# Voices on the Margins:

# The Role of New Zealand Cinema in the Construction

# of National and Cultural Identity

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# ABSTRACT

*Voices on the Margins: The Role of New Zealand Cinema in the Construction of National and Cultural Identity.*

This thesis is based on the proposition that the New Zealand feature film *Broken English* (1996, Gregor Nicholas) constitutes a 'break' in New Zealand cinema on the level of its subject matter. Where feature films before 'imagined' New Zealand overwhelmingly in either mono-cultural or bi-cultural terms, *Broken English* quite specifically provides a multi-cultural perspective. What makes it particularly problematic however is that its creative personnel consists mostly of Pakeha New Zealanders, while the film features virtually no Pakeha characters.

The expectation from the outset then is that this film can tell us much not only about the workings of the film industry in New Zealand, but also about national identity in general, and how this gets defined in particular contexts. As a result, it can also tell us much about the relations of power involved in this process. Overall then, this thesis is an attempt to work through issues of national identity, in relation to concepts of ethnicity, race and diaspora. It takes *Broken English* as its main focus to explore where policy makers, film makers and viewers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds situate themselves and others within the nation. By extension it investigates how they see the role of cinema in relation to national and cultural identity, and what kind of discourses they draw on in doing so. Although there is a lot of research which deals with different aspects of these discourses, there is little research which combines them and shows how they relate to each other and how they inform both media texts and engagement with those texts. This thesis is an attempt to close those gaps to some extent.

In terms of methodology, this thesis follows a tripartite structure (production-text-reception), linked by a discourse analytic framework. This methodology allows for an

exploration of the process of making meaning, and identifies the gaps and fissures between these different realms. In conclusion, this thesis argues that *Broken English* can be seen on one level as an important attempt to bring different minority groups into the mainstream, and thus represents an inclusive version of the nation. However, the problematic ways in which it does so illustrates the complexities involved in such a project in a contemporary New Zealand context.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

At the dawn of the twenty first century, New Zealand finds itself at the crossroads. In the years leading up to the millennium, the idea of a stable national identity was increasingly questioned. Recent debates about whether the New Zealand flag is still valid as a symbol of New Zealand society, or whether the national anthem (and its language[1]) still adequately represents New Zealand, provide typical examples of a growing sense of instability in the face of globalisation, and a questioning of 'where New Zealand is at' as a nation. These issues particularly come to the fore in public situations where New Zealand has to project itself to an international 'audience', such as during the APEC conference 2000, or during America's Cup events. From the question of who should perform welcoming ceremonies to the ongoing debates about the place of the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand society[2], definitions of nationhood are continuously on the agenda of public discourse.

All of this highlights the idea that national identities are never fixed or stable, but are made up of a wide variety of discourses which are continuously competing for hegemony. In other words, defining a national identity can be seen as an ongoing process of narration, involving both inclusion and exclusion. The construction of this identity, and by extension of the nation itself, therefore involves an active process of selecting particular elements. These elements can be historical, contemporary or oriented towards the future.

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[1]During a New Zealand All Blacks rugby tour in the UK in 2000, singer Hinewehi Mohi sang the national anthem only in te reo Maori and not in English, causing quite a stir in the media.

[2]The Treaty of Waitangi was signed between the Crown and some two hundred Maori chiefs on February 6, 1840. The Treaty has a central place in the imagining of New Zealand as a nation but is rather controversial, mainly because there are two versions: one in English and one in te reo Maori. They show fundamental differences with regard to the concepts contained within them.

While New Zealand is historically a nation of immigrants (which is a political statement in itself, but I will return to that later), not all immigrants have been equally welcomed. For example, while Chinese immigrants arrived here as early as the 1860s during the Otago gold rush, they have been largely left out of the dominant discourses of the nation. As Claudia Bell points out, 'for those immigrants not automatically entitled to residency here, a formal system of gaining citizenship officially resolves the possibility of exclusion. Through this system they too can be absorbed into the dominant culture, and are not part of its identity' (1996, p.7/8). She goes on to argue that,

> The building of a nation is nothing to do with nature at all, but with the politics that enables one culture to obliterate or assimilate another, through such processes as colonisation, genocide and immigration policies. We can add to this list the forms of 'social engineering' that take place within a nation, the political processes that bring about divisions in society between ethnic groups, classes and gender, and economic divisions: the divisions that split groups.
>
> <div align="right">(ibid, p.8)</div>

This raises questions of who controls this 'social engineering', at what point in time, and on whose behalf? Jakubowicz notes that, 'historically defining "national identities", finding a cultural identity that defines the nation, has been the task of historians, the literary and artistic world, and most important, the mass media (1994, p.53). This is largely based on Benedict Anderson's concept of 'print communities'[3], but it significantly includes the popular and electronic media. It raises the question of who defines the nation and at what point in time? Is it 'narrated' from the 'top down' by an elite of historians, artists, and literary figures? Or from the 'bottom up' through the channels of the popular media? Or is it a more complex interaction between the two?

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[3]See chapter 2.

Cinema provides an interesting field of study in this respect, particularly in New Zealand. Cinema in New Zealand finds itself in a rather schizophrenic situation: on the one hand it belongs in the realms of the arts, on which grounds it justifies applications for public funding. On the other hand, it tries to reach a wide audience to gain returns on that money. It can thus be seen as a site where a variety of discourses compete in an effort to represent a 'national identity', the other main justification for government support.

This research project takes the New Zealand feature film *Broken English* (1996, Gregor Nicholas) as its primary text, and is based on the proposition that this film constitutes a 'break' in New Zealand cinema on the level of its subject matter. Where feature films before 'imagined' New Zealand overwhelmingly in either mono-cultural or bi-cultural terms, *Broken English* quite specifically provides a multi-cultural perspective. There is a small number of other examples like *Illustrious Energy* (1988, Leon Narbey)[4] and *Flying Fox in a Freedom Tree* (1990, Martyn Sanderson)[5], but I wanted to focus on more contemporary versions. *Broken English* was released in cinemas in 1996, which was also the year I arrived in New Zealand. A general election was held at the time in which particularly the issue of immigration played a central part.

Given this emphasis, it struck me as odd that there were not more films that dealt with these issues. And while *Broken English* confronts these kind of issues, the film is also problematic in that its creative personnel consists mostly of Pakeha New Zealanders (like the examples above), while the film features virtually no Pakeha characters. This foregrounds questions of who defines identity and on whose behalf? Moreover, it draws

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[4]*Illustrious Energy* is a story about early Chinese gold prospectors in 19th century Otago.

[5]*Flying Fox in a Freedom Tree* is an adaption of Albert Wendt's 1974 short story with the same title, and tells the story of a young Samoan boy caught between two cultures.

attention to relations of power in a contemporary New Zealand context. The expectation from the outset then is that this film can tell us much not only about the workings of the film industry in New Zealand, but also about national identity, in relation to concepts of race, ethnicity and diaspora.

This research project therefore takes *Broken English* as its main focus and provides an opportunity to explore where policy makers, who make funding decisions, film makers and viewers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, situate themselves and others within the nation. And how they see the role of cinema in relation to national and cultural identity. This is complemented by a textual analysis. This comprehensive approach, in combination with the special position of *Broken English* within New Zealand cinema, largely provides the rationale behind the use of one specific text, which is thus partly based on logistics and time constraints in combination with the chosen methodological framework. It also informs the outline and structure of this thesis.

In terms of its structure, this thesis is divided into two main parts. The first part, which comprises the first five chapters, consists of an in-depth analysis and discussion of the main themes and issues which *Broken English* raises. The first chapter provides an explanation and rationale of the theoretical and methodological framework of this thesis. This is then followed by a chapter which deals with constructions of nationhood and national identity (chapter 2), with a link to national cinema (chapter 3). Chapter 4 traces discourses of race, ethnicity, culture and diaspora in a postcolonial framework. This is then linked to discourses of multiculturalism and biculturalism (chapter 5), which are of vital importance in a New Zealand context.

This first part then functions as an extensive 'discourse map' which forms the basis of the empirical research in the second part. The analysis in the second part consists in turn of three chapters that deal with the production context of the film (chapter 6), the film itself (chapter 7), and its reception (chapter 8). Throughout the analysis in the

second part, this thesis refers back to the discourses outlined in the first part.

# CHAPTER 1: Of Theory and Methodology.

## 1.1: Rationale for Methodological Framework

In relation to this particular research project, the tripartite approach as outlined by John B. Thompson would be most relevant in my opinion, as it directly addresses some of the weaknesses that show up in much of the previous research done in this area. Thompson refers to the main one of these weaknesses as the 'fallacy of internalism':

> Rather than assuming that the ideological character of media messages can be read off the messages themselves, we can draw upon the analysis of all three aspects of mass communication- production/ transmission, construction, reception/ appropriation- in order to interpret the ideological character of media messages (1990, p.306).

In other words, while a textual analysis can provide useful insights into the ideological character of particular media messages, it is also relatively narrow in the sense that this ideological character is thereby effectively reduced to a single reading of those messages. The basis of the tripartite approach on the other hand is the recognition of 'one of the principal characteristics of mass communication: that it institutes a fundamental break between the production and reception of symbolic forms' (ibid, p.303). Thompson goes on to say that,

> The break between production and reception is a structured break in which the producers of symbolic forms, while dependent to some extent on the recipients for the economic valorization of symbolic forms, are institutionally empowered and obliged to produce symbolic forms in the absence of direct responses from recipients (ibid, p.303).

This highlights the importance of power relations when it comes to the production and

reception of symbolic forms like cinema. In other words, cinema can be seen as a one-way flow of messages in which the producers of these messages assume an audience, but this audience is generally unable to intervene in the production process, at least in a direct way. This does not necessarily mean, however, that this audience will interpret the resulting film text as intended by its producers. Thus, 'a comprehensive approach to the study of mass communication requires the capacity to relate the results of these differing analyses to one another, showing how the various aspects feed into and shed light on one another' (ibid, p.304). The differing analyses he means relate to the three aspects of mass communication as mentioned above: production/ transmission, construction, and reception/ appropriation.

This thesis examines the production and distribution of *Broken English* through interviews with the people directly involved in these domains. This realm relates closely to the institutions involved in cinema in New Zealand, which is characterised by a combination of state intervention and private interests. The New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) for instance is a creation of the state and receives its funding directly from the state, which makes it at least partly accountable to the government. Distribution is for the most part in the hands of the private sector which means that these institutions have potentially conflicting interests which have to be negotiated in the early stages of the film making process.

The second aspect is the construction of the media message. Films are constructed in particular ways by particular people. Here I look to uncover some of the thought processes behind the ways *Broken English* was constructed, through interviews with the people directly involved in the film making process: director, writers, producer, and consultants. This is accompanied by a close reading of the film as text. It is here that a close analysis can uncover how interactions with the first aspect can influence the final outcome, in what ways and to what extent.

The third aspect is the reception and appropriation of media messages. In other words, how meanings are made by particular audiences and how these meanings fit into their position in New Zealand society. Here I have set up focus group discussions organised around ethnic backgrounds[1] to get a better idea of how the film is being received by different audiences, and how this relates to the above-mentioned aspects.

There is a large body of research that focuses on any one of these aspects in isolation. Not to deny their individual value, I agree with Thompson that these three aspects are interrelated. In other words, each aspect has an impact on the other two and vice versa. Particularly in relation to this research topic, I believe there is a need to analyse all three aspects in order to arrive at a better understanding of the dynamics involved, and the ideological implications of those dynamics. However, while Thompson provides strong arguments in favour of such an approach, he is less clear on how to combine these differing analyses in practice. As a means to relate these three different realms to each other, this research project draws on Critical Discourse Analysis, as developed by Fairclough (1995, 1998) and Van Dijk (1991, 2000) among others, and Discourse Theory (e.g. Howarth *et al*, 2000), and I will expand on this shortly.

Thompson then identifies the need to place film texts in a wider social context in which they are produced, distributed and received. They have their roots in a social context in which a large number of discourses compete with each other; a social context characterised by differing degrees of power in relation to the social actors involved. This applies not only to the producers, but also to the audiences that eventually watch the film. In the latter case, Thompson stresses that we need to 'distinguish between the *meaning of mediated messages as received and interpreted*, on the one hand, and the *significance of the activity of reception*, on the other'. Again, this draws attention to the importance of the context of reception: 'apart from the meaning that the messages may

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[1]A rationale for the use of focus groups and a justification for the selection of particular participants in these groups is provided in chapter 8.

have, the very activity of receiving these messages may be meaningful for the recipients' (Thompson, 1990, p.311, original emphasis).

This means for the researcher that he or she must pay careful attention to the circumstances under which meaning is being made out of a film text and analyse to what extent these circumstances shape this meaning. In this case that means paying careful attention to the dynamics involved in focus group research, and the way this particular context influences the way people make meaning. This requires 'reading between the lines' to a certain extent: in other words, how does the context influence the way people express themselves about a certain text? What is the role of the researcher and the other participants in this process of making meaning?

As Thompson argues,

> We can begin to grasp the extent to which this meaning serves, in the structured contexts of everyday life, to reaffirm or challenge traditional assumptions and established divisions, to sustain or disrupt existing social relations; and hence we can begin to grasp the extent to which the symbolic forms produced and diffused by the technical media of mass communication are ideological.
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> (ibid, p.313)

Although I agree with this in principle, Thompson's notion of the ideological here demands some caution. For it is a little narrow in as far as it implies that meaning is *always* made directly in the service of power in a rational and conscious fashion. I believe it is more complex than that, and less predictable, in that different meanings can be made for different reasons, sometimes within a single text, sometimes even within a single utterance. Furthermore, this is not always a conscious process. I will expand on this in my discussion of the concept of discourse in part 3 of this chapter. However, it serves for now to draw attention to the importance of social, cultural and

historical contexts to all three levels that Thompson identifies.

These contexts are often very specific, as for instance in a focus group situation, and due attention needs to be paid to this specificity. However, we have to go beyond specific contexts if we want to analyse how certain media texts acquire their meaning at particular moments. In other words, we need to connect a specific context to wider social circumstances by paying careful attention to the ways in which it is historically situated.

Producers of texts draw on a wide variety of already existing discourses to create these texts in a seemingly coherent way. By doing so, they assume that these discourses will be sufficiently familiar to the audiences that will eventually interact with those texts, in order for them to make sense and meaning out of them. This is not to say that this is a random process, nor that it is always a conscious process. There is not a collection of free-floating, coherent discourses 'out there' from which they can pick at random; the discourses they draw on are not fixed but are constantly re-worked and re-appropriated in slightly altered forms. This is not just an innocent process but one with important ideological implications.

Producers of media texts, like everybody else in society, occupy a certain position in the social hierarchy. This is not to suggest however that producers can step outside of their historical context and simply 'pick and choose' discourses that the 'masses' will fall for. On the contrary, they are both products of and enmeshed in a particular social-historical constellation. Their position relates to factors of class, race, gender, and so on. Each of these categories is talked about, represented, and lived in particular social contexts. But since each one of them can be seen as a construction, they are thus never stable, never closed-off. They are surrounded by a large number of competing discourses which are all attempting to establish a hegemonic position.

Hence, in particular contexts, any one of these discourses may appear to be relatively stable, but this stability is never final; it has to be guarded from ever present attempts to undermine its claim to some coherent truth. This seemingly coherent truth can thus only ever be an account amongst many accounts. And since there are many competing accounts and discourses, any account in any particular context always has necessary defenses built into it, to ward off potential counter attacks from others keen to put competing accounts forward. These defenses can thus be seen as rhetorical devices to arrive at a seemingly stable account.

Seen in this way, there seems to be a danger of relativism in this approach. If the idea of a coherent truth is inherently impossible, and if there are only ever accounts and alternative accounts without a link to a separate material reality, there does not seem to be much point in deconstruction, since the results can only ever be just another account. This is one of the central criticisms leveled at poststructuralism. However, I would argue that the tripartite approach, as outlined above, in combination with Discourse Analysis, can straddle a productive middle path between textual determinism, which it critiques, and the relativism of a deconstructionist model.

### 1.2: Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction.

Poststructuralism, developed in a French context by theorists like Derrida and Foucault, is firmly based on language as the main organising element of social and political power structures. As Seidman observes, 'poststructuralism is a kind of permanent rebellion against authority, that of science and philosophy but also the church and the state, through deconstruction' (1994, p.203). He goes on to say that,

> Deconstruction aims to disrupt and displace the hierarchy, to render it less authoritive in the linguistic organisation of subjectivity and society. Subverting hierarchical oppositions allows marginal or excluded signifiers and forms of subjective and social life to gain a public voice and presence (ibid, p.204).

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If we translate this to New Zealand cinema, and particularly its representations of marginal groups in society, we can begin to see its relevance, particularly when we consider the following:

> In the spirit of poststructuralism, [Foucault's] genealogy is deconstructive; it aims to disrupt social conventions and norms. Its value lies in imagining the human world as thoroughly social and historical and susceptible to immense social variety and change.(.) Discourses that carry public authority shape identities and regulate bodies, desires, selves, and whole populations. Additionally, genealogy aims to show that these knowledges are entangled in a history of social conflict and domination. Central to this history is the exclusion or marginalization of discourses that represent oppressed groups or communities. Foucault intended genealogy to recover the knowledges and the lives of those who gave voice to them that have been excluded for the purpose of deploying them in current social struggles (ibid, p.215).

All of this seems highly relevant to the research project at hand. New Zealand has a colonial history during which many marginal voices have been neglected in mainstream public discourse, and continue to be so to a large extent. Apart from this social level of marginalisation, cinema itself occupies a largely marginal position in the hierarchy of public discourses. Accordingly, it is often framed and categorised in the mainstream media under the headers 'arts' and/ or 'entertainment', with their connotations of 'less important' or 'less serious' than for example 'politics' or 'defense'. This position however, is not static or stable and it can transcend these categories in particular contexts, as the example of *Once Were Warriors* (1994, Lee Tamahori)[2] shows. This

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[2]Following its critical and box-office success, *Once Were Warriors* has almost achieved documentary status, to the extent that it is regularly appropriated in mainstream discourses about for example domestic violence in New Zealand.

usually happens when the subject matter of certain films links them to wider circulating discourses about that subject matter. A recent example of this process is *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001, Peter Jackson), which is increasingly being appropriated by politicians through the mainstream media, and linked to discourses about economic entrepeneurship and the 'knowledge economy', and is thus implicated in wider discourses about nationhood and where New Zealand should be heading as a nation. The subject matter within these discourses is largely irrelevant as the focus has shifted to technological aspects of the film and to matters of local employment.

In a broad sense then, this thesis is grounded in a poststructuralist framework, as this framework provides an opportunity to engage with social processes of marginalisation and dominance. In my opinion, these processes are central to the way *Broken English* represents its subject matter, and are directly linked to a specific social-historical context in New Zealand. The emphasis within poststructuralism on specific contexts thereby influences the chosen methodology of this thesis to an important extent.

However, the appropriation of this broad theoretical framework needs some caution. One of the main problems identified in poststructuralism is its perceived lococentrism. In other words, it was developed in a specific French context which raises the question of whether it can be adequately applied to other national contexts, such as New Zealand's one. Postcolonial theory builds on poststructuralism and may offer a way out in this respect. According to Ang and Stratton,

> What a critical (rather than affirmative) taking up of the position of post-coloniality enables, and herein lies its productivity, is to transpose the idea of cultural struggle to a resolutely transnational dimension: cultural struggle- as well as cultural power- is now located as enacted *between* 'societies' as well as *within* 'societies' (1996, p.381, original emphasis).

The latter point is particularly important here, since New Zealand cinema does not exist in isolation, but is implicated in wider power structures on a global level. There is therefore a need to employ an analysis which focuses on a specific context, but simultaneously draws attention to the interconnections of this local context with a wider global context.

In a general sense, this research follows a Cultural Studies approach in terms of its overarching theoretical framework. The main reason here is that this approach offers the possibility of an interdisciplinary study which was early on identified as a necessity, given the subject matter of *Broken English*, and the methodology of this research project. In other words, this thesis draws on diverse disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, political science and film and media studies, and the theories associated with them, to explore issues of national identity, ethnicity, race, multiculturalism and representation. It is thus not only an interdisciplinary approach, but also a theoretically eclectic one. While this offers on the one hand the possibility of a very comprehensive study, which is relatively unique in New Zealand[3], it also presents some considerable dangers, not least of which is a kind of radical relativism.

A considerable part of the theory, particularly the chapter on postcolonial theory (chapter 4), is partly based on poststructuralism and hence emphasises the importance of language. If we accept that cultural signs have no fixed meaning, then they can be re-negotiated as well, which points to one of the main objectives of postcolonial theory: to 're-write' history from different perspectives and to de-stabilise dominant accounts. But even if we establish a way to apply poststructuralist theory to a local New Zealand context, there is still a need to address some of the philosophical underpinnings on which it is based and which have come under attack from different corners.

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[3]For a similar approach, see Roscoe, 1999, 2000.

One of the main problems here is the danger of lapsing into a radical relativism, as mentioned earlier. Poststructuralism can be seen as a direct reaction to the Enlightenment ideas of scientific objectivity, the unity of humanity, social progress, and Western superiority. As Seidman observes,

> As the Enlightenment-inspired disciplines (sociology, anthropology, and political science) are perceived as entangled in social domination (e.g., the oppression of women, gays, people of color, non-Western populations), poststructuralists urge that we abandon key assumptions of the Enlightenment without, however, repudiating its social hope for a world with more freedom, equality, tolerance, and democracy (1994, p.230).

However, poststructuralists are generally rather unclear on how the latter is to be achieved. As Seidman rightly points out, 'social life is unimaginable without social norms, identities, and a system of social control' (ibid, p.231). In other words, the idea that all social regulation and constraint is domination eventually leads to a dead end if we are unable to formulate a form of social organisation that would be more just.

Although I can see Seidman's point, I believe it is partly based on a desire for closure and finality which is ultimately inachievable. Malik voices similar concerns when he asks: 'If power is simply the constituting element in all social systems, how can we choose between one society and another?' (1996, p.234). In response I would say first of all that there are degrees of power and differences between individual and collective power. There are also degrees of what is done with that power; depending on the context, power has different effects. Only if we conceive of power as the same in all situations does Malik's dilemma arise. My point is that state power, to name an example, is different in Indonesia when compared to New Zealand.

Malik advances his argument by saying that the poststructuralist position ultimately

leads to a situation where 'we can neither relate ideas and representations to real social movements, nor can we pass value judgements on different sets of ideas' (p.234). I believe we can, but by doing so we adopt a position of power, which does not have to be a problem as long as we recognise it as such. In other words, we need to carefully incorporate and question our own social position, both individual and institutional, in our value judgements, and the extent to which this position informs those judgements. In relation to this research, this recognition necessitates a careful analysis of the impact on the research data of my position as an academic researcher, both in terms of the questions asked during interviews and focus groups, and in terms of the resulting answers and reactions. In short, it requires a careful contextualisation of those data.

What poststructuralism in general, and the theoretical practice of deconstruction in particular, allows us to do most of all is to recognise that the modern dream of bringing to an end all social constraint and repression is precisely that: a dream. And it is a dream because it implies the possibility of closure and thereby ignores the fluidity and inherent instability of social relations. Does this mean that we have to abandon the idea of 'social progress' altogether? No, it does not. What it does mean however is that we have to recognise that freedom from social constraint and repression can only ever be partial and relative; it always has to be struggled for as it is necessarily implicated in power relations that exist at a particular time and in a particular place. It thus always contains an intersecting temporal and spatial dimension. And it is precisely because these power relations are never entirely stable, static, and closed-off that social progress is possible in specific contexts.

A helpful way of visualising this is in the form of a hierarchy in which it is possible to move up or slide down. To avoid extreme relativism is to recognise that not all players in this power field start from an equal footing. Some are more constrained than others, and there are structures and strategies in place to keep it that way. Those at the top of the hierarchy have more tools available to them, both material and discursive, to

maintain their position in this hierarchy and even strengthen it, but this does not mean that their position is stable and secured. On the contrary, it has to be worked on continuously, as there is an ever present potential of subversion. Poststructuralism offers a theoretical tool, in the form of deconstruction, to lay bare some of these seemingly stable structures and strategies, thereby opening up spaces to articulate alternative and oppositional points of view which can be appropriated in a variety of social struggles. But the question remains as to the extent to which this can be achieved, and the limits of this approach.

The key assumptions of the Enlightenment were that the social world could be known and hence analysed on an objective level. Objectivity implies a connection to a separate material social reality. Poststructuralism abandons this idea and posits the view that the social can ever only be discursive; that social reality originates only in language and is shaped by it. If we push this concept to its limits, we end up without a critical edge and in Baudrillard's 'hyper reality'. As Seidman warns, 'the tendency in Foucault to collapse all social control into domination and in Baudrillard to flatten the social universe into an undifferentiated manipulated, dominated mass is both sociologically naive and politically suspect (1994, p.231). It is politically suspect because it has an air of elitism about it. In other words, it implies that the researcher is one of the only ones who can 'see through' this while everyone else is being manipulated; the researcher is thus separated from the rest to some extent.

Although I agree with the basic assumptions of poststructuralism, I believe there is a need in any type of social analysis to include a deconstruction of the position of the researcher, as he or she is necessarily implicated in relations of power in a particular social context. The researcher is not just looking in from the outside, but is necessarily implicated since he or she is part of the social and historical context and occupies a particular position within the power relations that exist at the time of the research. Social science research is performed from within an institution which has a certain

amount of power. Until fairly recently, a dominant discourse emphasised 'objectivity' in this respect in a similar way that journalists often draw on this discourse. But, like any other discourse, this one, under the influence of poststructuralism has proven that its stability can only ever be relative and that there is always a possibility that it will be superseded by other discourses; 'objectivity' is thus increasingly being questioned and not just in the academy. The latter points again to the important recognition that institutions, like universities or cinema, do not exist in isolation but are interrelated and interact in a variety of ways with wider discourses operating in society at any given point in time.

As discussed before, poststructuralism denies the possibility of objectivity and thus all the other concepts that accompany it, like 'facts', 'truth', or 'reality' (e.g. Foucault, 1980, 1997). Where social science, and any other science for that matter, was previously driven by a belief that the 'truth' could be uncovered and that doing so was its ultimate goal, poststructuralism emphasises that to uncover a 'truth' or 'reality' is inherently impossible. In other words, there is no 'true fact', only versions and different accounts of a perceived 'truth'. This does not deny the importance of 'facts' in human interaction, but focuses on the ways these 'facts' are being used in particular situations to emphasise and reinforce certain positions.

The use of 'facts' can thus be seen as a powerful and strategic weapon in communication; they are often used to construct 'common sense' versions of events or opinions, based on the 'facts' (e.g. statistics). In other words, different accounts of 'facts' or versions of 'reality' help to make certain situations seem 'natural' and self-evident, without the need to show how these accounts came to be perceived as they are. It is up to the researcher then to analyse the context in which these accounts are used and for what strategic reasons; in other words, what is being included in this context and what is being left out; and what are the political implications of that.

In short, rather than uncovering the 'truth' about the significance of cinema in national identity construction, this research sets out to provide a contribution to a continuing dialogue about this subject matter. As a way of linking and combining different strands of this dialogue, it employs Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse Theory, but before I explain the relevance of these methods to this research project, I will first explain my definition of discourse and how I see its workings.

## 1.3: Defining Discourse

Even though the word discourse is regularly used, it is not an easy concept to define. One definition of discourse in the Oxford Dictionary, connected to linguistics, is the following: a connected series of utterances. These series of connections together form a structured and seemingly coherent whole. I say *seemingly* coherent because this is not an inherent or 'natural' feature of discourse. Discourses are based in language and hence dependent on interaction between human beings. They are systems of meaning which are partly articulated during interaction between people, and can thus be seen as attempts to give meaning to the world around us. They provide a means to communicate that world in a more or less structured way, and arrive at some common understanding of the objects and phenomena (including social phenomena) that we observe around us. In other words, they provide common frames of reference. However, it should be stressed that these frames of reference are dynamic and form a dialectical relationship with wider social contexts.

