

BLOOD NARRATIVE



*Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori
Literary and Activist Texts* CHADWICK ALLEN

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FOR MY FAMILY

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INTRODUCTION

Marking the Indigenous in

Indigenous Minority Texts

Improvisation is a vital element of cultural resistance; it determines the survival of a people, enhances the continuity of their spirit, the essence of their art.—Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (Maori),

Mana Wahine Maori

Survival is imagination, a verbal noun, a transitive word.

—Gerald Vizenor (Chippewa), “Crows Written on the Poplars”

Some readers will recognize the primary title of this book as a version of Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday’s signature trope *memory in the blood* or *blood memory*, which achieves tropic power by blurring distinctions between racial identity (blood) and narrative (memory).¹ By echoing Momaday, I mean to evoke the complicated, multiperspectivist, and sometimes controversial maneuvers that are employed by indigenous minority writers and activists when they attempt to render contemporary indigenous minority identities as literary and activist texts. An earlier version of the title expanded Momaday’s trope into the yoked form *blood as narrative/narrative as blood* in an effort to indicate a fluid movement between the key terms. But the reversed similes also suggested that the potential effects of blurring distinctions between blood and narrative are limited to a set of comparisons. As we shall see, simple comparison is rarely the effect of either Momaday’s provocative juxtaposition or the many other maneuvers developed by indigenous minority activists and writers to assert indigenous identities in contemporary texts.

In the broadest sense, this study investigates the construction of indigeneity within the context of a deep and enduring settler colonization. More specifically, it analyzes a number of the narrative tactics

developed by writers and activists who self-identify as American Indian or New Zealand Maori to mark their identities as persistently distinctive from those of dominant European-descended settlers and as irrevocably rooted in the particular lands these writers, activists, and their communities continue to call home. I limit my focus, further, to the early contemporary period (World War II through the 1970s), an era of dramatic social transformations and unprecedented textual production. Critics have largely avoided indigenous minority texts produced in the first half of the early contemporary period; political engagement and stylistic innovation are less obvious in these texts than in those published after 1968. But the “improvisational” and “transitive” discursive practices described by Te Awēkotuku and Vizenor as the basis for contemporary indigenous survival and resistance began in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, and it was then that they first became visible to diverse audiences.² I emphasize narrative tactics in order to engage Michel de Certeau’s model for these types of maneuvers—provisional, opportunistic, and creative—that enable disenfranchised peoples like indigenous minorities to realize practical kinds of power, including the power to make their voices heard by multiple audiences.³ One of the aims of this project in comparative literary and cultural studies, then, is to articulate the rhetorical complexity of indigenous minority writing in First World settler nations like the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand.⁴ Another, related aim is to develop a better sense of the distinct dynamics of the particular form of (post)coloniality experienced by indigenous minorities like American Indians and New Zealand Maori in the post–World War II era.⁵

Why compare literary and activist texts produced by contemporary American Indians and New Zealand Maori? The first answer is that the comparison sets each group’s discursive practices in relief, suggesting avenues for analysis and theory that are less obvious when texts produced by either group are considered on their own. American Indians and Maori share much in their responses to settler colonialism and in their assertions of indigenous identity. This is not surprising. Both groups experienced a dramatic population decline after initial contact with Europeans and the introduction of European diseases and military technology, and in both countries settler colonialism culminated in a series of violent land wars and land confiscations in the mid- and late nineteenth century. Neither Maori nor American Indian popula-

tions began to recover from the devastation of the contact era until the second half of the twentieth century, after World War II, the point at which this study begins. As those born after the war came of age in the 1960s and 1970s, both Maori and American Indians produced an explosive “renaissance” that forever altered their countries’ national literatures and politics and that invigorated international efforts at creating indigenous coalitions.

However, it is also their significant differences within broadly similar histories that make these groups, their experiences, and their contemporary discursive practices especially productive for comparison. Aotearoa/New Zealand is considerably smaller than the United States in both its geographical area and its total contemporary population, and, as a group of South Pacific islands, it is relatively isolated compared to the United States. The European colonization of Aotearoa/New Zealand began two centuries later than it did in North America, and it was a more rapid process: Captain James Cook first landed in New Zealand in 1769, and the British invasion was seriously under way, via neighboring Australia, by the 1820s. Because of different geographies and different histories of colonial settlement, Maori are today a smaller population than American Indians in absolute terms but a much larger percentage of the total population of their contemporary nation, about 15 percent of 3.7 million compared to less than 1 percent of over 260 million.⁶ Like American Indians, Maori did not conceive of themselves as a single cultural or ethnic group until Europeans described them as such, and their locally defined identities have persisted into contemporary times. As a group, however, diverse Maori iwi (peoples or “tribes”) more closely resemble each other in terms of their common Polynesian language, culture, and genealogy than do the diverse American Indian nations spread across the continental United States and Alaska. The relative visibility of Maori within the national population coupled with their relative cultural homogeneity has meant a greater Maori presence in national politics and dominant discourses. Finally, both American Indians and Maori were engaged as treaty “partners” by imperial and settler governments. But where American Indian nations negotiated nearly four hundred separate treaties with the United States, Maori negotiated a single treaty with Great Britain’s colonial representative. As I explain in detail below, this difference provides an important entry for theorizing about the forms

of (post)colonial hybridity at work in contemporary indigenous minority texts.

