

***Antipodean Affinities:
The Maori and Italy in Patricia Grace's
Tu***

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Unexpected Affinities

Patricia Grace's father, Sergeant Edward Gunson, left for war in 1944 to join Maori Battalion reinforcements in Italy. The idea of the novel *Tu* originates from the twenty-five page diary kept by him during his military service and read by Grace twenty years after his death in 1983, as she explains in the author's notes.¹ Grace wants to explore the motives leading an entire generation of Maori young men to voluntarily enlist and take part in a war that was "not our war" (89). As reported in the novel (142), there were opponents of the Maori participation in the conflict. The most vocal one was probably Te Puea Herangi, an activist and important agent for Maori culture.² But the majority of Maori people were in favour, including Maori politicians and authorities, on the grounds that it was a way to demonstrate their "pride of race" (278) to the world (and their own country) and have their rights and full citizenship acknowledged at home. This led to the creation of an all-Maori battalion within the Second New Zealand Division (2 NZ Division), the 28th Battalion, whose soldiers "saw action in Greece, Crete, North Africa and Italy", gaining "a reputation for bravery and skill in close-quarter combat".³

The war experience of the young protagonist Tu takes place approximately between August 1943 and December 1945, and mostly in Italy. After over a month at the Maadi Camp in Egypt, the base and headquarters of the 2 NZ Division, the 28th Battalion set off for southern Italy, to begin the entry into the country with other Allied troops and free it from the German occupation forces. By then, Allied divisions had landed in Sicily, the Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini had been overthrown in an internal coup, and the new Italian military government of General Pietro Badoglio had opened secret negotiations with the Allies, leading to Italy's surrender and withdrawal from the war with the armistice signed on 8 September 1943.⁴

A new phase of the war was inaugurated. Nazi Germans, previously allied to Italy, became enemies to be pushed out of the country. Overcome by hunger and poverty, suffering with a large number of casualties and from the devastation of their houses under heavy bombings, Italians welcomed the Allied troops as liberators from a long dictatorial regime whose foreign policy and war strategies had proved ruinous for the country.⁵

Like most of the Maori, Tu's family pays a very high tribute to the war. He is the only male member to survive after the death of his elder brothers, Pita and Rangi, on the battlefields. But, surprisingly, the pages of his journals offer a picture of Italy suggestive of affection and closeness, which also reflects the accounts given to Grace by returned Maori servicemen and the references she found in the soldiers' letters from the front, as she states in an interview.⁶ Tu perceives affinities between the Maori and Italian cultures which strengthen his sense of belonging and make him reappraise his own heritage, defining a new direction in his life after his return home.

This paper focuses on the influence exerted on Maori soldiers by some aspects of Italian culture, as found in Tu's narrative. Apart from the Italian geographical features that often remind the protagonist of the New Zealand/Aotearoa landscape, four major cultural affinities are found between the Maori and the Italians: 1) their affective relationship with food; 2) the sense of 'family'; 3) their enjoyment of singing as an emotional and communal experience; 4) their melodic language, which soldiers find easy to learn because its flow is similar to that of the Maori language. The recognition of affinities pertaining to primary affective needs and to the language reinforces the Maori soldiers' ethnic identity, through a projective process reminiscent of Jung's 'transference'. I will therefore demonstrate that the Italian Campaign becomes an act of indigenous appropriation of a Western culture in the service of the Maori cause, increasing the soldiers' racial self-esteem and prompting the emergence of a new counter-discourse in defence of their own culture at home.

Escaping to War in Search of Identity

The novel *Tu* consists of a doubled plot structure. The main narrative, including the Italian Campaign, is told in the first person by Tu through his journals. These chapters alternate with others employing a third person omniscient narrator, the second strand of the book, dealing with the story of

the family. There is here family life within a traditional rural community (a typical Maori extended family) and the predicament of Tu's father, who has become a demented man with irreversible neurological damage after being seriously injured and gassed in the First World War ('Tu' is the abbreviation of Te Hokowhitu-a-Tu, the name of the Pioneer Battalion of Maori soldiers of 1914–18 to which his father belonged). Then, after his death, the family migrates to Wellington with the help of an uncle working in parliament, and they are relocated in an urban setting and are deeply involved in the national war effort.