Depending on your philosophical position, discourses can be seen as representing a reality existing separately from language, or they can be seen as constructions of a reality which is in turn a construction itself. In the former case, you believe in the possibility of a reality that can be objectively observed and described in a more or less adequate manner. In the latter case, you discard this idea as inherently impossible, as poststructuralist theory does. This is based on two fundamental philosophical principles that Potter describes as follows: 'The first is the idea that description and accounts

*construct the world*, or at least versions of the world. The second is the idea that these descriptions and accounts are *themselves* constructed' (Potter, 1996, p.97).

These principles have important implications for the notion of discourse. Firstly, if we see discourse as a constructed account of something that is itself a construction, we thereby imply that no particular discourse can ever be final. In other words, anything that is constructed carries within it the possibility of re-construction or de-construction, *including this thesis*. A second implication is that for every discourse there is an alternative discourse. This means that every discourse necessarily has to contain build-in defenses against these alternative discourses in order to keep its position as a more or less convincing account. The reason why some discourses are perceived as more convincing in a particular context is directly linked to relations of power in that context.

> For Foucault, a discourse is a way of constituting power, and is at the same time verified by that power. The knowledge which a discourse produces constitutes a kind of power, exercised over those who are 'known'. When that knowledge is exercised in practice, those who are known in a particular way will be subject to it (Malik, p.233).

This serves to emphasise the importance of power in this notion. If we take this into account, we can define discourse as a version or account of a particular object or phenomenon and an attempt to make this version or account seem 'natural' or 'truthful' in a specific social context. According to Foucault, 'the subject who speaks in discourse cannot occupy the position of the universal subject. In that general struggle of which he speaks, he is necessarily on one side or the other; he is in the battle, he has adversaries, he fights for a victory' (1976/2000, p.61). The extent to which he or she succeeds in doing so depends partly on the degree of power that the person (or institution) who appropriates that discourse possesses in that particular context.

So what are the limits of discourse? Where do we draw the line between one discourse and another? I think a useful way of visualising this is through the metaphor of a web in which all strands are potentially connected. Each object or phenomenon is surrounded by a number of main discourses about that object or phenomenon. These main discourses are relatively stable at a particular point in time, and are made up of a collection of what I would call sub-discourses. I will clarify this with an example. Take immigration in New Zealand for instance, at the present point in time (note the importance of time and place!). There are a number of main competing discourses that surround this issue: broadly speaking, one says it is beneficial to the nation, the other that it is not. These discourses are often drawn on in connection with others (e.g. economic discourses). They are made up of secondary sub-discourses, for instance about specific groups of immigrants. All these different strands come together in a particular context and acquire a hegemonic position. However, this position is never stable, static, or closed-off; on the contrary, it has to be worked on and continuously re-constructed to maintain or improve its position in that moment's hierarchy of discourses.

Finally, it is important to recognise that discourses never simply appear, but are always built on ones that went before; they thus always contain elements which are added, elements that are retained, and elements that are discarded. They are the product of interaction with other discourses and with specific contexts. Discourses are therefore fluid and dynamic; they help to create specific contexts, while always remaining sensitive to social and political change.

When, where, and how particular discourses acquire a hegemonic position relates to the social position of those who appropriate them. This social position in turn relates to their ability and skill in appropriating and combining specific discourses. This ability and skill thus relates to social factors like class and education among others, and it foregrounds the ideological dimension of discourse. In other words, the question is not

just who uses certain discourses and when and where, but most importantly why and to what end.

## 1.4: Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse Theory

Having defined discourse in this way, discourse analysis can be seen as a continuous process of deconstructing and analysing public discourses, whether those drawn on in the process of film making, of funding cinema, of interpreting a film, or those contained in the film itself. As this rapidly expanding 'field' of study is still in the developing stages to some extent, we can identify different strands and approaches, which share similar assumptions but often use different terminology.

One such approach is Critical Discourse Analysis, as developed by Fairclough among others, which is mostly influenced by functional linguistics (e.g. Fairclough, 1995, 1998). Largely within this approach, Titscher *et al* (2000) identify what they call the 'discourse-historical' method, which is more influenced by cognitive models of text planning (e.g. Van Dijk, 1991, 2000, Wodak, 1996). Judging from its mostly different terminology and references, a third approach has developed quite independently from these two, but nevertheless shares many similar assumptions. This is what Laclau calls 'the Essex discourse-theoretic approach, an open-ended programme of research whose contours and aims are still very much in the making' (2000, p.xi, see also Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, Howarth *et al*, 2000). To avoid confusion, I will firstly discuss some general definitions and basic assumptions of these different approaches, before outlining their relevant and overlapping methodological concepts for this study.

*Definitions and Basic Assumptions*

Fairclough & Wodak define 'critical discourse analysis' (CDA) as follows:

> Critical discourse analysis sees discourse- language use in speech and writing- as a form of 'social practice'. Describing discourse as social practice implies a

dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it. A dialectical relationship is a two-way relationship: the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them (quoted in Titscher *et al*, 2000, p.147).

This definition draws attention to a number of assumptions. The most important of these assumptions are that firstly, CDA 'is not concerned with language or language use per se, but with the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures' (ibid, p.146, see also Wetherell & Potter, 1992, Fairclough, 1998). In other words, CDA is concerned with the ways in which language is used in particular contexts to serve certain functions and achieve certain goals. This is very relevant to the analysis of focus group data and other forms of audience research, as well as interview data, and it works on both 'micro-' and 'macro' levels. The micro level relates directly to the immediate focus group context and interview situation, and their dynamics. For example, different participants use language to position themselves in specific ways in relation to the other participants and importantly, in relation to the researcher. Conversely, on a macro level, participants use language to position themselves in relation to the 'text' (in this case *Broken English*) and its subject matter. Of course these two levels are not entirely separate, but often overlap.

This specificity of contexts then draws attention to the second assumption which relates to the importance of power in this process. The concept of power in CDA draws to a significant extent on Foucault's conceptionalisation of power:

It is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the *vis-a-vis* of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation.

The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle.

(Foucault, 1976/1980, p.98)

Consequently, 'CDA studies both power in discourse and power over discourse' (Titscher *et al*, 2000, p.146). In other words, it studies both the limits of particular discourses, which frame and constrain the ways in which topics can be discussed, and at the same time the ability of people to strategically appropriate certain discourses in specific ways.

This leads me to the third main assumption: 'discourses are historical and can only be understood in relation to their context. (.) Discourses are not only embedded in a particular culture, ideology or history, but are also connected intertextually to other discourses' (ibid, p.146, see also De Cillia *et al*, 1999, Gill, 1993/1996). Particularly the latter assumption implies therefore a process of active selection which depends not only on the immediate context, but also on social positions and a related ability to draw on certain repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Overall then, 'in discourse practice, structures and ideologies are expressed which are not normally analysed or questioned. CDA is now seeking, by close and detailed analysis, to shed light on precisely these aspects' (Titscher *et al*, 2000, p.147, see also Potter, 1996). It is thus concerned with 'common sense' constructions of social reality and its functions.

Curiously, whereas CDA often involves, in an empirical sense, the collection of data from 'constructed' research contexts, in the form of for example in-depth interviews and focus groups (e.g. Wetherell & Potter, 1992, Condor, 2000, Scott, 2000), the transcripts of which are then treated as 'texts' in their own right, 'discourse theory' appears to be more concerned with 'official' texts. Consider for example the following definition:

*Discourse analysis* [within a discourse-theoretical framework] refers to the practice

of analysing empirical raw materials and information as discursive forms. This means that discourse analysts treat a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic data- speeches, reports, manifestos, historical events, interviews, policies, ideas, even organisations and institutions- as 'texts' or 'writing' (in the Derridean sense that *there is nothing outside the text*). In other words, empirical data are viewed as sets of signifying practices that constitute a "discourse" and its "reality", thus providing the conditions which enable subjects to experience the world of objects, words and practices (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p.4, original emphasis).

A partial explanation for this apparent emphasis on 'official' texts, may be that Discourse Theory appears to be more concerned with 'politics proper', or power relations at a macro-level, as opposed to CDA which has a firmer focus on 'everyday' contexts, and consequently on a micro-level. In this way, CDA appears to be more suited to this particular research project in relation to the audience research, while Discourse Theory is better suited to the analysis of 'industry' data and official policy documents. However, there is a lot of theoretical overlap between the two approaches, and I believe Discourse Theory offers some very useful analytical concepts which can be used in addition to CDA, and to which I shall return in a moment.

On a theoretical level, 'issues of identity formation, the production of novel ideologies, the logics of social movements and the structuring of societies by a plurality of social imaginaries are central objects of investigation for discourse theory' (ibid, p.2). Not surprisingly then, Gramsci's concept of hegemony, via Laclau (1996), occupies a central position within this theoretical framework. This becomes especially clear when we consider some of its underlying assumptions. Firstly, 'discourses always involve the exercise of *power*, as their constitution involves the exclusion of certain possibilities and a consequent structuring of the relations between different social agents' (ibid, p.4, original emphasis). Secondly, 'discourses are *contingent* and *historical* constructions, which are always vulnerable to those political forces excluded in their production, as

well as the dislocatory effects of events beyond their control' (ibid, p.4). It is thus, similar to CDA, anti-essentialist and anti-reductionist, and allows for social change without ignoring the importance of power in the process. 'While discourse theory stresses the ultimate contingency of all social identity, it nonetheless acknowledges that partial fixations of meaning are both possible and necessary' (ibid, p.7, see also Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

Finally, and of particular importance to the audience part of this study, Discourse Theory is concerned with making explicit the position of the researcher within the research context: 'it rejects the rigid separation of facts and values, accepting that the discourse theorist and analyst is always located in a particular historical and political context with no neutral Archimedean point from which to describe, argue and evaluate' (ibid, p.7). Overall then, the basic assumptions of these two approaches appear to be very similar. Let me now turn to the analytical concepts they offer in relation to empirical studies.

*Methodological Concepts and Analytical Framework*

Within CDA, Titscher *et al*, drawing on Fairclough, identify a number of key terms and concepts which form the basis of analysis. These concepts can be related to each other in significant ways. Firstly, 'a discursive event' is defined as an 'instance of language use, analysed as text, discursive practice, social practice' (2000, p.148). A discursive event in this case would be a particular focus group discussion, an interview, as well as *Broken English* as film text. The transcript of for example a focus group discussion then serves as a 'text' to be analysed. Thus, 'text' is here defined as 'the written or spoken language produced in a discursive event' (ibid, p.148). Within this text, we can identify different levels of articulation, or three interrelated dimensions: (1) content/ topics, (2) strategies, and (3) linguistic means and forms of realization (De Cillia *et al*, 1999, p.157).

The first one of these relates to 'interdiscursivity': 'the constitution of a text from diverse discourses and genres' (Titscher *et al*, 2000, p.148). 'Discourse' here refers to a 'way of signifying experience from a particular perspective', whereas 'genre' refers to the 'use of language associated with a particular social activity' (ibid, p.148). This draws attention not only to the frames of reference that people use when they express their opinions about particular topics, but also to how the social context (e.g. focus group discussion) influences *what* frames of reference they use and *how*. Particularly the latter point is intimately related to 'strategies', both on a micro-level (within the group context), and on a macro-level (the group's position in wider society).

The third dimension relates more specifically to how these strategies are employed on a linguistic level. Van Dijk lays out a number of useful 'types' or 'categories' of strategic language use in this respect: polarization, opinion coherence, attribution, description, interest, implicitness, meta-opinions, expression, unmentionables, arguments, and using history (1998, pp.57-61, see also Potter, 1996). I return to these 'types' of language use in my analysis of the interview data (chapter 6) and the focus group data collected for this thesis (chapter 8).

Finally, as a way to link these three dimensions to a wider societal context, or to draw connections between micro- and macro-levels of making meaning, Fairclough uses the notion of what he calls an 'order of discourse'. He claims that 'texts have a dual orientation to "systems" in a broad sense: there are language systems, and there are orders of discourse. The text-system relationship in both cases is dialectical: texts draw upon but also constitute (and reconstitute) systems' (1998, p.145). He sees the workings of 'orders of discourse' as follows:

> An order of discourse is a structured configuration of genres and discourses (and maybe other elements, such as voices, registers, styles) associated with a given social domain- for example, the order of discourse of a school. In describing such

an order of discourse, one identifies its constituent discursive practices (e.g. various sorts of classroom talk, playground talk, staffroom talk, etc.), and crucially the relationships and boundaries between them. The concern, however, is not just with the internal economy of various separate orders of discourse. It is with relationships of tension and flow across as well as within various local orders of discourse in an (open) system that we might call the 'societal order of discourse' (1998, p.145).

Analysing these 'relationships of tension and flow' makes relations of power a central concern of CDA. 'The investigation of whether the different discourse types found within one order of discourse, or different orders of discourse, are strictly separate from one another, or whether they frequently overlap, may provide the key to conflicts and power struggles or social and cultural changes' (Fairclough, 1995, p.56).

The emphasis in the above framework appears to be very much on the 'text', or in other words on *what is being said*. As a caution here, I believe there is also a need to pay very careful attention to *what is not being said* (e.g. silences, hesitations, etc.). Therefore, I have included these as far as possible in the transcripts, and will include them in my analysis. Particularly in relation to this final point, Discourse Theory may provide certain additional concepts which could be useful.

In contrast to CDA, which has an empirical emphasis, Discourse Theory is far more abstract. However, it may be possible to apply some of its concepts in an analysis of empirical data. The most important of these concepts for my purposes are 'nodal points' and 'empty signifiers', 'the logic of equivalence' and 'the logic of difference', and the distinction between 'myths' and 'imaginaries'. I will discuss their relevance in turn.

Firstly, Howarth & Stavrakakis define nodal points as 'privileged signifiers or reference points in a discourse that bind together a particular system of meaning or 'chain of

signification' (2000, p.8). As an example, they provide the signifier 'communism' as a nodal point, around which other signifiers (like 'freedom' or 'democracy') acquire a certain meaning when articulated in relation to it. In other words, the signifiers 'freedom' and 'democracy' have a different meaning within 'communist discourse' as opposed to for example 'liberal-democratic' discourse, and their meaning is hence relational. Another example, in relation to this study, could be 'New Zealand' as a nodal point around which other signifiers like 'national identity' or 'ethnicity' acquire certain meanings. This seems fairly straightforward and commonsensical, but that is precisely the point. For it functions as an *unspoken* given, which does not need to be explained or articulated, thereby allowing us to focus on *what is not said*, or rather *what does not need to be said*.

In an attempt to be more specific about the power aspects involved in this process, Laclau has introduced the category of the 'empty signifier', and he asserts that 'the presence of empty signifiers is the very condition of hegemony' (1996, p.43). The 'empty signifier' is seen here to function as a nodal point. This is based on the following assumption:

> Even if the full closure of the social is not realisable in any actual society, the idea
> of closure and fullness still functions as an (impossible) ideal. Societies are thus
> organised and centred on the basis of such (impossible) ideals. What is necessary
> for the emergence and function of these ideals is the production of empty signifiers
>                                                         (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p.8).

I would argue that this applies not only on a national level, but is relevant to any 'imagined community' however defined. Empty signifiers then, can be seen as the ultimate forms of nodal points; they can be appropriated at any time without the need for explanation. One very clear and current example of an empty signifier would be 'terrorism' as appropriated in the Western media.

The second set of concepts in Discourse Theory, and equally relevant to strategic appropriation, concerns the distinction between the 'logic of equivalence' and the 'logic of difference'. The logic of equivalence functions politically 'by splitting a system of differences and instituting a political frontier between two opposed camps' (ibid, p.11). Again, a recent and rather extreme example of this can be found in the rhetoric surrounding 'September 11'; within this rhetoric, we can see a clear boundary being drawn between 'the civilised world' and 'the terrorist-harbouring rogue nations'. Of course, these distinctions become clearest at times of heightened tension. However, the logic of equivalence may work in smaller contexts as well. For example, in New Zealand it may work in specific contexts to create one group of for example 'ethnic minorities' or 'indigenous peoples' in opposition to the 'dominant Pakeha majority'. Within this strategic appropriation, these categories work as nodal points/ empty signifiers.

In contrast, the 'the logic of difference' does exactly the opposite:

> Whereas a project employing the logic of equivalence seeks to divide social space by condensing meanings around two antagonistic poles, a project employing a logic of difference attempts to weaken and displace a sharp antagonistic polarity, endeavouring to relegate that division to the margins of society (ibid, p.11).

In a general sense, many varieties of 'multicultural' and 'bicultural' discourses can be seen to employ this logic, through an emphasis on incorporation and concessions. Although these two concepts work in different ways, it is important to recognise that they are not mutually exclusive. 'There is always a complex interaction between the two, just as there is a play between identity and difference, and universality and particularity' (ibid, p.12, see also Connolly, 1991). In other words, *how* they get employed, *by whom*, and *why*, is all highly context-specific.

Finally, Discourse Theory distinguishes between 'myths' and 'imaginaries'. Within the outline above, we can identify an emphasis on *context* and *process*; or in other words, nothing is stable, including relations of power. This may easily lead to extreme relativism; the concepts of 'myths' and 'imaginaries' can be seen as a response to this potential danger. As Howarth & Stavrakakis rightly point out, 'it would be incorrect to conclude that all discourses are equally successful or unsuccessful in their attempts to achieve hegemony' (ibid, p.15). Norval then explains the usefulness of these concepts as follows:

> The distinction between myth and imaginary is a productive one, allowing one to understand and analyse hegemony construction as a *process*. Rather than being bound to a static analysis, involving what may amount to simplistic judgements as to whether or not a specific discourse is hegemonic at a given point in time, the introduction of these concepts shifts the analytical focus to the *movement* from myth to imaginary and *vice versa* (2000, p.227/228, original emphasis).

Within this conceptualisation, myths work on a smaller scale and are always being worked on to eventually become imaginaries. 'Myths operate on the level of the interests of a particular group. And, like the Gramscian use of hegemony, the term 'imaginary' is reserved for those cases where a particular group succeeds in moving beyond its particular interests onto a universal terrain' (ibid, p.229). Myths can thus be seen as discourses which are confined to some extent to the margins of society, while always striving to move into the 'mainstream'. The relationship between myths and imaginaries is therefore one of hegemonic struggle. Howarth and Stavrakakis put it this way:

> From their emergence until their dissolution, myths can function as a surface of inscription for a variety of social demands and dislocations. However, when a myth

has proved to be successful in neutralising social dislocations and incorporating a great number of social demands, then we can say that the myth has been transformed to an imaginary (2000, p.15, see also Laclau, 1990).

Again, the attraction for my purposes here is the centrality of power and hegemony. I should reiterate at this point that these concepts were developed in a highly abstract framework, particularly in Laclau's case. However, I believe they can be applied in the empirical context of focus group discussions and interviews, and can add an interesting dimension to the conceptual framework of CDA.

## 1.5: Combining Different Appproaches

Given the comprehensive nature of the theoretical and methodological approach thus outlined, this thesis can be seen as a process of deconstructing and analysising public discourses, in this case those drawn on in the process of film making. It must not be seen as a straightforward attempt to arrive at a 'truth', but more as an analysis of different accounts that try to achieve the status of 'objective truth'. It is therefore more a method of analysing a process than it is a method of analysing particular objects or phenomena.

Keeping this in mind, we can move on to *Broken English* and explore what this means when we analyse the film. The film draws on a wide range of discourses that work on different levels in terms of its subject matter. In order to appear convincing they need to take account of possible alternative discourses and construct a build-in defense against those.

Similarly, cinema has its own particular characteristics which provide opportunities on the one hand, but creates limitations at the same time. Moreover, 'cinema' can be seen as a discourse itself, bound up with discourses of nation, art and popular culture, intertextuality, and so on. Cinema appears in a national context but is also implicated in

wider global power structures. It is part of the mass media and hence draws on a wide variety of discourses that operate within and through other media like television, radio, newspapers, and so on. In a similar vain, it also forms a dialectical relationship with academic discourses. Again, it is my contention that these influences need to be taken into account as cinema does not exist in isolation.

More specifically then, in relation to *Broken English*, this thesis focuses on different types and strands of discourses and explore how these interact with and influence each other. In order to do this convincingly, I believe it is necessary to create a comprehensive outline or 'map' of possible and likely discourses, their interrelations, and their socio-historical context, which then leads into an analysis of the film itself, and the research data from interviews and focus groups. This 'discourse map', and the subject matter it deals with, is roughly divided into chapters: firstly, I look at discourses of nationhood and national identity, followed by a more specific chapter on national cinema. Having established a national context in this way, the next chapter focuses on discourses of race, ethnicity, culture and diaspora in a 'postcolonial' framework. This helps to set up a historical context which I believe sheds light on contemporary multicultural and bicultural discourses in a specific New Zealand context.

In short, the rationale behind this particular organisation of chapters is to create a basic framework of possible discourses, and to articulate my own position vis-a-vis those discourses, which can subsequently be utilised in the analysis of interviews with people on the production side, my own textual analysis of the film, and the focus group discussions on the reception side.

Finally, Fairclough conceives of CDA as,

> mapping three sorts of analysis on to one another in an attempt at integrated statements which link social and cultural practices to properties of texts:

33

-analysis of texts (spoken, written, or involving a combination of semiotic modalities, e.g. televisual texts);

-analysis of discourse practices of text production, distribution and consumption;

-analysis of social and cultural practices which frame discourse practices and texts

(1998, p.144)

This relates closely to Thompson's tripartite approach of media texts, as discussed above. The final and important step in this approach relates to the reception side of media texts, and I will therefore conclude this introductory chapter by outlining my conceptionalisation of 'the audience' in theoretical terms.

## 1.6: Conceptualising the Audience

According to Thompson, the study of the reception and appropriation of media messages is essential within the tripartite model, 'because it considers both the social-historical conditions within which messages are received by individuals, and the ways in which these individuals make sense of the messages and incorporate them into their lives' (1990, p.306, see also Livingstone, 1999). The latter refers to the recognition that, 'apart from the meaning that the messages may have, the very activity of receiving these messages may be meaningful for the recipients' (ibid, p.311). This is what he calls 'the everyday appropriation of mass-mediated products'. Although I strongly agree with the basis of this argument, I will use the term 'everyday appropriation' with some caution, which firstly relates to a recognition of some of the constraints of this particular research project, and secondly to the philosophical underpinnings of this concept.

In terms of the former, an important part of this research deals with the ways in which different ethnic groups in New Zealand interact with a text like *Broken English*: how they feel they are being represented in the film, and how this relates to their position in New Zealand society in a more general sense. To begin to answer these questions

34

entails a rather detailed analysis of data from a chosen form of enquiry. In this case, I have chosen to conduct a number of focus group discussions where the groups were chosen according to their ethnic backgrounds, rather than individual interviews for example. I will justify this choice and its implications in more detail in chapter 8, but this serves for now to emphasise that the choice of participants was highly selective in that the participants clearly identified *themselves* as either 'Croatian', 'Maori' or 'Chinese'.

Two group discussions were conducted for each of these categories. Inevitably, this raises questions of representativeness. Due to factors of time and resources, this sample is very limited and the aim is therefore not to reach a generalised conclusion about these groups as a whole, but the emphasis is rather on the process of making meaning in a particular context, and particularly on the way in which these different groups draw on specific discourses about the structure, the content and the themes in the film. Therefore, targeting different ethnic groups seems an obvious way of gaining a range of responses related to my research topic.

However, in many respects this particular context fails to justify the 'everyday' part of appropriation: it is not everyday that one is asked to participate in a discussion about a particular film. That is to say, the activity of talking about films one has seen could very well be an everyday activity, but gathering people together to discuss a particular film for academic research purposes brings factors into play which will have a certain amount of influence on the resulting data. This leads me to the second caution.

According to Thompson,

> A great deal of research has been done on the nature and size of audiences, the short-term and long-term effects of media messages, the ways in which audiences use the media and the gratifications which they derive from them. But these kinds of

research, however interesting they may be, pay insufficient attention to the particular social-historical contexts within which individuals and groups of individuals receive media messages, make sense of them, appraise them and integrate them into other aspects of their lives.

(ibid, p.313, see also Fairclough, 1998, Ang, 1996).

The caution referred to above then, relates mostly to the conclusions we draw from the analysis of the data. Thompson identifies six features of 'everyday appropriation' most of which are highly relevant for this research project:

(1) the typical modes of appropriation of mass-mediated products; (2) the social-historical characteristics of contexts of reception; (3) the nature and significance of activities of reception; (4) the meaning of messages as interpreted by recipients; (5) the discursive elaboration of mediated messages; and (6) the forms of interaction and mediated quasi-interaction established through appropriation (ibid, p.313/314).

Again, most of these features form the basis of my analysis of the focus group data in chapter 8, and this entails paying very careful attention to the specific context in which the research is carried out. However, while these categories seem very useful in theory, it may be impossible to differentiate between them in practice. It seems highly likely that some of these categories will 'spill over' into other ones, without the clear-cut boundaries implied above. In other words, Thompson fails to acknowledge the likely fluidity of these categories in any given context. So, while I believe these categories can provide a useful guideline, I draw on them with considerable caution.

For example, when Thompson talks about 'typical modes of appropriation', we need to be very aware of the extent to which this appropriation can be said to be typical. In more concrete terms, when participants in this study are engaging with *Broken English*, we need to recognise for example that this engagement is directly related to the

research context; the film itself may very well be largely irrelevant to their everyday lives (Gandy, 1998). In other words, they may not have chosen to see the film if they were not prompted to do so by the researcher. This is not to say however, that the content or themes of the film are irrelevant to them in a more general sense. And furthermore, I would argue that the moment people consent to participate in a focus group discussion, this discussion *becomes* part of their 'everyday' lives, and is therefore very relevant.

Given the problematic nature of 'the audience' and the inherent impossibility of ever knowing the 'whole' audience, I will proceed to outline the theoretical paradigms associated with different conceptualisations of the media audience, and to position this particular research within those paradigms.

*General Paradigm: Cultural Studies and Reception Analysis/ Research*

In relation to the audience, this research project is firmly situated within the 'cultural studies' and 'reception analysis' paradigms. However, it is important to note that these paradigms were developed in reaction to earlier 'traditions'. There are a number of ways in which 'the audience' has been conceptualised historically and these ways are often outlined in terms of phases or periods. Abercrombie & Longhurst for example, note that 'a common analysis is of three phases- 'effects', 'uses and gratifications' and 'encoding/decoding' (1998, p.4). Within these 'phases', particular traditions of audience research can be identified: 'effects; uses and gratifications; literary criticism; cultural studies; and reception analysis' (McQuail, 1997, p.16, see also Alasuutari, 1999).

Although it is useful to trace the development of 'the audience' in this way, there are some dangers in fitting these conceptions into neat compartments. It often implies for example that one tradition has been overtaken by another at a particular point in time, and is thereby consigned to history, along with *all* its assumptions. This may be the case

theoretically, but we need to pay careful attention to the ways in which some of these assumptions and concerns linger on in wider public discourses. As Ross rightly argues, 'what many of the new individual-centred models of the audience tend to overlook is the way in which (some) real *audiences* (as opposed to media *theorists*) still believe that television [and cinema] sends out powerful messages whose meanings are accepted uncritically by most of their recipients' (2000, p.134, original emphasis).