But, less expectedly, the comparison also highlights the often hidden context of colonialism that is still operative within the United States: it reveals how that context has affected—and continues to affect—the narrative tactics of literary and activist texts produced by those individuals and communities who insist on identifying themselves not as American but as American Indian. Given that American Indians (along with Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians) constitute less than 1 percent of the total U.S. population and have little say in the design or enforcement of U.S. laws, current demographic and political realities tend to obscure the ongoing history of colonialism in the United States, the persistent presence and distinctiveness of its indigenous peoples, and the unique legal and moral relationships forged between indigenous peoples and the federal government through treaties and other binding agreements. Moreover, both the development of postcolonial theory and the rise of multiculturalism in the last quarter of the twentieth century have also tended to obscure the ongoing colonized status of indigenous peoples in the United States. So-called orthodox postcolonial theory has drawn almost exclusively from the experiences of populations in Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean; when critics have examined British settler colonies like New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, they have focused the majority of their attention on the continuing psychological effects of the colonial past on European settlers and their descendants—not on the material or psychological circumstances of these nations' indigenous minorities. For a variety of reasons, including its early independence from Britain and its own history as an imperial power in offshore territories like the Philippines, the United States has been included in studies of “settler colonies” only rarely, with little attention paid to American Indians or their textual production. Although various multiculturalist projects have brought a greater number of American Indian texts into the American literary canon, they have often done so by leveling distinctions between peoples indigenous to what is now the United States and other nondominant U.S. “minorities.” The distinctiveness of American Indian identity is elided in what one recent academic commentary on multiculturalism describes as “the dominant social understanding of the United States as a society of immigrants.”⁷ I take up

these issues of the relationships among indigenous minority status, postcolonial theory, and multiculturalism in greater detail in the separate introductions to part 1 and part 2. My point here is that, unlike typical postcolonial or multicultural approaches, the comparison with Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand refocuses critical attention on American Indians as both colonized and indigenous.

A recent example highlights the power of this comparison. At the new Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, which opened in Wellington in 1998, both the ongoing distinction between indigenous peoples and European settlers and the significant ongoing relationship between these groups and their descendants are positioned at the structural center of the building and thus at the conceptual center of the contemporary settler nation—something not to be encountered in any nationally representative museum in the United States. The striking design of the museum in Wellington reflects a conception of Aotearoa/New Zealand as a bicultural nation, made up of “the Tangata Whenua, people here by right of first arrival,” and “the Tangata Tiriti, people here by right of the Treaty [of Waitangi].”⁸ Display space at the museum is divided into Tangata Whenua galleries on one side and Tangata Tiriti galleries on the other; the layouts of each wing reflect the differing settlement patterns of indigenous Maori and Pakeha (European) settlers. These contrasting physical spaces meet in a central Wedge zone, a symbolic “point of cleavage” meant to suggest both a coming together and a separating, as well as the fluidity of movement between these divergent meanings of the verb “to cleave.” The Wedge houses the museum’s permanent exhibit on the Treaty of Waitangi, which includes large-scale replicas of the conflicting Maori and English language versions of Aotearoa/New Zealand’s founding charter and multiple Maori and Pakeha voices that interpret the Treaty’s relevance for the contemporary nation and its diverse peoples.⁹ Although this conception of Aotearoa/New Zealand is not uncontested, in many ways the new museum stands as a monument to efforts made over the last two decades by both Maori and Pakeha to heal old wounds from a turbulent history of racial conflict and aggressive attempts by dominant settlers to impose a British-derived monoculture. As an American visitor accustomed to the marginalization of indigenous peoples in representations of the United States, I found the innovative architecture of “Te Papa” and the high visibility of the progressive politics that

undergird its design nothing less than breathtaking. More to the point, the new structure and the provocative concept of its design are suggestive of the national impact of Maori writing and activism in the early contemporary period. And they draw attention to possible models for the representation of indigeneity in the United States, such as a paradigm of treaty partners or of fluid movement between separation and alliance.

Blood Narrative is organized to foreground a comparative methodology, and both part 1 (World War II–1960s) and part 2 (1960s–1970s) move from materials produced by Maori toward materials produced by American Indians. The several visits I made to Aotearoa/New Zealand between 1987 and 1998 to study contemporary Maori language, literature, and political activism, including a full year in 1994 working with faculty and students in the Department of Maori Studies at Auckland University, suggested a rich comparative context for better understanding the rhetorical complexity and the particular dynamics of (post)coloniality evident in American Indian literature and activism. In limiting my focus to the period I consider early contemporary, that is, the period that begins with the onset of World War II and ends—or, more accurately, is transformed—sometime during the early 1980s, I concentrate on the less well known but formative period that set the stage for the innovative, better-known work of indigenous minority writers who emerged in the final quarter of the twentieth century.

