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# Inherited Body

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Rebecca Joy Styles

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## Abstract

Narrative ethics is a useful tool for approaching New Zealand historical fiction about family history because it looks to the risks and losses of appropriating family for the author, their subjects, and readers. In the following critical analysis I discuss three recent New Zealand novels based on family historical narratives, each of which depict characters attempting to write their own stories within power structures that threaten to silence them: Alison Wong's *As The Earth Turns Silver* (2009), Paula Morris's *Rangatira* (2011), and Kelly Ana Morey's *Bloom* (2003).

For a writer a narrative ethics analysis ensures they acknowledge the ethical implications of their work, not just for their own family, but for collective understanding. My novel *Inherited Body* fictionalises an incident from my family's history about mental health and sits alongside a contemporary narrative that seeks to understand the possible causes of a psychotic break.

A narrative ethics analysis has highlighted my dual role as reader/critic and writer. Wayne C. Booth's discussion of narrative ethics emphasises the connection between writer, character and their readers. Adam Zachary Newton expands on this transactive connection and shows the ethical consequences of narrating story and fictionalising people, and the reciprocal claims connecting teller, listener, witness and reader in that process. As a reader, I took on an ethical responsibility to understand the texts, and as a writer, I attempted to understand the effect of my characters and readers of the book's content. Connecting my critical and creative components with a narrative ethics framework ensures that I see both sides of narrative ethics.

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