In a similar vein, we need to pay careful attention to the theoretical contexts in which particular shifts occur. Gray for example draws attention to this when she discusses Stuart Hall's 'encoding/decoding' model, which is generally accepted as the beginning of 'active audience' studies. She cites an interview in which Hall himself notes that his influential article (Hall, 1974) was 'written and delivered as a 'position paper' and has a 'polemical thrust' (Gray, 1999, p.26). In other words, these shifts often signify a deliberate political agenda. Morley equally argues that,

> What is often at stake in intellectual progress is how to build new insights into (or onto) the old, rather than how to entirely replace the old with the new. Perspectives and models are always developed within some particular intellectual context, in relation to the intellectual and political protagonists of that moment. The demands of some given context often require an emphasis on some particular aspect or issue in our research- emphases which, after a time, and in a new context, may well be no longer necessary (1999, p.197).

While recognising this, the concept of 'the audience' has been profoundly reworked within the Cultural Studies 'tradition'. This tradition took the basic assumption from Uses and Gratifications research that the audience was active, but it radically transformed this notion by paying much closer attention to exactly what type of activity this involved. In addition, it reintroduced the 'text' into the equation, and has tried to establish links between meanings contained within media texts and the ways in which

audiences interact with these texts. As McQuail puts it,

> The cultural studies tradition occupies a borderland between social science and the humanities. (.) It emphasizes media use as a reflection of a particular sociocultural context and as a process of giving meaning to cultural products and experiences. This school of research rejects both the stimulus-response model of effects and the notion of an all-powerful text or message (1997, p.18/19).

These are important characteristics which underlie much of this particular research project, and they provide clear links to the combination of discourse analysis and the tripartite approach as outlined above.

Within this tradition of 'reception studies', Alasuutari identifies three phases, or three 'generations', the third of which builds on the first two, and is still in the process of being developed. He calls these phases 'reception research', 'audience ethnography', and 'a constructionist view' (Alasuutari, 1999). I will discuss these phases in turn, as they form the basis on which the 'audience' section of this research project is built.

*Reception Research*

As mentioned above, Stuart Hall's 1974 paper in which he outlines what has become known as the 'encoding/ decoding model', is generally seen as a defining moment in audience research, and signifies the beginning of 'reception research'. Abercrombie & Longhurst explain the basic assumptions of this model as follows:

> First, Hall argued that the study of media communication had to be located within a Marxist understanding of the generation and distribution of power. Second, he maintained that messages had to be understood through the prism of semiotics. They were codes. Thus, media messages were encoded from within the dominant frame or dominant global ideology, by media personnel who operated professionally

from within the hegemonic order, often reproducing messages associated with political and economic elites. The messages contain dominant or 'preferred meanings' (1998, p.14).

In my view, the most important feature of this model is the central position awarded to relations of power. But by invoking Gramsci's concept of hegemony, this power aspect is not closed-off nor is it static. The place of hegemony in this model allows for the possibility of social change. Rather than seeing either 'the media' or 'the audience' as all-powerful, the encoding/ decoding model problematises these categories by making the process of their interaction the central focus of analysis. In Livingstone's words,

> A central achievement of Hall's encoding-decoding model was to emphasize the dynamic interrelations among the three elements of text, production and audience, moving us away from the limitations of hitherto dominant models which arranged them in a broadly linear and unidirectional path from sender via message to receiver. Questions of media and knowledge, under this latter model, had become questions of how elites use the media to inform, educate, persuade or control the laity, with their success depending in part on the efficiency of the communication channel and the receptivity of the audience (1999, p.95, see also Gray, 1999).

Within Hall's model, the text is seen as an intermediary between producers and receivers of media messages, and importantly as being polysemic, and therefore potentially open to multiple meanings. 'The idea that a message is encoded by a programme producer and then decoded (and made sense of) by the receivers means that the sent and received messages are not necessarily identical, and different audiences may also decode a programme differently' (Alasuutari, 1999, p.3).

In terms of this decoding process, Hall outlines four 'ideal-type' positions from which these can be made:

Within the *dominant or hegemonic code* the connotative level of the messages is decoded in terms of the dominant or preferred meanings; the *professional code* is what the professional broadcasters employ when transmitting a message which has already been signified in a hegemonic manner; the *negotiated code* contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements; and finally the *oppositional code* is the position where a viewer perfectly understands both the literal and connotative inflection given to an event, but determines to decode the message 'in a globally contrary way' (Alasuutari, 1999, p.4, see also Nightingale, 1996, Gandy, 1998).

As noted before, Hall's model should be seen as a theoretical 'intervention' first and foremost. Seen in this way it has opened up significant new ways of conceptualising the audience. However, a number of subsequent empirical studies which have tried to apply this model, starting with Morley's often cited study of the *Nationwide* audience (1980), have also drawn attention to some of its limitations.

Schroder argues for example that the different possible readings as outlined above 'presuppose that the media text itself is a vehicle of dominant ideology and that it hegemonically strives to get readers to accept the existing social order, with all its inequalities and oppression of underprivileged social groups' (2000, p.236). This then leads him to question how to analyse the reception of media texts which are 'not just ideologically ambiguous, but clearly non-hegemonic' (ibid, p.236). Although I do not necessarily believe that this presupposition is evident in Hall's model, I do agree that it is often implied in empirical studies. Many of the critiques of Hall's model then relate more to the ways in which it has been applied than to the model itself.

These critiques take three major forms. Firstly, there is a sense in many of the initial studies that the activity of the audience is 'unlimited', which leads to a kind of 'celebration' of the active audience. But Curran argues for example that texts are not

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infinitely open; even if they contain a plurality of meanings, there is definitely one preferred reading and that is bound to limit what audiences can do with the text (quoted in Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p.30).

Secondly, there is a danger of confusing the active audience with the resistant audience (e.g. Fiske, 1987, 1989). But as Gray argues, 'what these studies suggest is that people negotiate- rarely are their readings and positioning oppositional' (1999, p.31). There is thus a danger of extreme relativism which can lead to the idea that 'particular television programmes [or films] are good *just because* the audience is active in relation to them' (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p.30).

And finally in a more general sense, 'with the emphasis on the active audience, especially when combined with a stress on the polysemic nature of the text, there is a risk that the issue of power will slide off the agenda altogether or, more likely, will be allocated a less central place in the theoretical debate and ensuing empirical work' (ibid, p.30).

These kind of critiques, although not all equally valid, do draw attention to some of the limitations of the encoding/ decoding model, some of which are addressed in the 'ethnographic turn' that followed.

*Audience Ethnography*

The move to a more 'ethnographic' approach to the audience relates to a number of recognitions which came out of the initial applications of the encoding/ decoding model. Alasuutari divides these into three parts. 'First, there was a move away from an interest in conventional politics to identity politics, particularly to questions about gender' (1999, p.5, see also Ang, 1995, Van Zoonen, 1994). This does not only relate to 'reception studies', but is part of a more general movement within the field of Cultural Studies. In relation to reception studies though, there is a change in focus from an

emphasis on a particular text and how a particular audience interprets this text, to an emphasis on how these texts fit into the politics of everyday life, or how the mass media 'have come to serve as resources which help young people to define their individual lifestyle and cultural identity' (Gandy, 1998, p.201, see also Gillespie, 1995).

Secondly, and related to this, 'at the expense of a diminishing interest in programme contents, much more emphasis was laid on the functions of the medium' (Alasuutari, 1999, p.5). In a sense then, this can be seen as partly a return to some of the issues raised in Uses and Gratifications research, but the scope has widened to include the social context in which these 'functions' take shape and are expressed. In this way, the emphasis shifts quite firmly from 'encoding' to 'decoding' with an increasing emphasis on the reception end of the scale.

As Alasuutari notes, 'people representing the second generation of reception studies like to emphasize that they are doing or that one should do proper ethnographic case studies of 'interpretive communities' (ibid, p.5). Part of these case studies would involve spending extended periods of time with 'audiences' in their everyday environments, for example the home. However, apart from the logistical difficulties of 'participant observation' in combination with 'in-depth' interviews (e.g time constraints), the validity of data thus obtained is rather questionable, particularly when it comes to drawing general conclusions from it. And as Alasuutari notes, 'what is called an 'ethnographic study' often simply amounts to qualitative 'in-depth' interviews of a group of people' (ibid, p.5).

Not surprisingly then, critiques of the 'ethnographic approach' often center not so much on the method itself, but on the conclusions drawn from it, and the way in which the researcher positions him- or herself within this research. Nightingale for example is critical of the emphasis on what people say in these studies:

Relying on what people say about a television programme to evaluate it is a problem. Not only may there be a gap between what is said and what is understood, but a reliance on what is said suggests an underlying definition of the historical subject as someone who is in possession of a 'reality', a reality of which an account can be given; it also suggests that the account will be based in a definition (shared with the researcher) about what constitutes an account; and assumes some shared agreement about what constitutes rational (and irrational) behaviour (1996, p.99).

This is an important critique and is typical of a general shift towards 'self-reflexivity' in reception studies. In other words, there is an increasing emphasis on the constructedness of 'the audience', which leads me to Alasuutari's third phase.

*A Constructionist View*

The 'constructionist view' should not be seen as a radical departure from the 'phases' discussed above. There are no clear-cut boundaries around these phases as they are identified; they rather represent certain movements which are still largely in development. The most significant features of this 'third phase' are firstly the ways in which 'the audience' is conceptualised, and secondly the ways in which researchers position themselves vis-a-vis 'the audience'. 'One must bear in mind that audience is, most of all, a discursive construct produced by a particular analytic gaze' (Alasuutari, 1999, p.6). This recognition captures the essence of this 'third phase' in that it emphasises the constructedness of the audience, and it also shows the way in which the researcher is implicated in this construction.

The following description shows how the tripartite approach, which informs this particular study, is quite firmly situated in this third phase, and I will therefore quote it at length:

The third generation entails a broadened frame within which one conceives of the

media and media use. One does not necessarily abandon ethnographic case studies of audiences or analyses of individual programmes, but the main focus is not restricted to finding out about the reception or 'reading' of a programme by a particular audience. Rather, the objective is to get a grasp of our contemporary 'media culture', particularly as it can be seen in the role of the media in everyday life, both as a topic and as an activity structured by and structuring the discourses within which it is discussed. (.) The third generation resumes an interest in programmes and programming, but not as texts studied in isolation from their usage as an element of everyday life. Furthermore, it adds a neglected layer of reflexivity to the research on the 'reception' of media messages by addressing the audience's notions of themselves as 'the audience' (Alasuutari, 1999, p.6/7).

Overall then, the assumption here is that media reception is a many-layered *process* in which the researcher is necessarily implicated. This consequently dismisses the notion that the researcher can position him- or herself outside this audience, but focuses rather on the ways in which the particular research *context* influences the different ways in which audiences make meaning out of a particular text, and how this relates to a wider social context. As Livingstone asserts, 'media cultures provide not only interpretative frameworks, but also sources of pleasure and resources for identity-formation which ensure that individuals certainly have a complex identity of which part includes their participatory relations with particular media forms' (1999, p.100).

This takes the notion of audience activity to a new level and the complexity that this implies requires us to pay very careful attention to the specific context in which this activity takes place. One still developing framework which allows us to do so is CDA and Discourse Theory, as discussed above. 'From a discourse-analytic perspective, the idea is not to treat the interviewees' talk as a screen through which to look inside their head. Instead, the idea is to start by studying the interview text- or any text or transcriptions of conversations for that matter- in its own right' (Alasuutari, 1999, p.15,

see also Nightingale, 1996).

In addition, by treating all three aspects of communication (production, 'text', and reception) as texts to be analysed, the tripartite approach, in combination with CDA and Discourse Theory, offers a way to link these different aspects, without privileging any one of these domains. By not focusing on any one of these aspects in isolation, but rather on the way they intersect and interreact, this approach thus offers an opportunity to provide a more comprehensive picture of this process.

Finally, the audience part of this particular research is based on the general recognition that 'audience research has been slow to raise questions of 'race' and ethnicity' (Gray, 1999, p.30, see also Cottle, 2000). This seems rather surprising considering the increasing emphasis on the activity of the audience and hence on the process of making meaning. Similarly, Sinclair & Cunningham note that 'treatments of diasporic identity have concentrated on issues of representation *by* mainstream media *of* ethnic and racial identities' (2000, p.5, see in New Zealand e.g. Abel, 1997, Shepard, 2000). They go on to argue that 'the conclusions reached in the numerous studies of this kind tend to be that Western mass media operate as prime filters of a hegemonic discourse "othering" minority cultures and identities' (ibid, p.5).

The audience part of this study adds a different layer to these kind of studies as 'they are not sufficient to understand the productive construction of new hybrid identities and cultures by the active processes, simultaneously, of maintenance and negotiation, of an original home and a newly acquired host culture' (ibid, p.5). If we then incorporate Husband's assertion that 'the history of a society carries within it deeply embedded notions of who are the 'real' members of the society' (2000, p.200), we can see the importance of these negotiations and the power aspects that these processes involve.

In my opinion, a 'discourse analysis' of focus group material may shed some light on

the ways in which such negotiations take place, by drawing attention to the possibilities and constraints in specific contexts. In this way, the expectation is that the audience part of this study will complete the 'triangle' of this tripartite approach to the analysis of cinema in New Zealand.

# CHAPTER 2: Nation, Narration and National Identity.

One important way of contextualising *Broken English* is to position the film in relation to discourses about national identity and constructions of nationhood in New Zealand. As mentioned before, the film was produced in New Zealand and received a significant part of its funding from the state. As part of a national cinema, it can be seen as part of a nation building process, and it thus offers a particular version of New Zealand as a nation. By extension, it positions itself in particular ways in relation to debates about national identity in New Zealand. These debates take place in a specific social context which in turn has important historical dimensions. Given the apparent primacy of concepts like 'nation' and 'national identity' within this context, and the often taken-for-granted nature of them in mainstream discourses, this chapter explores their historical development and the theoretical debates that surround them.

From the outset, it is my contention that the notion of national identity can be explored, using a discourse analytic framework as outlined in chapter 1. I believe discourse analysis, if used in this particular way, is well suited to work through issues of national identity, precisely because it allows us to pay careful attention to specific contexts and the power relations within them. Moreover, it offers the possibility to deconstruct essentialist notions, if applied with care. Overall then, we need to work towards an integrated theory which takes account of both the constructed elements of national identity, ethnic identity and any other identity, and the psychological effects of these constructions in particular contexts. In other words, we need to view these identities as fluid and ever-changing, as opposed to static.

Finally, this chapter explores concepts like nation, state, nation-state, nation building, nationalism, and national identity in a general sense, before applying these specifically to a discussion of national cinema in the next chapter.

## 2.1: Terminology: Defining the Nation

Giddens defines the nation as follows: 'A collectivity existing within a clearly demarcated territory, which is subject to a unitary (and uniform) administration, reflexively monitored by the internal state apparatus and those of other states' (quoted in James, 1996, p.12). This definition points to an important problem in theorising the nation, which is one of confusing terminology. In other words, a nation is not the same as a state, and the two do not always overlap. As Connor warns, 'loyalty to the nation has often been confused with loyalty to the state. This confusion has been reflected in, and caused by, inappropriate terminology' (1994, p.40).

On the face of it, defining the nation seems a rather redundant exercise. In today's world, most of us are citizens of a particular nation; we carry passports that tell us so. We are born in a particular location which is situated in a particular nation, a territory clearly marked by borders. We have a national language (or languages), a national government, and national symbols, the flag being one of them, the national anthem another. This all seems fairly straightforward and unproblematic, but is it?

When we try to define the nation, it quickly becomes clear that it is not such a 'natural' entity as it may appear to be. For a start, there is the use of the word 'we'. Who is this 'we'? What distinguishes 'we' from 'they'? It is precisely because of the often taken-for-grantedness, the apparent 'common sense' of what it means, that there is a need for closer scrutiny, something I have stressed in the introduction to this study. When we look at the world map, it is easy to imagine that the way it is organised has something 'natural' about it; that even though there are continuous conflicts about where the borderlines should be drawn, the basic structure has always been in place. Thus, when the Soviet Union fell apart for instance, it seemed apparently 'natural' that it split into Russia, The Ukraine, Tajikistan, and so on, for these were coherent units that seemed to fit the label 'nation'. But what about Chechnya, or what about the Kurds, or the Hutus and Tutsis of Rwanda? Do they not fit that same label? Clearly, it is not as

straightforward as we may have presumed.

Anderson argues, in his historical account of the emergence of nations (1983/1991), that the nation is a relatively recent construct which partly developed out of a profound instability, caused by the industrial revolution. The main difference was that where borders were previously roughly and vaguely marking empires, they now became rigidly marked. He identifies the invention of print as the most important factor in facilitating this process. In addition, the process of industrialisation created the means through which people could become more mobile, which in turn made it necessary for nation-states to become more rigid in their policing of boundaries and resources. Hobsbawm similarly notes that 'the 19th century revolutions in transport and communications, typified by the railway and the telegraph, tightened and routinized the links between central authority and its remotest outposts' (1990, p.81). This process has accelerated ever since and has led to increasing globalisation which leads some, including Hobsbawm, to believe that it will eventually make borders obsolete[1].

The main attraction of both these accounts, for my purposes, is that the nation is seen as a construction, which not only implies the possibility of de-construction and re-construction, but also draws attention to issues of power. In other words, constructed by whom? And to what end? Anderson is rather unclear about this, and it is here that Gramsci's notion of hegemony, and its central importance to discourse analysis, may provide important answers, and I will therefore refer back to it throughout this chapter.

The notion of hegemony is important, because both Anderson and Hobsbawm imply a rather abrupt beginning to the emergence of nations, which needs some caution. They both see the nation, and by extension nationalism as the project that creates them, as

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[1]This is highly debatable and I return to this discussion later in this chapter.

thoroughly modern constructs, which has caused a great deal of debate[2].

Anderson then defines the nation as follows:

> An imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and
> sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will
> never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in
> the minds of each lives the image of their communion.
>
> <div align="right">(1991, p.6, original emphasis)</div>

This definition highlights a number of important characteristics. Firstly, it points to the political dimension of nationhood, and nationalism in particular. Ignatieff makes a very useful distinction in this respect:

> As a political doctrine, nationalism is the belief that the world's peoples are divided
> into nations, and that each of these nations has the right of self-determination, either
> as self-governing units within existing nation states or as nation states of their own.
> As a cultural ideal, nationalism is the claim that while men and women have many
> identities, it is the nation which provides them with their primary form of
> belonging.
> As a moral ideal, nationalism is an ethic of heroic sacrifice, justifying the use of
> violence in the defense of one's nation against enemies, internal or external.
> These claims- political, moral and cultural- underwrite each other.
>
> <div align="right">(1993/1994, p.3)</div>

In other words, they are interrelated in complex ways and importantly, 'each one of these claims is contestable and none is intuitively obvious' (ibid, p.3). The key words

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[2]I discuss my position in relation to these debates in 2.2.

here are 'imagined' and 'contestable', for they highlight the constructedness and the fluidity of these beliefs. The political sovereignty in Anderson's definition thus refers to the *belief* that within its borders, the nation as an entity can be governed by a political system *apparently* of its own choice, according to a legal system *apparently* devised to suit its specific needs. These needs are at once similar to and different from other nations, hence the differences in constitutions and political systems. However, it is important to recognise here that these kind of systems do not have a life of their own, but should be seen as the product of historical forces and contexts which are forever subject to change.

Secondly, for a political system to work like this, it needs a community that recognises itself in this system and accepts it as relatively non-problematic. In short, a community that 'imagines' itself as a community. Since its individual members are never in direct contact with most of the other members, they have to imagine themselves to be, and are often addressed as such through various national institutions, including media institutions. One important aspect of theorising the nation is thus a deconstruction of this process of imagining. Billig's *Banal Nationalism* (1995) is an important attempt to explain this process of imagining the nation in everyday contexts[3].

In terms of this process of imagining, Anderson stresses the historical importance of print, and specifically print-language. He sees the novel as historically instrumental in creating this feeling of community, and he ties the emergence of the novel to capitalism. 'The essential thing is the *interplay* between fatality, technology, and capitalism' (Anderson, 1991, p.43). Where books were initially printed in Latin, they needed to be printed in vernacular languages in order to expand the potential market. Language thus becomes at once an instrument of unity and differentiation. It plays, in his view, a major role in the construction of the unified nation. Anderson concentrates

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[3] I discuss the relevance of Billig's concept of banal nationalism in depth in 2.3.

on print-languages and mostly ignores the visual media, which could be seen as fulfilling a similar role, and possibly as having overtaken the print media.

Unity thus forms the main organising principle of the nation-state, and wherever such unity does not exist, the state needs to use force to project itself to the outside world of other nation-states as unified and stable. The stability of nation-states hence depends on the degree to which the imagined national community and the state overlap. If there is a large degree of overlap, the need for internal violence seems less pressing, which is not to say that this can be taken for granted. This stability is only ever relative and there is always the potential of internal and external instability, which explains the presence of repressive state apparatuses such as the police and the army in every nation-state. As Billig asserts, 'the struggle to create the nation-state is a struggle for the monopoly of the means of violence. The triumph of a particular nationalism is seldom achieved without the defeat of alternative nationalisms and other ways of imagining peoplehood' (1995, p.28). This struggle can thus be seen as a struggle for hegemony.

Both Anderson and Giddens stress the importance of other nations in relation to a particular nation. In order to function as a nation, it has to differentiate itself from other nations. Nationalism can thus be seen as an *international* ideology:

> Nationalists live in an international world, and their ideology is itself an
> international ideology. Without constant observation of the world of other
> nations, nationalists would be unable to claim that their nations meet the
> universal codes of nationhood. Nor would they have ready access to stereotyped
> judgements about foreigners (Billig, 1995, p.80).

The importance of language, as mentioned above, goes some way in explaining how this process of differentiation can be achieved, but it is not sufficient. For instance, it does not explain the contradictions in nations as we find them today, or in other words,

'why these and not other nations?' (Smith, 1993, p.20). To some extent, these definitions imply that print-languages created or invented 'print-communities' where they did not previously exist. To put it differently, there is a sense that nations have an abrupt beginning; that there was nothing to bind communities, that make up nations, together beforehand; that this 'imaginary' had to be invented from scratch. This fails to account for the rapid mobilization that we witness when nations are created. Smith talks about 're-creation' and 're-construction' in this respect (ibid, p.20), rather than creation and construction. As mentioned above, this shifts the focus to the theoretical advantages of discourse analysis in relation to the concepts of nation and national identity. In other words, it acknowledges some form of continuity, while simultaneously paying attention to significant shifts.

Seen in this way, the nation could be alternatively 'imagined' as a wall, made up of different bricks, some old, some new. But the wall is never finished; it has to be worked on and re-build at times. Sometimes cracks appear; sometimes parts of it collapse. Some bricks are firm, others are fluid and still in the process of becoming firm; they may never achieve firmness and may disintegrate instead. Although the wall is being guarded at all times, it is always potentially in danger of crumbling; it is always being chipped at from within, but it can be rebuild quickly when it is being assaulted from the outside.

What we see then is not so much an abrupt beginning of nations, although it may sometimes appear that way, but rather a continuous struggle for hegemony between nations as well as within nations. These power struggles are never consciously 'plotted' from above or below, although again they may appear to be, but are rather in continuous interaction with each other. They are in a dialectic relationship, albeit not an evenly weighted one. Stability can only ever be relative stability, which can only be achieved with the threat of force, as mentioned before.

As Taylor and Wetherell point out, 'the notion of the nation as an 'imagined community' has become familiar in the sociology and politics of nationalism' (1995, p.69). The emphasis is thus on 'the discourses and systems of symbolic representation through which national belonging is constituted and the ideological work which is done by this constitution' (ibid, p.69). The consequence of this for much of the theoretical work done on nationhood is an enthusiastic de-constructing of the discourses that accompany this notion, in an effort to lay bare the underlying power relations. But there seems to be a danger of over-simplification here. Merely de-constructing discourse does not seem enough, as it implies firstly an unconscious 'buying into' these discourses by people who draw on them.

Secondly, we could similarly de-construct discourses surrounding other social categories like class, race, and so on. This may give the impression that any one of these categories is as important as the other ones. That may be the case in particular contexts, but nation and national identity seem to have an added value which overrides all other categories in particular contexts. This may be because it can be seen as an ideology which overrides and subsumes all other ones like religion, class, and so on. As Ignatieff notes, 'when nationalists claim that national belonging is the overridingly important form of all belonging, they mean that there is no other form of belonging- to your family, work or friends- which is secure if you do not have a nation to protect you' (1993/1994, p.6). Consequently, it is possible, and indeed often seems the case, that all other categories are perceived as less significant during times of 'national importance'. It is particularly during these times, be it a crisis or a celebration, that the concept of the nation is accompanied by profound emotions.

This peculiar place that is occupied by the nation in today's world makes it at once difficult and important to attempt to explain. For it is this emotional side that leads people into war and violence under the banner of 'the nation', however it is defined. In other words, although a feeling of national identity can be seen to be constructed, it is

nevertheless accompanied by very real emotions. Hence the main question becomes one of how to account for these emotions, something which is often neglected in 'constructionist' views of nations and nationalism. This forms the basis of an important debate between primordialists and constructionists.

## 2.2: Theoretical Debates about 'The Nation'

The main concern of primordialists is with the emotional side of nations and nationalism. Whereas constructionists like Gellner, Hobsbawm and Anderson stress the essential *novelty* and *modernity* of nationalism, primordialists like Connor, Smith and Kellas believe that more attention needs to be paid to systems of loyalties that transcend nations. This relates closely to the question, 'which comes first: the nation-as-people or the nation-as-state?' (Billig, 1995, p.25)

Kellas, for instance, asserts that 'nationalism's roots in ethno-centrism explain the emotional strength it possesses in politics, which no socio-economic functional explanation is able to do' (1998, p.40). He goes on to quote Anthony D. Smith: 'modern nations simply extend, deepen and streamline the ways in which members of *ethnie* (Smith's term for ethnic groups) associated and communicated. They do not introduce startlingly novel elements, or change goals of human association and communication' (ibid, p.60, original emphasis). This fits the argument put forward before, in connection with discourse analysis, in that it accounts for continuity as opposed to clear, clean-cut ruptures with the past.

However, it is when we approach these two as opposites that it becomes problematic. We need to recognise, in my view, that the two are intertwined and work in conjunction; they are not necessarily in opposition to each other. In other words, we need to recognise that when major shifts occur in history, like for instance the industrial revolution and more recently the advances of information technology and globalisation, the result is inevitably a shift in loyalties. However, this does not mean that older

loyalties die out altogether; they may lie dormant for a period of time, but they can be re-appropriated, depending on the context and the position of those who appropriate them. And when they do, they do not necessarily re-appear in their original 'primordial' form (the existence of which is highly questionable in itself) but in more or less altered forms. This makes them dynamic, and whether they achieve a hegemonic position is therefore highly dependent on specific contexts. Consequently, it is more a matter of degree that is important; the degree to which they correspond to earlier loyalties, and the degree to which this process is shaped and influenced by those who are in a position to do so, and who have a vested interest in doing so.

Thus, when Kellas writes that 'national myths, old languages, and so on, are the substance of nationalism as much as modernising communications and education, and [that] Smith's theory is better able to cope with these than Gellner's' (ibid, p.61), he makes an important point, but then takes this too far by treating these myths and languages as static and whole, as opposed to fractured and fluid. To put it differently, he positions them as 'primordial' in opposition to 'constructed'. It would be more useful to treat them as re-constructed in my view. For this allows us to take particular contexts into account in which these myths and languages achieve a hegemonic position. The reason why they can achieve this position is because they are flexible and fluid, and thus adaptable to particular circumstances where they can serve those who hold the power to define them in that particular context[4].