For New Zealand Maori and for American Indians, as for so many communities around the globe, the early contemporary period was an era of rapid change, affecting everything from local economies and political structures to national residency patterns and birthrates to international travel, communication, and coalition. Both Maori and American Indians fought on behalf of their contemporary nations during World War II and joined their nations' war support efforts in remarkable numbers. The events of the war and the formation of the United Nations at its end spurred these men and women to pursue their longstanding efforts to assert cultural and political distinctiveness with renewed vigor. During the war years and in the first decades of the war's aftermath, Maori and American Indians worked largely within dominant discourses in their efforts to define and to assert viable contemporary indigenous identities. But by the late 1960s and early 1970s,

when the children of World War II veterans came of age, both New Zealand and the United States felt the effects of an emerging indigenous renaissance, marked by dramatic events of political and cultural activism and by unprecedented levels of literary production. By the mid-1970s, Maori and American Indians were part of a burgeoning international indigenous rights movement, signaled by, among other events, the formation and first general assembly of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP).

Writers and activists who identified as Maori or American Indian in this period produced, appropriated, and/or revalued both indigenous and nonindigenous discourses for their contemporary purposes; they also created, appropriated, reclaimed, refashioned, and/or juxtaposed powerful tropes, emblematic figures, and distinctive genre conventions in their efforts to represent the increasing complexity of contemporary indigenous minority identities. The primary concern of *Blood Narrative* is to better understand Maori and American Indian discursive practices and their effectiveness for various audiences, to better understand, that is, how indigenous minority writers and activists *mark* and thus construct contemporary indigenous identities as distinct from settler and other nonindigenous identities in their particular nations and in the larger global context.

Some Preliminary Terminology

Indigenous peoples can be defined as those populations that were already resident when Europeans or other colonizers invaded, occupied, and/or settled their traditional territories. Such a general definition of indigeneity—"original inhabitants"—is of limited use, however, when applied to examples of colonial relations in specific geographical locations and during specific historical periods. Distinctions can be drawn, for instance, among, one, indigenous peoples who have remained majority populations in their homelands; two, indigenous peoples who were dislocated to foreign territories, where they may have displaced other indigenous peoples (becoming, in effect, settlers themselves) and where they may have become either majority or minority populations; and, three, indigenous peoples who have become minorities in lands they once controlled. New Zealand Maori and

American Indians fall into the last category of indigenous minorities, along with Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians in the United States, First Nations peoples in Canada, and Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia. Other, perhaps less obvious indigenous minorities include Smaller Peoples in the Russian Federation, Sami in the Scandinavian countries, and Ainu in Japan.

There has been increasing debate over whether the circumstances under which indigenous minorities live in First World settler nations like Aotearoa/New Zealand and the United States are best described as “colonialism,” “postcolonialism,” “internal colonialism,” “para-colonialism,” “domestic imperialism,” or something else. I take up this debate in some detail in the introduction to part I, and there I offer a justification for my own use throughout the book of the term *(post)colonial*, which employs parentheses to emphasize the irony of an often-asserted post-colonial situation (where the hyphenated “post-” implies “beyond”) that is never quite one for indigenous minorities. I want to note here that additional generalizing labels have been affixed to indigenous minorities along these different lines, some generated by indigenous peoples themselves, including the relatively politically neutral terms “original nations,” “domestic nations,” or “nations within,” and the more overtly politically radical terms “internal colonies” and “captive” or “occupied” nations. Some Maori activists, for example, designate New Zealand as “Occupied Aotearoa.” In Canada, both indigenous peoples and settlers currently use the term “First Nations” to refer collectively to American Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples; some U.S. American Indians employ it as well. This term is notable for its implications of historic memory coupled with its relative political neutrality: “First Nations” suggests both prior occupancy of territory and prior political organization (and thus self-determinacy) without overtly carrying accusations of violence or theft against majority populations of European-descended settlers in Canada or the United States.

In the international arena, two generalizing labels for indigenous peoples have come into common currency. “First Peoples” is a United Nations term that is applied to indigenous peoples in all parts of the world, whether they are majority or minority populations, while “Fourth World” is a more politically radical term that is often, though not always, limited to indigenous minorities. Both terms acknowledge indigenous status—claims of deep historical, cultural, and spiritual ties

to specific lands—as a legitimate rationale for collective political identity at local, national and, potentially, international levels. But unlike the term “First Peoples,” “Fourth World” serves to distinguish the particular historical contexts and contemporary concerns of indigenous minorities from those of the majority indigenous populations of so-called developing or Third World nations, as well as from those of the majority-settler First World populations that now occupy and control most of the traditional territories claimed by indigenous minorities like Maori and American Indians.¹⁰ It is for this reason that I employ “Fourth World” as a general term for indigenous minority peoples.