The second narrative strand also gives a picture of New Zealand in the early 1940s as a country where racial prejudice and discrimination did exist. Janet Wilson observes that it is Tu's eldest brother, Pita, who most perceives the "subtle forms of marginalisation" which are enacted by the dominant culture and accepted by Maori leaders.⁷ These end up exoticising and othering the Maori while proclaiming "well-intentioned beliefs of egalitarianism", as appears in the episodes of the Maori ethnic performances at the Wellington Ngati Poneke Club and on the occasion of the Centennial Exhibition to commemorate the Treaty of Waitangi.⁸ Pita's growing awareness of the fracture between 'performing' and 'being', epitomised by his perception of himself as a "performing monkey" (154) and part of "a showpiece or a clown act" (151), is also fostered by the discriminatory rules enforced in the country, as shown by the uncle-in-parliament's comment that "a Maori woman whose man has died gets only half the pension of a Pakeha widow" (74) and by the dialogue between Rangi and his mother. Here, Rangi complains that a Maori boy is "not allowed in the pubs with the Pakeha and the Chinaman" and the mother answers: "Well it's the law" (91), a reference to real facts relayed to Grace by her father, as she explains in an interview.⁹

The dislocation of the Maori in urban environments disrupted some of the basic tenets of Maori rural culture, such as the communal sharing of food, the enlarged family, the vocal expression of emotions and traditions through chants and ritual dance, and the use of the Maori language. The trauma of urban migration on the Maori is a major issue of Maori Renaissance writers and is also found in some of Grace's early works like *Mutuwhenua* (1978), *The Dream Sleepers* (1980) and *Electric City* (1987). Maori values are turned into empty boxes losing their symbolic and emotional valence, as Pita bitterly perceives. *Tu* shows how war essentially became an escape from

the experience of dislocation and cultural dispersal for a whole generation of Maori young men.

Rangi, the most exuberant of the brothers, feels soon trapped between two worlds in Wellington and is among the first Maori to enlist (90). He defies traditional authority (for example, in his reluctance to join the Ngati Poneke Club), rejects the fervent Catholicism of his family and does not want to conform to the code of written and unwritten laws regulating the life of the Maori in the city. His enlistment is unreflective and instinctual: an escape from restrictions and a way to project his masculine energy.

War is an escape for Pita too, who follows his brother's example three years later to flee from the "mess of himself and what it did to dreams" (38). If Pita is the character who most senses the ambiguity of New Zealand ethnic politics of 'reconciliation' and the erosion of Maori identity operated by Pakeha culture, he is unable to articulate a counter-discourse, trapped in a paralysing sense of duty, exemplified by his nickname "Little Father" (51). His over-normative structure causes a dissociation between rationality and instincts, reason and emotions, preventing him from being the agent of his life. In the end he cannot but accept traditional authority, as shown by his uncritical Catholicism and his rejection of Jess, the Pakeha girl who had become "his dream" (38). Unable to deal with dreams and emotions, Pita takes refuge in the more conventional marriage with Ani Rose, a Maori girl close to his family, and in the Maori Battalion.

Seventeen-year-old Tu, destined by his family to attend law school, enlists without their consent to escape from school, boyhood and boredom (24). But, as Wilson notices, he will succeed in articulating "the oppositional discourse Pita was unable to".¹⁰ First of all because of his "strategic survival" enacted by his brothers (they decide that Tu must be maimed in action in order to keep him off the battlefields until the end of the conflict).¹¹ Secondly, because he is able to re-elaborate his experience of war and suffering, retrieving the deep emotional bond with his heritage that had been lost by his brothers. His inter-action with a foreign country dispossessed by war but forcefully affirming affective symbols and models deep-rooted also in Maori culture (and devalued or repressed by the dominant culture at home) is therefore crucial to the growth of his self-agency and the articulation of a counter-discourse when he is back home.

Exploring Antipodean Affinities

In his essay *The Healing Tongue*, Peter Beatson devotes a whole chapter to the celebration of food in Maori literature as “an act of ideological restoration”. He argues that “one of the things which gives Maori writing a sense of gusto is its celebration of food. This represents a real appetite for and enjoyment of the sheer physicality of existence”.¹² Beatson attributes three main meanings to the celebratory representation of food. The first is a political one. The assertion of their right to gather the food of the forest, land and water and their pleasure of eating traditional food are directly connected to the major economic and political disputes between Maori and Pakeha over the use and distribution of the country’s resources. Secondly, the celebration of food is simultaneously a celebration of the life of the community, which collectively gathers and collectively consumes the food. This contrasts with the economics of food in industrialised systems, where it is mass produced for profit and privately consumed by family units. Thirdly, the overt relish of traditional Maori food produces a “gastronomic polarisation”.¹³ Food is used as a synecdoche for Maori identity and is set in a binary opposition to Pakeha culture.