Although Hobsbawm's theories are firmly based in a constructionist tradition, he does touch on something deeper, underlying the concept of the modern nation. Following his line of thinking, ethnicity becomes an alternative identity, and if it coincides with a national identity, it can become a powerful combination. He talks, in relation to this,

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[4]One pertinent example here is the selective appropriation of 'The Battle of Kosovo' in the service of Serb nationalism by former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic during the Balkan wars of the 1990s (see Ignatieff, 1993/1994).

about 'proto-nations', although he acknowledges that proto-nationalism alone is not enough to form nationalities, nations, or nation-states: 'ethnicity is and can be something that binds together populations living on large territories or even in dispersion, and lacking a common polity, into something which can be called proto-nations (Kurds, Jews, etcetera)' (Hobsbawm, 1990, p.64). The problem here is that ethnicity seems to be taken for granted and left unexplained. In other words, if nations and national identity can be shown to be constructions, where does that leave ethnic identity? Are we to take this as something more 'natural'(or 'primordial') and not constructed? Hobsbawm seems to imply this, but leaves it largely unexplained and treats it mostly as a given and hence static. By doing so he falls in a similar theoretical trap as Smith and Kellas.

Another potential flaw in Hobsbawm's theory is its perceived economic and class reductionism. Gellner is even more explicit in this respect: 'History is the history of *class* struggle. It is not, or only superficially, the history of *national* struggles' (Gellner, 1994, p.6). Even though ethnic and nationalist struggles can often be seen to arise out of the material conditions of particular groups in particular contexts, these conditions are not always the only reason for those struggles. Connor sharply criticizes this tendency towards class reductionism:

> To some, ethnonational identity seems little more than an epiphenomenon that becomes active as a result of relative economic deprivation and that will dissipate with greater egalitarianism. (.) All of these approaches could be criticized as a continuing tendency of scholars to harbor what we termed earlier an unwarranted exaggeration of the influence of materialism upon human affairs. But they can be faulted chiefly for their failure to reflect the emotional depth of ethnonational identity and the mass sacrifices that have been made in its name.
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> (1994, p.73/74)

In doing so, he equates ethnic identity with national identity and distinguishes this from the state. He may have a point, and it is a similar point that Hobsbawm makes when he talks about proto-nations. Again however, we need to be careful with the terminology used in this argument.

When Connor talks about multi-national states, he talks about a concept that others would call multi-ethnic or multi-cultural states. To him, ethnic identity is something which comes before, and overrides, national identity. He illustrates this point with many examples of ethnic struggles in multi-ethnic states that were previously thought of as stable nation-states. In other words, ethnic identity seems to be in the habit of boiling to the surface after long periods of lying dormant. 'The experience of multi-ethnic states, past and present, strongly suggests that the ethnic nation may well constitute the outer limits of that identity' (ibid, p.56).

But where Hobsbawm seems to be taking ethnic identity as a given, Connor attempts to explain its emotional appeal through psychological means. This is not to say that he sees it squarely in essentialist terms; on the contrary, he agrees that it is essentially a construction, but he makes a distinction between different forms of human association and finds ethnic identity to be the strongest form of such an association. He bases this on a number of examples of empirical evidence[5]. It is thus a matter of degree. The construction element becomes clear when he asserts that 'myths engender a reality of their own, for it is seldom *what is* that is of political significance, but what people *think is*' (ibid, p.140, original emphasis). This comes very close to Anderson's 'imagined community', except that he draws the limits of this community along ethnic lines, whereas Anderson draws it along national lines.

According to Connor, 'defining and conceptualizing the nation is much more difficult

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[5]For example Catalonia in Spain, and Quebec in Canada.

(than a state) because the essence of a nation is intangible. This essence is a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all other people in a most vital way' (ibid, p.75). This leads him to the following definition:

> A nation is a group of people characterized by a myth of common descent. Moreover, regardless of its roots, a nation must remain essentially an endogamous group in order to maintain its myth. It is not *what is*, but *what people believe is* that has behavioral consequences (ibid, p.75, original emphasis).

Although I can go along with this to a certain extent, I believe it is too limited and rigid. Even though it makes an attempt to steer away from essentialism, it does not do so convincingly. By focusing on ethnic groups as opposed to nations, it fails to account for occasions (and history seems rife with them) where national identity seems to override ethnic identity, such as during wars between nation-states. In such cases, emotions flare up and people are willing to pay the ultimate price in the name of the nation. This is not to say that they do not simultaneously identify with other groups, but the 'national' identification seems to be most salient during such moments.

Apart from that, there are many nations (the USA being an important one) whose national origin myth is not based on an endogamous group, but on a diverse ethnic make-up, although there is of course a hierarchy of more or less important ethnic groups contained in this myth, and a significant amount of violence associated with its inception. Connor makes a valid point when he writes that, 'it is the intuitive conviction which can give to nations a psychological dimension approximating that of the extended family, that is, a feeling of common blood lineage' (ibid, p.94), but this is not to say that this feeling cannot be the same for a whole nation, comprised of different ethnic groups, in particular situations.

Connor further notes that, 'the major criticism of primordialism is that its suggestion of primitiveness, as in the case of *tribalism*, implies that it will wither away as modernization progresses' (ibid, p.106, original emphasis), his point being that recent history suggests otherwise. My point is that the renewed salience of ethnic identities today has not brought them back in some pristine, essential or 'primordial' way, but in an altered form, catering to specific needs in specific contemporary contexts and relations of power. Billig comes close to this fundamental recognition when he writes that,

> The creation of the nation-as-people added something to the pre-existing identities. Seldom has the creation of nation-states been a harmonious process, in which a traditional 'ethnie' grows from small shoot into the full flower of nationality, as if following a process of 'natural' maturation. The process typically is attended by conflict and violence. A particular form of identity has to be imposed. (.) The battle for nationhood is a battle for hegemony, by which a part claims to speak for the whole nation and to represent the national essence.
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> (Billig, 1995, p.27)

As mentioned before, discourse analysis is well suited to work through issues of national identity, precisely because it allows us to pay close attention to specific contexts and power relations, through the concept of hegemony, while allowing us simultaneously to steer clear of essentialist notions, and to account for them.

The most important thing to keep in mind then is that feelings of national identity and the ways in which the nation is defined at a particular point in time are always relational and context bound. These contexts include a wide variety of factors, some economic, some social, some historical, and so on. They are hence very much dependent on who does the defining and why; in other words, which ones of these factors predominate in particular versions of the nation?

The nation can thus be seen as a variety of circulating discourses competing for hegemony. This means that the concept is never final, never closed-off. It always has to work on its place in the hierarchy of discourses. Even if it achieves a hegemonic position at a particular point in time, it always has to guard itself against other competing discourses that are waiting in the wings, on the periphery, always ready to take center stage should the opportunity arise. These alternative discourses lie dormant which does not mean they are out of the picture entirely; they only lie dormant in relation to dominant, mainstream discourses and can be appropriated and re-appropriated at any time, again depending on the context.

Another important factor to keep in mind in this respect is the difference between the state and the nation. Bhabha notes that 'it is the mark of the ambivalence of the nation as a narrative strategy- and an apparatus of power- that it produces a continual slippage into analogous, even metonymic, categories, like the people, minorities, or 'cultural difference' that continually overlap in the act of writing the nation' (1990, p.292). Important here is that the nation is not only seen as a narrative strategy, but at the same time as an apparatus of power, directly related to the state. It is this power structure that has a direct impact on who has access to the tools of narration, for example the cinema, and consequently on who defines the nation and to what effect. And although this power structure is never final, always under erosion, its narratives always subjected to 'slippage', it nevertheless has a profound impact on the way national identities are being defined. In other words, it sets boundaries and limits the spaces of articulation, at least in terms of 'public' discourses.

*The Impact of Globalisation*
It is the importance of these public discourses on which Anderson's 'imagined community' is based, and the attraction of this concept (I have discussed its limitations above) is that the emphasis is on creation, which means that it is never final and has to

be continually re-imagined, under the influence of ever-changing power relations. Nation-states developed then out of the possibility to reach large numbers of people at the same time through print, thereby creating a relatively stable and homogeneous 'national' community.

This raises the question why it is that the 'nation' is still such a profoundly important concept at the dawn of the twenty first century, and why it has not been eroded to the point of non-existence under the influence of an ostensibly ever-increasing globalisation. For along with globalisation we see increasing migration of large numbers of people and, paradoxically, increasing fragmentation accompanied by a renewed focus on the local.

From this, Hobsbawm observes that, 'urbanisation and industrialisation, resting as they do on massive and multifarious movements, migrations and transfers of people, undermine the other basic nationalist assumption of a territory inhabited essentially by an ethnically, culturally and linguistically homogeneous population' (1990, p.157). Similarly, Gellner points out that, 'the nationalist principle is extremely difficult to satisfy in conditions of great cultural ('ethnic') diversity, where villages of quite different languages are juxtaposed, and where culture and language are often functions not of position on the geographical map, but of social role and stratum' (1994, p.27).

Concerning the question of the continuing force of the concept of the nation, part of the answer lies in the combination of historical, political, and economic forces: material wealth is never equally distributed, neither *between* nations, nor *within* those nations. It is hence not in the interest of the more wealthy nations to relax their borders; on the contrary, in order to control their wealth, they have to control and carefully select those who are permitted to enter through those borders; those who might be allowed to become part of the 'national' community. As Gellner rightly observes, 'the flaw in the *laissez-faire* doctrine of free trade is that those who enter the free market do so on equal

terms. Some are constrained by their weakness to accept unfavourable terms' (ibid, p.11).

Seen in purely economic terms then, it is little wonder that celebratory claims about the 'global village' come predominantly out of Western contexts of the wealthier nations. As Billig notes, 'there is a growing body of opinion that nation-states are declining. Nationalism, or so it is said, is no longer a major force: globalisation is the order of the day' (1995, p.8). It is easy to imagine these developments: under the influence of increasingly sophisticated communication and transport networks, 'we' in the West may get a feeling that we can be in many different places simultaneously. 'We' can shop around for whatever culture 'we' fancy at any particular time, directly (through travel) or indirectly (through, for instance, satellite television and the internet).

However, all of this comes at a price that only a select few can afford, both in Western nations and in the rest of the world. This 'global village' is hence not all-inclusive; on the contrary, it is highly selective. And, as Billig observes, 'People have been freed to create their own identities in ways which were impossible hitherto. Some people are scared by this freedom. Turning away from the uncertainties of the present, they regressively yearn for the security of a solid identity' (ibid, p.137). After many years of moulding, national identities provide ready-made identities in this respect, which can easily be appropriated. And even for those with the financial freedom to pick and choose their identities, this freedom is not unlimited. In other words, 'one can eat Chinese tomorrow and Turkish the day after...But *being* Chinese or Turkish are not commercially available options. Cosmopolitans and authoritarians alike are constrained by the permanence of national identity' (ibid, p.139).

So how can we account for this permanence? And to return to an earlier question, what makes national identity still such a profoundly important concept for which so many are still willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice, despite globalisation? How can we explain the

apparent contradiction that globalisation in part reinforces nationalism? Interestingly, Billig draws on the psychological features of Social Identity Theory[6], in an effort to explain the emotional side, but he criticizes the universalism of that theory and allows for differences in (or hierarchies of) social identifications, which makes it a more flexible theory to work with. Social Identity Theorists look for psychological similarities behind different forms of group identity (anything from political groups to tribal groups or national groups). Their point is that such groupings have to be psychologically imagined and that therefore they are all psychologically similar (ibid, p.68).

In reaction, Billig posits that, 'it can be argued that they have to be imagined in different ways and, thus, are psychologically different' (ibid, p.68). This is attractive because it eliminates, to a large extent, the individual choice element from national identities, and draws attention to the idea that national identity seems to override all other identities in particular contexts. To take this a step further, it recognises that most other identities are often 'imagined' in *national* terms, although this is usually taken for granted and not explicitly stated. This taken-for-grantedness is thus what we critically need to focus on, precisely because it can show the ways in which national identities are imagined on a sub-conscious level. I believe the discourse analytic framework, as outlined in chapter 1, allows us to explore national identity as a discourse, the strength of which may be that it can be seen as a kind of overarching discourse which shapes and infuses other discourses to varying degrees.

Billig recognises this when he argues that, 'national identity is more than an inner psychological state or an individual self-definition: it is a form of life, which is daily

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[6]Social Identity Theory is not primarily a theory of nationalism. It is a general theory of group identity, exploring universal psychological principles, which are presumed to lie behind all forms of group identity (Billig, 1995, p.63/64). For further references, see Billig (1995). I only draw on this theory in as far as it informs his notion of 'banal nationalism', which is very relevant to this thesis.

lived in the world of nation-states' (ibid, p.69). The way in which it is daily lived is through what he calls 'banal nationalism', and there is very little that suggests that this 'way of life' is likely to change in the foreseeable future.

## 2.3: Banal Nationalism

In Billig's terms, banal nationalism is the kind of nationalism that goes unnoticed. It is there, all around us on a daily basis, but we generally fail to recognise it as such. It is the kind of nationalism that is not called nationalism, since the term has negative connotations. Nationalism conjures up images of violence and images of 'others'. As Billig notes, it always seems to be located on the periphery (1995, p.5). It is interesting that this holds true both nationally and internationally. Within the world of nations, nationalism is connected to 'separatists', 'fundamentalists' and 'terrorists'. Within nations themselves, these become 'extremists' or 'radicals'. This terminology is very important because it conjures up instant images of violence, foul play and dirty tactics, and these terms thus function as nodal points.

Everyday nationalism has another word to describe itself, if it has to name itself at all: patriotism, which is positive and praiseworthy, since it supports the existing power structure. Patriotism is associated with exactly the opposite type of images: heroism, medals of honour and sacrifice for the common good. The violence involved is generally ignored as it is deemed necessary. As it is rarely criticized, it becomes part of everyday life and hence goes largely unnoticed. In other words, it becomes banal. In Billig's view, this banal nationalism goes a long way in explaining the rapid mobilization of forces in times of crises. It provides those in power with readily available words and images that can be appropriated without having to explain them. The nation has already been defined on a day to day basis. Banal nationalism then relates to the naturalised level of nationalist discourse. So how does this process work in a New Zealand context?

As mentioned before, the nation is not so much a construction or creation, but rather a re-construction and re-creation, constantly in motion. Banal nationalism provides the cement that holds the structure together, and therefore also serves a maintenance function. Language is its major component, but not its only one. Visual imagery has become increasingly important.

Language is used to construct and re-construct history, one of the founding building blocks of the nation. History is never final but is constantly contested and re-shaped. One of the most banal parts of New Zealand's history is that this is a 'young nation'. Generally when this discourse is being used, no eyebrows are raised. But is it a 'young nation' with a 'young history'? Surely only from a Pakeha point of view. Maori arrived here more than a thousand years ago. Does their history not count as the nation's history? This is where the importance of print-language comes in. Maori history has only been written down fairly recently. Oral history does not travel far; it needs direct contact and is hence incapable of unifying 'imagined communities' on a large scale. This also draws attention to the important legacy of colonial discourse, and its impact on New Zealand nationalism[7].

Within this relationship between history and language, a number of factors are of prime importance: one of them is naming (of places as well as people), another one is mapping (of boundaries). These two are connected and they serve to unite people where they do not have 'natural' connections. Anderson identifies three institutions of prime importance in relation to the colonial nation-state, but they could be seen to be important to any nation-state: 'the census, the map, and the museum, together profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion- the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry' (Anderson, 1991, p.163/164). The main question we always need to ask is,

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[7]I return to the impact of this legacy in depth in chapter 4.

who does the classifying and naming, the mapping, and the collecting of 'national' artefacts? Or in other words, who has the means, access, and power to do so? In New Zealand's case, this has traditionally been the middle class Pakeha male, and still is to a large extent. This can thus be seen as a historically located hegemony with important implications for contemporary 'common sense' discourses about nationalism.

After the nation itself has been named, its territory is mapped and named. The name New Zealand, and similarly place names like New Plymouth, indicate that the nation is not so much created, but rather re-created, albeit in this case in a different geographical space. These names draw on older names which previously had been used to unite people. This again reinforces the point that discourses about the nation display, at least partially, some continuity with those that went before, and that they can be selectively appropriated to serve particular functions by those who are in a position to 'make meaning stick'. Little mention was made until recently in the mainstream media about the fact that the territory already had a name (although this name in turn may have been re-invented): Aotearoa.

After the 'founding' of the nation, 'national heroes' quickly start to appear all around us in the form of street names for example. History is quickly written down and distributed throughout schools; 'national' newspapers guarantee distribution of the daily versions of the nation. These versions become part of the fabric of everyday life; they are 'official' versions, but go largely unnoticed as such.

The writing of history is a process that has two main characteristics: memory and amnesia. These two go hand in hand and are equally important in the (re)shaping of nationhood. For every part included, another part is left out, and some parts are actively removed or added. In this way, certain discourses achieve a temporary hegemonic position, while others are marginalised. So who is in the position to do the including, excluding and removing? In today's New Zealand, the nation is still flagged from a

strong power base, the white, male, middle-class power base. This flagging serves as a means of uniting for a common purpose while at the same time differentiating the nation from other nations; it thus serves both an internal and an external function.

To start with the print media, newspapers are a typical example of banal nationalism. There is a hierarchy of importance in the news which is clearly marked off and segmented. Thus, newspapers draw on certain dominant discourses which relate to ideas associated with everyday understandings of notions of 'objectivity' and 'mainstream'. The main news is national news, usually on the front page. Other news is either regional or world news. The latter comes under the header world news so that the readers know they are dealing with 'other' news, not national news. For national news does not have to be named as such; it speaks for itself. Similarly, in bookshops and libraries, there is a clear distinction between national books and 'other' books.

The visual media are even more powerful in giving a sense of 'normality' to the nation as a category. What makes visual symbols particularly powerful in this respect is that, while they are connected to particular discourses about the nation, these discourses do not need to be explained; these symbols thus function as empty signifiers in the naturalisation of the everyday environment. We see visual symbols of the nation around us all the time: the flag is one of the most obvious ones, and again shows that New Zealand is 're-created'; the Union Jack still fills the corner. But there are many others, like 'kiwis' on products made in New Zealand for instance. The nation is institutionalized and it is through these institutions that it receives continuous flagging. From stamps to bank notes, from museums to statues, the symbols are there around us. We pay little attention to them since they seem 'natural' parts of our daily environment.

Television is arguably the most powerful medium in this respect. The news has a similar structure to newspapers and a similar hierarchy. It therefore draws on similar dominant discourses. As Abel observes about news presenters, 'it is their job to present

the news as 'objective truth', to make it seem neutral, commonsense and obvious' (1997, p.13). It is important to note that this hierarchy does not just work on a national level, but between nations as well. So it is that world news is selected from American, British, and Australian sources in New Zealand's case. Although, again, this may seem 'natural', there is no *inherent* reason why world news should not be selected from sources in for example Paraguay or Lithuania...[8] But, as Billig notes, 'some foreigners are identified as being stereotyped as more admirable, and more like 'us' than others' (1995, p.80). Again, this applies both within and between nations.

Within the news, politicians feature prominently and they consistently address the nation. They have a variety of policies on education, health, and the 'national' economy. Except, of course, for one: 'foreign' policy. Usually with a New Zealand flag in the background (and in the former PM's case with a 'silver fern' on her dress!), 'our' prime minister frequently talks about 'what New Zealanders want'. Especially during election year, politicians from the entire political spectrum talk about 'us' in that way, and 'we' never think twice about it, since we have an 'imagined' idea of what 'New Zealanders' means. The news ends with the weather; not just any weather but the national weather. In this way 'we' get reminded of the shape of 'our' nation and its borders on a daily basis.

The one event where banal nationalism reaches its peak, apart from war, is sports, and particularly contests between nations. In the run-up to these sporting events, television announcements show clips of previous games, but they always feature black shirts or caps. 'We' do not question this as it seems only 'natural' that 'we' all support 'our' national athletes. The rhetoric that constructs sports is very similar to the rhetoric that constructs war, and they both draw on similar discourses. Within these discourses, there is an extensive reliance on universal terms, such as 'we' and 'they', which are

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[8]I'm using this only to make a particular point. There are of course many different reasons why this is the case, not least of them economic.

positioned as binary oppositions. Sports thus become a perfect test case of the strength of a nation's feelings about itself. Sports is a perfect playground for banal nationalism, since it polarizes the nation towards a common goal. It is in this arena that no one, apparently, is excluded. Differences that may exist on a local level are brushed aside as 'we' cross the national boundary. Once this boundary has been crossed, we move into a different realm, the realm of international power relations where different rules apply. It is in this situation that the 'national' wall is erected quickly to ward off 'assault' from outside. The All Blacks then become the symbol of a nation united.

Finally, a very safe way of flagging the nation through the celebration of its wildlife and its landscape, particularly if this wildlife is not to be found in any other nation. In this way, the kiwi bird becomes a symbol of New Zealand, even though this particular bird can hardly be said to play a large part in most people's lives. However, symbolically it does. Similarly, geography serves as a potent symbol of both location and longevity; in other words, it provides ready-made symbols which have connotations of permanence and continuity, both of which are vital in 'imagining' nationhood. There are endless examples of these kinds of ways in which the nation gets flagged. However, at this point it will be useful to examine how these representations can change over time within the nation itself and at what point a change in loyalties occurs.

2.4: The New Zealand Context

New Zealand, like most nations, has had a long history of tension when it comes to definitions of nationhood. The importance of language cannot be stressed enough in this respect. Even though many aspects of nation and national identity are similar in most nations, each nation has its own specific historical and socio-economic context. As Fleras and Spoonley observe,

> Within the New Zealand context, the task of constructing the nation that could form the basis of a modern state has remained incomplete. Determining what constitutes

the nation, and therefore national identity, has been problematic, particularly given the presence of significant indigenous peoples, not to mention successive waves of immigrants (albeit primarily from the United Kingdom and Ireland) and the unresolved issues of colonialism (1999, p.x).

They go on to argue that, 'developments since the 1970s[9] have confirmed the fragile nature of nationhood, and of national and ethnic identity, and the inequitable distribution of resources in contemporary New Zealand' (ibid, p.x). The developments they refer to both had a profound impact on discourses about the nation and consequently on the way New Zealand has been imagined since.

*Maori Sovereignty Discourse*

Within the Maori Sovereignty discourse, the Treaty of Waitangi has acquired a central position around which many of these imaginings take place in a complex manner. Abel broadly identifies four discourses which appropriate the Treaty for different reasons[10]:

Firstly, there was the 'unity' discourse which referred to the Treaty (if at all) as a symbol of unity, the 'founding document of *our* country'.

Secondly, an alternative discourse (perhaps best described as the 'moderate' position) used the rhetoric of unity and 'moving together' while at the same time suggesting that there have been inadequacies in the way the Treaty has been observed by successive governments.

Thirdly, another alternative discourse can be differentiated by the fact that it was more clearly based on the need for structural change, and by its avoidance of the

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[9]They refer here to two significant events: firstly the joining of the EU by the United Kingdom and its economic impact, and secondly what is generally referred to as the Maori renaissance. I will return to both events in depth in chapters 4 and 5.

[10]She identifies these specifically within television news, but I believe they have a wider application.

'we are one people' rhetoric.

Finally, there was the oppositional discourse which expressed strong dissatisfaction with the failure to honour the Treaty and directly challenged the status quo.

(Abel, 1997, p.39/40, my emphasis)

She identifies the first discourse as the dominant one, and the fourth one as largely marginalised. Apart from illuminating particular relations of power, this also draws attention to the dynamic and fluid nature of these discourses, which is partly related to the way in which they draw on older, historical discourses.

Historically then, an 'imagined community' cannot solely be achieved through peaceful means, since there are always conflicts of interest. Hence, the right to represent such a community, and unite them under one flag, has to be struggled over, either by force or other means of persuasion, including to a significant extent discursive means. Thus, when the British arrived in New Zealand, they had to 'win' the right to govern, but they never won a decisive victory. Victories are never fully secured and hence the struggle for hegemony is a constant and continual one. The New Zealand Wars (previously often called the Maori Land Wars; a subtle but important difference!) were only a partial military victory, but to create a sense of unity, more was needed (Belich, 1986).

Naming and mapping has already been mentioned. Another important feature, which again highlights the importance of language, was the systematic banning of Te Reo Maori in schools. Maori had to speak English and were taught English and European history (Walker, 1990). This points to one of the important characteristics of nation building discourses: an emphasis on 'unity' and a simultaneous denial of difference, effecting a constant tension between memory and amnesia. In other words, for every element included, another has to be forgotten. However, it is rarely forgotten altogether, but rather marginalised. It may be a brick, temporarily excluded from the nation's wall, but it is not entirely destroyed; it lies outside of the wall (at least in terms of

mainstream discourses), but can be re-appropriated at any point in time, albeit in a different position. Thus, while the New Zealand Wars were part of the nation's 'amnesia' for a long time, they have recently become 're-invented' in an altered form to suit contemporary contexts (Belich, 1986).

This process of struggle for hegemony is not a simple case of black and white. It rather spills over and is in constant interaction with competing discourses. It is not a simple struggle of all Maori against all Pakeha, but rather a struggle for access to the means of representation by subordinated sections of society. Language is of prime importance in this struggle, which is why there has been a large increase in written publications aimed at the Maori 'imagined community'[11], in combination with Maori language education and a continuous battle for access to the airwaves and to funding for television and cinema.

As Smith argues, 'representation is important as a concept because it gives the impression of 'the truth' (1999, p.35). It has therefore strong connections with the power to define. The language and symbols used in this process of defining identity on a more localised level, in comparison to national identity, are very similar to the ones of banal nationalism. Naming becomes similarly important and is always done in relation to an 'other'. Different iwi have their own heroes; many Maori (and some Pakeha) prefer the name Aotearoa; there is a Maori flag which takes on special significance, especially at times when conflict is foregrounded, like Waitangi Day. These symbols then are part of an alternative discourse which is marginalised within the hegemony of New Zealand nationalism. But this discourse is nonetheless enduring and an important ingredient in the overall field of discourses which are contested within the sites provided by the media: print, television and cinema.

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[11]For example *Mana* Magazine and *Tu Mai*.

However, in the international arena of sports and war, the colour of the flag changes. The following words of Powhiri Rika-Heke serve to illustrate this point: 'I do not define myself as a New Zealander except when the New Zealand national teams are playing the British Lions in rugby. At times such as those I am fiercely a New Zealander' (1997, p.173). This reinforces the notion that national identity, like any other identity, is very much context bound; at certain times, certain types of nationalism and identity become stronger, more salient.

Avril Bell compares Maori sovereignty to Basque nationalism in Spain and Quebecois nationalism in Canada (1996, p.150), but there are some significant differences. One of those is the marking of territories and the protection of boundaries by force against 'others'. Niko Tangaroa put it this way at Moutua Gardens in 1995: 'Everyone now thinks that Maori want to take over the whole country. We don't. We simply want to control our own resources. If we lose the remaining land, we will lose everything. We will disappear as a people' (Brett, 1995, p.47). This is not the same as marking off territory and saying that 'others' cannot use those resources. There is a slight but important difference in nuance. Statements like this clearly show the dialectical nature of discourses, and how they are appropriated in relation to other discourses. In this case for example, Tangaroa draws on a discourse which constructs Maori firstly as unified, and secondly as 'benign'. The latter is discursively accomplished by drawing on 'natural' connections to the land and particular ideas of justice, both of which are presented as 'inevitable'. But within this context, these discourses are also strategically appropriated in direct opposition to discourses which construct some Maori as 'stirrers' and thus hostile. Abel identifies the latter as the flipside of the 'unity' discourse (1997, p.39). This, again, highlights the inherent fluidity and contestability of discourses about the nation, national identity or tribal identity. For any one of these concepts presupposes unity, something which can never be fully achieved, only relatively.