The Fourth World condition is marked by a perennial struggle between “native” indigeneity and “settler” or “New World” indigeneity. Stated briefly, aboriginal inhabitants of what are now First World nations have been forced to compete for *indigenous* status with European settlers and their descendants eager to construct new identities that separate them from European antecedents. Indigenous minority assertions of prior claims to land, resources, languages, and cultures—above all, of the right to maintain some level of cultural and political distinctiveness—appear to threaten settlers’ constructions of an available New World and to call into question settlers’ attempts to assert their own cultural distinctiveness from Europe.¹¹ This is a struggle over definitional control (who will be allowed to define themselves as “indigenous”) in which the stakes continue to be high: the right to claim tangible resources such as land, minerals, timber, and fisheries, as well as the right to claim intangible but nonetheless highly valuable political, social, and symbolic resources such as authenticity and legitimacy. And it is a struggle over definitional control that continues to be regulated by tensions among the contradictory desires of dominant settlers to identify with indigenous peoples, to supersede them, and to eradicate them completely, either through absorption or genocide. This complex struggle has, at least in part, motivated settlers’ calls for all inhabitants of their nations to behave as one people, to self-identify as part of a dominant culture and to speak a dominant language. The same complex struggle has motivated politically and militarily dominant settlers either to invalidate claims of native status through acts of legislation (for example, requirements of blood quantum, endogamous marriage, or patrilineal descent, or the granting/imposition of

national citizenship) or to deny indigenous claims to collective rights guaranteed by international law by unilaterally redefining indigenous peoples and nations as “populations,” “groups,” “societies,” “persons,” and “ethnic minorities.”¹² As settlers’ projects for establishing cultural authenticity and national legitimacy have developed over time, claims of native indigeneity often have been ignored.

The Occasion of Indigeneity

In her seminal 1975 analysis *Hui: A Study of Maori Ceremonial Gatherings*, New Zealand anthropologist Anne Salmond argues persuasively for taking an “occasional” approach to the study of “formal Maori culture” and postcontact Maori identity, rather than trying to analyze the contemporary Maori situation as an integrated whole (210). Drawing on Erving Goffman’s theories of the “significance of situations as frames for action” (3), Salmond points out that “in contact situations everywhere, minority groups maintain their distinct identities in episodic sub-cultures, which carry over from one special occasion to the next” (210). I extend Salmond’s idea of the significance of Maori cultural “occasions” in order to analyze diverse performances of indigenous identity within and alongside the larger performance of the contemporary settler nation.¹³

Salmond’s description of “contact situations” is somewhat limited by its clear division between indigenous- and settler-controlled spaces. According to Salmond, the contemporary marae (Maori community facility) is “a last outpost of traditional culture,” where “*Maoritanga* [Maoriness or Maori identity] comes into its sharpest definition, whereas in other situations, especially in the cities, it plays at best a background role” (210). A more refined assessment becomes possible by engaging Homi Bhabha’s notion of the performativity of all cultural engagements, where “the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation,” as well as by engaging Mary Louise Pratt’s definition of “contact zones”: “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power.”¹⁴ These theories help articulate the fact that the contemporary marae is not simply a bastion of “traditional” Maori culture located away from the contact

zones and cultural negotiations of the city, where non-Maori rules and values dominate. The contemporary marae, whether rural or urban, is also a complex contact zone itself, where Maori meet not only other Maori, with whom they may or may not share common experiences, traditions, and views, but also a diverse range of Pakeha (Europeans), as well as migrant or immigrant Pacific Islanders, various individuals of mixed blood and mixed heritage, and, increasingly, non-European and non-Polynesian immigrants and tourists. Maori rules and values may dominate on the marae but, as at other locations in the contemporary settler nation, they do not dominate free from the potential opposition—or free from the potential appropriation—of racial or cultural outsiders. In diverse social spaces with asymmetrical relations of power, including the marae, Maori individuals and communities negotiate the potential and situational forms and meanings of contemporary Maori identity through various modes of cultural performance. As Te Awēkotuku states succinctly, “Creativity was a potent weapon in political battle [within precontact Maori society and, in the contact era, between Maori and Pakeha]—and it has remained so” (164). Much the same can be said of the complex cultural negotiations performed at contemporary American Indian tribal and pan-tribal social, religious, political, academic, or activist events, which are as diverse as the closed conferences of elders conducted during the meeting of the Wabanaki Confederacy held in Maine and the public dances staged for tourists during the Gallup Ceremonial held in New Mexico. In the new millennium, such negotiations increasingly occur as well in cyberspace.