Beatson’s theoretical points are lyrically expressed by Rowley Habib in his poem ‘Fish’.¹⁴ Eating fish is invested with spiritual and sensual attributes. It makes the poet part of a wider design, connecting him to nature and to his ancestors, and gives him physical pleasure as well as nourishment. It is the result of specific “noetics” (ways of knowing), in Eva Rask Knudsen’s words, which have ontological grounds and produce specific “poetics” (ways of creating).¹⁵

Grace’s fiction abounds in images of collective food gathering, food preparation and meals. In ‘At the River’,¹⁶ the family annual eel-fishing is described as a ritual – a seasonal event following the rhythm of nature – which brings all the generations of the family together creating affective links between each other and between man and the elements. In *Potiki* the Tamihanas forcefully assert their right to follow the old ways by rejecting the millionaire offer of private developers who are building a tourist resort in the vicinity. Believing that “land does not belong to people, but people belong to the land”,¹⁷ they struggle to defend their community and Maori identity against the (even physical) assaults of Pakeha materialism, and choose a subsistence economy based on the communal keeping of ‘gardens’, communal fishing and the communal sharing of the food produced. In

Mutuwhenua, Graeme's official entry into Linda's family occurs when he is invited to spend the weekend at the beach with them collecting mussels and diving for kina (sea eggs). At night they share the fresh seafood with gusto and Uncle Tom parodies the way chefs deal with Maori kina on television, arranging the sea-urchins on a "washed lettuce leaf in the bottom of . . . [a] flash glass".¹⁸ The scene creates that binary opposition or "gastronomic polarisation" Beatson mentioned above, that is, it underlines different relationships with food. Beatson mentions another passage in the book meant to create this polarisation: when Grace describes "in mouth-watering (or stomach-heaving) detail the delights of eating fish eyes".¹⁹ Linda's father's relish of eating fish-heads is recalled when she is far away, as an image of home, affection, identity.²⁰ But a non-Maori reader could react differently to it. By using food as a synecdoche, Grace asserts Maori identity over and against Pakeha culture.

In *Tu* we are told how much the soldiers valued and welcomed the food parcels coming from home, containing chocolate, puddings, tinned pears, and fruit cakes, but also fish and meat cooked in the hangi (earth oven) and muttonbird, whitebait fritters, oysters, and shellfish, prepared by their relatives and preserved in fat in kerosene tins (95–6). And the Maori Battalion mobile canteen – a covered truck selling food and beverages, purchased by the kids of native schools and their families after huge fund-raising – becomes the central meeting-point for the soldiers in their spare time, an affective symbol which connects them with 'home' and allows for the communal sharing of Maori traditional food (32).

The importance of food for Italians – with all its affective and communal valences – is common knowledge. As Massimo Montanari argues, it can be traced back to the etymology of the word *convivio* (which means 'banquet' or 'formal dinner'), from the Latin *cum vivere*, which means 'to live with'. In Italian culture sitting at the dining table becomes a metaphor of life itself and a symbol of identity, insofar as eating together is equivalent to belonging to the same group or family. This sense of belonging and identity is not only found in the upper classes but among peasants too. In medieval peasant language *vivere a uno pane e a uno vino* (literally 'to live on one bread and one wine') is a recurrent idiomatic sentence meaning 'belonging to the same family' and the same concept is still found in some Italian dialects where the expression 'getting into one's kitchen' equates with 'getting into one's home'.²¹ Sharing food at the same table exemplifies 'belonging' in any type

of community, from the monastic ones (monks are required to eat together in the same refectory) to the community of Roman Catholic believers, who share bread and wine – symbolising the body and blood of Jesus Christ – in every mass as part of the liturgy. The importance of food and gastronomy, in all their regional variants, is testified by the numerous references found in the works of Latin authors (for instance, Horace, Martial, Columella, Marcus Terentius Varro, Cato, and Pliny) and by the vast array of recipe-books, the first of which (*Liber de coquina*) dates back to 1200–1300. Cook books also circulated in periods of dietary restrictions due to wars (as with the period between 1940 and 1946), teaching people to make the best of the few resources available and providing information on the so-called ‘war-cuisine’.²² But the best example of Italians’ strong bond with food is probably the scarce popularity, in today’s global world, of fast food restaurants in Italy, appealing only to 3% of the total Italian population,²³ and, conversely, the success of the Slow Food Movement, founded by Carlo Petrini, whose philosophy is synthesised by Alice Waters in the foreword to his book:

Slow Food reminds us of the importance of knowing where our food comes from. When we understand the connection between the food on our table and the fields where it grows, our everyday meals can anchor us to nature and the place where we live. And Slow Food reminds us that cooking a meal at home can feed our imaginations and educate our senses. For the ritual of cooking and eating together constitutes the basic element of family and community life. In short, Slow Food can teach us the things that really matter – compassion, beauty, community, and sensuality – all the best that humans are capable of.²⁴

In emphasising all the spiritual, sensual and communal values attributed to food by traditional Italian culture, this passage bears striking similarities to both Beatson’s analysis of the Maori bond with food and Habib’s poem.

