and significance of the past are incomplete, tentative and revisable according to contingencies of our present life circumstances, the present from which we narrate. [2000:745]

This implication in a living history, by means of which the present and the past are imbricated, seems to be identical to Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of a "fusion of horizons" in historiography (1975:306). In autoethnography, the goal is no longer description per se but communication, not to portray facts but meanings attached to the experience. And such ethnography is "not a project you'll ever complete or get entirely right" (Ellis and Bochner 2000:748, 751, 752).

The overall aim of the autoethnographer, according to Ellis and Bochner, is to

> produce narrative, evocative, dialogic texts that show human beings, including ourselves, in the process of creating, negotiating, and performing meaning in a world of others, making our way through a world that poses obstacles, interruptions, contingencies, turning points, epiphanies, and moral choices. [2000:748]

I shall return to this point in the second part of my article. But my own immediate purpose in writing this article can be stated rather more succinctly. I needed to speak, for deeply personal reasons. But then I needed to understand what I spoke.

Preparing for the Journey

At some point during Marianne's dreadful battle with pancreatic cancer during the late summer and fall of 2006, she told me that she would like her ashes to be scattered in Cape Reinga, known in *Te Reo*[1] as *Te Rerenga Wairua*, the jumping-off place of the spirits. Neither of us could bring ourselves to believe that she would actually die, but our thoughts were dark as the ravenous cancer rapidly progressed. I cannot even remember how the matter came up. But I accepted it as a sacred trust, and when she passed away, I began to plan for our trip to the land of her birth.

Marianne was one-half Māori by blood. Her mother, Puti Hooro ("Betsy") Gray, née Wira, was a full-blooded member of the Ngati Hine *iwi* (tribe), and her first language was Te Reo. Her father was a *pakeha*, a European New Zealander. Both parents were Jehovah's Witnesses. Her mother believed that there was no future for Māori lifeways, and Marianne was not encouraged to learn the language or *Māoritanga* (Māori ways). She did get some whispered instruction from her aunt Tangaroa (Hilda) and could remember learning to spin flax. She accompanied her mother on traditional medicinal herb-gathering expeditions. But she grew up in a white person's world, resolutely independent, resourceful and restless and with a strong wish to make a difference.

I met her in 1995, when she lived in Whitehorse, and we fell in love that same year, managing the long distance with frequent trips. I was fascinated by her Māori background and set out to learn the language (I remain at a fairly elementary level), some New Zealand history and Māoritanga and *tikanga* (customs and obligations). I wanted to be able to speak to her mother in Te Reo someday. Marianne, who never took on this task, told me that she was honoured. She and her son, Danny, came to Ottawa to live with me in 1998. A few months later her daughter, Aurora, came to join us, leaving New Zealand/Aotearoa where she had been attending school.

In 2000, Marianne's mother fell ill, and we spent six weeks in New Zealand/Aotearoa. Her mother died within the first few days. The family was divided, Māori and pakeha, Jehovah's Witnesses and, from the Jehovah's Witness perspective, non–Jehovah's Witnesses. Marianne asked me to speak for her at the memorial service, and, indeed, I was seen as a neutral party. I was able to cobble together a little Te Reo and speak to everyone in attendance. Rumours were flying that her family would try to steal the body and take it to her *marae*, Matawaia (near Pokapu in the Bay of Plenty area), but nothing of the sort took place. I recall an awkward head-cracking *hongi* with a nephew of Marianne's. "You're not a Māori yet," he laughed.

Later we toured around the North Island, from Marianne's place of birth at Whangarei through the Waipoua Forest, stayed at a backpacker's hostel in Kaitaia, drove up to Cape Reinga and then headed back, visiting relatives in Shannon and, crossing over, drove through Taihape, past the three volcanoes to Lake Taupo, with its patches of steaming water; then we went to Rotorua (where we discovered the marvellous *titoki* liqueur). After a few more stops, we returned to Ottawa.

Imperceptibly, Marianne began to take possession of her suppressed indigenous background, referring to

herself as a New Zealand Māori. I like to think that I opened a door in that respect, one that had been closed by her mother. For my retirement in 2003, we travelled for several weeks in the South Pacific—Hawai'i, Fiji, Tonga and Sāmoa. Marianne completed her MA in anthropology in 2005 on the subject of Polynesia and the ethics of representation. (On her encouragement I had just begun my second MA, also in anthropology, my eventual thesis addressing the etiology of Nunavut governance.)

The family journey to *Te Rerenga Wairua* had to be put off for a year. We, Marianne included, had planned a visit to Hawai'i for Christmas, 2006, but she passed away on October 29. I felt under an obligation to go ahead with it when our grief was more manageable, so Danny, Aurora and her new husband, Emre, and I vacationed in Hawai'i for a few weeks in April and May of 2007.

All of this time, however, I was making plans for the trip to Cape Reinga. Several months before our departure, I had made arrangements for Marianne's ashes to be transferred to Kaitaia, a short drive from the Cape. When Marianne and I stayed there in 2000, the owner of our budget hostel was a man named Peter K., who was very committed to Māori ways and deeply knowledgeable, from what I could gather. I tracked him down by email, and he agreed to help us with Marianne's farewelling. What follows, then, is an impressionistic account of our journey to New Zealand/Aotearoa, our discoveries, our mission and our connections and disjunctures and, flowing from that, the final dissolution, for me, of any notion of bounded "cultures" or, indeed, of "culture" itself.

Part One: Points of Departure

We are met at the Auckland airport by Marianne's brother, the secular one, and we head back to his mansion-like house on the outskirts of the city. We will be staying there for two or three days to recover from the long flight and get our bearings before we head north. Nothing is said about our mission. D. G. refers to Māori as "they" and tends to be disparaging when the subject of *te tangata whenua* (the people of the land, the Māori) comes up, and I don't press him. He and his pakeha partner—except that he is pakeha, too, in his own mind—are warm and hospitable. We visit the Auckland Museum, with its fine collection of Māori artifacts, and take in a "cultural experience" there. Marianne and I had done the same eight years earlier. There were costumed young Māori: short and long *poi* (cloth balls tied to strings and swung in the hand, for developing coordination), *taiaha* (a long club), striking with the *mere* (a short, flat club), *waiata* (songs), *tititorea* (Māori stick play)—an ethnic catalogue in the flesh. "What do these people do in real life," I found myself wondering. If I wanted, I could have had my picture taken with them.