Salmond’s paradigm of minority cultural “episodes” and “occasions” can be expanded to include events of political and cultural activism and, broadly defined, literary and activist texts. For these purposes it is useful to conceive of events of indigenous protest as both instances of ethnopolitical conflict and performances of ethno-drama.¹⁵ Activist events—demonstrations, marches, and occupations—employ ideological interpretive frames such as “Kotahitanga” (Unity), “Red Power,” or “nationalism” that help assign meaning to movement participation and to specific protest activities.¹⁶ Designed to highlight ethnic differences between the majority settler population and the particular indigenous minority people, these events also tend to have an immediately discernable dramatic structure. They stage the “facts” of persistent indigenous presences and a version of contemporary indigenous “reality.” They

often also endeavor to make it possible for members of the dominant culture to see and/or to understand certain cultural and political “truths,” such as the continuing importance of the ancestral land base to indigenous identity or the continuing relevance of historic treaties and other negotiated agreements. As drama, these events routinely mobilize powerful emblematic representations of Native identity, whether along tribal, pan-tribal, or pan-indigenous lines, that respond to the expectations—and that often are shaped by the expressed needs—of particular audiences.¹⁷ Typically, in the period covered by the present study, the specific circumstances and the particular charismatic leaders of individual activist events could bring together a wide range of tribal groups, women and men, rural and urban individuals, and diverse radical and moderate protest factions only for a limited period of time, for a particular occasion or set of occasions, for a particular performance or set of performances.

Similarly, it is useful to conceive of indigenous minority texts as “occasions” for the performance of indigeneity, as “episodes” in the ongoing negotiation of contemporary indigenous minority identities. An occasional and episodic approach invites us to read particular literary and activist texts as responses to the multiple motivations for their creation and, potentially, as co-creators of the multiple contexts of their reception—local, national, and global—rather than to focus on their conformity or lack of conformity to a given set of standards for authenticity or aesthetic excellence. Navajo poet Luci Tapahonso explicitly compares her acts of writing to her “occasional” visits to the Navajo nation, and she describes her works as “enabling myself and other Navajos to sojourn mentally and emotionally to our home, Din-étah.”¹⁸ Tapahonso’s statements suggest that there is often more than one text in play during public performances of indigenous minority identities and often more than one audience able to interpret the markers of indigeneity in contemporary texts.

The latter point was made dramatically clear to me during a “Maori concert” I attended in December 1994 at the renowned War Memorial Museum in Auckland.¹⁹ Although I lived for almost a year within a block of the museum, I avoided the Maori concert regularly performed there until the week before my return to the United States. Given the museum’s central location on the New Zealand tourist trail, I feared the concert would disappoint because it would not feel “authentic.” As I

predicted, the concert's sizable audience consisted of European and Asian tourists, most of whom had arrived at the museum on commercial tour buses. Also as I predicted, the concert's program of waiata (songs), waiata-a-ringā (action songs), and haka (chants with actions), while highly accomplished and entertaining, was designed to present mostly static images of the "traditional Maori," that is, the Maori before contact with Europeans. The performers wore "traditional" costumes, and no mention was made of the diverse lives that Maori people lead today. Unknown to me or to the other tourists, however, a local Maori school group arrived during the performance and was seated at the rear of the auditorium. At the performance's conclusion, amid the bustle of moving chairs and the chatter of several European and Asian languages, the Maori school group unexpectedly reframed the "text" of the concert. Suddenly, I became aware that much more had been at stake during the performance than simply welcoming foreign visitors, teaching cultural outsiders, or earning a few tourist dollars.

When the staged portion of the concert ended, the school group's leader, a Maori man, stood up at the back of the room and began to *whaikorero* (deliver a speech) in response to the performers' efforts. His group, about fifteen or twenty Maori adolescents and a Maori woman who was likely another teacher, arranged themselves behind him to stand in support. The Maori man's voice rang out over the tourists' conversations. In eloquent Maori, he formally addressed the concert troupe, acknowledging their considerable effort and telling them how important it is for Maori young people to have opportunities to see and hear these aspects of Maori culture and to see and hear them performed so well. Although the performers were caught off guard, they quickly assessed the situation and lined up below the stage to listen politely. The tourist audience, who had been told that the concert was over and that the performers would shake hands with them as they filed out of the auditorium, was visibly confused. Families and other small groups continued to converse; several individuals pushed their way past the Maori students to get to the door. Others openly expressed their discomfort. When the Maori man finished his speech, his group supported him by singing a waiata. In response, one of the male members of the concert troupe made a short speech in Maori; his group, now better organized, performed a short waiata to support their speaker. Only now, after this exchange of *korero* and

waiata between manuhiri (guests) and tangata whenua (hosts), was the concert considered complete for these participants. The unexpected deployment of Maori language, dialogue between Maori speakers, and the recognizable conventions of whaikorero and waiata shifted the focus of the concert from a primarily “tourist” performance to a significantly “Maori” performance, serving distinctly Maori purposes. In effect, the occasion of the concert was reframed in terms of a Maori ethno-nationalist discourse. And once reframed, at least for certain readers, the concert could function as an activist event. The active presence of the Maori school group disrupted the “museumification” of Maori culture for tourist consumption, and it revealed the text of the staged concert as a potential force for galvanizing the younger generation’s sense of its Maoritanga (Maori identity). Strikingly, this shift in the concert’s interpretive ideological frame occurred not covertly but openly, literally over the heads of the tourist audience.