If Maori sovereignty shows up cracks in discourses of unity about the nation, other minority groups show up even more cracks. If Maori are struggling to get access to print media and visual media, so are other ethnic minorities.

'Statistics supplied by the Immigration Service list 97 countries as the source of immigrants coming into New Zealand' (Walker, 1995, p.295). Figures released by Statistics New Zealand indicate the following 'ethnic make-up' of New Zealand in 1996: 79.6 percent European, 14.5 percent Maori, 5.6 percent Pacific Island, and 4.8 percent Asian (Statistics New Zealand, 1997, p.36/37). Despite the problematic categorisation, these figures seem to confirm the often asserted notion that New Zealand is a nation of immigrants. However, the cultural diversity that this would imply is rarely recognised in the dominant discourses about nationhood. On the contrary, these discourses have, until recently, been firmly articulated in either mono-cultural or especially bi-cultural terms, and still are to a large extent.

The notion of an 'immigrant nation' is thus rarely reflected through the mainstream media. There appears to be a clear distinction between white (British) immigrants and immigrants from different ethnic backgrounds. Again, language and history play a large part in this process. For Roscoe, the term suggests something of a paradox:

> On the one hand, it suggests that New Zealand is a country that has been built by a diverse range of communities, and that it continues to welcome those communities. In this sense, it portrays itself as a settler society operating within a framework of multiculturalism. On the other hand, the placing of words suggests a different story. The immigrant is separate from, and outside of, the nation. It is not an inclusive term but exclusive, and one which conjures up a version of New Zealand that seeks to maintain its racial and ethnic homogeneity over diversity (1999, p.40).

Many immigrant groups (like the Chinese or the Dalmatians) have been here for a long time, but the dominant discourse of history seems to have 'forgotten' this fact until very recently (Ip, 1995, Brooking & Rabel, 1995). New Zealand, so the story went, was a bi-cultural society of Pakeha and Maori, and Pakeha clearly means white (and most probably 'British') in this context (Barlow, 1991/1996). This represents a naturalised discourse about the relationship between immigration and the nation, which involves a denial of the recent past and is based on claims to a longer historical narrative.

Part of the reason for the significantly hegemonic position of this discourse is that not all immigrant groups are equally distributed. In other words, some are more powerful, both in numbers and in terms of 'desirability', in relation to the dominant, Pakeha part of the nation. These dominant discourses have had a number of implications for the construction of a national identity.

'Identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entail the radically disturbing recognition that it is through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside* that the 'positive' meaning of any term- and thus its 'identity'- can be constructed' (Hall, 1996, p.4). This construction in relation to the Other has two simultaneous consequences. It creates a boundary against which identity is forged, thereby collapsing a heterogeneous group into a homogeneous unity. Therefore, at the same moment when the Center proclaims its identity as unified, it also marks the outside of the boundary as a unified Other. This is what Te Aku Graham talks about when she writes that, 'by lumping all tribes into one collective group or waka[12] called 'the Maori', our Pakeha colonizers could then proceed to rule us and, indeed, take our space; physically and metaphysically' (1995, p.52), and *discursively,* something I touched on before. Of course, a statement like this does essentially the same thing by collapsing all Pakeha

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[12]Canoe.

into a homogeneous unity of colonizers, which foregrounds the political power of statements like these.

This process not only operates within nations, and between different groups inside those nations, but also between nations. This brings us back to the importance of power structures as mentioned above: 'the 'unities' which identities proclaim are, in fact, constructed within the play of power and exclusion, and are the result, not of a natural and inevitable or primordial totality but of the naturalized, overdetermined process of closure' (Hall, 1996, p.5) This play of power works along intersecting axes of time and place, and can thus be seen as a hegemonic process of discourse within specific social-political contexts.

So how does all this tie in with discourses of multiculturalism? If we keep the importance of time and place in mind, we can see some recurrent themes emerging in the contemporary debates in New Zealand. Although the bicultural discourse is still a strong force, multiculturalism is becoming a louder voice in recent years. Multiculturalism is rarely treated as 'already there'; on the contrary, it is often perceived as something which has to be build on, a process of creating and moulding a common culture, incorporating elements of the past towards 'a harmonious multicultural society in which all cultural traditions can be maintained' (Rizvi, 1994, p.63). Note that 'society' here clearly means *national* society, something which, again, does not need to be mentioned but is taken for granted in a 'banal' kind of way.

Equally though, stating that 'we' already live in a multicultural society is politically loaded as well, particularly in relation to indigenous politics[13]. These discourses tend to obscure issues of power. For instance, this multicultural future is undoubtedly

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[13]I discuss the debates between biculturalism and multiculturalism, and the tensions between these concepts, in depth in chapter 5. This serves for now to show how multiculturalism complicates discourses of the unified nation.

considered to be English speaking: immigrants are subjected to English language tests. In other words, it has an underlying agenda of assimilation; difference is allowed, and even welcomed, as long as it does not interfere with the dominant power structure. The time dimension is foregrounded here, for as Anderson remarks, 'the idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived of as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history' (1991, p.26). Hence, for the nation to stay 'solid' and 'unified', new arrivals need to adapt and assimilate as quickly as possible, in order not to interrupt the steady, coherent flow along the historical river of 'national' time.

If we return at this point to the ways identities are forged, we can identify again that the discourse of multiculturalism is one of inclusion and exclusion. This means that the term is generally restricted to those of non-English speaking backgrounds and does not include Pakeha New Zealand which is in this way firmly placed in the homogeneous centre. This is particularly relevant to *Broken English*[14].

Gunew identifies three reasons why the multicultural discourse is useful for those in control of the dominant institutions. Although she is talking specifically about Australia, the situation shows similarities to a New Zealand context[15]. Firstly, 'it incorporates notions of European cosmopolitanism which help break the nexus between Britain and New Zealand' (1990, p.104). This is useful in the creation of a New Zealand identity distinct from the 'motherland'. The underlying consideration here is one of a changing economic environment in which New Zealand needs to project itself to the outside world as a distinctive 'brand'. Since Britain joined the European Union in the 1970s,

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[14]See chapter 6, 7, and 8.

[15]I use Australia and the USA in a comparative framework in chapter 5, including a justification for their relevance in relation to a New Zealand context.

New Zealand has had to re-define itself, not only economically, but also in relation to its position on the geographical map and hence to its neighbouring countries. In other words, New Zealand could not solely rely anymore on its direct colonial relation with Britain, but was forced to forge new relationships with nations in the Asian-Pacific region (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999). To a large extent, it is still in the process of doing so, but this is not an easy, straightforward process. On the contrary, it is accompanied by sharp contradictions, particularly since it involves a profound change in the way the nation defines itself. In this case then, this can be seen as an enforced change in economic relationships with the UK, which had hitherto tended to reinforce the naturalised colonial ties. In situations of instability such as this, discourses of nationhood tend to be  fiercely contested, as their relative stability is thrown into a state of heightened flux.

Secondly, in terms of internal changes, 'the multi-cultural banner obscures the battle for land rights currently being waged by [Maori] together with a campaign for rescuing what they can of their own cultural history' (ibid, p.104). In other words, the different position of Maori tends to be collapsed into sameness with all other groups in the multicultural 'melting pot'. This allows for the glossing over of power relations and goes hand in hand with a process of strategic amnesia about the violent nature through which these power relations have been established: 'we all came on a boat at some point'.

But as Henrietta Fourmile argues about the Australian situation, 'through the multitudinous acts of colonisation, dispossession, past management policies and marginalisation, culminating in the present legacy of low life expectancy, poor health, high rates of imprisonment, low levels of education and employment and a culture of dependence, there remain a number of issues to be addressed which are specifically between governments and the aboriginal community' (1994, p.72). This situation is comparable to the position of Maori in New Zealand, albeit not on the same scale. She

goes on to say that, 'in addition to this log of 'unfinished business', is the vital and fundamental difference in the cultural situation of Aborigines compared to those of other ethnic communities in Australia. Namely that the cultural sources of these communities remain intact in their countries of origin and to which most (political refugees excepted) can, in principle, return, even if only for a brief visit' (ibid, p.73).

This is the fundamental principle on which the politics of indigenous peoples are based, and one which is comparable, in terms of the above mentioned symptoms, in most settler societies, albeit to different degrees (Smith, 1999). Not coincidently, it is also the principle which is most frequently under attack from the dominant culture within these nations. Michael King, for instance, effectively claims indigenous status for Pakeha when he asserts that 'for both peoples, Maori and Pakeha, home is Aotearoa/New Zealand, the focus of present and future loyalties and commitments. The fact that one of these peoples has been here longer than the other does not make them *more* 'New Zealand' than later arrivals, nor give them the right to exclude others from full participation in the national life' (1991, p.9). He draws on a very common discourse in New Zealand, namely the bicultural discourse, but one which again tries to erase issues of power from the equation.

Finally, 'in practice, multiculturalism celebrates post WWII migration (white professional European) and distinguishes this new Establishment from more recent (and less acceptable) Asian immigrants' (Gunew, 1990, p.104). In other words, through institutional practices like language and means tests, New Zealand, like Australia, effectively distinguishes between more or less desirable immigrants. This is often seen as non-problematic in dominant discourses about the nation; moreover, it is seen as making perfect economic 'common sense', hence justifying exclusion.

Within the various discourses about the nation then, multicultural discourses are often appropriated in selective and contradictory ways. This implies firstly that the term

multiculturalism is rather flexible and can be seen to function as an empty signifier in certain contexts. And secondly, it draws attention to the basic paradox of the notion of multiculturalism within the traditional concept of the modern nation as ethnically, culturally, and linguistically homogeneous. The latter idea, despite its inherent contradictions, is still very dominant and is often articulated in a roundabout way through assimilationist policies. Within these policies, the 'culture' component of multiculturalism frequently becomes foregrounded in a narrow definition of the word (e.g. food, dance, clothing, and so on) which in turn serves to cloud over an underlying agenda of short-term economic gain from immigration.

In terms of national identity, cinema and 'the arts' in general provide a convenient defense mechanism against charges of institutional racism within the dominant culture, and hence occupy a peculiar but important position. As Gunew argues,

> Acknowledging cultural difference is a way of harnessing other differences such as 'visible differences' which traditionally pertain to race and relate to racism, religious differences and political differences. Appeals to cultural difference are a way of rendering all these differences as both 'only' cultural and therefore benign in the sense of not having to be taken seriously. In other words, it dismisses the arts as an unimportant area of socio-political struggle and, further-more sees them as a way of diffusing such socio-political struggles (1994, p.6).

This makes sense if we consider the low priority of cinema, and the arts in general, in the hierarchy of political discourses and budgets. In short then, discourses on multiculturalism tend to be played out on three different levels: in terms of economic gain for the nation, in terms of cultural richness of the nation, and in terms of human rights, citizenship and freedom of expression (Theophanous, 1995). These levels often overlap and are drawn on selectively and strategically in different contexts, but they are nevertheless predominantly framed in 'national' terms.

Overall, in New Zealand's case, bicultural discourses are still a strong force, but multicultural voices are becoming louder in recent years. Identity politics can thus be seen as internal struggles that chip away at the 'national' wall from the inside. Internationally, the picture is less clear. Walzer points out that 'the hold of groups on their members is looser than it has ever been, though it is by no means broken entirely' (1997, p.256). It is difficult to tell at this stage to what extent different ethnic minority groups would feel part of the nation in times of conflict. But the way in which the nation gets flagged on a daily basis clearly fails to unite all of 'us'.

As mentioned before, *Broken English* occupies an interesting position in relation to the different levels mentioned above, and can be seen as a 'discursive event' in which many of these discourses are contested. This relates not only to its content and its position within a 'national cinema', but also to its production context and its reception. The next step in outlining a 'discursive map' therefore involves situating the film in the context of a national cinema.

# CHAPTER 3: Discourses of National Cinema

As mentioned before, *Broken English* was produced within the context of a national cinema. As discourses of national cinemas are a very important aspect of funding criteria for feature film production world wide (in relation to discourses of 'dominant Hollywood'[1]), this chapter discusses some of the assumptions that underlie these discourses. Central to these is the ambiguity involved in defining what is 'national' about a particular cinema. Paradoxically, this ambiguity makes it a useful concept to appropriate in different contexts, for it is this ambiguity that makes it also highly flexible. In other words, it can be appropriated as an empty signifier, thereby relieving it of the need to be defined in certain contexts.

In the previous discussion of nationalism and national identity, I stressed the constructedness of the concept of the nation and its inherent instability. I also talked about the ways in which the nation is 'imagined' in relation to other nations. In short, the concept of the nation can be seen to run along intersecting axes of time and space in a continuous process of 'becoming', rather than 'being'. It should come as no surprise then that discourses of 'national cinema' (like 'national literature' or 'the arts' in general) are deeply embedded in this project of defining a national identity. In Higson's words, 'the concept of national cinema is equally fluid, equally subject to ceaseless negotiations: while the discourses of film culture seek to hold it in place, it is abundantly clear that the concept is mobilized in different ways, by different commentators, for different reasons' (1995, p.4). And not only by commentators, but also by institutions, assigned with the task of selecting particular film projects and funding them.

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[1] The reason for the brackets around 'dominant Hollywood' is that within discourses of national cinema, 'dominant Hollywood' can often be seen to function as a nodal point which needs no explanation, where it is my contention that there is a need to complicate this notion.

I earlier invoked Billig's idea of 'banal nationalism' which complicates the idea of constructions of nationhood by drawing attention to a parallel project of *maintaining* nationhood. Both of these projects are important in relation to national cinemas, but they point at the same time to a central paradox which these institutions face in their justifications for funding. Schlesinger articulates this paradox as 'a desire to see the interior of the national space as more complex and diverse, while at the same time wishing to sustain the idea that there is still some retaining boundary wall, if not of nationhood, then at least of statehood' (2000, p.27, see also Willemen, 1994, Higson, 2000). The former relates to an ongoing construction of the changing nation, while the latter is more concerned with historical notions of what holds the nation together (e.g. origin myths).

Both of these factors (differentiation and unification) work in conjunction and importantly, both work in relation to other nations and other cinemas. And as Crofts notes, 'especially in the West, national cinema production is usually defined against Hollywood' (1993, p.49). There is of course no denying that 'Hollywood' is the dominant player in the international market place, at least in the West, and certainly in New Zealand. However, I agree with Crofts that the binary structure of Hollywood versus 'national cinemas' needs to be complicated, as these categories are far too rigid. In other words, they intersect and influence each other in important ways and on a number of different levels. I would further argue that the notion of 'Third Cinema' (Pines *et al*, 1989), although helpful, in a way sets up a similar binary between itself and 'Euro-American' cinema. I expand on this in a moment, but let me first set up a framework from which to analyse national cinemas.

3.1: Analytical Framework: Four Levels of Analysis.
The starting point here is that there is not one discourse of national cinema, but several discourses. In other words, discourses of national cinema work on different levels, emphasising different aspects. In addition, there are no clear boundaries between these

different discourses; on the contrary they reinforce each other and overlap in important ways, depending on the context in which they are used and for what strategic reasons.

Higson identifies four different levels in this respect:

> First, national cinema can be defined in economic terms, with the focus being on the film industry rather than film texts. (.) From this point of view, the history of a national cinema is the history of a business seeking a secure foothold in the market-place in order to maximize profits, and/or to keep a 'national' labour-force in full employment.
>
> Secondly, national cinema can be discussed in terms of exhibition and consumption. Often what is at stake here is an anxiety about the nation's cultural standing, and about the assumed effects of foreign cultural intervention- especially the effects of 'Americanisation'.
>
> Thirdly, there is an approach which is much more evaluative from the outset, allowing only certain aspects of the full range of cinematic activity in a particular nation-state to be considered under the rubric of national cinema.
>
> Fourthly, national cinema can be defined in terms of representation. This time, the concern is with what the films are about (1995, pp.4-5).

These different levels together cut across all areas of the tripartite model of this thesis as outlined before. They can hence be seen to move across different chapters, as they relate to aspects of production/ distribution, text and reception. While it is therefore useful to separate these different levels, I should reiterate that there are no clear boundaries between them; they influence each other in important ways. I thus explain the links between them in the process of discussing these different domains in relation to a New Zealand context.

*Economic Factors*

On an economic level, cinema is part of a commercial environment which is global in scope. This means it has to compete on an open market in terms of distribution. Steady deregulation since 1984 has meant that presently a film produced in New Zealand does not necessarily get a cinema release although this is rare. This also means that local films, produced on modest budgets, compete on an open market with high budget Hollywood films for audiences. As Willemen notes, 'the capital-intensive nature of film production, and of its necessary industrial, administrative and technological infrastructures, requires a fairly large market in which to amortise production costs, not to mention the generation of surplus for investment or profit. This means that a film industry- any film industry- must address either an international market or a very large domestic one' (1994, p.211).

In New Zealand's case, this is a particularly pressing issue, as the domestic market is relatively small, which in terms of box-office returns means that locally produced films by definition need international sales in order to make a profit[2]. Willemen goes on to say that, 'the economic facts of cinematic life dictate that an industrially viable cinema shall be multinational or, alternatively, that every citizen shall be made to contribute to the national film industry, regardless of whether they consume its films or not' (ibid, p.212).

In terms of the former point, and in relation to a New Zealand context, Turner develops an interesting argument as he traces this situation historically: 'Lacking a self-sustaining critical mass of population or financial capital, the settler society was shaped by forces dictating that whatever is produced must also be exportable. This demand is not merely

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[2]A recent article by Frances Walsh in *The Listener* makes for sobering reading in this respect. In 2001 the New Zealand Film Commission devoted 47 percent of its total budget- about $6.2 million- to producing feature films. The six features released for the year grossed $1.1 million at the New Zealand box office (March 9, 2002, p.51).

economic but cultural' (2000, p.218). I revisit this argument later in terms of its implications on a cultural level. Suffice to say for now that this leads again to the central paradox of national cinema, 'a cinema dependent for its existence on the very dominant export and multinational-oriented cinema it seeks to criticise and displace' (Willemen, 1994, p.212). Since a perceived 'Hollywood dominance' has been more or less in place since the 1920s in most national contexts, with a few notable exceptions like India and Hong Kong, a number of different strategies of differentiation have been developed historically and within different 'national' spaces.

Crofts identifies three modes of product differentiation in the international market place: the first is 'by nation of production, with different national labels serving a sub-generic function', the second is 'by authorship', and the third is 'by less censored representations of sexuality. (.) All three modes of differentiation were, and remain, defined against Hollywood, promising varieties of authenticity and frisson which Hollywood rarely offered' (1993, p.58). These modes of differentiation work both on the level of production and reception, in that they engage with an anticipated audience. They are also articulated in different, but often parallel ways by the institutions involved in the funding of national cinema.

One of these ways is ideological in nature and can be seen as part of the nation building project; the argument here is often expressed in the rather 'banal' assertion that 'our stories need to be told', without ever explaining what 'our' stories might consist of. The second way relates to a more straightforward economic rationale and is concerned with economic 'spin-offs'. National cinema is then assumed to play a role in 'promoting the nation as tourist destination, to the benefit of the tourism and service industries' (Higson, 2000, p.69). In New Zealand's case, this argument can be extended to the attraction of overseas investment as well, and the drive to promote New Zealand as a location for Hollywood (as well as Bollywood) productions; recent examples are *Vertical Limit* (2000, Martin Campbell) and for television, *Xena* and *Hercules. The*

*Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001, Peter Jackson) is of course the ultimate coup in this respect. This creates both jobs domestically and attracts tourists. Seen in this way then, national cinema serves as a kind of brand name. As Higson argues, 'to promote films in terms of their national identity is also to secure a prominent collective profile for them in both the domestic and the international marketplace, a means of selling those films by giving them a distinctive brand name' (ibid, p.69).

On a less pragmatic and more theoretical level, one could argue that the development of cinema in general, as a communication technology, has played an important part in the development of the 'modern nation'. Jarvie argues for example that 'modernity empowers partly by mastering a technology: that is, acquiring it, training the necessary support personnel, but also creating an interface so that its mastery can be widely diffused' (2000, p.82). In other words, a national cinema is important in projecting an image to the outside world of a modern nation. Although this argument is rarely explicitly stated, it can be picked up in the undercurrents of the 'official' rhetoric surrounding national cinema.

Overall then, in economic terms, New Zealand cinema can be seen to work both with and against Hollywood and other national cinemas to different degrees. Sometimes it imitates, sometimes it tries direct competition, sometimes it differentiates according to categories like 'art' and (related) 'auteur', sometimes it tries co-productions with other national cinemas. In a New Zealand context, the government's involvement is not so much related to protectionist measures (e.g. legal barriers to free trade), but rather to providing incentives through institutions like the New Zealand Film Commission and New Zealand on Air. As becomes clear later, *Broken English* provides an interesting case study in that it can be seen as a text/product in which all these different aspects collide and come together to varying degrees.

*Exhibition and Consumption*

The second level Higson identifies relates to exhibition and consumption. The attraction of separating this level out is that it allows us to focus on both the economic aspects of these realms and the cultural aspects and discourses. In an economic sense, exhibition, and by extension consumption, are clearly dominated by Hollywood in New Zealand, albeit through an 'Australian detour': Hoyts and Village Force control around 95 percent of exhibition in the 'national space' and both have direct links to Hollywood distribution structures. This situation is shaped by global market forces and the extent to which New Zealand has opened itself up to these forces. From an economic point of view then, and given the capital intensive nature of film production, the arguments in favour of state support for local film production seem quite reasonable. 'A government-supported national cinema may be one of the few means by which a film culture not dominated by Hollywood can still exist' (Higson, 2000, p.70).

However, on a cultural level, the arguments become decidedly murkier. For convincing cultural arguments demand a number of steps: they first need to be able to define the specificity of a particular culture (vis-a-vis other cultures), before being able to explain why this culture is in need of support from all citizens, regardless of whether they 'consume' the resulting products. It thus requires a value judgement and needs to be able to demonstrate to what extend 'Hollywood' fails to deliver these cultural benefits.

This is the crux of what is generally called the 'cultural defense' argument. National cinema is here again defined against a dominant Hollywood and it is seen as providing a kind of counter balance against what is variously perceived as 'cultural imperialism' or 'Americanisation'. These are thus perceived as a threat to national identity and the national culture. Schlesinger argues that 'it is precisely the extra-territorial cultural pressure of Hollywood's production, imported into the national space, that sets up the contemporary issue of national cinema. This outside challenge to ideas of the national is at once interpreted as cultural, economic and political as well as ideological' (2000,

p.24).

Jarvie takes this a step further by arguing that 'treating a language or a culture as needing defence or propping up smacks of insecurity. Insecurity suggests that the invader is attractive as well as damaging. There is then a grudging acknowledgement of the potency of American movies lying behind the fear of them as culturally damaging' (2000, p.84). I would argue then that this 'cultural defense' argument is not only fundamentally flawed, but also ultimately unsustainable. It leads to 'a set of binaries which start from the primary one of Hollywood/other' (Hayward, 2000, p.92). It is based on notions of 'culture', 'identity' and 'nation' as closed-off entities, both in a geographical and a temporal sense. These concepts are far more problematic than a simple binary structure would allow for[3]. I want to reiterate here again then that we need to be much more precise in our analysis. It is not enough to simply show the flaws in for example the 'cultural defense' argument; we need to analyse why these arguments are being used, by whom and for what *strategic* reasons.

Within 'cultural defense' discourses, Hollywood seems an easy target: it is not hard to imagine it as a monolithic entity, backed up by a huge marketing drive that at times seems to steamroller everything in its path. Because of its visibility, it has in a sense become synonymous with globalisation itself. This is then seen as a threat to the national culture. The binary structure thus set up implies a one-way flow of messages from a center (Hollywood) to the peripheries (national spaces), with the peripheries absorbing these messages in an unproblematic fashion, like a sponge.

Many recent studies of the impact of globalisation have cast radical doubts over these kind of assumptions. Gillespie sums this up as follows:

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[3]The problematic nature of these concepts is discussed in more depth in chapters 2 and 4.

The increasing globalisation of economic, political and cultural relations is matched by a massive rise in the flow of migrants, both voluntary and involuntary, and an equally enormous rise in the flow of images, narratives and information which cut across and challenge established national and cultural boundaries and identities. Yet any tendencies towards cultural homogenisation accompanying these processes are matched by simultaneous tendencies towards the fragmentation, pluralisation and diversification of markets, cultures and peoples.

(1995, p.3, see also Mohammadi, 1995)

Dayan similarly argues that 'transnational flows are much less homogenizing than was previously believed. The local is no longer the end of the road, the final and lowly destination of messages emanating from the lofty centre. The local has become cosmopolitan in its own way' (1999, p.19). These studies deal quite specifically with the reception side, particularly with diaspora identity formations, and they show that media messages are not passively absorbed, but actively negotiated, embraced and/or denounced, depending on specific contexts.

I discuss the consumption/reception side in detail at a later stage[4], but this serves for now to problematise the 'national space' as a coherent, closed-off entity or bounded 'public sphere'. It seems more useful then to imagine the national space as a 'sphere of publics' in which national identities are seen as subject to much more explicit negotiation' (Schlesinger, 2000, p.27, see also Higson, 1995, 2000). While this recognition of the 'national space' as heterogeneous on the one hand throws the notion of a national cinema in serious doubt, it does so only insofar as the national cinema is defined in narrow terms. In other words, it can also serve as an argument in favour of a national cinema, this time defined as a space where this heterogeneity can find a voice with which to question and negotiate different and changing versions of the national

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[4]See chapters 6, 7 and 8.

92

space as *locally specific* space. This comes closer to the notion of a 'third cinema' to which I return shortly.

The other assumption of the 'cultural defense' argument relates to the production of cinema. The binary here is equally problematic. On the one hand, 'Hollywood' has historically never been separate from other (national) cinemas, and those national cinemas have equally never existed in isolation. In other words, the relationship between these two categories is rather more symbiotic than the binary would allow for, which is not to suggest that it is a level playing field; there are of course always particular power relations at work. In Hedetoft's words, 'national cultures do assimilate outside influences, but for one thing the primary sender (the US) itself constitutes a diverse, assimilationist cultural rag-bag, and second, receivers both react, interact and proact *vis-a-vis* American influences, in the process reforging and reinterpreting them in the context of national history, culture and perceptual optics' (2000, p.281, original emphasis).

This complicates both essentialist notions of Hollywood and national cinemas. From their early beginnings, Hollywood studios have always attracted 'foreign' film makers from a variety of national contexts, and continue to do so. New Zealand examples of this are directors like Roger Donaldson, Lee Tamahori and Alison Maclean among others. This serves both to limit 'outside' competition and to strengthen its own personnel base. And additionally, it helps in a continuous drive to differentiate its products in a high risk commercial environment. Similarly, one of the most successful ways of differentiating national cinemas from 'Hollywood' has been in terms of 'art' cinema, and by extension 'auteur' cinema. In response, Hollywood has developed its own 'art' cinema, thereby blurring the 'boundaries between specialist and entertainment market sectors in its own market and abroad, and weakening the assertions of independence made by other art cinemas' (Crofts, 1993, p.52). And importantly, this does not only apply to 'independent' cinema in other nations, but to incorporation of

'independent' cinema in the US itself as well.

Conversely, we have to recognise the influence of Hollywood on national cinemas. In Elsaesser's words, 'Hollywood can hardly be conceived...as totally other, since so much of any nation's film culture is implicitly "Hollywood" (quoted in Higson, 1995, p.8). Hollywood cinema then forms an integral part of the 'national cultural space' and by extension 'national cinema', as do other national cinemas to differing degrees. Recognising this in relation to the earlier mentioned 'sphere of publics' would allow us to analyse more specifically why some Hollywood films carry more relevance to certain New Zealand publics than some of 'our own' stories. To put it very simply, *Titanic* (1997, James Cameron) may be more relevant to many more 'publics' in a New Zealand context than *The Price of Milk* (2001, Harry Sinclair).