On a sunny morning we head off to the Otara market. The atmosphere is Pacific Islands: Sāmoan blaring from a loudspeaker, stalls selling everything from island music to hot food to brightly patterned dresses and Māori Pride T-shirts to ... yes, there's a *tohunga whakairo*, a master carver of greenstone displaying a collection of pendants, large and small. He tells me he's from the Te Ati Hau Nui-A-Paparangi tribe. We chat a bit about our mission, and he wishes us well. Danny shells out a good amount of money for a teardrop-shaped *pounamu* (greenstone) pendant that is supposed to offer protection. He puts it around his neck right away. I watch him, a tall and sturdily built young man, darker than his mother, walking with a confidence I hadn't noticed before, striding in the noon sun among the Islanders of Otara.

We set out on the journey to Kaitaia, pausing for a day in Whangarei to stay with Marianne's father, Ron. He is a man of few words, and we greet awkwardly. That evening several of us go to dinner, including a cousin of Marianne's and some distant relations by marriage who are planning to go north to the ceremony—we shall foregather at a motel in Waipapakauri. Peter lives 100 yards or so down the beach. We drink a toast or two. Ron, a devout Jehovah's Witness, avoids our superstitious practice of clinking glasses. The next day we leave for the North. We drive through the Waipoua Forest and stop to see Tane Mahuta, the largest living *kauri* tree, named after the Māori god of the forest. Marianne and I had seen it together. Somehow it looked different now. Memories.

Onward—taking a ferry at one point and then on to Kaitaia. We find the funeral home, and now I have Marianne's ashes in a box in my hands; we drive on to Waipapakauri, 20 minutes or so, and arrive at the motel. "Oh, you're Peter's friends," says the receptionist. "He's a very wise man"—or words to that effect. We get our rooms, and we stumble down the beach to find him.

Peter lives with his girlfriend on a house fronting Ninety Mile Beach. The house is rambling and unfinished; there's a wild garden outside. We are greeted warmly, and Danny and I hongi with Peter. Danny is a natural; the gesture, his first, is perfectly executed. Women get a kiss on the cheek. Later Peter says that one tribe (Ngāti Raukawa?) does a double hongi, two touches of

the nose, foreheads touching twice. (A memory occurs to me: at the "cultural experience" that Marianne and I attended in 2000, one of the performers joked about doing that in his own tribe, only if married.)

Peter's lineage is both Ngāti Kuri and Te Aupouri—the two northernmost tribes, with Ngāti Kuri on the land that includes Cape Reinga. He is a big man with recent tattoos on his legs; he is salty, even coarse at times—half shaman and half showman. My back is out—he gets behind me and starts vigorously massaging my neck—burping furiously the while. Is it the beer he's been drinking or something to do with spirits and energies? I do not have the courage to ask! Peter is known in the area for his healing powers. He visits people in cancer wards and takes their pain away. My back feels better all evening, although the pain returns the next day. He tells us that a bird settled by the house and stayed around for an unusually long time just before we showed up. The previous Thursday, he had felt something go through his body and, he said, "Must have arrived." That was the day we had landed in Auckland, and I tell him this. No, he says, "Your mate."

Two of our party arrive for the evening. We have a big supper that night in Kaitaia. Peter is well-known in these parts, and the restaurant owner comes over to talk to him. Peter joshes Danny a fair bit. Afterward he tells me that Danny is feeling a lot of pain, that he was trying to reach him. I think he must have. Danny asked me sometime afterward if he could commission Peter, a man of many skills, to carve him a taiaha. (When we return to Canada, Peter tells me by email it would be more *tika* to have a whakairo from Danny's own tribe do it. That was done, a subsequent story in itself, and I presented it to Danny as a 21st-birthday present.)

As we part that evening, we make plans to go up to Te Rerenga Wairua the next day, in the early afternoon. Peter tells us to bring a feather, a stone, some sand and a shell. The new day is bright and hot. Time does not pass quickly. We pick up the objects as Peter instructed us. Eventually Marianne's cousin, Pat, a warm and loving person, her hard life etched in her friendly face, tattoos on her arms—one simply a scrawled "Mom and Dad"—arrives with two young women, each with a baby. One of the women is her daughter. Her baby's name is Mischief. The other woman is her daughter's friend. Pat has qualified as a nurse but has five children in her care and no time to practise. She has separated from her husband, who has a drinking problem.

Peter shows up in his truck. He brings a shell, a rock, sand and a feather in case we had forgotten. He chuckles when he sees we had not. These are all of the elements, he says, earth, sea and air. We set out in a convoy to Cape Reinga, Te Rerenga Wairua, where the spirits of deceased Māori arrive from two paths, one from the South and then up Ninety Mile Beach (Te Oneroa-a-Tōhē) and the other along the east coast through Kapowairua (Spirits Bay) and a few kilometres further, converging on Te Rerenga Wairua. From there the spirits leap into the water, surface after reaching Manawatāwhi (Three Kings Islands) and sing a lament for the loved ones they are leaving behind. Then they begin their journey to Hawaiki, the spiritual home of the Māori.

It is bright, hot and sunny at Cape Reinga, and (a rare occasion) the Three Kings Islands can be seen across a placid sea—two seas, actually; the green water of the Tasman Sea here mixes with the blue water of the Pacific. The actual *wahi tapu* (sacred place)—the rock promontory from which the spirits leap, with its lone *pōhutukawa* tree in a cleft in the stone—is inaccessible. We are across a gully, a few hundred feet from it. We step over a low wall that surrounds a small lighthouse and walk partway into the gully. There we stop.