In the chapters that follow, I take an occasional approach in order to analyze indigenous minority texts as particular episodes in the ongoing negotiations and performances of post–World War II New Zealand Maori and American Indian identities as *indigenous* identities. Further, in order to highlight how the construction of indigenous identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the United States has been transformed over time, I organize each chapter in relation to the two overarching theoretical terms that emerge from my comparative analysis: first, what I call the blood/land/memory complex and, second, a specific manifestation of that complex, the discourse of treaties. I offer initial definitions for these terms below; in subsequent chapters, I refine and expand these definitions as I employ each term in specific analyses. In foregrounding the blood/land/memory complex and treaty discourse, it is not my intention to suggest that these terms can account for the construction of meaning in all contemporary Maori or American Indian texts. Analysis of oral literatures in English and indigenous languages and of various forms of local writing and publication, such as tribal or iwi newspapers, for instance, are mostly beyond the scope of the present study. Rather, I use these overarching terms to focus my analysis on two sets of related narrative tactics for asserting indigeneity that largely have been unexplored in recent scholarship on indigenous minority writing, the significance of which becomes especially clear within a comparative New Zealand Maori–American Indian framework.

*Blood/Land/Memory:
Defining and Defending Indigenous Minority Identities*

The intimate “and/or” juxtaposition of these three highly charged terms is meant to be suggestive of the Fourth World condition experienced by contemporary Maori and American Indians. *Blood*, *land*, and *memory* name primary and interrelated sites in the struggle over defining indigenous minority identities in Aotearoa/New Zealand and in the United States; they also name three primary and interrelated tropes or emblematic figures that contemporary indigenous minority writers and activists have developed in their works in the post–World War II era to counter and, potentially, to subvert dominant settler discourses.

Individually, each of these terms, along with the cluster of potential meanings it represents, has been and continues to be considered controversial. Discussions of indigenous “blood,” for example, often raise disturbing issues of essentialism, racism, and genocide. These discussions also raise the vexed issue of how to define and certify contemporary indigenous identities in Aotearoa/New Zealand and in the United States given the demographic reality of large numbers of “mixed-blood” individuals and communities. Government officials, social scientists, and indigenous minority peoples themselves have disagreed over whether biological kinship, language, culture, group consciousness, community endorsement, personal declaration, or some combination of these “objective” and “subjective” criteria should be used to recognize “authentic” indigenous status. Discussions of indigenous “land” often raise equally disturbing issues of colonial reterritorialization: the historical and contemporary attempts to decode and recode indigenous lands so that they can be appropriated into the colonial power’s economic and cultural systems.²⁰ And often they expose, more specifically, the ongoing colonial practices in New Zealand and the United States of forcibly expropriating resources from indigenous peoples for the benefit of settlers. Further, these discussions draw attention to continuing assaults on lands that remain under indigenous control (and to ongoing assaults on the people who inhabit those lands) through flooding for hydroelectric projects, mining, weapons testing, and hazardous waste disposal.²¹ And discussions of indigenous “memory” often reveal the underlying disparities that still exist be-

tween indigenous and invading peoples' conceptions of history, as well as the underlying unequal power relations that determine whose version of history and whose methods of historiography are considered "legitimate" and "authentic" in various popular, academic, and legal contexts.

However disconcerting these issues may prove for particular audiences, including those U.S. scholars who have lamented the possible racist connotations, especially, in the indigenous (re)deployment of "blood," it is imperative that we contextualize the discursive appeal and symbolic power of these emblematic figures. What I call the blood/land/memory complex is an expansion of Momaday's controversial trope blood memory that makes explicit the central role that land plays both in the specific project of defining indigenous minority personal, familial, and communal identities (blood) and in the larger project of reclaiming and reimagining indigenous minority histories (memory). Like Momaday's trope, the blood/land/memory complex articulates acts of indigenous minority recuperation that attempt to seize control of the symbolic and metaphorical meanings of indigenous "blood," "land," and "memory" and that seek to liberate indigenous minority identities from definitions of authenticity imposed by dominant settler cultures, including those definitions imposed by well-meaning academics.²² Throughout the book, I employ the blood/land/memory complex as a useful construct for analyzing assertions of indigenous identity and authenticity. Although other scholars have used these individual terms or their cognates to examine the construction of Native identity in American Indian texts, typically they have focused on one and excluded the others. I argue that these terms and their potential meanings must be examined together, as a complex set of interactions, so that we can better understand the ways Maori and American Indian writers and activists both juxtapose and integrate "real" and "imagined" genealogies, physical and metaphorical ancestral land bases, and narratives of "real" and "invented" histories in their constructions of viable contemporary indigenous identities. Moreover, I argue that the blood/land/memory complex, like Momaday's trope blood memory, names both the process and the product of the indigenous minority writer situating him- or herself within a particular indigenous family's or nation's "racial memory" of its relationship with specific lands.²³