The first contacts between Tu and Italians, occurring in the south of the country, show a people subdued by poverty, fleeing and starving. Moved by their plight, Maori soldiers often share their rations with them and give them food from the Mobile Canteen. In a ‘no man’s land’, devastated by continual bombing and fighting, they sometimes take advantage of poultry and pigs too, whether they are wandering orphans or they belong to some farmer in

the neighbourhood fortunate enough to still have them. But when Tu spends some time in Florence after its liberation, he gets in touch with Italians in a condition of gradual normality and the situation is reversed. Here he makes friends with an Italian young woman called Maddalena. Interestingly, when Tu talks about the girl he says he likes her (254), but referring to her family he says: “I’ve fallen in love with a family” (254). And, among the reasons justifying this love, he also mentions his appreciation of their food:

They’re kind, and the *food* they cook suits me. It’s because of Maddalena’s *family* that I feel myself becoming stronger, because of them that I’m able to eat and add a bit of stuff to my bones. There are times when I think of remaining in Italy, in the music of Florence with *my new language* and *new family* and Maddalena. I love it here (254–5, my emphasis).

In this passage Tu explicitly points out his closeness to three aspects of Italian culture: food, family and language. There is no polarisation in this statement, because he recognises the same affective valence given to food, the same closeness and warmth in family relationships, and even a surprising easiness in picking up the Italian language. A similar experience occurs to his cousin Anzac, who has fallen in love with a girl living in a house “stuck up on the ribs of a mountain” (246) and to many other soldiers of the Maori Battalion “billeted with families they came to love” (246). The Allied army, including the Maori Battalion, had entered Florence after a tough fight lasting for days. They had been welcomed as heroes, showered with flowers and offered fruit and wine. The Italian way to celebrate, like the Maori one, is always inclusive of food. And the Italian extended family, like the Maori one, is traditionally the propulsive centre of emotional nourishment, identity formation and social regulation, not only in childhood but throughout the whole life of people.

As argued by Ernesto Galli della Loggia, the centrality of the family in Italian society is an inalienable trait inherited by the two most powerful forces which shaped Italian identity: the Roman heritage and Christianity.²⁵ The Roman *familia* (from *famulus*, which means ‘slave’) was a large patriarchal structure founded on the cult of the ancestors (*maiores*). It included the *pater familias* – its head, invested with absolute authority – his wife (*uxor*), sons (*liberi*), and daughters-in-law (*nurus*), and his slaves. It

was part of a larger group or *gens*, whose members were families related to each other, bearing the same name (eg *gens Julia*), and bound together by reciprocity and the religious duties towards common ancestors.²⁶ This structure was culturally reinforced by the gospel, with its symbolic imagery articulated through the figures of ‘the Father’ and ‘His children’, and its appeal to brotherhood and reciprocity. The relevant position of the extended family in Italy throughout the centuries is ascribable to the lack of a strong central authority. From the Middle Ages up to the mid nineteenth-century, the fragmentation of the Italian peninsula into a plethora of small states, very often under the rule of foreign powers, accentuated the role of the family as the only stable and reliable normative unit of a pre-capitalist society. Galli della Loggia stresses how oligarchies and corporations are respectively the political and economic structures that have most informed Italian society up to present time. Both are rooted in the same ‘logic of aggregation’ of a system founded on small groups, bound together by family relations and organising their primacy through alliances and factions. The practice of sharecropping, widespread among peasants up to the twentieth-century, was also based on extended family units.²⁷ Although the persistence of this notion of family is undoubtedly connected to pre-industrial subsistence economy, it must be remembered that Italy remained an agricultural country until well into the twentieth-century, and that its industrialisation covered only a small area in the north (the industrial triangle Turin-Milan-Genoa).²⁸ Most of the Italian Campaign was spent by the Maori in the south and the centre, in a pre-capitalist agricultural country of villages and small towns, where the extended family still exerted all its possible functions – as an economic unit, a social and moral regulator, and an influential network of political alliances. The type of family the soldiers got in touch with in Italy bears many similarities to their own traditional rural communities at home.

As to the third affinity, music seems to be a major means of communication between the Maori and the local population. One of the most moving experiences for Tu is when he hears an Italian boy singing at Statte (near Taranto), soon after the Battalion’s landing in Italy. While waiting for their turn at the barber’s, the soldiers sang and played their mouth organs and ukuleles. The barber and his relatives seemed to enjoy their tunes and, after a while, a young boy of the family was called. He clasped his hands in front of him – a typical posture of Italian opera singers – and started singing ‘*Sul mare luccica l’astro d’argento*’. What Tu feels is a deep emotional

involvement going back to his ancestral roots, so intense that he would like to share it with his own family:

It was like a sound breathed through hollowed bone. I knew it wasn't that I wanted to be home, only that I wished the home people could be there with us listening to the boy. Their hearts would've expanded in their chest as mine did, their throats would've locked as mine did, causing tears to run from their eyes. (48)

The song becomes a common tune among the Maori and is included in the repertoire of their choir (48).