Peter has braided a piece of flax leaf into a flower. My stepdaughter, Aurora, digs a small hole and buries the rock, sand, shell and feather. She marks the spot with the flax flower. Meanwhile, Danny and I struggle to open the box with Marianne's ashes. I had been sure to ask him to bring a knife, and it proves necessary. I brought water for rinsing, so that all of the ashes would remain here. Peter speaks in Te Reo the entire time, offering up a *karakia* (prayer) and a slightly off-key waiata, for which he gently apologizes later. My knowledge of the language only permits me to pick up a word here and there. He gestures that it is time, and I throw the ashes onto the embankment, testing first for wind. Danny and I rinse the rest of the ashes from the container. I speak and barely remember what I say after I say it. It is a goodbye. I speak in both English and Te Reo. I thank Peter, address him respectfully as *e koro* (old man) and we hongi. Marianne's cousin speaks, remembering the mischief that she and Marianne used to get in to as girls. One of the distant connections—the sister of a woman once married to the brother of Marianne's first spouse—speaks of the honour that has been given her to attend this gathering. She herself is well-versed in Māoritanga. The sun beats down. I had requested no photographs of the ceremony. Afterward, I take some pictures of the promontory itself, pictures that will die later, with the hard drive on which they were inscribed. There is considerable construction work up from the path we had taken. Peter is organizing opposition to a massive development that may see a hotel complex built right above the sacred ground.

We are invited back to Peter's for a feast. I convince Marianne's cousin to stay for a while, even though she has a sitter looking after all the children she cares for, and it is a several hours drive back. She ends up staying for the full meal—green mussels, *riwena* (potato sourdough bread), corned beef, salads from the garden, plenty of beer. Emre avoids the tomatoes: the previous evening, Peter said he urinated on them to help them grow. We break out the bottle of titoki liqueur that I had earlier presented to Peter. The conversation is a blur. At one point Peter says to me, "And now you have to move on." Danny and I are the last to leave.

The next day we make our way back to Whangarei—one cannot avoid it if one wants to go further south. We stay with Ron for another night; he is delighted to see us. He doesn't ask about our mission. We head for Paihia, on the Bay of Islands, and at our hotel we leave the box that once held Marianne. We visit Waitangi, where the famous treaty was signed in 1840. Danny had been looking for a greenstone mere pendant. In a glass case by the ticket counter, I spot a very large one for sale. He is tremendously pleased; soon it is around his neck. It fits his frame. It fits.

In one of the concessions on the treaty grounds, a Māori woman compliments me on the two bone amulets around my neck: a *hei-koru* (spiral pendant) and a *hei-matau* (stylized fishhook pendant). Marianne had tied the hei-koru around my neck; after Marianne's death, Aurora had done likewise with the hei-matau, which she had carved herself. We speak of our mission, and I mention the step-children's Ngati Hine heritage and their marae, which I had half-thought we might visit. The woman tells me to visit the Ngati Hine Health Trust in Kawakawa, a few miles distant. We should speak to a person there who will help us. She gives me a name. The second phase of our adventure begins in this accidental way.

We show up the next day and are warmly greeted. The person whose name we had been given is unavailable. The surname of Marianne's mother, Wira, is not known to them. A "beloved auntie" (a *kaumātua*, or elder) will come to *kōrero* with us about the Trust. She tells us at great length about this project, undertaken by the Ngati Hine themselves, to provide health services to remote areas of the Ngati Hine rohe. A man arrives to tell us that a kaumātua had been found who went to school with Marianne's mother. He would be there shortly. Meanwhile the man introduces himself as T. A., a Ngati Hine Trust official. He believes he is related to the family. He speaks of a "*whakapapa* man" (a local genealogical expert) in the area, but that man is unfortunately unavailable that day. I say to the children, "They can trace you right back to your canoe."[2] T. A. says, "They can trace you right back to Te Kore [the nothingness before creation]!"

We move to another room. The kaumātua, W. W., arrives and speaks of his memories of Puti and tells us of the children's ancestry. I had thought that the name of their *hapu* (subtribe) was Te Kau-i-Mua. As though reading my mind, T. A. says, "It doesn't mean 'cow in front'!" The correct name, he said, is Tekau-i-Mua, or "ten in front," meaning ten generations of direct descent from the first chief of Ngati Hine, a woman, Hine Amaru. Puti's grandfather was Mikaere Wira, a Ngati Hine prophet. The children's marae is called Matawaia, or "water in the eyes," a reference to a Tekau-i-Mua chief who wept as he faced his people. T. A. offers to show us the way. W. W. takes his leave. We hongi: "*Tēnā koe.*" "*Tēnā koe, e koro.*" My forehead touches his, slightly too hard.

T. A. finds us after lunch, and we set out in the pouring rain to find the children's marae, following his van. We wind through a country road, and come to a deserted set of seen-better-days buildings, including the *whare rūnanga* (meetinghouse). It is clearing. There is mist on the hills. Perfect silence. One building is a *kohanga reo*, a "language nest" place where children learn Te Reo. We are taken inside the meetinghouse. It is still and silent in the large room; everywhere there are photographs of stern-looking ancestors. T. A. points out several and explains who they are. Danny decides that no photographs are to be taken. This is his marae and Aurora's. I can feel the connections being made; I can see it in their bodies, hear it in their silence. I clumsily read some words in Te Reo from a board; T. A. smiles and says that the translation is underneath, and so it is: "I am the way, the truth and the life." I was embarrassed. He tells us this was a gift from a young man who had decided to make something of himself. *Ngati Hine pukepukerau*, Ngati Hine of a Hundred Hills—in the land of their ancestors, Danny and Aurora have their *turangawaewae*, their place to stand. The name of their marae would be part of a formal self-introduction, a *pepeha*, which, with many other elements, might include the name of the nearest river and the nearest mountain: "*Ko Hikurangi te māunga, Ko Te Raparapa te awa.*" Outside, we take some pictures. A sign forbids smoking in the whare rūnanga. The name of the house is Rangimarie.

T. A. invites us to visit his own marae, Motatau, a few kilometres away. We stop at one point to look at some land. The children have shares in three parcels. How much land is that? T. A. laughs and gestures with his hands a few inches apart. When we arrive, we must

wait. T. A.'s eldest daughter will *powhiri* (formally invite) us onto the marae. He gestures at a small building a few yards away, but I am uncertain, and we wait in the now pouring rain for a few minutes. When he comes looking for us, he asks why we didn't take shelter—that was what the little building some yards from the whare rūnanga was for.