Indigeneity, Hybridity, and the Discourse of Treaties

In multicultural settler nations like the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand, the discourse of treaties stands out as a distinguishing feature of the discursive relationship between indigenous peoples and settler-invaders. The treaty-making process implicitly recognizes the sovereignty of indigenous nations; specific treaty documents explicitly vow that imperial or settler governments will uphold that sovereignty. Since it operates within a paradigm of nation-to-nation status, the discourse of treaties, like the discourse of declarations of war or declarations of independence, provides one of the few interpretive frames within which contemporary indigenous minority activists and writers can stage formal dialogue with dominant settler interests on (potentially) equitable terms. Because historic treaties recognize indigenous nations as sovereign, they continue to offer strong legal and moral bases from which indigenous minority peoples can argue for land and resources rights as well as articulate cultural and identity politics. By imposing one group's expectations on the other even as it envisions their reconciliation, the discourse of historic treaties is simultaneously pragmatic and idealistic. It therefore offers indigenous minority activists and writers a widely recognized symbol and a set of widely recognized statements through which they can not only express anger over past and present acts of colonial violence but, at the same time, continue to imagine the possibility of future peace. In other words, the indigenous minority appropriation of treaty discourse is a specific and powerful manifestation of the blood/land/memory complex.

I argue in the chapters that follow that the appropriation and re-deployment of treaty discourse helps define the particular type of (post)colonial hybridity at work in many New Zealand Maori and American Indian texts produced in the post-World War II era. Analyses of Maori and American Indian mobilizations of treaty discourse force us to question the usefulness of theories of hybridity and mimicry that totalize the discursive strategies of various colonized and formerly colonized peoples. Much of so-called orthodox postcolonial theory emphasizes what it defines as an ambivalence inherent in colonial discourses; by revealing or exploiting this ambivalence, so the argument goes, "natives" or indigenous "subalterns" have been able to effectively de-center European colonial discourses from their positions

of power and authority in India, Africa, and the Caribbean. As evidenced by the frequently cited, comprehensive study *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, typical readings of postcolonial literary texts rightly celebrate the ways in which these works often deploy “a number of counter-discursive strategies, re-entering the western episteme at one of its most fundamental points of origination to deconstruct those notions and processes which rationalized the imposition of the imperial word on the rest of the world” (104). Although useful in a general sense, this theory of postcolonial hybridity offers no terms by which to account for the ways indigenous minorities like New Zealand Maori or American Indians might *re-recognize*, rather than deconstruct, the authority of particular colonial discourses, such as treaties, for their own gain.²⁴

To take another well-known example, Homi Bhabha, in his influential essay collection *The Location of Culture* (1994), details historical and literary events in which dominant British discourses (and, in particular, the European book) are “displaced,” “transformed,” and “transfigured” in their “discovery” and “repetition” in colonial India, Africa, and the Caribbean. In its displacement through mimicry, Bhabha argues, the basis of colonial discourse—its “rules of recognition”—is “estranged.” The thrust of Bhabha’s complicated thesis is that this particular manifestation of hybridity, this process of displacement and estrangement, is paradigmatic of all indigenous resistance to dominating discourses. In Bhabha’s formulation, “Hybridity [always] represents that ambivalent ‘turn’ of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification—a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority” (113). Like Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin’s version of postcolonial reading practices, Bhabha’s model is attractively optimistic and extremely useful for understanding the disruptive potential of discursive hybridity.²⁵ It is untenable, however, as a generalization across diverse cultures and across diverse histories of colonial encounters. To look at only two potential examples, in Aotearoa/New Zealand and in the United States the (post)colonial hybridity of the indigenous minority encounter with treaty discourse—and, in particular, with the Euro-American “book” of treaty documents—operates differently and has opposite aims.

The dominant power in both New Zealand and the United States disavowed the discourse of treaties almost as soon as the ink was dry,

arguing that the promises inscribed in treaty documents and the recognition of sovereignty inherent in the treaty-making process are not binding on the settler nation. Once disavowed, treaty documents and the events of treaty making could be transformed into mere abstractions—platitudes of good faith, understatements of treachery—with no concrete relevance. In contrast, Maori and American Indian appropriations and redeployments of treaty discourse work to re-recognize and, in the process, to revalue the discourse of treaties. Treaty documents are neither “transformed” nor “transfigured” by these activists and writers, and the authority inscribed in treaties is generally not questioned. Instead, this disavowed discourse is reified—reclaimed from impotent abstraction and once again rendered concrete. To rephrase Bhabha’s definition of colonial mimicry as “almost the same, *but not quite*,” we might define indigenous re-recognition as “exactly the same, *but then some*.” Indigenous minority redeployments of treaty discourse insist that the dominant power remember the cross-cultural and cross-national agreements it forged with indigenous nations during previous eras; contradicting Bhabha, they reinstate and reinvigorate this colonial discourse’s original powers of legal enforcement and moral suasion. Such redeployments work, therefore, as at the new Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, to re-center the discourse of treaties, to re-establish treaty documents as powerful and authoritative and as binding on the contemporary settler nation.