*Evaluative Aspects*

The third level that Higson distinguishes relates to the evaluative aspects of defining national cinemas and particularly discourses of 'art' or 'high' culture versus 'mass' or 'popular' culture. 'In general, such a perspective will privilege particular film movements or directors felt to have some connection with the national culture, where the latter is defined in high cultural terms' (Higson, 1995, p.5). Again, this works both on an economic level and an ideological level.

In an economic sense, the distinction between 'art' (high culture) and 'entertainment' (popular or mass culture) has historically served as a mode of differentiation which makes commercial sense. It therefore runs along the same binary where 'Hollywood' functions as a nodal point for 'entertainment', 'popular' and 'mass' culture, and industrial production as opposed to 'national cinemas', which are characterised by 'artists/ auteurs' (individual expression) and 'high' culture. In this way, it is part of an economic strategy which 'aims to differentiate itself textually from Hollywood, to assert explicitly or implicitly an indigenous product, and to reach domestic and export markets

through those specialist distribution channels and exhibition venues usually called "arthouse"' (Crofts, 1993, p.51).

As noted above, the boundaries between these categories have become increasingly blurred in the 'postmodern' era, but the important thing to remember here is that they are still used *as if* they matter, and therefore cannot be discarded as yet. Notions of 'high' versus 'mass' and 'popular' culture are historically modern concepts (Gans, 1974), and are therefore intimately linked with nation building projects. 'National pride and the assertion at home and abroad of national cultural identity have been vital in arguing for art cinemas. Central, too, have been arguments about national cultural and literary traditions and quality as well as their consolidation and extension through a national cinema' (Crofts, 1993, p.51). It is no coincidence then that in New Zealand, for example, the Film Commission was originally established (in 1978) as a successor to the QE II *Arts* Council[5].

Central to discourses of 'art' is the idea of the individual artist as the sole source of expression. In cinema, this idea led to 'auteurism': 'the belief that cinema was an art of personal expression, and that its great directors were as much to be esteemed as the authors of their work as any writer, composer or painter' (Lapsley and Westlake, 1988, p.105, see also Willemen, 1994). Despite the obvious class issues that this concept raises, it has considerable economic benefits, not only for the film makers involved (the director as brand/ commodity), but importantly also for journalists and critics who play a key role in defining cinema in this way. As Willemen puts it: 'it is the conjunction of subjects in/through discourse and capitalist relations of production which results in the notion of the author as we have come to know it' (1994, p.75). He relates this explicitly to class when he asserts that, 'this is not merely a matter of blind servility: it is also a matter of self-interest, for journalists-critics work in the same social formations as the

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[5]See further chapter 6.

artists, only in a different place. They too depend for their livelihood on an over-inscription of themselves as witty, cultured, intelligent, ordinary stars' (ibid, p.76).

Given the relatively ad-hoc nature of film production in small nations like New Zealand, it thus makes strategic sense to draw on discourses of 'art'. As Reid wrote in 1986: 'Individual New Zealand films may have a style all their own, but that is to the credit of their individual writers and directors. It is not the result of their being part of a New Zealand "school" (p.22). I would argue that this still applies today, despite the homogenising gesture of the 'cinema of unease'[6]; Martin & Edwards point out for example that the latter excludes 'the shaggy dogtale, the pot-boiler co-production, the film reflecting Pacific Island culture, the urban comedy, the feminist thriller, the Hollywood clone...' (1997, p.184).

However, it can be seen as an attempt to establish a canon of important films which is a retrospective and selective process, closely linked to the project of nation building; a canon of films (and auteurs) that symbolise the nation's achievements. 'Thus we are presented with the paradox of individual auteurs whose work is legitimized by mainstream film critics primarily in terms of a discourse of self-expression, yet who are also taken up as representatives of and vehicles for the expression of national culture' (Higson, 1995, p.24). In response to this I would argue, again, that the question we should be asking is not so much whether discourses of 'art' in relation to national cinema are 'right' or 'wrong' (or paradoxical), but how they are used, by whom and for what specific purposes.

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[6]*Cinema of Unease* (1995, Sam Neill & Judy Rymer) was a film commissioned by the British Film Institute to mark the centenary of the medium. The BFI had approached *directors* Martin Scorsese, Jean-Luc Godard and Stephen Frears for, respectively, American, French and British perspectives. In New Zealand's case, they to chose to approach *actor* Sam Neill (Calder, 1996, p.189/191).

*Representation*

The final level Higson identifies relates to representation, both in the sense of how, and of what is being represented. From a production and funding point of view this relates to characteristics that could be identified as 'New Zealand'. It is on this level then that the concept of a 'national' cinema is most ambiguous. In other words, what makes something a specifically New Zealand film? Is it the citizenship status of the film makers? Is it the landscape in which the diegesis takes place? Is it a film which is funded by New Zealanders? Or does it need to represent a New Zealand 'way of life' (e.g. a particular set of values)?

I will illustrate this ambiguity with a few recent examples. Is *The Frighteners* (1997, Peter Jackson) a New Zealand film? It has a New Zealand director and it has recognisable New Zealand locations, but the key cast and the funding come from Hollywood. Similarly, is *Memory and Desire* (1998, Niki Caro) a New Zealand film? It has Film Commission funding and New Zealand locations and crew, but the main characters are Japanese, and speak English. Does it represent a New Zealand 'way of life'? Or is it an Antipodean version of a 'Europudding'? Does this make *The Piano* (1993, Jane Campion) a Franco-Australian pavlova? These are notoriously difficult questions to answer, but institutional structures along national lines dictate that they have to be answered to justify funding decisions.

The bicultural institutional framework in New Zealand poses an added, but related problem in this respect: what is a Maori film? As Barclay puts it, 'a Maori film is one made by Maori. (.) A Maori film might have nothing to do with what both Maori and Pakeha are pleased to think of as "the Maori style of life"- communal attitudes, a respect for the elders, a love of the land' (1990, p.20). In other words, defining a film in these terms leads to a selective process where one has to define itself in narrow terms against another. 'Perhaps a hidden question was being asked, one that is not usually asked of film makers from the majority culture- whether *Ngati* really had special values

underpinning it- Maori values that were somewhat different and more meritorious than those one could find in any other of the 80-odd feature films made by New Zealanders in this country since 1930' (ibid, p.20).

Again, it is precisely the ambiguity of defining what is 'national' about a particular cinema which makes it a useful concept to appropriate in different contexts. However, Hjort does attempt to define precisely what is 'national' about a particular cinema, by referring to what films are about in terms of themes. 'A theme is what the work in question is *about*. This aboutness is not, however, a matter of full-fledged referential meanings, for only in the case of specific genres do authors make literal claims about actual persons or events, which can and should be assessed in terms of notions of truth and falsity' (2000, p.105). She then goes on to make a very useful distinction between what she calls 'perennial' themes and 'topical' themes. 'Perennial themes bring into focus subject matter that resonates across historical and cultural boundaries. They are universal or quasi-universal in their thrust. (.) Topical themes, on the other hand, involve only concepts that arise within, and remain relevant to, a highly specific historical or cultural formation' (ibid, p.106, see also Lamarque & Olsen, 1994). These are interesting distinctions in relation to New Zealand cinema and very relevant to *Broken English.*

Perennial themes relate to concepts like 'love', 'passion', 'pride' and so on, in a loose sense; themes that can be defined as 'universal' in that they can basically be found in one way or another in all fictional feature films. These are also the themes that underlie many discourses of 'art', and insofar as film makers think of themselves as artists, it is no surprise that they foreground the 'universal' themes of their work, 'oriented by enduring, lasting concerns' (ibid, p.107). These themes are then linked to more 'topical' themes which make the film more or less locally specific. 'Topical works are frequently politically motivated and serve as interventions in ongoing discussions within a given social context' (ibid, p.106), for example a national context.

*Broken English* for example, represents such topical themes as 'immigration', 'multiculturalism' and so on in a specific New Zealand context, while the overall narrative is driven by perennial themes like 'love' and 'family' among others. Interestingly, Hjort makes a further distinction, drawing on Billig's notion of 'banal nationalism', which she calls 'banal aboutness'. She talks about a Danish context when she argues that, 'to state loosely that a film is *about* Denmark is not the same thing as claiming that a film is *about* Denmark in a proper *thematic* sense. The casual use of 'about' assumes that all films that make use, for example, of recognisable Danish locations, the Danish language, Danish actors and props that mirror the material culture of Danes, qualify as being about Denmark' (ibid, p.108, original emphasis).

Of course, these different thematic levels are often interwoven to a significant degree, to the point where some films (*Broken English* being a good example here[7]) contain elements of all these themes in different configurations. But in light of the specific conditions of film making in New Zealand and the urgent economic pressures that I have outlined above, the concept of 'banal aboutness' is useful in analysing New Zealand films. At its most extreme, 'banal aboutness' can lead to what Hjort calls a 'hyper-saturation of the audio-visual field with national elements' (ibid, p.111).

It is precisely this 'hyper-saturation' of 'banal aboutness' that Turner talks about when he argues that 'for images of local people and place to be worth producing, programs [or films] must be competitively interesting. In practice, this requires the exaggeration of New Zealandness- that images of local identity be simplified, reduced, or essentialised' (2000, p.224). In other words, economic pressures create a communicative space which depends for its existence on how 'others' see it. Turner calls this the 'metropolitan gaze' and argues that 'the framing of the content of each

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[7] See chapter 7.

film ensures that it is subordinate to the fantasy, or desire, of the metropolitan gaze, a function of the image-making market (getting the most people to see it)' (ibid, p.222). This then leads to a situation where 'the country is made to feel like a landscape lived in by locals *as tourists*' (ibid, p.226, original emphasis). Interestingly, he then extends this notion to something which is *inherent* to a New Zealand identity by claiming that 'external pressures operate even in the absence of a watching audience. The metropolitan gaze, like Bentham's panopticon, does not require international spectators to be actually watching local production for its image-making to be shaped by the desire of their gaze' (ibid, p.227).

Although I can go along with this to some extent, I believe he takes this argument a little too far. I would argue that 'banal aboutness' is definitely a prominent element of many New Zealand films (including *Broken English*), but it is not always a question of either/or. In other words, while a particular film may contain a number of 'banal' elements, it may *simultaneously* work in terms of other topical themes. Assumed audience*s* shape the style of address, and this in turn relates to the level of assumed knowledge that film makers and producers expect viewers to have. As a result, a particular film may even deliberately ironise particular 'banal' elements with a knowing wink to a local audience, while those elements may work on a more straightforward level in a different context (some of Peter Jackson's films spring to mind here).

The issue of address is thus a complex one for any film, with a variety of discourses operating at once. I agree in this respect with Willemen when he argues that 'the issue of national cinema is primarily a question of address, rather than a matter of the film makers' citizenship or even of the production finance's country of origin' (1994, p.212). And in New Zealand's case, the issue of address is always already double in that any film necessarily has to take an international audience into account. And although this applies to any cinema (including Hollywood) to some extent, it is a particularly pressing issue in New Zealand.

## 3.2: Theoretical Debates

If the above has served to complicate definitions of national cinema, this is not to suggest that this concept should be thrown overboard, as it still functions as a powerful concept which shapes access to communicative space in particular contexts. This communicative space is highly regulated through a number of institutions. And as Willemen warns, 'just as there is a hierarchy imposed upon the diversity of discourses, the institutionalised exercise of power bears upon exactly which semantic possibilities shall remain *unrecognised* or *unutilised*' (1994, p.198, my emphasis). In other words, institutions which are organised along national lines perform a powerful gatekeeper function. This is relevant in relation to this thesis, as some players involved in the production of *Broken English* (the consultants in particular[8]) felt significantly constrained by the 'semantic possibilities' in this production context. Consequently, they were keen to discuss possible alternatives, and the notions of 'third' and 'fourth' cinema may be useful here.

*Beyond National Cinema: 'Third'/ 'Fourth' Cinema?*

Willemen makes a case for so-called 'Third Cinema' (as opposed to 'Euro-American' cinema) which he defines as 'a cinema made by intellectuals who, for political and artistic reasons at one and the same time, assume their responsibilities as socialist intellectuals and seek to achieve through their work the production of social intelligibility' (ibid, p.200). Although I think there is merit in recognising cinematic practices which depart from restrictive notions of what is 'national' or what is 'art', there are a number of problems with bringing them together under a single umbrella term. As Shohat observes, 'the resistant practices of such films are neither homogeneous nor static; they vary over time, from region to region, and, in genre, from epic costume drama to personal small-budget documentary. Their aesthetic strategies

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[8]See chapter 6 for an analysis of interviews with its production personnel.

range from "progressive realist" to Brechtian deconstructivist to avant-gardist, tropicalist, and resistant postmodern' (1997/2000, p.1997).

Using an umbrella term like 'Third Cinema', which was originally a strategic gesture (see Crofts, 1993), creates a new kind of restrictive boundary where questions of what and who is to be admitted come to the fore. However, I believe the concept has certain merits if we appropriate it in a broad sense as a way of recognising cinematic practices that depart from the mainstream in particular social contexts and thereby allows for changing perceptions of that social context. Theoretically, Willemen explains this as follows:

> If outsideness is the prerequisite for creative understanding, it also follows that outsideness is a position as threatening as it is productive. Threatening for the 'insider', whose limits become visible in ways inaccessible to him or her; productive precisely in so far as structuring limits, horizons, boundaries become visible and available for understanding (1994, p.200).

This is closely related to Bhabha's notions of the 'third space' and the 'in-between'[9]. As a theoretical concept then, I think it has certain advantages in that it allows us to recognise oppositional practices, thereby complicating and broadening the restrictive binary of 'Hollywood' and 'European art cinema'. However, I believe Willemen's definition falls into a similar trap by creating a new binary of 'Euro-American cinema' versus 'the rest'. Furthermore, the strict boundary he thus imposes fails to account for complexity *within* 'Euro-American' cinema itself (see for example Lev, 1993).

I agree with Shohat when she implies that it is therefore complicit with what she calls 'three-worlds theory'. 'Three-worlds theory not only flattens heterogeneities, masks

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[9]I discuss these in depth in chapter 4.

contradictions, and elides differences, but also obscures similarities (for example, the common presence of the "Fourth World", or indigenous peoples in both "Third World" and "First World" countries)' (1997/2000, p.1997). In addition, it begs the question of who and what is to be admitted to this category and more importantly, who decides this. For example, does it include films like *Ngati* (1987, Barry Barclay) or *Mauri* (1988, Merata Mita)? Or are they part of a 'fourth' or 'indigenous' cinema, as Barclay argues[10]? Both can be seen as departing from certain mainstream conventions, but both were also produced from within an institutionalised context. In other words, which 'politics' are deemed admissable and which are not? Do 'socialist ideals' include certain feminist texts like for example *Magik + Rose* (2000, Vanessa Alexander)? And where do we place the development of a variety of 'diaspora cinemas', which cross national boundaries, but which are nevertheless produced from within certain 'national' boundaries in terms of institutional and financial support?

Creating static categories is problematic for 'cinema is not a pure product. It is inherently a hybrid of many cultures, be they economic, discursive, ethnic, sexed and more. It exists as a cultural miscegenation, a deeply uncertain product' (Hayward, 2000, p.101). The emphasis in this case will therefore not be on whether these categories are valid according to strict definitions and characteristics, but rather on how and why they are discursively appropriated, and for what strategic reasons.

Finally, while Willemen does not ignore audiences for Third Cinema, he defines these again in a rather limited sense. 'Theirs is not an audience in the Hollywood or in the televisual sense, where popularity is equated with consumer satisfaction and where pleasure is measured in terms of units of the local currency entered on the balance sheet' (Willemen, 1994, p.200). This echoes a rather elitist view of the audience as

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[10]See Reid, Graham (2001), 'Present Tense, Future Perfect', Section B6, New Zealand Herald, 10th December.

uncritical and unthinking mass, one that in my view needs to be complicated[11]. Overall then, defining Third Cinema in narrow terms seems to raise more questions than it answers. I think it can be valuable as an analytical concept as long as we use it to analyse specific contexts; not as a narrowly defined category.

In summing up, I agree with Schlesinger when he argues that 'the best way to envision a national cinema is not as a set of films which help to distinguish a nation from other nations but rather to see it as a chain of relations and exchanges which develop in connection with films, in a territory delineated by its economic and juridical policy' (2000, p.28, see also Sorlin, 1996). As a category then 'national cinema' is deeply flawed theoretically, but it is still widely used and therefore demands attention. It provides both possibilities and powerful restrictions. In a New Zealand context, discourses of national cinema, as well as those of 'third' or 'fourth' cinema, are intimately linked to discourses of national identity, which in turn are profoundly shaped by New Zealand's colonial legacy. Therefore, before I focus my attention on the way in which discourses of national cinema get specifically appropriated in the production context of *Broken English*, I will first extend this 'discourse map' to include discourses of race, ethnicity, culture and diaspora. Given New Zealand's specific colonial history, and the ways in which *Broken English* positions itself vis-a-vis particular versions of that history, postcolonial theory provides an appropriate framework in this respect.

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[11]For a discussion on the conceptualisation of the audience, see chapter 1.

*Broken English* deals specifically with issues of race, ethnicity, culture and diaspora. It represents these concepts in particular ways and draws on particular discourses that surround them. Some of these discourses are general in scope, in that they can be seen to show similarities to discourses on race, ethnicity and diaspora in other nations. Some of them however are quite specific to a local New Zealand context, particularly its status as a post-colonial settler nation. I have mentioned New Zealand's specific colonial legacy in earlier chapters, and this chapter explores this legacy in depth. This involves an extensive discussion of discourses of race in a historical context, their implication in issues of representation, and contemporary manifestations of these discourses. In addition, this chapter explores the usefulness of postcolonial theory and its critiques. Finally, it offers a discussion of the concept of diaspora and its promise of movement beyond static boundaries. Since it also explores the New Zealand context in relation to all of the above, this chapter constitutes the largest part of the earlier mentioned 'discourse map'.

As Marie Gillespie notes, '...it remains the nation state which, in the first instance, constructs its internal ethnic 'others', its 'racial minorities' as such' (1995, p.14). This points to two important factors that I've discussed in previous chapters: firstly the construction element of concepts like race and ethnic identity, and secondly the way they are intimately related to concepts of nationhood. In terms of the latter factor, it relates closely to the way the majority population dominates mainstream discourse about nationhood, and consequently to the way it constructs its minorities. As Lola Young notes, 'race' is not an objective culture-free designation of difference and neither is the labelling of skin colour' (1996, p.39). But although there is widespread acceptance of the constructedness of race as a category, at least in contemporary academic discourse, 'the belief that there are fundamental, essential differences

between black and white people persists and is difficult to dispel, resulting in the ascription of particular psychological, physical and intellectual characteristics to different 'races' (ibid, p.39).

This leads me to the role of the media in this process, and particularly the mainstream media in which cinema plays an important part. 'It is the power to define reality and set the agenda of issues that makes the media of crucial importance to race relations in contemporary New Zealand society' (Maharey, 1990, p.25). We should see media here in its widest sense, not just local or national media, but imported media as well. As Lealand observes, 'although this country's racial mixture of Maori, Pacific Islander and Pakeha is unique, many of its images of race relations are imported, created by the media of the Northern Hemisphere' (1990, p.69). He goes on to say that 'the portrayal of ethnicity in popular culture such as American television programs can be a source of identification for minorities elsewhere in a way that transcends official national cultures' (ibid, p.73). It is this interaction between the local and the global that plays a decisive part in the ways that discourses about race and ethnicity change over time. This process is influenced by a wide variety of factors, some economic, some class based, some historical.

Gillespie quotes Mercer as saying, 'identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be [relatively] fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty' (1995, p.13). In other words, issues of race, ethnicity and diaspora become foregrounded when the relative stability of the center is destabilised. Large shifts have for instance occurred in New Zealand following significant changes in immigration policy. This resulted in the so-called 'waves' of particular groups of immigrants: Pacific Islanders in the 1950s and 1960s and Asians in the 1990s. The fact that these groups are often perceived as coherent categories is significant in itself and has a number of consequences to which I return later in this chapter.

Suffice to say for now that this kind of destabilisation forces the center, which had hitherto imagined itself to be relatively coherent and clearly defined, to re-examine itself. This process requires new interpretations of formerly dominant discourses, and thus leads to heightened contestations between different discourses. As mentioned before, this does not necessarily mean that older discourses get replaced altogether, but rather that they get re-interpreted and re-arranged in new configurations to suit new circumstances, in an attempt to achieve a hegemonic position. Again, we must be mindful of who has the power in these new circumstances to do the defining. In other words, how decentered does the center really become?

In this chapter, I analyse the ways in which discourses surrounding concepts of race, ethnicity, culture and diaspora have changed over time, and how they are represented and contested in a contemporary New Zealand context, paying particular attention to the ethnic groups represented in *Broken English*. As stipulated before, this widens the scope of a 'discourse map' which is used to refer back to in the second part of this thesis. Since these discourses do not exist in isolation, I begin with a general discussion, before identifying the particularities of the New Zealand context.

## 4.1 Discourses of Race in a Historical Context.

To begin with, it is important to make a distinction between the concepts of race and ethnicity. The latter term is often preferred in contemporary mainstream discourses as it carries more positive connotations than race. Race is often seen as more static, more 'natural' and thus more inflexible than ethnicity, which has more active, less essentialist connotations because it is more directly linked to 'culture'. However, none of the connotations associated with these terms are very stable; they tend to change dramatically depending on contexts of both time and place. They are often appropriated as part of political strategies and are thus intimately linked to power relations.

Gilroy reminds us that, 'race is a relational concept which does not have fixed referents. The naturalization of social phenomena and the suppression of the historical process which are introduced by its appeal to the biological realm can articulate a variety of different political antagonisms. They change, and bear with them no intrinsic or constant political effects' (1993, p.409). This variety of different political antagonisms pertains to differences in class and socio-economic status within the boundaries of nations. It often gets played out on the level of majority versus minority groups and this group identity is perceived in political terms as empowering. It is for this reason that Gilroy concludes that 'race must be retained as an analytic category not because it corresponds to any biological or epistemological absolutes, but because it refers investigation to the power that collective identities acquire by means of their roots in tradition' (1993, p.418). Of course these ideas are grounded in the British context that he is most familiar with, but it draws attention to the political relevance for the use of race as a category. As will become clear, this is particularly relevant to the political project of Maori in a New Zealand context.

The biggest problem in terms of theorizing concepts like race and ethnicity is to write about them without essentializing them as static or 'natural' categories. As Gillespie warns,

> Discourses of ethnicity in the social sciences have typically served to conflate
> the concepts of 'race' and 'nation' with 'culture', and then in turn with 'nature':
> the term lends itself to an all-too-easy slippage across these concepts. This gives
> rise to various forms of racial essentialism, reductionism, absolutism and
> determinism: to the notion that people behave as they do because it is 'in their
> blood'; or, in more recent forms of 'cultural racism', because it is in their
> culture (1995, p.9/10).

This shows us on the one hand how discourses surrounding race change over time, with

regards to terminology used, but on the other hand how certain fundamental elements can be seen to survive and reappear in slightly altered forms.

It is therefore useful to trace how contemporary discourses of race have developed over time and under what circumstances. We can then link these to a specific New Zealand context. Or in Malik's words:

> Different social groups and different historical periods have understood race in radically different ways. The concept of race arose from the contradictions of equality in modern society but it is not an expression of a single phenomenon or relationship. Rather it is a medium through which the changing relationship between humanity, society and nature has been understood in a variety of ways. What is important to understand are the ways in which this changing relationship has been, and still is, expressed through the discourse of race (1996, p.71).

Interestingly, there are significant historical links between the emergence of the nation state and the changing concept of race. As I have discussed in chapter 2, the instability that was caused by the industrial revolution led to the emergence of nations. This was not only a rapid process, but inevitably an uneven one. It was thus accompanied by both excitement about the new possibilities that it offered and fear about the radical potential for social upheaval, as a result of this rapid social change.

It was in this context that the idea of degeneration developed. 'The notion of degeneration expressed a sense both of inevitable progress and of inevitable regression' (Malik, 1996, p.72). We can see the residues of this discourse today. The nation is often talked about in terms of a family or a body, but while it is working hard towards progress and unity, some 'members of the family' are holding it back. The issue then becomes one of how these members are defined and according to what criteria. Furthermore, once they have been defined, they can not be left behind but have to be

somehow incorporated in the forward march of the 'homogenous' nation, particularly if they 'were here first' as in the case of indigenous peoples. We can see how the discourse of assimilation became a powerful one in this context.

The movement between progress and regression is intricately linked to the concept of the nation itself. Anderson talks about the importance of 'homogenous, empty time' in this respect, 'in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar' (1991, p.24). This is a crucial part of imagining the nation: as the clock ticks, the nation can either progress (always in relation to other nations), stand still or worse, regress. Notions of progress are thus always formulated in relation to other nations, but it is within the nation that credit can be given or blame can be laid. It is in this context that the concept of race became important, and it is thus very closely linked to capitalism, since the idea of progress is the driving force behind capitalism. It was, according to Malik, 'the complex interplay between the embrace of progress and the fear of it that shaped much of social discourse in the nineteenth century. It was largely through this interplay that the ideas and concepts of the Enlightenment were recast, that social inequalities were naturalised and that the conundrum of equality was reforged as the concept of race' (1996, p.71/72).

The concept of race can thus be seen to have originated in the Enlightenment, reaching its peak during the twentieth century. It is therefore also intimately related to imperialism and colonialism. Enlightenment ideas provided the justification for the violence which accompanied those processes. Smith for example locates imperialism 'within the Enlightenment spirit which signalled the transformation of economic, political and cultural life in Europe' (1999, p.22). She goes on to say that 'the imperial imagination enabled European nations to imagine the possibility that new worlds, new wealth and new possessions existed that could be discovered and controlled. This imagination was realized through the promotion of science, economic expansion and

political practice' (ibid, p.22). In this way, colonialism can be seen as an extension of imperialism in that it provided a more concrete, less volatile form of control.

Both these projects had to be justified, since they involved the subjugation of the people encountered in these 'new' worlds, often in very violent ways. Science played a decisive part in this justification process and was thus instrumental in the emerging concept of race. Science in all its shapes and forms facilitated a process by which race became part of a classification system in which people in different colonies could be measured on a sliding scale of development. It can thus be seen as an important part of the wider field of colonial discourses.

In order to get a better understanding of the continuities and disruptions in this field and how they relate to contemporary contexts, we need to critically engage with the way it has achieved these continuities. Apart from this, it is important to keep in mind that the discourse of race was not only projected outwards, but was also a powerful concept through which relations of power 'at home' were conceptualised. As Malik notes, 'it is certainly true that racial theory came eventually to be underpinned by its insistence on the inferiority of non-Western peoples'. But 'the object of racial anthropology was not only Africa or the Orient, but also the 'primitive' areas and groups within the home country' (1996, p.81).

This again draws attention to the importance of the nation, as mentioned before. It also highlights the idea that 'race' cannot be isolated as a concept by itself, but is linked in complex ways to economic, class and gender issues:

> Scientific racism helped generate a hierarchy, underpinned by forces beyond the reach of humanity, that justified the superiority of the ruling class, both at home and abroad. It proclaimed the fitness of the capitalist class to rule over the working class and of the white race to rule over the black. And it did so not in the name of

divine will or aristocratic reaction but of science and progress (Malik, 1996, p.100).