His daughter chants a welcome, and we are invited forward. "*Haere mai*!" We enter the meetinghouse, a handsome, carved house called Manu-Koroki. T. A. is carrying a *tokotoko*, a ceremonial carved walking stick, and as we sit, he begins a long *whaikōrero* (formal speech), gesturing with the tokotoko, identifying for us every ancestor represented by carved posts in the house, telling us the history that is held here in carvings and mats. One of the posts has a Star of David; a Jewish ancestor had married into the tribe.

After some time, I am asked to respond. I greet T. A. in Te Reo and say that I shall not speak for very long. I thank him for his wisdom and his knowledge and for helping to connect the children to their marae. His daughter then sings a beautiful waiata in our honour. A couple of younger children are acting up and T. A. shoos one of them out the door. We depart and, shortly after this, we leave New Zealand/Aotearoa.

Loose ends, which I begin to worry about on our return. I email Peter. I am looking for a completeness, an integrated set of events. Peter had talked of three paths to Te Rerenga Wairua, but were there not only two? Or was the third path our own connection to the spot, our link between the living and the dead? The burial of the sand, stone, shell and feather is a time capsule, he said in response: when we return, it indicates a direction, to which the entire natural world points. It is our link alone; it is the spiritual path of the living. And what of the *takahia*, the tramping of the house: did this burial of the elements make up for not having done it? Just flick water in all of the rooms of your house, he said, do a karakia and that will complete the tramping of the home. Too much reflection, compounded by ignorance—I am caught up in the myth. I am part of it now. If it is incomplete, then so am I. I ask him anxiously if this means Marianne's spirit will be trapped in the house until I do this; he did not respond. Some things we must work out for ourselves. If there is a realm outside time, then all that happens is one, and so long as the takahia is done, the ceremony at the Cape is ended.

Coda

My stepson left his jacket at a concert, and the next morning nothing had been handed in. The jacket was lost. When he woke up fully, he came running: "My mere was in my jacket," he said, a rising panic in his voice. I felt winded, thunderstruck, physically ill. I told him I was sorry. I had tears in my eyes. Then I suggested we look around the house for the jacket, and I urged him to try to remember—why did you take it off? He asked me for the keys to the car and came back into the house, the mere in his hand. I hugged him with relief. As of this writing, I am still not over the shock: I keep reliving the moment when he told me of his loss, just as terrible memories of Marianne on her deathbed recur without warning and my immediate world disappears. Why is this piece of pounamu a part of our lives? What is condensed in it? In us?

Part Two: The Cultural Quagmire and the "Dialogic City"

How does one best "think with" this narrative of loss and encounter? Traditionally, the journey described might have been seen as the traversing of a series of borders between cultural worlds. Moving back and forth across familial intersections (the family of the author's deceased partner included Māori and non-Māori, even anti-Māori, subject positions) to encounters with the more formal aspects of the farewelling ceremony at Cape Reinga and the powhiri onto the Motatau marae, the narrator moved out of the known into increasingly less familiar space. Yet the cultural frame tends to obfuscate such accounts: it over-sharpens differences that are actually subtle, interpenetrating, ever-shifting and contested, while at the same time blurring the complexities of individual engagements between and among people whose relations transcend physical location and local community in a web of global interconnectedness.

"Culture" lies, perhaps, at the very heart of this story—but in the mode of its absence, in its plural form. People encountered other people; we all had something to learn, much to say or be silent about. Perhaps the bereaved visitors took a kind of refuge in the different and made it their own. Differences there were, certainly, and much that was unfamiliar, and yet for me there was never a sense of stepping into another world, no dramatic "ethnographic entrance." Rather, it was a living, pre-ethnographic "process of creating, negotiating, and performing meaning ... making [my] way through a world that pose[d] obstacles, interruptions, contingencies, turning points, epiphanies, and moral choices" (Ellis and Bochner 2000:748).

The narrative is, in part, one of globalization. The visitors had flown 10,000 miles in less than a day, after using the Internet to make connections and arrangements. One of them was a Turkish national. One was

the narrator, myself, a Canadian, a pakeha immersed, for whatever reason, in Māoritanga, and two were the children of the my deceased partner, who had come to consider herself a Māori woman. In the account, the common language is English. When Te Reo is spoken, it acquires an iconic character, conveying an opaque Otherness. But the people themselves are anything but opaque. We talk. We have differences, and we have things in common. With Unni Wikan (1991: 290), then, I ask: "Culture! ...Where is it?"

"Culture"

The notion of *a* culture, the subject of strong contestation within the field of anthropology for decades, persists, however modified (see Birukou et al. 2013; Fellows and Liu 2013; Lubkemann 2010; Purrington and Hickerson 2013; Snodgrass et al. 2013; Varenne 2008). Birukou and his coauthors, in fact, address what appears to them to be a radical displacement of "culture" from states and geographies to the virtual world, where it is now to be found, they claim, in online communities. The debate over its utility, which reached fever pitch in anthropology in the 1990s and early 2000s, is obviously far from over.

"Culture," said the cultural historian James Clifford a quarter-century ago, "is a deeply compromised idea I cannot yet do without" (1988:10). I find that I *can* do without it. The signifier misleads; it carries its own historical accretions, rings with old, cracked resonances. Cultures, in the plural, indicate differentiable wholes, bounded or porous, outlined in ethnographies or nonoutlineable but, in any case, complex and supposedly distinguishable sets of group dynamics in the widest and deepest sense, which, by being named, are inevitably hypostasized. The word situates, locates, "places" people: hence, to use Arjun Appadurai's apt description, it subjects them to discursive incarceration. "Proper natives," he says, "are somehow assumed to represent their selves and their history, without distortion or residue.... The natives are immobilized by their belonging to a place.... Natives are those who are somehow confined to places by their connection to what the place permits ... the intellectual operations of natives are somehow tied to their niches, to their situations" (Appadurai 1988:37, 38).