The vocal expression of feelings – whether sad or happy – in musical form is a common feature among Italians and Maori alike. In Italy it is epitomised in the tradition of *melodramma*, which reached its climax with Verdi's operas in the nineteenth-century, during the Risorgimento, the Italian nationalist struggle for independence from foreign rule. The melodramatic traits of the Italian character had already been noted by Madame de Staël, who defined them as “a people torn apart by invasions, oppressed by present conditions, but not oblivious of its past greatness”.²⁹ According to De Staël, the opera suited Italian people because it was a projection of all their impulses and surges mortified by their exclusion from an active participation in the political and civic life. Verdi's opera accompanied the Risorgimento as a subtext and major source of ideological transmission. It was a vehicle to convey repressed emotions, it embodied the collective imagery and sensibility of the people and inflamed their patriotic spirit. It is no accident that Witi Ihimaera's *The Matriarch* (1986) and its sequel *The Dream Swimmer* (1997) are interspersed with excerpts from Verdi's melodrama, sometimes sung by the protagonist herself Artemis Riripeti. These operatic quotations not only reinforce the author's intent to trace a parallel between two nationalist struggles occurring in the same period in two countries – the New Zealand Wars and the Italian Risorgimento – but they also show a common inclination of Maori and Italians to express emotions musically. Like food, singing can be more generally defined as an assertion of the ‘physicality’ of emotions, endowed with strong affective and communal valences. It is an identity trait reinforcing the sense of belonging to a cause, a culture, a people.

In the Maori world, the vocal expression of feelings in music is connected to their tradition of oral literature and to a vast repertoire of folk songs.

All their ceremonies and rituals are widely interspersed with chants and rhythmic dances accompanied by the voice. The protocol of the entrance into the marae (traditional gathering place) itself is very theatrical, with its succession of alternated karanga (calls) from the hosting party and replies from their guests. Waiata (songs) are sung at funerals and other gatherings. Singing is an assertion of identity and belonging, as stressed in Grace's story 'And So I Go', where the community, in a sort of lyric duet with the migrating protagonist, asks him:

*And when you go our brother as you say you must will you be warm? Will you know love? Will an old woman kiss your face and cry warm tears because of who you are? Will children take your hands and say your name? In your new life our brother will you **sing**?*³⁰ [my emphasis]

Singing and playing guitars, ukuleles, and mouth organs were more than just pastimes for Maori soldiers, as Habib's poem 'The Raw Men: For the Maori Battalion' clearly states. While praising the soldiers' undisputed valour on many battlefields, Habib repeatedly stresses their will to sing and play music:

With a rifle on one hand and a guitar in the other. *That's us* –/And a song ever ready on the tongue. *That's us* –/[. . .] *That's us*. The guitars and the song. [. . .]/*always* there is singing./In the deserts of Egypt there was the singing. /In the streets of Rome there was the singing/Going to war and returning, there was the singing. *Always* there is the song and the guitars. Above it, beneath it,/right through it all, there is the singing and the dancing and the laughing.³¹ [emphasis in original]

Habib's repetitions of "that's us" and "always" in relation to Maori soldiers' musical expressions seem to be an assertion of singing as an identity trait, which is confirmed by numerous scenes in *Tu*. The mobile canteen is the place where they gather to yarn, sing and listen to the radio (32, 137). They start a choir, which gradually numbers many Italian songs in its repertoire (48). Italian tunes are also included among their "waiting songs", those sung while waiting for the attack (149). Besides, in the pauses between actions they exorcise their fear by singing, as on the Cemetery Ridge near

Orsogna (93) or during the attack to Cassino station, where the tune “Blue smoke goes drifting by” ironically alludes to the smoke wall made by their artillery and gunners (128). Italian melodrama, too, has a great appeal for Maori soldiers. After listening to the Bari Opera Company’s performance of *Tosca*, Tu comes out of the theatre “floating” and comments that the singing and voices “just get right into your insides – into your mind and into your heart” (249). He is surprised at the vocal way Italians applaud and show appreciation of the show, but at one of the concerts organised for the soldiers, he and the others cheer, clap and call as if they were Italians (216).