Science and progress are the main driving forces behind capitalist societies. It is therefore not surprising that discourses about race and ethnicity often incorporate these concepts in contemporary Western societies like New Zealand. And these are not the only residues of colonial discourse that are still relevant today. In that sense, the 'post' in post-colonial theory (as in 'post-modernism') could be seen as somewhat of a misnomer in certain ways, since it implies a 'clean' break with the past. By deconstructing colonial discourse and definitions of race, post-colonial theory carries within it the danger of what Stuart Hall calls 'a playful deconstructionism, the fantasy of a powerless *utopia* of difference. It is only too tempting to fall into the trap of assuming that, because essentialism has been deconstructed *theoretically*, therefore it has been displaced *politically*' (1996b, p.249).

We appear to be at a stage then where theories of 'difference' are in danger of becoming an 'essence' in itself by becoming increasingly institutionalised. Malik draws attention to this by identifying the 'core ideas that underpin much of current radical thinking on race:

> First, that social groups define themselves by their history and identity; second, that the particular history and identity of each group sets them apart from other social groups; third, that it is important to recognise this plurality of differences as a positive aspect of society today; and finally, that the struggle for racial equality takes the form of a struggle for group identity (1996, p.217).

In a grand gesture, he locates the genesis of these ideas in the theories of French (post)structuralist thinkers from Claude Levi-Strauss to Jacques Lacan, and from Jacques Derrida to Michel Foucault. Although he acknowledges that their work is varied and often conflictual, it can be characterized by a number of common themes,

'including a critique of reason, a hostility to universalism, a rejection of humanism, an anti-realist epistemology and a radical relativism' (1996, p.219).

These themes were subsequently developed by a number of later theorists and indeed form the basis of much of the contemporary theories of race, particularly in postmodernist and postcolonial frameworks. 'The central argument in contemporary theories of difference is the idea that Enlightenment discourse, by establishing universal norms and by equating such norms with European societies and cultures, has ensured the silence of non-European peoples and cultures' (ibid, p.220). These non-European peoples and cultures have come to be conceptionalised through the concept of 'the Other'. The main thrust of Malik's critique is that this category of the Other is far too general and is in danger of becoming an essence in itself:

> The category of the Other is ahistorical and takes little account of the specificities of time and place in the creation of the discourse of race. Instead it steamrollers historical, social and geographical differences into a single discourse of 'the West and its Others'. The category of the Other eternalises human modes of perception. It takes historically specific ways of constructing identity and endows them with an eternal validity (ibid, p.222; see also Grossberg, 1996, pp.87-107).

I agree that there is a danger of essentialism with the use of the category of the Other, but only if we fail to recognise specific historical contexts in which these categories are being appropriated. Particularly in relation to his last point, a specific social and political context may leave a struggle for group identity open as the *only* avenue to forge social change when it comes to racial equality. In this way, the concept of the Other is not so much seen as an essence (although some may perceive it as such), but as a category that can be usefully appropriated in an ongoing struggle for equality, a useful subject position from which to strategically subvert existing power structures. The Maori sovereignty discourse serves as a pertinent example here in a New Zealand

context.

Chow echoes Malik's concerns when she writes that, 'rather than attacking identity politics per se, my point is that we need to be more precise in our attack: we need to point more accurately at the idealism that is at the heart of identity politics'. She goes on to say that, 'often, in the valorization of non-Western "others", we witness a kind of tendency to see all such "others" as equivalent, as a mere positive, positivist idea devoid of material embeddedness and contradiction' (Chow, 1998, p.xxi). She thus similarly expresses the concern that the Other often becomes an all-encompassing category against which the center is defined and vice versa. In this way, both categories come to be conceptionalised according to the old binary logic.

In addition, McClintock argues that, 'race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively like armatures of Lego. Rather, they come into existence *in and through* relation to each other- if in contradictory and conflictual ways' (1995, p.5). What all these critiques have in common is that they complicate the category of the Other and thereby steer us away from analyzing it in terms *only* of race, *only* of gender, or *only* of class.

What seems to be at stake here is an important need to recognise the multiplicity of individual identities and to analyse where these categories overlap and intersect in particular contexts, and where contradictions appear. McClintock coins the term 'articulated categories' (ibid, p.5) in this respect. This draws attention firstly to the relative instability of these categories in identity formation, and secondly to the strategic aspect of their appropriation. It also foregrounds the idea that it is not only the Other that is conceptualised in this way, but that we always have to ask the question: Other from what and in relation to what? As Dyer observes, 'as long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially

seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people' (1997, p.1). He draws attention to the power aspect of this when he observes that, 'there is no more powerful position than that of being 'just' human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity. Raced people can't do that- they can only speak for their race. But non-raced people can, for they do not represent the interests of a race' (ibid, p.2). This is very relevant in relation to this particular research project and it has important implications for notions of multiculturalism in a New Zealand context[1]. Suffice to say for now that this again points to the danger of essentialism in the category of the Other.

'Postmodern multiculturalism may have genuinely opened up a space for the voices of the other, challenging the authority of the white West, but it may also simultaneously function as a sideshow for white people who look on with delight at all the differences that surround them' (ibid, p.3/4). In other words, does the concept of the Other lose its critical and strategic edge at the moment when it gains acceptance in mainstream discourses? What are the effects and the political implications of its appropriation in different contexts? As Yegenoglu warns, 'an identity politics based on reversal is limited to changing the cultural or subjective contents of identity. The identity of the subject changes in such politics, but the subject continues to be constituted in the same essentialist form. Therefore it does not actually make the subject an agent, but reproduces the same form of the subject as fixed and fixing' (1998, p.9).

The main objective should therefore be to complicate essentialist notions of both the Other and the traditional Western subject and the way these two categories are intimately related to each other. It is important then to trace the development of the concept of the Other in theory, in order to establish how it has acquired such a powerful position as an analytical concept in contemporary theory, and how this relates to wider

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[1]This is discussed in depth in chapter 5.

circulating discourses in contemporary societies.

Chow identifies four stages in the field of study that has come to be called 'Cultural Studies', a field in which this study is firmly situated. These four types of analyses are Orientalism-critique, investigations of subaltern identities, minority discourses, and culture-as-hybridity (1998, p.4). She further draws attention to its relation to poststructuralist theory:

> Cultural studies, by its dogged turns toward the other not only within language and text but also outside language and text, in effect forces poststructuralist theory to confront the significance of race- and with it the histories of racial discrimination and racial exploitation- that is repressed in poststructuralist theory's claim to subversiveness and radicalism. By so doing, *cultural studies challenges poststructuralist theory's own position as the "other" of Europe, as the "other" within the European tradition* (ibid, p.5, original emphasis).

The attraction here is that she draws a connection between Cultural Studies as theoretical field and the political effects and implications of the proliferation of these theories, not only within the confines of the academy, but also beyond. I will therefore discuss the way the concept of the Other has been conceptualised in these four theoretical stages. A particular emphasis will be on Orientalism-critique, because it deals in a very direct way with issues of representation in (post)colonial discourse and is therefore highly relevant to *Broken English*, and on culture-as-hybridity, because of its promise of a way out of the impasse that Orientalism leaves us with, albeit a problematic one.

## 4.2: Orientalism and its Critiques.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* is one of the most influential texts in relation to contemporary notions of the Other, and is therefore a good starting point for this

analysis. It also deals very directly with representations of otherness and the implications of these representations, which makes it highly relevant for this particular study. I will therefore begin with an extensive quote from *Orientalism* in which Said defines the concept and explains the scope of how he sees its workings.

> It (Orientalism) is a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of 'interests' which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with political power (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what 'we' do and what 'they' cannot do or understand as 'we' do).
>
> (1978/1995, p.12)

The attractiveness in this concept lies first of all in the concept of power contained within it. It does not see power as coming from a single source, but as distributed *discursively* through a variety of different channels that have different effects in different contexts. In other words, power is not just imposed from political positions and institutions but is seen as implicated in all aspects of social life. This draws on Foucault's notion of power: 'Power is employed and exercised through a net-like

organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application' (1976/1980, p.98). This is relevant to this study as it allows for an analysis of the way individuals and groups make meaning out of a film text and the particular discourses they appropriate in doing so. I therefore return to Foucault's concept of power when I analyse the data from interviews and focus group research[2]. Suffice to say for now that there is an important distinction in the conceptualization of power between Foucault and Said.

Where Foucault is not specific in his description of the 'individuals' he talks about, Said sets up a binary structure in which the Occident (and presumably *all* individuals within it) attempts to rule over the Orient. He sees this will to rule as a very slow process of appropriation within which Orientalism is implicated in two different ways: through latent Orientalism and manifest Orientalism.

> The distinction I am making is really between an almost unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity, which I shall call *latent* Orientalism, and the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth, which I shall call *manifest* Orientalism. Whatever change occurs in knowledge of the Orient is found almost exclusively in manifest Orientalism; the unanimity, stability and durability of latent Orientalism are more or less constant.
>
> (Said, 1978/1995, p.206)

It is the distinction between these two types of Orientalism that makes Said's thesis most problematic. For what he suggests here is that while specific discourses about the

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[2]See chapters 6 and 8.

Other are subject to change historically, these discourses can only be found within tangible cultural texts like literature, scientific texts, photographs, films, and so on. Latent Orientalism on the other hand refers to the unconscious and thereby to the realm of desire; furthermore, it is seen as constant and more or less static. As Yegenoglu puts it, 'Orientalism simultaneously refers to the production of a systematic knowledge and to the site of the unconscious- desires and fantasies; it signifies how the "Orient" is at once an object of *knowledge* and an object of *desire*' (1998, p.23). This dualism between knowledge on the one hand and desire on the other is common in discourses about any Other, and is therefore highly relevant to the analysis of *Broken English*.

However, Said's notion of the 'desire' aspect is particularly problematic in a number of ways, which can be seen as running along both axes of time and space. By asserting that latent Orientalism is more or less constant, he firstly collapses hundreds of years of history into one steady flow which apparently never changes, and secondly implies that this is very much a one way flow from one coherent entity to another, with the West imposing its will on the East. As Malik argues,

> The ahistoricism of Orientalism leads Said to mimic the very discursive structures against which he polemicises. Said creates a 'Western tradition' which runs in an unbroken line from the Ancient Greeks through the Renaissance, the Enlightenment to modernism. It is a tradition which defines a coherent Western identity through a specific set of beliefs and values which remain in their essence unchanged through two millennia of European and Western history (1996, p.228/229).

Related to this perceived ahistoricism is the notion of Orient and Occident as coherent entities, apparently without internal inconsistencies or struggles. As Ahmad notes, 'he seems to posit stable subject-object identities, as well as ontological and epistemological distinctions between the two. (.) Said quite justifiably accuses the 'Orientalist' of essentialising the Orient, but his own essentialising of the 'West' is

equally remarkable. In the process Said of course gives us the same 'Europe'- unified, self-identical, transhistorical, textual' (quoted in Malik, 1996, p.229).

In my view, these critiques are valid, but this does not mean that we should dispense with Orientalism as a theoretical tool altogether. Said's analysis of Orientalist discourse is very useful; what makes his work problematic is that his claims go far beyond just analysing discourse. He attempts to link this analysis to its functioning in relations of power and domination in a much more concrete form: 'What we must reckon with is a long and slow process of appropriation by which Europe, or the European awareness of the Orient, transformed itself from being textual and contemplative into being administrative, economic and even military' (Said, 1978/1995, p.210).

It is this move from textual and contemplative to 'real' political and administrative domination which is often criticised and with good reason, for it suggests that, given enough time and enough textual groundwork, 'Europe' could come to dominate the Orient from all possible angles and impose its will. Even if resistance is implied (but still only within the binary categories), it is ultimately assumed to have been unsuccessful. It thereby does not engage with the ways colonialism and imperialism have been played out differently in different local contexts. By ignoring internal struggles within these categories of 'Europe' and the Orient, and thereby closing off the possibility of forms of resistance within these categories, however unsuccessful they may have been, Said effectively locks the Other into a position of eternal subjugation. 'Said seems to be suggesting that the only role allotted to the 'Other' is to succumb to the picture constructed by the Western 'self'. It is a picture of the relationship between the West and its Other in which the Other is transformed into simply a passive victim' (Malik, 1996, p.231). In other words, it leaves no room for agency.

The issue of agency is a very important one, because it opens up an avenue to allow for different histories to be written from different positions in the social hierarchy. I will

clarify this with an example of this particular study: if I was to analyse *Broken English* in a purely 'Orientalist' framework, I would just study the text and identify to what extent it conforms to Orientalist discourses in terms of its representations of the Other. But as Lola Young warns, 'a great deal of work has been concerned with representation and the relationship between the external reality referred to and the image constructed of it. This relationship is problematic if it is implied that there is some direct transfer of material reality from the object of the image' (1996, p.8). In other words, this would give me a rather limited perspective on the wider circulation of these discourses, and it would not tell me anything about the ways these discourses are being appropriated or dismissed, or a combination of the two, by different sections in society. As Yegenoglu points out, 'the discursive constitution of the subject does not connote merely a total pacification or a process of producing the being of the Oriental subjects as a stable category fixed in a position of subjugation, but an enabling process as well' (1998, p.22).

If we remain mindful of this notion of agency, Orientalism does provide us with a useful tool to analyse constructions of race and ethnicity in terms of the Other and to link these constructions to historical notions of Otherness. According to Said, 'the Orient existed as a place isolated from the mainstream of European progress in the sciences, arts and commerce. (.) Theses of Oriental backwardness, degeneracy and inequality with the West most easily associated themselves early in the nineteenth century with ideas about the bases of racial inequality' (1978/1995, p.206). In his book *The Meaning of Race* (1996), Malik traces the development of these discourses of race up to this point (the nineteenth century), which is an important point in terms of New Zealand's history. He then identifies a fundamental shift in Western thought in the nineteenth century, a shift towards what he calls 'the science of Man': 'from an emphasis on the fundamental physical and moral homogeneity of man, despite superficial differences, to an emphasis on the essential heterogeneity of mankind, despite superficial similarities' (1996, p.87). This is interesting in light of the four core ideas that underpin contemporary discourses

of race, as identified above[3]. These core ideas however are often not articulated in terms of 'race' but in terms of 'culture', which leads me to one of the main weaknesses in Malik's critique.

Although these two terms can often be seen to be virtually interchangeable in particular contexts, there are some subtle differences between them which make 'culture' a powerful term to appropriate in those contexts, both for the contemporary 'Orientalist' and for the contemporary Other. 'Culture' is seen as benign whereas 'race' carries a lot of negative connotations. Malik appears to ignore these subtle differences, and thereby ignores their historical context. He identifies three main ideas that accompanied the new 'science of Man', which were to be central to the scientific racism of the nineteenth century; these ideas are worth quoting at length:

> The first was a teleological view of history. Human development was seen as purposive, leading ever forward to the triumph of civilisation, which was defined as contemporary European society. This social evolutionism had its roots in the one-sided Enlightenment view of reason and progress.
> The second aspect of the new science was the belief in the continuity of the human and the animal world. Human nature was not different in kind from that of animals, but only in degree or quantity. Moreover, instinct and imitative behaviour, which had previously been consigned to the animal world, were now seen as human qualities too.
> The third key feature of the new science was the belief that mental abilities were related to physical characteristics (1996, p.87).

These ideas led to the subsequent dominance of social Darwinism. 'Nature had evolved by gradual means from the most backward types to the highest forms. "Primitive"

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[3]See chapter 4.1, p.112.

people were seen as the link between European civilisation and primates. This outlook was encouraged by the anthropological view that contemporary backward societies represented human beings arrested at an earlier stage of evolution' (ibid, p.88). Again, there may be a perception that these discourses have 'become extinct' as they are now, in their explicit form, largely taboo since the events of World War II. Indeed, people who draw on these discourses in explicit ways, like the Ku Klux Klan or neo-nazis, are mostly marginalised in contemporary Western societies as 'irrational' and 'dangerous'. However, I would argue that many of the fundamental underpinnings of this discourse can be found in contemporary conceptions of 'cultural' difference.

Robert Young calls this the 'oneiric logic' of race theory: 'The scientific theories measuring cultural difference have always used earlier ideas whereby the multiple meanings of race were grafted onto each other. This allows it to survive despite its contradictions, to reverse itself at every refutation, to adapt and transform itself at every denial' (1995, p.94). It is important to keep this in mind when analysing contemporary discourses of 'culture'. Apart from that, it also allows for the importance of location and specific contexts in which these discourses gain their hegemonic position. I therefore agree with Yegenoglu when she argues for 'a theoretical framework which will enable us to show how colonial discourse is inevitably fractured within itself and never repeats itself identically as it constitutes its unity; how it changes while it retains its hegemony and adapts to different circumstances. In other words, the point is to show the *sameness within the difference* of colonial discourse' (1998, p.36, my emphasis). This leads me to Bhabha's notion of 'hybridity', but before I discuss the merits of that, let me begin by outlining how the subject is constituted in *Orientalism*.

As discussed above, Said makes a clear distinction between the 'Orientalist' and the 'Oriental', which ultimately leads to an inflexible binary between subject and object.

The male conception of the world, in its effect upon the practicing Orientalist, tends

to be static, frozen, fixed eternally. The very possibility of development, transformation, human movement- in the deepest sense of the word- is denied the Orient and the Oriental. As a known and ultimately an immobilized or unproductive quality, they come to be identified with a bad sort of eternality: hence, when the Orient is being approved, such phrases as 'the wisdom of the East'.

<div align="right">(1978/1995, p.208)</div>

Although Said argues here for the desirability of 'transformation', he firstly does not elaborate on how this is to be achieved and secondly, he does not allow for the inter-mixing of the two categories of 'orientalist' and 'oriental': 'we must not forget that the Orientalist's presence is enabled by the Orient's effective absence' (ibid, p.208). By sticking to these categories in a rigid fashion, he effectively creates a static and ahistorical 'essence' of Western subject and Oriental object.

But as Yegenoglu rightly argues, 'the Western subject should not be thought of as an essence. (.) The process of *becoming- a- Western- subject* is not a process that simply homogenizes and makes uniform but that also *differentiates*. Hence it implies neither an essential unity nor homogeneity' (1998, p.2). She goes on to say that, 'the category Western subject does not refer to an essence or uniformity nor to a metaphysical self-presence. The connotation is not essence but the process of constitution of identity; it thus refers to a position or positioning, to a place, that is, to a specific inhabiting of a place' (ibid, p.3). This is attractive for my purposes because it draws attention to the importance of time and place, or in other words to a particular historical context in which this 'positioning' takes place. 'The process that constitutes subjects as Western is not identical in each individual instance; it is subject to differential articulation at every specific historical moment and in different cases' (ibid, p.4). Instead of dismissing *Orientalism* altogether, Yegenoglu complicates it, and importantly, develops a way to incorporate the notion of agency in her analysis.

<div align="center">124</div>

The main way she complicates it is by questioning the deconstruction, in a poststructuralist sense, of the Western subject. In other words, merely deconstructing the Western subject is not enough for it eventually leads to the same binary structure with which one started out, except this time, it is the other way around. It thereby leaves the binary structure intact. 'The dangerous result of this attitude is to reverse the structure and to enact the same subject, to repeat the same desire for a sovereign, autonomous position on the side of the subordinate, hegemonized, second term' (ibid, p.8). The danger she alerts us to is the creation of the Other, the second term, as essential subject, thereby locking it into a position of eternal difference. She thus echoes Malik's and Chow's concerns as discussed before. 'The "other" is not what the subject distinguishes itself from, nor the beyond of an absolute limit which the subject cannot pass, but the necessary possibility that makes the subject possible, again and again, each time anew. Unless this sense of otherness and limitlessness is conceived as a condition of subject, we are bound to the same dominating and possessive form of subjectivity' (ibid, p.9).

Breaking through this 'limit' leads us to Bhabha's notions of hybridity, the 'third way' and 'spaces in-between': 'the constitution of the oppressed or subordinate subject implies the "in-between" or "passage". It implies a subjectivity where embodiment and relationality are not denied but become the constitutive moment of subjectivity, challenging and subverting the Western form of sovereign subject' (ibid, p.9). Although these concepts offer us theoretical tools to 'break through' the binary structure, we should be mindful firstly of Stuart Hall's earlier quoted warning about the link between theory and politics. In other words, the 'Western subject' may be destabilised, but it has not disappeared altogether. Secondly, and related to this, Yegenoglu warns against fragmentation for fragmentation's sake: 'the totalizing notion of colonialism cannot be called into question by focusing on particularity or by an uncritical celebration of colonialism*s* instead of colonialism. I do advocate retaining the general category of colonial discourse without seeing its unity as a simple harmonious totality, but by

recognizing the complexity within such a unity' (ibid, p.10).

In other words, although we have to recognise the specificity of particular contexts (New Zealand in the 1990s in this case), we need to pay attention to wider, global trends as well, and the historical trajectories which they have followed, since these local contexts do not exist in isolation. But first, let me turn to the relevance of Bhabha's 'intervention' and Stuart Hall's concept of 'articulation' for this study.

## 4.3: Bhabha's 'Intervention'.

The significance of both Bhabha's and Hall's writings, in my view, is that both have taken important steps towards complicating notions of otherness and subjectivity. Both are dedicated, at least theoretically, to 'de-essentialising' these concepts in different ways. But where Bhabha's work has a clear discursive emphasis, combined with psychoanalytic theory, Hall's work, grounded in Marxism, is more geared towards the 'politics' of everyday life, towards the application of theory in social and political contexts. When combined, both these approaches are important for this particular project, as it deals with the relation between cultural texts and the social contexts in which these are produced and appropriated.

In a sense, Bhabha builds on *Orientalism* in that his work is to a large extent a critique of colonial discourse. But while not denying the power of colonial discourse, he treats it as an 'open' system of meanings, by showing the inherent impossibility of the closure it forever seeks. 'An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/ historical/ racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition' (1994, p.66). Of course Said identifies this paradox as well, but Bhabha develops this idea by attempting to break through the binary logic that underlies *Orientalism*:

126

My reading of colonial discourse suggests that the point of intervention should shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse. To judge the stereotyped image on the basis of a prior political normativity is to dismiss it, not to displace it, which is only possible by engaging with its *effectivity*; with the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs colonial identification subject (both colonizer and colonized) (1994, p.67).

He suggests here that merely deconstructing colonial discourse and to show its 'wrongness' leads to a dead end, as it implies that there is some coherent reality 'out there' which can be known and represented. The fallacy of that position is that it fails to recognise that any representation is always already partial, incomplete and selective.

What we need to analyse instead is the way these discourses construct their 'regimes of truth': 'In order to understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of truth, not to subject its representations to a normalizing judgement' (1994, p.67). He draws here on Foucault's notion, and thereby links it to the power involved in this process: 'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth' (Foucault, 1977/1980, p.133). The focus thus shifts from identifying whether a particular discourse is 'right' or 'wrong' to analysing how it achieves its *status* as plausible in a particular context.

Bhabha identifies the stereotype as a major discursive strategy in colonial discourse which is, not coincidently, also a major point of contestation in reviews and critiques of

*Broken English*[4]:

> The stereotype is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between
> what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously
> repeated. (.) It is the force of this ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its
> currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive
> conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces
> that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must
> always be in *excess* of what can be empirically proved or logically construed.
>
> <div align="right">(1994, p.66)</div>

It is the *effect* of the stereotype that is important here, for it is there where power can be located if we follow Foucault. In other words, the stereotype acquires a kind of 'truth' status at the moment it is accepted as 'probabilistic truth', however 'excessive' it may be. As Foucault asserts, 'it's not a matter of a battle 'on behalf' of the truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays' (1977/1980, p.132). Of course this status of truth is related to power, not just the power to define this 'truth' (the particular stereotype), but the power to make it accepted as truth, the effect of truth.

bell hooks defines the stereotype as follows:

> Stereotypes, however inaccurate, are one form of representation. Like fictions, they
> are created to serve as substitutions, standing in for what is real. They are there not
> to tell it like it is but to invite and encourage pretense. They are a fantasy, a
> projection onto the Other that makes them less threatening. Stereotypes abound
> when there is distance. They are an invention, a pretense that one knows when the

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[4]See chapters 7 and 8.

steps that would make real knowing possible cannot be taken or are not allowed.

<div align="right">(1992, p.170)</div>

This definition points to a couple of important characteristics: firstly, it emphasises the constructedness of representations ('invention' and 'fantasy'); secondly, the 'distance' aspect implies a sliding scale: the more distance between those who represent and those who are represented, the cruder and more 'excessive' the stereotype. As Karen Ross puts it, 'the greater the experiential distance between the viewer and the subject (for example, the white audience and the black image) and the more complex and sophisticated the image, the closer the perceived fit of screen image to actual reality' (1996, pp.xx/xxi).

What is interesting here from my point of view is the connection with power and social change. The steps that would make 'real knowing' possible would involve upsetting the status quo and a particular hegemony, and whether these steps can be taken or are allowed would depend on upsetting the balance of a particular configuration of power in a specific social context, a complex interaction between institutional power (in this case the New Zealand film industry) and its 'effects' at the level of reception. But while she acknowledges the importance of fantasy and desire, there is still a sense in bell hooks' formulation that the stereotype is always negative because it does not conform to a separate 'reality'.

Bhabha attempts to identify the structure that underlies this notion by drawing on the psychoanalytic concept of the fetish: 'The fetish or stereotype gives access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it' (1994, p.75). His elaboration of this structure again echoes Foucault's understanding of power:

Power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress, if it worked only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression, in the manner of a great Superego, exercising itself only in a negative way. If, on the contrary, power is strong this is because (.) it produces effects at the level of desire- and also at level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it.

<div align="right">(Foucault, 1975/1980, p.59)</div>

The important connection here is between desire and knowledge, but where Foucault is rather unclear about this connection, Bhabha draws on psychoanalysis in an attempt to explain its workings: 'Like the mirror phase 'the fullness' of the stereotype- its image *as* identity- is always threatened by 'lack' (1994, p.77). In other words, although it strives to achieve closure, it can never be complete; it is always both overdetermined and lacking, never a complete 'fit'. He goes on to say that, 'the taking up of any one position, within a specific discursive form, in a particular historical conjuncture, is thus always problematic- the site of both fixity and fantasy. It provides a colonial 'identity' that is played out- like all fantasies of originality and origination- in the face and space of the disruption and threat from the heterogeneity of other positions' (1994, p.77). It is in this space that he identifies the possibility of resistance, where 'other positions' are taken up; it is in this space where 'productive ambivalence' is located: this is what he calls the Third Space.

The attraction of this Third Space is that it disrupts a binary structure of 'self' and 'other', 'colonizer' and 'colonized', 'East' and 'West' and so on. This 'in-between' space disrupts essentialist notions of culture and instead allows for hybridity; it is a productive space as opposed to a reductive space. It is therefore also a strategic space. As Bhabha puts it, 'it is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew' (1995, p.208).

<div align="center">130</div>

This opens up a myriad of possibilities and in a sense liberates both 'colonizer' and 'colonized' to break out of oppressive structures, at least on a theoretical level. And it allows this opportunity for both sides of the 'binary fence' by apparently breaking down that fence. In Makdisi's words, 'the existence of pure and unaffected traditional cultures to which the postcolonial intellectuals can 'escape' is exposed as an illusion. Indeed, the very existence of any culture in some sort of absolute isolation from others is shown to be impossible in the postcolonial world' (1993, p.543/544). There is something very liberatory and attractive about this notion. However, it needs to be appropriated with caution, for it can easily slide into a 'celebration of difference' where we are all 'happily hybrid'. This is closely related to the 'we are all just New Zealanders' discourse[5].