In our journey, caught up in the global currents as we were, it was perhaps ironic that it was Danny who found "place" in the Otara market and, too, so did both of my stepchildren in the Matawaia marae: "I can feel the connections being made; I can see it in their bodies, hear it in their silence." Yet, in neither case was this confining: the sense of embodied meaning that I perceived in them was a kind of discovery, one of an enlarged global "home" of many pieds-à-terre; nor does my description of this awareness discursively root them to the spot. Native and nonnative, they seemed to exemplify Clifford's "dwelling-in-travel," placed and displaced, people of many communities (Clifford 1997:2). "One no longer leaves home confident of finding something radically new, another time or space.... Difference is encountered in the adjoining neighbourhood, the familiar turns up at the ends of the earth" (Clifford 1988:14).

But Clifford also writes of the "currency of culture and identity as performative acts," defined by the conscious "articulation of homelands, safe spaces where the traffic across borders can be controlled" (Clifford 1997:7). The notion of "borders," in terms of our own journey, seems somewhat misleading, as this notion may be, in fact, more generally (Chang 1999). We did observe clear territorial demarcations, the most significant for the purposes of this article being the one we crossed by invitation onto the Motatau marae—an invitation that would be required for visiting Māori as well. But the enclosed, formal "safe space" into which we were invited did not contain the lives of those whose guests we were: the larger part of those lives were being lived some distance away where such lines did not exist. One could consider a marae a kind of ethnic sanctuary, a repository of living memories, but hardly a homeland, at least in the present day.

A self-conscious display of ethnicity, such as what we saw at Motatau and at the Auckland Museum, is deployed for a wide range of reasons, including communication with other groups (MacCannell 1984:380, 382), as an effort to protect threatened lifeways from extinction (Mead 1976:291) or as an expression of resistance (M. Mitchell 1996:23). But the markers of ethnicity that we encountered did not set out physical or even metaphorical borders, so much as they presented directions, guideposts and portals to "sites of worldly travel, difficult encounters and occasions for dialogue" (Clifford 1997:12) in "an increasingly connected but not homogeneous world" (1997:2).

What Don Mitchell (1995:103) calls the "empty, untethered abstraction of 'culture,'" then, can still be a "category of practice" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:4), a set of stylized real-world performances. And these do not take place on neutral, uncontested ground. As Mitchell puts it, culture makes "others," and "the idea of culture is thus thoroughly implicated in the political economy of the contemporary world" (Mitchell 1995:112).

During my first trip to New Zealand/Aotearoa, I visited a reconstructed Māori marae that was a popular tourist spot. Tamaki Village, just outside Rotorua, is literally the full-meal deal: the highlight of the evening

is a *hangi*, a Māori feast. But the journey there and back, the formal invitation onto the marae and the performances in the meeting house were fraught with uncomfortable ironies. The Māori guides and performers, articulating a frozen-in-time "cultural experience" in which they were the masters of their domain, effectively reversed the everyday power relations in the settler society in which they lived. We pakeha tourists, off to experience an evening of Maori performance from our position of privilege, found ourselves performing for the Māori instead. I was brought up on stage to join in an action dance, for example, having no idea what to do, and I could see the amusement on the faces of the other dancers. On the way back, each person on the bus had to sing a song for the driver, who actually pulled off the road until a Chinese tourist obliged with a rendition of "Happy Birthday."

Marianne reacted fiercely at the time to my suggestion that Tamaki constituted a microexample of successful indigenous resistance. "What good is 'resistance' that won't lead to positive social change?" she asked, and I take her point. Tamaki is a profitable Māori-owned capitalist enterprise in a country where the socioeconomic status of Māori in general remains low. To reify and sell culture in this manner, and to do well at it, may not be subversive but accommodating, with the further irony that the representations sold in a package to tourists, like the Māori "cultural experience" in the museum, *are* part of the "real lives" of living Māori.

"Cultures, we often hear, 'die.' But how many cultures pronounced dead or dying by anthropologists and other authorities have ... found new ways to be different?" (Clifford 1988:338). Tamaki Village is indeed a "new way to be different," but one doesn't need the concept of a culture to frame it. In fact, the fluidity ironically underscored by the frozen replica village suggests the ephemerality of any such notion. Unni Wikan sums up the contemporary "anticulture" view:

> "Culture," [is] a hegemonic concept that until recently and even today holds us in a straitjacket. Renato Rosaldo ... has set out the salient aspects of this essentialist structure: It was a monolithic formation of logically coherent parts with the observer as the authoritative adjudicator of what does and does not belong.... Order reigned, at the expense of uncertainties, ambiguities, contesting visions, not to speak of the disorder and unpredictability of much of everyday life. Norms, rules and regularities carried the day to coalesce into a harmonious whole of pattern, consistency—in short, a culture. [1991:289]

Christoph Brumann argues on the other hand that, while we might, with Timothy Ingold, "imagine the world in which people dwell as a continuous and unbounded landscape, endlessly varied in its features and contours, yet without seams or breaks," we still require "a vocabulary for describing its mountains, plains, rivers, oceans, and islands" (Brumann 1999:S13). Yet, this highlights the very problems under review. What "people" are these, interacting regularly among themselves in this virtually connected world? What are these "common concepts, emotions and practices" he speaks of? Who manifests them? Ingold's "landscape," furthermore, has no easily defined features with the solidity of mountains or the reassuring daily presence of rivers and islands.

Brumann's article is nuanced and thoughtful: he does not attempt to reclaim the idea of bounded wholes. In fact, he does not reject the notion of a global culture (Brumann 1999:S23), although he introduces the notion of a "layer" of culture, which I find singularly problematic and unhelpful. It is this idea of a global culture, however, that may have finally put paid to the notion of pluralizable culture as a useful concept, even in the highly contingent manner in which Brumann employs it.

"Hybrids" and "Hybridity"

Does the notion of hybridity get us out of the essentialist bind posed by the culture concept? If we accept the idea that a culture is unbounded; that, as Marie Gillespie (1995) puts it, "all cultures are lived, and therefore always in flux ... all cultures are 'hybrid,' 'syncretic,' 'creolized,' or 'impure'" (1995:4); that identities, in Scott Olson's words, "are protean, contingent, and temporal, not fixed, deliberate, and permanent as cultural preservationists would have us believe" (2002:3), then what is left of the notion? Many anthropologists, unwilling to abandon the concept, began to talk about hybridization, or hybridity, as Gillespie does above. The notion is inextricably related to globalization and its rapid flows of communication, resources, commodities and people. Hence, Bhabha (1994:2) refers to "cultured hybridities" emerging in moments of historical transformation and observes, in the present day, "a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities," countering the recent excesses of Balkan nationalism (1994:5). And Ulf Hannerz (1997) writes of "flows, boundaries and hybrids," albeit critically.