Interestingly, singing is also the main medium through which Maori soldiers learn Italian, which they find easy to pick up both for its melodic quality and for the pronunciation of its vowels which is close to that of the Maori language. “In some ways it’s an easy language to pick up as the vowel sounds are close to those of our own language. Once you get used to it there’s a kind of *familiar flow*, and plenty of expression to go with it” (213, my emphasis). In an interview, Grace affirms that this is what the servicemen of the Maori Battalion said in the sources – mainly letters – that she consulted:

Often mentioned is the ease with which MB soldiers picked up the pronunciation of Italian because of the vowels being similar to Maori. Often mentioned was that Italian people love to sing, just as Maori do too.³²

Indeed, in both Maori and Italian the pronunciation of the five vowels is regular and the vowel sounds are similar.³³ Moreover, Maori does not admit final consonants or consonant clusters. Similarly, with a few exceptions, in Italian most syllables end in vowels and few consonant clusters are admitted. The result is its syllable-timed rhythm. As explained by Janet Holmes, Maria Stubbe and Meredith Marra, a ‘syllable-timed’ rhythm consists in a tendency to pronounce small grammatical words in unstressed positions with full vowels.³⁴ Arguably, it is the syllable-timed rhythm of Italian, much closer to the mora-timed rhythm of the Maori language than the stress-timed English, that makes its ‘flow’ familiar to them. The Italian syllable structure and rhythm are definitely similar to the Maori ones, which also explains the melodic qualities of these two languages and the definition of Maori as ‘the

Italian of the south' given by the Australian lexicographer Edward Morris in the late nineteenth-century.³⁵

After a while, the linguistic medium the soldiers use is either Maori or Italian. English is forgotten, as Tu mentions when he joins his unit after his stay in hospital:

It's true what Anzac told me, the boys are speaking Italian much of the time now. I'm racing to keep up with them. If not speaking Maori we speak Italian, even to each other, as though English has become a forgotten language. But as far as writing is concerned, well English is the only language I've been schooled in. (251–2)

Beatson underlines how the figure of the mutilated warrior abounds in contemporary Maori poetry and painting and how, along with other wounds, his tongue has been hacked away.³⁶ Maori language was eroded by the English-speaking education system and by the pervasive force of the dominant language. Habitual violence was done on Maori words and names, mispronounced and made unrecognisable. In an interview Patricia Grace mentions that during her school years the only Maori word students came across in textbooks was *whare* (building, house), but that she never recognised it as Maori first because teachers mispronounced it 'worrie', second because its original meaning was turned into a derogatory 'makeshift dwelling' or 'hut'.³⁷ The Maori language was forbidden in schools and children punished when they used it. Grace often underlines that, together with the alienation of the land, the loss of the Maori language is the most traumatic experience for Maori people, often ending up in mental pathologies or physical death, as for the characters of Mata in *Cousins* (1992) and of Gran Kura's little cousin Riripeti in *Baby No-Eyes* (2002). Conversely, in Italy the use of the Maori language becomes an affective bond among the soldiers of the Maori Battalion and, by getting in touch with a foreign language whose pronunciation and rhythmic pattern sound familiar to them, they are encouraged in using their own language over and against English.

Recovering the Numinosity of Cultural Symbols

What happens to Tu in Italy can be figuratively explained in Jungian terms, as a process of re-appropriation of the 'numinosity' of some major

cultural symbols through a positive transference with a foreign culture. With 'numinosity' Jung intends that an emotional bridge or energy which makes an archetype or symbol is more than just a name, a concept or a mere abstraction. It makes it "living matter".³⁸ According to him,

[Cultural symbols] are important constituents of our mental make-up and vital forces in the building up of human society, and they cannot be eradicated without a serious loss. When they are repressed and neglected, their specific energy disappears into the unconscious with unpredictable consequences.³⁹

Jung contends that the loss of numinosity of cultural symbols effects the dissolution and decay of civilisations, which lose their *raison d'être*, and causes neurosis in the individual. This is exactly what Pita has lost: the emotionality of his cultural values. And this is the cause of his dissociation and neurosis, which prevent his self-agency in the personal and collective sphere.

Jung's theory broadens the Freudian notion of transference as a redirection of repressed feelings and impulses of sexual and oedipal nature to encompass a wider projective process in which an activated unconscious starts expressing its deepest emotional and affective needs.⁴⁰ Transference (from the German word *Übertragung*, meaning literally 'to carry something over from one place to another' and metaphorically 'the carrying over from one form into another') is a specific case of projection. It is never a voluntary act but always automatic and spontaneous and, as a rule, of an emotional nature. Basically, it is "a general psychological mechanism that carries over subjective contents of any kind into the objects". The emotion of the projected contents "always form a link, a sort of dynamic relationship, between the subject and the object".⁴¹ Once the transference is dissolved all that projected energy falls back into the subject, and "he is then in possession of the treasure which formerly, in the transference, had simply been wasted".⁴² In explaining the process of transference, Jung compares it to the spontaneous and unprovoked mechanism of "love at first sight", although it must never be misunderstood as an act of love in its common sense.⁴³

Tu undergoes a similar process. Italian people, culture, language and even landscape, by virtue of their affinities with his own heritage and personal experience, activate his unconscious. The closeness he feels with