There are subtle but significant differences between how Maori and American Indian activists and writers redeploy the discourse of historic treaties in early contemporary texts. Maori activists and writers tend to mobilize the competing discourses of the bilingual Treaty of Waitangi as allegory. This strategy is made possible by the fact that, unlike in the United States, where the federal government’s representatives negotiated nearly four hundred separate treaties with indigenous nations between 1788 and 1868, in Aotearoa/New Zealand the British Crown’s representative negotiated a single written agreement, the Treaty of Waitangi, which was eventually “signed” by more than five hundred Maori rangatira or “chiefs.”²⁶ However, there are four extant versions of the 1840 Treaty: three English-language versions, which are similar in content and which only a few rangatira signed, and one Maori-language version, which diverges from the English texts and on which the vast majority of rangatira inscribed their names or identifying

marks. Although the Treaty was never ratified by the New Zealand Parliament, its brief contents are well known. Today, New Zealanders generally consider it their nation's founding document (or documents) and a charter for ongoing relations between Maori, the government, and Pakeha (European) settlers. Maori, moreover, have long considered the Treaty both a sacred covenant and an esteemed taonga, a "treasured possession" handed down from their ancestors.²⁷ As a result, Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi provides a "silent second text" against which contemporary Maori works can be read as allegory.²⁸ But because this silent second text speaks in two distinct, conflicting voices, the resultant allegory always explicitly rehearses the difficulty of reconciling the Treaty's divergent Maori- and English-language versions. However strongly a particular allegory might promote one version, it cannot suppress the other. Even in those works that never allude to treaty documents specifically, tension between competing Maori and Pakeha versions of the "truth" often is suggestive of treaty allegory. This effect is only enhanced in bilingual and dual-language texts.

In contrast, American Indian activists and writers tend to redeploy treaty discourse as metaphor and metonymy—but, strikingly, not as allegory. Since so many individual treaties were signed in the United States, neither the specific contents of any one treaty document nor the details of any particular treaty dispute are well enough known to provide the basis for allegory, especially for national audiences. Instead, American Indian activists and writers evoke the discursive characteristics of treaties as metaphors for Indian-White relations and inscribe treaty documents in their texts as metonyms for the promises made—and most often broken—by the federal government. American Indian activists and writers typically foreground the generalized contents and surface features of a treaty, including the physical characteristics of the document itself as well as the rhetorical and literary style, figures of speech, and narrative devices in and associated with its preamble and specific articles. This move is obviously strategic, since dominant Euro-American culture typically has foregrounded the context of treaties in order to disavow their discourse. Inevitably, both the U.S. government and White U.S. citizens have had to argue that treaty promises are politically retrograde, a discourse without contemporary meaning that was designed in the past to pacify Indians or amelio-

rate their inevitable subjugation. The dominant culture has had to foreground the idea that treaty documents were little more than bothersome formalities, or that they were ruses designed to deceive, or that, whatever the federal government's intentions at the time of signing, treaty promises are no longer practical for the nation. This appears especially true in discussions of those nearly two hundred mid-nineteenth-century treaties that were negotiated in the years spanning the large-scale removals of southeastern Indian nations to the Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River and the final large-scale "Indian wars" fought on the central, southern, and northern plains. Although such arguments are promoted as the exposure of important truths hidden behind the facades of actual treaty documents, their effect is not to reveal some politically neutral "truth" but rather to undermine the sovereignty of American Indian nations recognized in past eras. To counter this selective and defensive amnesia, American Indian activists and writers foreground, as I have suggested above, precisely those surface features of treaties that the dominant culture wishes to ignore. Both metaphoric and metonymic redeployments of treaty discourse draw attention to the idea that treaties are not only the founding discourse for peaceful relations between American Indian nations and the United States but also undeniable records of binding agreements, whatever the U.S. government may have intended at the time of signing or may desire today.

Despite tactical differences, both New Zealand Maori and American Indian writers and activists engage the discourse of treaties as one of the sanctioned discourses for inscribing stories about indigenous minorities in First World nations. But—and here is the critical maneuver—they refuse to engage, and even mock, the subsequent rules of recognition that have enabled the dominant culture to (mis)read treaty discourse as an enduring sign of Maori or Indian subjugation rather than as an enduring sign of compromise between mutually respected sovereignties. These writers' and activists' hard-won subversion is manifest in their re-recognition of a treaty discourse that acknowledges indigenous sovereignty and in their insistence on the continuing authority of that original recognition. Given the demographic and political realities of indigenous minorities, such maneuvers represent a deft set of tactics for facilitating activist occupation of significant sites of colonial discourse. Like physical occupations of confiscated