Sally Merry (2006:46) refers to hybridity as a form of cultural "vernacularization." Rowe and Schelling define hybridization/hybridity as "the ways in which forms

become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices" (1991:231). It is related to, and sometimes synonymous with, "creolization" (Lie 2002:16), a term that had its origins in the colonial experience and bears the hallmarks of dominant/subaltern power relations but has become generalized to mean the mixing of two or more cultures in liminal/liminoid, intercultural spaces situated between the global and the local (2002:39), spaces that have been called "borderlands" (2002:15).

What this all comes down to is an odd metaphorical notion of cultures, discrete or leaky, producing offspring. As Hannerz puts it, referring to the term *creolization* (without fully subscribing to this objection himself):

> One objection occasionally raised against the creolization concept—and other related notions may be confronted with it as well—is that such an identification of creole cultures as a particular category might simply push those features of essentialism a step back, implying that the cultural currents joined through creolization were pure, bounded, and so forth, until they were thus joined. [1997:14]

What we are observing is a multifaceted process of reinscription, which, at the level of language, has been described in this way:

> For [Yuri] Lotman, the arrival of a foreign text into a new culture is seen as a curiosity, but not a danger, because the text seems so strange. Eventually, this new text begins to alter the culture, and the culture of course begins to alter readings of the text. Through this mutual contamination, the new cultural context essentially steals the meaning of the text so that its original cultural context holds no enduring authority over its meaning. The text has mutated from alien to indigenous. [Olson 2002:4]

Once again, however, we are plagued by metaphors of "entrance" and notions of strangeness and the "steal[ing] of meaning." (What stable meaning inheres in a text?) The idea of boundaries—however porous, however unstable, however mobile—remains. The difficulty is how these Othering boundaries are qualitatively different from, say, those between classes in the same village, or subcultures in the same city, or political factions in the same nation, or regions in the same country. In fact, to take the *reductio*, differences within a single family are continually contested and negotiated, and going even further, our own unstable selves are continually reinscribing our personal "tradition," reassembling intertextual fragments, engaging in an ongoing bricolage. The Other is everywhere. Indeed, we are our own Other—or Others.

On the specific subject of New Zealand/Aotearoa, Paul Meredith (1998) seeks to escape the Maori–pakeha binary by applying Bhabha's ideas of hybridity and the "third space" to the contemporary socio-political scene there. The "third space" is allegedly found at the intersection of dominant and subaltern groups where "difference is neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between" (Bhabha 1994:219).

We are rightly instructed that cultural encounters are fraught with issues of power within the colonial context. But all encounters, between groups and individuals, involve power of one kind or another. Face-to-face encounters are inevitably mediated through assumptions, structures of identity (e.g., gender, class) and, of course, by language itself, whose meanings are always contested. And so we might see the dominant–subaltern binary, with its supposed opening up of that contested and destablilizing third space as just a special case, as Bhabha appears to concede: "All forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity" (Rutherford 1990:211). In other words, Culture, with or without an uppercase "C," is always contingent, in constant flux.

But if it is indeed the case—that all forms of culture are ceaselessly hybridizing—then one must challenge the idea of two "spaces" giving rise to a third one. As an alleged attempt to de-essentialize culture, is the third space model, like creolization, not just pushing essentialism back one step? Bhabha talks about the third space as "in-between," as "straddling"—what? Or, alternatively, is all of culture not in fact enacted within that third space, as Bhabha suggests, making the ordinal superfluous? More to the point, perhaps, in the multitudinous personal relations, mediated and unmediated, that mark uppercase-"C" Culture, we, as individuals, do not perceive contested space: we encounter other people. If there is indeed a third space—and obviously I question the usefulness of the term—it exists no less certainly between individuals. Bhabha's in-between-ness exists in all encounters: we try to leap that gap every time we speak or gesture.

Autoethnography is all about personal encounters and meanings, and these do not easily dissolve into generalities and models. Even the realities of power fail to establish rigid categories of encounter, as the Tamaki experience and the Motatau invitation indicate: power fluctuates; it is not located; it "is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault 1998:94). In the subtle complexities of these varied encounters, perhaps we might

find a way out of the culture trap and its confining spaces.

We need to abandon analytically nugatory concepts with all their attendant ailing metaphors of strangeness and separation without suggesting to the contrary that global flows take place on featureless ground: we know that they encounter obstacles, that they are channelled through often difficult terrain, and that they skip over parts of the world population entirely (Ferguson 2006:14). But carried along as we are in these flows, with their rapid and unstable conjunctures, their "friction" and "sticky engagements" (Tsing 2005:6), their encounters with frontiers and borderlands (Hannerz 1997:6; Tsing 2005:43), which, *pace* Hannerz, are not so much boundaries as causes of turbulence and eddies, can we finally dispense with cultures and their teeming hybrids?

Global Conversations: Translation and Dialogics

I suggest that we *can* dispense with culture and that accounts such as the one provided in the first part of this article are better understood without these flawed conceptual overlays. The more concrete, more inclusive notion of dialogics offers us an alternative mode of comprehension.

It would be difficult to improve upon John and Jean Comaroff's (1992) short definition of culture—in the generic and nonpluralizable sense—as "the semantic space, the field of signs and practices, in which human beings construct and represent themselves and others, and hence their societies and histories" (1992:27). And language as such occupies much of the field in which this complex interplay of "signifiers-in-action, signifiers at once material and symbolic, social and aesthetic" takes place (1992:27).

Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) developed the concept of dialogism that I refer to here, in which language is always engaging with itself, in perpetual dialogue with itself. No words are solitary or exist apart but, instead, bring old contexts with them (1981:66, 279, 293) while acquiring new meaning in a "living interaction" with an environment of other words.