Italy is spontaneous and involuntary, a sort of ‘love at first sight’, because he is projecting symbols of his own culture, retrieved and charged with all their numinosity. Tu and the other soldiers do not feel attracted by Italy itself but by the projections of their own deep-rooted cultural symbols. It is no accident that, while they feel a deep emotional involvement before Monte Cassino (111–12), the old stone towns clung to the hill-tops like Orsogna (77), the Pompeii archaeological site (214), and the hills and paddocks of a widely agricultural country (47), they conversely find Rome and the Vatican “overwhelming” and “tiring”: of little appeal for all their cultural wealth (253). Monte Cassino becomes a projection of Taranaki, the old stone towns a projection of their hilltop pa (fortification) sites, Pompeii of Te Wairoa, the buried village in Whakarewarewa, and the hilly cultivated countryside, never too far away from the sea, of their land back home. But Rome is too crowded, noisy and distant from their culture, and transference fails there. So much so that Tu feels he cannot pray in St Peter’s (252), despite his strict Catholic upbringing. On the contrary, this projective mechanism occurs when they perceive affinities with Italians’ affective bond with food, with their sense of family and enjoyment of singing, and with their language.

Building Up a Counter-Discourse

Tu is the only one of the brothers who is spared in the war, but he comes back physically disabled, mentally unstable and incapable of adapting to the normality of life. The death of his brothers, of many relatives and friends leaves an indelible mark on his personality and equilibrium. But a new consciousness of the war arises, which informs a counter-discourse. Tu questions whether the Maori people will ever be able to benefit from their soldiers’ sacrifice, as the Maori authorities and elders had argued: “We took full part in a war but haven’t yet been able to take full part in peace. [...] during our time away the other Kiwi battalions had been more than pleased to have us at their side. These things were quickly forgotten” (279). He realises that the only way to make his life worthwhile is to reveal what he knows, what he has felt and learnt, and he does so by passing his notebooks to the younger generations: his nephew Benedict (Pita’s son, named after the Benedictine Abbey on Monte Cassino) and his niece Rimini (Rangi’s daughter, named after the road to Rimini where Rangi died), both born when their fathers were serving at the front. His journals also disclose a

family secret regarding Rimini's paternity (Benedict and Rimini are not both Pita's children, as it was believed), tracing the right line of descent which is so important for Maori culture. But, most of all, they record the new consciousness achieved by Tu in Italy: the emotional rediscovery of Maori heritage. The message of the notebooks, reiterated by Tu's warm appeal in his final letter to Benedict and Rimini, is one against all wars. Maori young generations should not follow their fathers' footsteps, because the price to pay was too high. They should value their lives and heritage as treasures: as the only possible survival of Maori people. This can happen only if they recover the numinosity of cultural symbols, that is, the emotional attachment to their culture that Tu has found in the Italian context. At the very end of the novel, Tu's wish to bring Rimini and Benedict to Italy, to pay homage to their dead buried there and see the country, seems to imply that he wants them to experience what he has experienced.

There are places to go to, people to meet, music to listen to. It's a beautiful country, old and eerie. You'll find we haven't been forgotten there in Cassino, Santo Spirito, Tuscany, Florence, Trasimeno, Rimini, all of those places – and not just because we stole the villagers' pigs and chickens. (281)

Tu succeeds in forming a counter-discourse but is unable to directly put into practice the fruits of his Italian experience, due to his physical disability and neurological conditions. Yet, the lesson he has learnt will be passed on to his direct descendants. The ones that will reach the adult age exactly during the Maori renaissance of the 1970s and will successfully fight for the recognition of their rights at home. These are the ones that will revive the emotional attachment to Maori culture in arts and writing. Being chronologically set before that time, the novel could not allude to what would happen about thirty years later. But from a present perspective, a reader can easily see that the Maori participation in World War II, and particularly in the Italian Campaign, did contribute to the realisation of a deeper consciousness of Maoritanga (Maori cultural identity) and to the assertion of their right to tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) in years to come.