> The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse. [1981:276]

Bakhtin is well-known for his analyses of the novel, which for him is a reflection of society, refracted through the author's artistic re-creation. It "comes into contact with the spontaneity of the inconclusive present," which "keeps the genre from congealing" (1981:27). It differs from all other genres precisely because of its openendedness: it is "constructed in a zone of contact with the incomplete events of a particular present" (1981:33). And, like society itself, it has "no definite, stable characteristics" (1981:8). The novel for Bakhtin, then, is a re-presentation of that incomplete, ever-developing, ever-unfinished process of culture. And to it, interestingly enough, he contrasts the epic, a genre that is "rigid" and "absolutely completed and finished" (1981:4)—like the traditional view of a culture frozen in time.

Compare the semantic space of culture and its "historically unfolding ensemble" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:27) with Bakhtin's (1981) concept of the novel: "the only developing genre ... [reflecting] more deeply, more essentially and rapidly, reality itself—the process of its unfolding" (1981:7). Like society, it has "no definite, stable characteristics" (1981:8). In the novel, "image[s] of a language" (1981:336) are constructed out of a vocabulary of intertextual fragments, different registers and varieties of language that Bakhtin calls "heteroglossia," drawn from the pool of the "already uttered" (1981:279)—the author's linguistic environment. Or as Roland Barthes put it, referring to text in general, "a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation" (1977:148). Nor is the writer a creator *ab nihilo*: the writer's

> only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. Did he wish to *express himself*, he ought at least to know that the inner 'thing' he thinks to 'translate' is itself only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely. [Barthes 1977:146]

In the case of speech rather than written text, meaning is conveyed by words supplemented by physical and verbal gestures, affect and so on. The speaker, engaged in conversation, is by turns both "author" and "reader." The "text" is composed of fragments, messages, incomplete narratives and so on from that pre-existing dictionary, deployed in new contexts, refracted through our subject positions, as we encounter each other within the semantic space. Note that these encounters are not between cultures or between a person and a culture but between or among people. We *talk* to each other, these days regardless of physical distance, but we do so at our own risk:

> The speech of another, once enclosed in a context, is—no matter how accurately transmitted—always subject to certain semantic changes. The context embracing another's word is responsible for its dialogizing background, whose influence can be very great. Given the appropriate methods for framing, one may bring about fundamental changes even in another's utterance accurately quoted. [Bakhtin 1981:349]

We interpret, even contest, what we hear. We are engaged, therefore, in a continual process of translation, and I use that term in the widest sense: we do it ourselves, or avail ourselves of actual translators, or of experts who can make specialized professional or technical vocabulary intelligible to us. Others may guide us through unfamiliar symbolic terrain. What at first appears opaque and therefore meaningless to us can be rendered meaningful through this mediating process. In the ethnographic account before us, T. A. explained the significance of every single feature in the *whare whakairo* ("carved house," a term for a traditionally crafted main meeting house) on the marae at Motatau. Without that lengthy whaikōrero, we would have seen only a few mats and carved posts. Gesturing for emphasis with his walking stick, he revealed the interior of the building to be heavy with meaning. His performance (for it was performance) was itself an English "translation" of classic Māori oratory. The "cultural experience" at the Auckland Museum was accompanied by a series of explanations for the audience, a running commentary on what was being performed. The "beloved auntie," and the elder, W. W., and T. A. all translated the unfamiliar for us, linking their shared world and that of my stepchildren. Peter K. gently explained the significance of the farewelling ceremony at Cape Reinga.

We take from our common pool of intertextual vocabulary what we need, and we return our own semantic assemblages to the pool for others to respond to in turn. To translate, or to have translated, from the otherwise unintelligible semantic domain of others, supplements and enhances our dialogic engagements. But translation itself, of course, is always open to interpretation—to many interpretations, in fact.

Bhabha (1994) desires

> an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. To that end, we should remember that it is in the "inter"—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space—that carries the burden of the meaning of "culture." [1994:38]

We can at least agree that, on the individual level that Bhabha seems to be including here, the ability to communicate and to converse is key.

But Merry (2006) offers a caution about the subversive potential of translators; translation, as she reminds us, takes place within "fields of unequal power." She writes, "The nature of cultural translation is an old anthropological problem, but the globalization of human rights discourse raises it in a new guise" (2006:40). Translation alters what it translates. Through chains of translation, constructs originating in the "local" are reinscribed, vernacularized along a continuum, from "replication" to "hybridity." (2006:43, 44).

With Merry, I reject the "local–global" binary. "Despite considerable critique of the use of the terms *global* and *local* and numerous studies that show that things we call 'global' are often circulating locals, these terms have a recalcitrant tendency to shape discussions of transnational phenomena" (Merry 2006:40). Indeed they do: everything is at once local and global, implicated in a continual process of translation, and meanings are contingent, always subject to destabilization, never complete. Yet, we open our mouths and speak.

Opacity, Translucency, Transparency: Life in the Dialogic City

The uneven symbolic features of the intercommunicating world are made up of relative transparencies, translucencies and opacities. We can speak directly to each other in transparency, or so it seems, but dialogics, as noted above, take place in a space of shifting contexts and perspectives that can produce great changes in utterances even when accurately transmitted. Various types of translators assist us with translucencies; opacities may be rendered transparent or translucent—or remain impenetrable obstacles. When the latter come to our attention as hidden repositories of meaning, we reify them. From them we fashion a radical Otherness. Where there is little or no exchange of symbolic communication, at best the utterances of such Others take the form of the iconic, the metonymic—that is, when we think we perceive a culture, in all of its essentialized obduracy. Translators, however, can eliminate or appear to eliminate the blockages and get the flow going again, and our dialogic encounters, multimediated as they may be, resume. Life goes on in a global, dialogic city.