Notes

1. Patricia Grace, *Tu* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004): 283. Further references to the text, henceforth indicated in brackets, are to this edition.
2. Te Puea Herangi was a direct descendant of Maori kings Potatau and Tawhiao. She became active in politics helping the election of Maui Pomare to Parliament in 1911. She was involved in many political, cultural and humanitarian causes. See Roger Robinson & Nelson Wattie (eds), *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature* (Melbourne & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 531.
3. Michelle Keown, *Pacific Islands Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 101.
4. Megan Hutching (ed), *A Fair sort of Battering* (Auckland: Harper Collins, 2004): 24.
5. Gianni Oliva, *I vinti e i liberati* (Milano: Mondadori, 1994): 6. See also Oliva, *Le tre Italie del 1943* (Milano: Mondadori, 2004): 39.
6. Paola Della Valle, 'The Wider Family: Patricia Grace Interviewed by Paola Della Valle', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 42: 1 (2007): 131–41.
7. Janet Wilson, 'The Maori at War and Strategic Survival: *Tu* by Patricia Grace', *Hecate* 34: 1 (2008): 96.
8. Ibid: 97.
9. PDV: *Tu* is set in the Forties. Was there a sort of apartheid in New Zealand at that time? I am asking because one of the characters, Rangi, complains that Maori can't go into pubs and his mother replies 'it's the law'.
PG: Yes, it was the law. They weren't allowed into pubs over a certain period of years. I know my father wasn't allowed into pubs, but he used to go in anyway. And also there were rules about picture theatres, restaurants and so forth. These weren't laws of the land but requirements in different areas, which wouldn't allow Maori people into certain parts of a picture theatre or restaurant. So there was that kind of separation. Maori people were discriminated against in the work place and when it came to accommodation. A Maori widow was given less in her pension than a Pakeha widow (Della Valle: 138.)
10. Wilson: 97.
11. Ibid: 93.
12. Peter Beatson, *The Healing Tongue: Themes in Contemporary Maori Literature* (Palmerston North: Studies in New Zealand Art & Society 1, Sociology Department, Massey University, 1989): 45.

13. Beatson: 45.
14. Rowley Habib, 'Fish', in Margaret Orbell (ed), *Contemporary Maori Writing* (Wellington & Auckland: Reed, 1970): 72. "When I of fish eat; when, with knife and fork/I break the tender segments of flesh within my plate/I feel the pulling back. Strong I feel it;/Pulling me back to my forefathers,/To shores not yet trodden by white men./It is, then, not a mere eating of the flesh,/A delighting in the sensual taste./It is, for me, more than this: it is a revelation./The sea surges before me, washing upon the shores;/Heaving against jagged rocks; as it did of old./And this sea holds more than just its beauty,/ Its aboundingness. It is something sacred;/It is like a parent to me. For think I then/ That the sea was my forefathers' very existence./Fishermen were they. From the sea came their very life./This then is what it is when, with knife and fork/ I lift a morsel of fish to my mouth."
15. Eva Rask Knudsen, *The Circle & the Spiral* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2004): 2.
16. Patricia Grace, 'At the River', *Waiariki* (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1975): 11–15.
17. Grace, *Potiki* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995 [1986]): 110.
18. Grace, *Mutuwhenua* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1994 [1978]): 61.
19. Beatson: 45.
20. Grace, *Mutuwhenua*: 38-9.
21. Massimo Montanari, *Il cibo come cultura* (Bari: Laterza, 2006): 130–1.
22. Massimo Montanari, *La cucina italiana* (Bari: Laterza, 2000): 3, 41, xiii.
23. Ibid: x.
24. Carlo Petrini, *Slow Food: The case for taste* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001): x.
25. Ernesto Galli della Loggia, *L'identità italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998): 99–100.
26. Angelo Diotti, *Lingua Magistra* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2008): 212.
27. Galli della Loggia: 97–8, 100–2.
28. Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia: Famiglia, società, Stato* (Torino: Einaudi, 1998): 14.
29. Simonetta Chiappini, 'La voce del martire. Dagli "evirati cantori" all'eroina romantica', Alberto Mario Banti and Paul Ginsborg (eds), *Storia d'Italia – Annali 22: Il Risorgimento* (Torino: Einaudi, 2007):

290. Chiappini is quoting from De Staël, *Corinna ovvero l'Italia*, 1807.
30. Grace, 'And So I Go', *Waiariki*: 45.
31. Habib, 'The Raw Men: For the Maori Battalion', in Orbell (ed), *Contemporary Maori Writing*: 70–1.
32. Della Valle: 139.
33. The Maori language has five vowels that are pronounced exactly as in Italian. They might be short or long. In the latter case they are generally marked by a macron, as in āporo (apple) or pūnu (spoon), but their pronunciation does not change remarkably.
34. Janet Holmes, Maria Stubbe and Meredith Marra, 'Language, Humour and Ethnic Identity Marking in New Zealand English', in Christian Mair (ed), *The Politics of English as a World Language* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi 2003): 433.
35. Elizabeth Gordon and Tony Deverson, *New Zealand English and English in New Zealand* (Auckland: New House Publishers, 1998): 65. Edward Morris was a lexicographer of the University of Melbourne, famous for his seminal study *Austral English* (1898).
36. Beatson: 37.
37. 'Patricia Grace Interviewed by Jane McRae', in Elizabeth Alley and Mark Williams (eds), *In the Same Room. Conversations with New Zealand Writers* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1992): 286.
38. C.G. Jung, 'Healing the Split', *The Symbolic Life, The Collected Works of C.G. Jung* (18), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989): 254–7.
39. Ibid: 253.
40. Jung, 'The Tavistock Lectures: Lecture V', *The Symbolic Life*: 135–65.
41. Ibid: 137–8.
42. Ibid: 140.
43. Ibid: 143.