Nearly a half-century ago, Marshall McLuhan noted, "Today electronics and automation make mandatory that everybody adjust to the vast global environment as if it were his little home town" (McLuhan and Fiore 1968:11). But, for several reasons, I prefer the

term "dialogic city" to McLuhan's "global village." The notion of a village, first of all, is too small to contain the dark alleys, walls, "ethnic" areas, tony districts, slums, divisions of labour, Internet cafes, madness, dangers, traffic, crowds, palimpsests, workspaces, pollutions and the sheer *noise* that is life in the early 21st century. We are not connected to each other like the residents of a village. Our city is one of fragments, disjunctures, fatal clashes, incomprehension, terror, barriers and ecstatic unions. It is a grid staffed at strategic points by police, CEOs and officials posing as truth-givers. In this contemporary bedlam, we talk to and through and past each other. Sometimes our conversations are facilitated by translators. We use the sound of our own voices; we use wires and letters and email and the airwaves. Sometimes our calls are dropped, sometimes the phone fails to ring and the Internet is down, and in some parts of the city there are no phones or computers at all. There are conversations and side conversations, formal and informal encounters, oratory, the level tones of anchorpersons, screams from dungeons, the wheedling of crazed panhandlers, official announcements. There is far too much to read and to hear. But we go on, talking and listening, trying to understand and to be understood, imagining that we do and are. One might here speak of intersubjectivity and invoke Richard Rorty's search for the "widest possible intersubjective agreement" (Rorty 1998:63). But subjects are unstable, and too many people are speaking at once. And yet ... we find meaning, somehow, through our encounters and conversations.

The global interconnectedness of all of the people we met in New Zealand/Aotearoa has little to do with the ties that characterize a village community. Whether or not a significant proportion of our time was actually spent in rural areas, all of us communicated regularly by telephone and through the Internet, using email and social media. Transport routes linked us and distances shrank. Unbelievably, the taiaha took less than a week to be delivered halfway around the globe. We inhabit a common space, connected in an almost intimate immediacy. We are family, neighbours, friends, living among a large community of strangers: the metaphor of the city seems apt. The encounters here described might have been facilitated by familial ties and trustworthy translators, but they are nevertheless an instance of a multitude of possible encounters in the dialogic city. Many, of course, will be too ephemeral to lend themselves to narrative. Some will have a common language to draw on. Some may take place in tough neighbourhoods where translators, if required, may have their own agendas, or be incompetent, or be actively hostile to the values or lifestyles of one or other of the interlocutors—or there might be no translators within reach. But whatever the hazards, the inhabitants of the city will continue to talk, to gesticulate, to text, to read and write, as long as the city exists.

In New Zealand/Aotearoa, we spoke with others, and they spoke with us. Our journey was to an unfamiliar neighbourhood of the dialogic city, not to a place out of ken. And through our conversations (and, to a far lesser extent, our written messages), the unfamiliar grew more familiar, and the familiar—perhaps a little less so.

Conclusion: Bringing It Back

In this article, I argue for a means of generating anthropological knowledge that does not flow from notions of culture(s) and hybridity. Accounts such as that given in the first section lend themselves more readily and productively to a dialogical analysis. The semantic space referred to by John and Jean Comaroff (1992:27) is filled with vocabulary: intertexts, "messages, images and actions"—the contents of a grand Barthesian dictionary. Even physical objects (the mere, the taiaha, the carvings and mats in the marae) are palimpsests upon whose surfaces we could read—or impose—countless narratives in which we found ourselves implicated. That would account for the anxiety I experienced at the apparent loss of my stepson's mere. There is no reflection there of cultural fetishism, appropriation, a reification of "culture" (Beck 2003:46) but, rather, the literal loss of a part of the discursive self, inscribed in the object. Global instantaneity has brought together much that was separate, in a jostling mass of Bakhtinian heteroglossia and polyglossia. Individuals do not encounter cultures and their culture-bearers. Instead they have conversations, at different registers and pitches, mediated and to various degrees facilitated. Both authors and readers, speakers and listeners, we draw from a global dictionary now. We encounter the different but seldom the strange. We are not "emplaced" but roam at will.

We all inhabit a converging semantic space that coincides with a world in which borders have, to all intents and purposes, ceased to exist for most except as empty formalities. The shock of 9/11 was not just the loss of life but the realization that there can be no privileged spectators. We are all implicated. Time is foreshortened, and space becomes a shared city. How to read, or "think with," the narratives of encounter that are generated in this space? They are elements of a global process of becoming, never finished, never concluded. They involve journeys at once actual and metaphorical, meetings and exchanges, mutual acts of

finding out that become stories we tell each other because we must.

Perhaps I have left the sense of emotional presence in the account of a family's adventures in New Zealand/Aotearoa too far behind in my analytical dust. But maybe not that far after all. What remains of that journey is not a conclusion but a partial understanding, one generated dialogically by interrogating anthropological assumptions and theoretical positions.

But other questions continue to press: Why was that farewelling ceremony so important to me? Was it more than a deathbed obligation? More than simple closure? (For so it seems.) What did it mean? What, precisely, is the nature of the connection that I wanted the children to make? Why did I want them to make it? What are the "lineage" and "heritage" that I avoid problematizing? Why do I avoid doing so, even in the form of a reflection upon the importance I appeared to give them? Am I shying away in some embarrassment from a suspect metaphysics of blood and soil? Or is this about metaphysics at all? Why did I become obsessed with completeness after my return? Is the absence of Marianne being mirrored/expressed/projected as the fear of an incomplete interpellation into Māori myth, one insufficiently grasped and acted upon?

Within the context of the analysis of culture(s), globalization and dialogics just presented, these questions offer at least the possibility of answers, even if only partial, contradictory, unsatisfactory answers can emerge from such interrogation. As I look at them, however, I am struck by a grave misgiving: Is this, after all, more the province of psychology than anthropology (placing in parentheses for now the socially constructed nature of what we call psychology)? But what if it is? Anthropologist and psychoanalyst Vincent Crapanzano, in his groundbreaking ethnography of a schizophrenic Moroccan toolmaker (an ethnography that so implicated the teller that the boundaries of the two selves seemed to dissolve in the account), cites Paul Ricoeur on the hermeneutics of encounter: "the comprehension of self by the detours of the comprehension of the other" (Crapanzano 1985:139). If in the openended dialogics of being-with-others we discover something about ourselves, then, or are just left with questions for reflection, so much the better. Let the investigations continue.

But perhaps, for now, this is a good place to stop.

John Baglow, Independent Scholar, 53 Simcoe Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 1A3, Canada.
Email: baglow@firstwrite.ca.

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Notes

1 "The tongue," the Māori language.
2 The Māori are said to have arrived in Aotearoa in seven *waka*, or canoes. The Ngati Hine *waka* was called Ngatokimata-whaorua.

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