Again, we need to pay careful attention to the power relations involved in the appropriation of this discourse. As Dyer puts it, 'we may be on our way to genuine hybridity, multiplicity without (white) hegemony, and it may be where we want to go-but we aren't there yet, and we won't get there until we see whiteness, see its power, its particularity and limitedness, put it in its place and end its rule' (1997, p.4). Dyer thus draws attention to firstly issues of power, and secondly issues of race.

In contrast, Bhabha's notion of hybridity, an elaboration of the Bakhtinian 'hybrid', seems to be mostly applied to *culture*. But what does culture mean exactly? As mentioned before, the term culture is often used interchangeably with 'ethnicity' and 'race' in a rather careless way. In other words, it is fairly easy to envisage 'hybrid cultures', but it becomes a lot harder to think in terms of 'hybrid races'. As Stratton warns, reiterating Hall's earlier point[6], 'there is a high level of naivety in thinking that,

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[5]See chapters 2 and 5.

[6]See chapter 4.1, p.112.

because you stop talking about race , race will go away' (1998, p.12). Keeping this in mind, Bhabha sees the workings of hybridity and agency as follows:

> I have developed the concept of hybridity to describe the construction of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism or inequity. Strategies of hybridization reveal an estranging movement in the 'authoritative', even authoritarian inscription of the cultural sign. At the point at which the precept attempts to objectify itself as generalized knowledge or a normalizing, hegemonic practice, the hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal. Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor collaboration. It makes possible the emergence of an 'interstitial' agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism. Hybrid agencies find their voice in a dialectic that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty. They deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy; the outside of the inside: the part in the whole.
>
> (1996, p.58)

Aside from the problematic notion of culture, as mentioned above, the concept of hybridity does allow us to recognize heterogeneity amidst homogenizing forces, and through the Third Space, the 'in-between' space, blurs the boundaries between static binary oppositions (between 'cultures').

But although these concepts are therefore very useful, we need to keep in mind that they are theoretical concepts which are very much grounded in the analysis of particular texts. As bell hooks notes, 'it is sadly ironic that the contemporary discourse which talks the most about heterogeneity, the decentered subject, declaring breakthroughs that allow recognition of Otherness, still directs its critical voice primarily to a specialized audience that shares a common language rooted in the very master narratives it claims

to challenge' (1993, p.423). In other words, it is important to analyse to what extent these concepts are being appropriated in particular social contexts, as well as who appropriates them, in what ways, and for what reasons.

Robert Young critiques Bhabha's notions of ambivalence and agency as too unclear by posing the question 'whether these apparently seditionary undoings in fact remain unconscious for both colonizer and colonized, who are nevertheless inexorably locked into a constant movement of destabilization which only Bhabha can articulate, or whether the colonized can detect such slippages in the speech of the colonizer and consciously exploit them' (1990, p.152). I agree that Bhabha is not very specific about this; although 'hybridity' appears to be a very useful theoretical 'tool' in readings of colonial texts, he is rather non-specific about how this can be appropriated in social practices and contexts.

Stratton identifies this and makes an interesting distinction between hybridity and creolisation which is worth considering here. He draws attention to the historically negative connotations of the term hybridity as non-productive and related to infertility. These connotations stem from the nineteenth century when the term was mostly applied to thinking on race. 'When applied to culture, we have assumptions about cultures being discrete entities, that they may integrate but that there is always the possibility that the resultant new cultural formation may break apart and fragment back to its original forms' (Stratton, 1998, p.15).

This is certainly not the way in which Bhabha conceptualises it, but it echoes Malik's earlier noted concerns about 'contemporary radical thinking on race'. Stratton connects this to what he calls 'official multiculturalism'[7]. He contrasts this to 'everyday multiculturalism' to which the term creolisation can be better applied, because it has

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[7]I return to this in depth in chapter 5.

133

historically been associated with language and has therefore more positive and productive connotations. He uses Robert Young's following definition: 'the imperceptible process whereby two or more cultures merge into a new mode' (Stratton, 1998, p.16). This underlines the inherent impossibility of 'fragmenting back to its original forms'; it emphasises that the outcome is inevitably something new. Although the concept is in that sense almost identical to Bhabha's hybridity, it does aid in the understanding of the very important distinction between 'official' and 'everyday' multiculturalism. I elaborate on this distinction and its implications for the New Zealand context in the next chapter, but it serves for now to make the link to Stuart Hall's writings on race and ethnicity which are, though theoretical in nature, more geared towards 'everyday' social contexts.

## 4.4: Stuart Hall: Articulation, Hegemony and Identity Politics.

Stuart Hall is widely considered to be an instrumental figure in the development of Cultural Studies in a broad sense. His writings are not limited to any of the sub-domains of Cultural Studies, any of the four stages as outlined by Chow[8]. They rather range across the whole field. For the purposes of this chapter I concentrate on Hall's ideas about race and ethnicity, and his related elaboration of the concept of 'articulation', which I believe is very relevant to this study, as it provides a framework with which we can analyse the data gathered from production interviews and focus group research.

The main thrust of Hall's conceptualization of race and ethnicity is based on a recognition of the complexity that underlies these categories. A lot of work is therefore spent on the deconstruction of essentialist notions in which the categories of race and ethnicity are often framed. Instead of thinking about these categories as static, frozen in time, we need to think of them as open-ended, constantly subject to change. This promises to facilitate the move from regressive notions of identity formation, always

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[8]See chapter 4.1, p.116.

harking back to some 'authentic origin', and thereby focused on exclusion, towards a more progressive notion, which would be open to change, always adapting to changing contexts, and therefore more inclusive.

> Ethnicity *can* be a constitutive element in the most viciously regressive kind of nationalism or national identity. But in our times, as an imaginary community, it is also beginning to carry some other meanings, and to define a new space for identity. It insists on difference- on the fact that every identity is placed, positioned, in a culture, a language, a history. Every statement comes from somewhere, from somebody in particular. It insists on specificity, on conjuncture. But it is not necessarily armour-plated against other identities. It is not tied to fixed, permanent, unalterable oppositions. It is not wholly defined by exclusion.
>
> (Hall, 1987/1993, p.138)

There is a very attractive positivity in this argument, but as I have mentioned before, the emphasis on difference walks a fine line and can easily slip back into regressive notions of difference, this time maybe not along national lines, but along ethnic or racial lines.

Although Hall subsequently recognises that it involves dimensions of power, he initially asserts that, 'it isn't quite so framed by those extremities of power and aggression, violence and mobilization, as the older forms of nationalism' (1987/1993, p.138). The events of the last decade in for example the Balkans would tell a different story, which indicates that we have to pay careful attention to specific contexts in which these identities are being defined: Hall's work is mostly situated in a British context. I would argue that we can't separate the concepts of race and ethnicity from the national contexts in which they are being articulated, for these forms of identification are inextricably linked. But keeping these reservations in mind, the concept of ethnicity as open-ended is theoretically still very attractive.

Hall traces its development, historically and on a theoretical level, through what he calls 'five great de-centrings' of the Western subject: firstly through the traditions of Marxist thought, secondly through Freud's 'discovery' of the unconscious, thirdly through the work of the structural linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, fourthly through the work of Michel Foucault, and fifthly through the impact of feminism, both as a theoretical critique and as a social movement (1992, pp.285-291). Obviously, to discuss each of these 'de-centrings' in depth would be impossible in the space of this study, but it is important to recognise, historically, a trend towards a different conception of the individual subject, as this underlies much of what has become the 'politics of difference'.

This study does therefore draw on some of the theoretical underpinnings of this shift, particularly the work of Foucault and (post)feminism. Influenced by these conceptual shifts, 'the Enlightenment 'subject', with a fixed and stable identity, was de-centred into the open, contradictory, unfinished, fragmented identities of the post-modern subject' (1992, p.291). Drawing specifically on Freud, Hall comes to define identity as follows: 'Rather than speaking of identity as a finished thing, we should speak of *identification*, and see it as an ongoing process. Identity arises, not so much from the fullness of identity which is already inside us as individuals, but from a *lack* of wholeness which is 'filled' from *outside us*, by the ways we imagine ourselves to be seen by *others*' (1992, p.287). This highlights the relational character of identity, be it ethnic, racial, gender, national or in short, any identity. Any one of these identities becomes foregrounded and more salient in particular contexts.

An important aspect of Hall's writing is that he is always looking for ways to position 'theory' in particular social contexts, to take them out of the academy so to speak. It is therefore not a coincidence that he is attracted to Gramsci's writings who's theoretical writing 'was always intended to serve, not an abstract academic purpose, but the aim of 'informing political practice' (Hall, 1986/1996, p.411). In his attempt to outline the

relevance of Gramsci for the study of race and ethnicity, Hall warns that 'we expose ourselves to serious error when we attempt to 'read off' concepts which were designed to operate at a high level of abstraction as if they automatically produced the same theoretical effects when translated to another, more concrete, 'lower' level of operation' (ibid, p.413). One of the main principles he takes from Gramsci is his anti-reductionist stance, 'the idea that societies are necessarily complexly structured totalities, with different levels of articulation (the economic, the political, the ideological instances) in different combinations; each combination giving rise to a different configuration of social forces and hence to a different type of social development' (ibid, p.420/421). In other words, an analysis based on any one of these 'instances' in isolation is always going to be limited, as they are necessarily connected and implicated in each other.

When we recognise this, Gramsci's concept of hegemony becomes a very useful 'tool', as it emphasises not only historical specificity, but is also multi-dimensional in character: 'it cannot be constructed or sustained on *one* front of struggle alone (for example, the economic). It represents a degree of mastery over a whole series of different 'positions' at once' (ibid, p.424). This is attractive in terms of the analysis of race and ethnicity in that it resists a closed-off and 'tidy' understanding of these categories. In other words, categories of race and ethnicity are differently articulated in different contexts, and they can thus be appropriated differently. They intersect with categories of class and gender, but never in straightforward and predictable ways. Furthermore, Gramsci does not conceive of the 'self' as a unified and coherent subject, 'but a contradictory subject and a social construction' (ibid, p.440). In other words, we cannot assume that people are going to behave according to a prescribed idea of how they 'should' behave in relation to their social class position, or their race or ethnicity. This opens the way for an analysis of the apparent contradictions of for instance 'internalised racism' (ibid, p.440, see also bell hooks, 1992, p.18/19).

Seen in this way then, hegemony becomes 'not a *thing* to be seized, overthrown or

'smashed' with a single blow, but a complex *formation* in modern societies which must become the focus of a number of different strategies and struggles because it is an arena of different social contestations' (ibid, p.429). This means firstly that power should not be seen as unified and monolithic, but as historically situated in particular contexts, and secondly that it has different effects in different contexts. In terms of the latter point, this means that categories of race and ethnicity, despite broad similarities, are articulated differently in different contexts and have different effects.

To sum up, Hall, with Gramsci, conceives of ideological struggle as 'the processes of de-construction and re-construction by which old alignments are dismantled and new alignments can be effected between elements in different discourses and between social forces and ideas. This conceives ideological change, not in terms of substitution or imposition but rather in terms of the articulation and the dis-articulation of ideas' (ibid, p.434). This has clear parallels with Foucault's notions of power and discourse, and forms the basis of much of Hall's work on race and ethnicity, although sometimes problematically so. It is useful for my purposes in this study because it is based on the premise that power is a relational concept with different effects in different contexts; it also shows clear parallels with the discourse analytic framework as outlined in chapter 1. While not denying the importance of power in relation to race and ethnicity, it allows for more flexibility and thus for the possibility of social change.

Hall's work on representation deals quite specifically with 'everyday' social struggles for social change. 'How things are represented and the 'machineries' and regimes of representation in a culture do play a *constitutive*, and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event, role. This gives questions of culture and ideology, and the scenarios of representation- subjectivity, identity, politics- a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the construction of social and political life' (1989/1996, p.443). If we take this fundamental recognition, that representations are *both* reflexive and formative, as a basis, we can see why the struggle over representations is often considered a vital one,

as this recognition has powerful implications.

The struggle over representations is fought on three different fronts, and in three different stages. Firstly, there is a struggle over access to the means of representation. Secondly, there is a challenge to the representations themselves: who is included and excluded? How stereotypical are the images? Thirdly, and somewhat dependent on the first two, how to show diversity without regressing to earlier 'positive' and 'negative' images, once access has been achieved. Clearly, these struggles are fought over in particular national contexts and relate to the position of minority groups in those national contexts. Within a British context, Hall expresses relief 'at the passing away of what at one time seemed to be a necessary fiction. Namely, either that all black people are good or indeed that all black people are *the same*' (ibid, p.444). We will see at a later stage if this 'passing away' applies to minority groups in a New Zealand context.

In relation to the politics of representation Hall then makes a distinction between race and ethnicity. He decouples these two concepts in an attempt to move away from the biological connotations of race as 'stabilized by Nature', which echoes Stratton's earlier noted concerns about hybridity versus creolisation:

> What is involved is the splitting of the notion of ethnicity between, on the one hand the dominant notion which connects it to nation and 'race' and on the other hand what I think is the beginning of a positive conception of the ethnicity of the margins, of the periphery. (.) We are all, in that sense, *ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are. But this is also a recognition that this is not an ethnicity which is doomed to survive, as Englishness was, only by marginalizing, dispossessing, displacing and forgetting other ethnicities. This precisely is the politics of ethnicity predicated on difference and diversity (ibid, p.447).

Attractive as this may sound, there are a number of dangers involved. First of all, simply replacing race with ethnicity implies a positivity in which the replacement of one term by another makes the first term somehow go away. This is putting it rather simply, but there is a kind of optimism that underlies this idea which makes it easy to ignore the power relations involved in such a move.

Related to this is what I would call the scramble for ethnicity, as manifested in a resurgence of the study of ethnic identities over the past decade, resulting in a frantic assertion of ethnic identities. This brings with it the danger of ignoring race as a category and a leveling out of the playing field. This is dangerous because there is still a hierarchy at work; some ethnicities are more powerful than others in particular contexts. Dyer writes about the American context that 'being say, Polish, Catholic or Irish may not be as important to white Americans as some might wish. But being white is' (1997, p.4). He calls ethnic categories like Irish-American or Italian-American 'variations on white ethnicity' (ibid, p.4). We will see in part six of this chapter to what extent this applies to a New Zealand context[9]. In short, race is still a very powerful concept regardless of whether it is explicitly talked about or not.

This recognition goes some way in answering Hall's question about what the need is for further debate about 'identity', if sustained anti-essentialist critiques have considerably destabilized ethnic, racial and national conceptions of cultural identity (1996a, p.1). There seems to be a paradox at work here in that the more work is done on destabilizing these categories, the more they seem to be appropriated *as if* they were stable categories. In my view, destabilization has not gone far enough if the effect is merely that larger categories are fragmented into smaller categories which are however no less inflexible. In other words, there appears to be no possibility of thinking outside these categories, in a way that transcends them. There seems to be a binary at work here that

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[9]See also chapter 5.

only allows for two polarized discourses: either we are all different (articulated in terms of group difference) or we are all the same (e.g. all New Zealanders, or all human).

Grossberg recognizes this when he identifies a need to 'rearticulate the question of identity into a question about the possibility of constructing historical agency, and giving up notions of resistance that assume a subject standing entirely outside of and against a well established structure of power' (1996, p.88). He then asks an important question: 'what are the conditions through which people can belong to a common collective without becoming representatives of a single definition?' (ibid, p.88). The question then becomes one of how we can build on the recognition of difference in a way that transcends fixed notions of difference. I believe we can only do that if we think of identity formation as a process, as opposed to something 'finished'. Hall makes a distinction in this respect between identification and identity:

> Identities are points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us. They are the result of a successful articulation or 'chaining' of the subject into the flow of the discourse. (.) The notion that an effective suturing of the subject to a subject-position requires, not only that the subject is 'hailed', but that the subject invests in the position, means that suturing has to be thought of as an *articulation*, rather than a one-sided process, and that in turn places *identification*, if not identities, firmly on the theoretical agenda.
>
> (1996a, p.6)

The privileging of identification over identity is interesting because it recognises both the importance and the 'impossibility' of identity, and by 'impossibility' I mean its inherent fluidity and relationality. What the related concept of articulation allows for is a recognition of agency which is implicated in this process. In relation to categories of race and ethnicity then, this study focuses on the way these categories are being 'articulated' in particular contexts and why; on what the limits and possibilities for this

articulation are in specific New Zealand contexts, and how this relates to the power involved in setting these particular boundaries.

Much of the theory above draws on what can generally be called 'postcolonial theory'. The quotation marks indicate that this is a highly contested field of study (some would call it a discourse), but many aspects of it are relevant in a New Zealand context. I therefore first consider what constitutes this field of study, and discuss some of the main criticisms leveled against it, before relating it to a New Zealand context.

## 4.5: Post-Colonial Theory.

Postcolonial theory is but one part of a larger field which is variously described as 'postcoloniality', a 'postcolonial condition', a 'postcolonial position', and the list goes on. As Roscoe notes, 'there has been much debate and confusion over the use of the term "postcolonial". It seems at once to be characterising a particular historical moment, that which comes after colonisation, a body of intellectual work, a subject position and a moral standpoint. As with many of the other "post" terms, it has taken on the status of an accepted and unproblematic term, used widely, and frequently without explanation' (1999, p.20); in other words, it has become close to an empty signifier.

Judging by two recent anthologies, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (1995[10]) and *Postcolonialism: Critical Concepts* (2000[11]), this 'field' is enormously varied and heterogeneous. Both of these anthologies are also primarily concerned with literary texts. This poses a number of questions as to its usefulness as a concept. In other words, is it too general to be effective as a political project? Who and what is 'postcolonial'? What is included and what is excluded? Can it be unproblematically applied to film texts?

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[10]Edited by Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin.

[11]Consisting of five volumes; edited by Brydon.

According to Ashcroft *et al,*

> Post-colonial theory involves discussion about experience of various kinds:
> migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender,
> place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as
> history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking
> and writing by which all of these come into being. None of these is 'essentially'
> post-colonial, but together they form the complex fabric of the field (1995, p.2).

Again, incorporating all of these strands under a single umbrella term seems fraught
with danger. As Brydon notes, 'the very breadth of postcolonialism's reach has aroused
concerns that the concept may prove unduly homogenizing, overly ambitious,
ahistorical, and thus complicit with the very relations of inequality that it ostensibly
seeks to protest against' (2000, p.7/8). This is indeed a very real danger that demands
vigilance.

However, the proliferation of writings in recent years (Shohat, 1992, McClintock, 1995,
Dirlik, 1994) which question the term itself points to one of its major strengths: that is,
an important aspect of postcolonial theory involves questioning established structures
and practices, which includes its own. Furthermore, postcolonial theory has such a wide
reach across different disciplines that it is also difficult to contain it under an umbrella
term. This provides very attractive opportunities, and I agree provisionally with Brydon
when she says, 'the strengths of postcolonialism derive from its ability to cast the
familiar in a fresh light, to encourage cross-disciplinary dialogue, and to provoke the
rethinking of traditionally accepted disciplinary boundaries' (2000, p.7).

If applied with care, this allows for the recognition of specific contexts and historical
developments, while at the same time taking into account areas of general overlap

between different localities. In other words, the focus should not just be on a 'recovery' of history in isolated form, but also on how contemporary relations of power, in a global and local sense, are both shaped by this history and inform its content in complex ways. Appiah warns in this respect of the tendency to relate everything back to colonial history, without paying enough attention to contemporary influences. Seen in this way, 'the *post* in postcolonial (.) is the *post* of the space-clearing gesture' (1992, p.119). While not denying the influence of colonialism, he goes on to say, in relation to contemporary African cultural life, that 'what is called 'syncretism' here is made possible by the international exchange of commodities, but is not a consequence of a space-clearing gesture' (ibid, p.119). I would suggest it may be both, to varying degrees.

The 'post' in postcolonialism then implies a temporal and spatial dimension, as well as referring to an epistemological 'break'. It points to a period after colonialism as well as to locations after colonialism. It therefore implies closure: the colonial period has apparently ended. We have to guard ourselves from falling into this reductionist trap. However, recognising that 'the colonial' is not dead, since it lives on in its 'after-effects' (Hall, 1996b, p.248) does not mean that it is played out in the same ways. We need to recognise the complexity that Appiah refers to and importantly, the power relations that are involved in this. As McClintock notes, 'neocolonialism is not simply a repeat performance of colonialism, nor is it a slightly more complicated, Hegelian merging of tradition and colonialism into some new, historic hybrid' (1995, p.13).

With regards to the temporal dimension, McClintock develops a valid critique: 'Metaphorically, the term postcolonialism marks history as a series of stages along an epochal road from "the precolonial", to "the colonial", to the "postcolonial"- an unbidden, if disavowed, commitment to linear time and the idea of development' (ibid, p.10, see also Shohat, 1992). She goes on to say that, 'if the theory promises a decentering of history in hybridity, syncreticism, multidimensional time and so forth, the singularity of the term effects a recentering of global history around the single rubric

of European time. Colonialism returns at the moment of its disappearance' (ibid, p.11).

This echoes Appiah's earlier point about the danger of equating colonialism with Europe alone and positioning it in the past, which is what the 'post' implies. This firstly threatens to generalise the vastly different ways in which colonialism has affected different places historically, and secondly doesn't take into account various forms of neo-colonialism as they can be identified in contemporary contexts. 'While some countries may be postcolonial with respect to their erstwhile European masters, they may not be postcolonial with respect to their new colonizing neighbours' (ibid, p.13).

In relation to settler societies like New Zealand, we could take this a step further, depending on how 'colonization' is defined. Smith argues for instance that, 'naming the world as 'post-colonial' is, from indigenous perspectives, to name colonialism as finished business. In Bobby Sykes' cryptic comment post-colonial can only mean one thing: the colonizers have left. There is rather compelling evidence that in fact this has not occurred' (1999, p.98). From a settler perspective on the other hand, neo-colonialism can be seen to have different effects again. We therefore need to pay careful attention to contemporary manifestations of power, without losing sight of specific historical contexts; in other words, it is important to link these different strands in an analysis of contemporary discourses.

'What 'post-colonial' certainly is not is one of those periodisations based on epochal 'stages', when everything is reversed at the same moment, all the old relations disappear forever and entirely new ones come to replace them' (Hall, 1996b, p.247). Different colonies have historically developed in different ways and different contexts, which has a severe impact on the power relations within and between those different contexts today. There is a significant difference between India, where the colonizer has 'come and gone', and settler societies like New Zealand, to name one example. But as Hall notes, 'Australia and Canada, on the one hand, Nigeria, India and Jamaica on the other,

145

are certainly not 'post-colonial' *in the same way*, But this does not mean that they are not 'post-colonial' *in any way*' (ibid, p.246, original emphasis).

Where McClintock and Hall stress the importance of interrogating the term itself, while simultaneously recognising the validity of the theoretical substance of postcolonial theory, Dirlik launches an all-out assault on not only the theory, but also the power aspect of its institutionalisation. By doing so, he reintroduces the importance of class:

> Within the institutional site of the First World academy, fragmentation of earlier metanarratives appears benign (except to hidebound conservatives) because of its promise of more democratic, multicultural, and cosmopolitan epistemologies. In the world outside the academy, however, it shows in murderous ethnic conflict; continued inequality between societies, classes, and genders; and the absence of oppositional possibilities that, always lacking in coherence, are rendered even more impotent than earlier by the fetishization of difference, fragmentation, and so on.
>
> (1994, p.516)

The main thrust of postcolonial theory focuses on deconstructing colonial discourse and decentering the subject. Theoretical concepts discussed in this chapter (for example hybridity and the 'in-between') have been instrumental in forging new ways of conceptualizing notions of culture, race and ethnicity. In Hall's words, [postcolonial theory] 'is obliging us to re-read the very binary form in which the colonial encounter has for so long itself been represented. It obliges us to re-read the binaries as forms of transculturation, of cultural translation, destined to trouble the here/there cultural binaries for ever' (1996b, p.247).

But where this opens up a myriad of possibilities, theoretically, Dirlik draws attention to the limits of 'hybridity':

It excludes the many ethnic groups in post*colonial* societies (among others) who, obviously unaware of their "hybridity", go on massacring one another. It also excludes radical "postcolonials", who continue to claim that their societies are still colonized and believe that the assertion of integrated identities and subjectivities is essential to their ability to struggle against colonialism. Of particular note are indigenous radical activists who refuse to go along with the postcolonial repudiation of "essentialized" identities (1994, p.508).

Although I do not entirely agree with his argument here (compare Smith's argument above), it does force us to question the notion of hybridity and to place it in specific contexts. And again, it forces us to consider issues of power involved. In other words, not all of us are in a position to *choose* a hybrid identity. McClintock similarly argues that, 'culturally enforced ethnic passing (Jewish or Irish immigrants assimilating in the United States, say) or brutally enforced hybridity (the deliberate impregnation of Muslim women by rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina) entail very different relations to hybridity and ambiguity. (.) The lyrical glamour cast by some postcolonial theorists over ambivalence and hybridity is not always historically warranted' (1995, p.67/68).

To a large extent, these critiques stem from a perceived emphasis in postcolonial theory on 'textuality', which is not surprising considering its foundations in poststructuralist theory. Postcolonial theory can be seen to have a preoccupation with 'the concept of colonialism as an ideological or discursive formation: that is, with the ways in which colonialism is viewed as an apparatus for constituting subject positions through the field of representation' (Slemon, 1994, p.46). In other words, a lot of postcolonial work stays 'locked' within colonial texts. These critiques expose the limits of this tendency, and argue for a need to find ways to apply the theory to more concrete contexts, both in social and historical terms. I believe a tripartite approach in combination with a

discourse analytic framework[12] constitutes a step into that direction.

Dirlik however, takes his critique of hybridity very far by extending it, in a clean sweep, to postcolonial theory in its entirety. He argues that 'postcolonial critics have engaged in valid criticism of past forms of ideological hegemony but have little to say about its contemporary figurations' (1994, p.523). In other words, by focusing on colonialism as history, it fails to account for a very different 'world order' today. He takes this even further when he asserts that 'in their simultaneous repudiation of structure and affirmation of the local in problems of oppression and liberation, they have mystified the ways in which totalizing structures persist in the midst of apparent disintegration and fluidity' (ibid, p.523), thereby accusing postcolonial critics of being complicit in this process.

Although I believe, with Hall (see 1997, pp.258/259), that this is a rather simplistic conclusion to Dirlik's initial argument, he does draw attention to some very important issues within that argument. These relate to globalisation and the transnationalization of production and capital[13], and particularly how this relates to class. Dirlik identifies a new kind of marginalisation which may transcend older categories (like nation, race, gender and so on) in important ways. This is important to keep in mind in relation to my discussion of diaspora and transnational identities in the next section of this chapter.

Dirlik argues that 'the new "flexible production" has made it no longer necessary to utilize explicit coercion against labor, at home or abroad (in colonies); those peoples or places that are not responsive to the needs (or demands) of capital or that are too far gone to respond "efficiently" simply find themselves out of its pathways' (ibid, p.519). This echoes the often stated 'blurring of boundaries', but importantly recognises new

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[12]As outlined in chapter 1.

[13]As discussed in chapter 2.

boundaries which may be equally powerful, if not more so. I would argue however that in the process of policing those boundaries (who is to be admitted, who is not) older categories play a vital part, as they ensure that those outside the 'pathways' do not congregate to cause 'blockage'. These older categories then play a vital part in the demarcation between those implicitly deemed 'desirable' migrants (for example 'business' migrants) and 'less desirable' migrants (for example refugees or asylum seekers).

In short, while hybridity may be an attractive option within the boundaries, we need to carefully consider its workings outside those boundaries; the choices may be far more limited. This does require linking history to the present, and conceptualizing it as a process, something which 'discourse analysis' is well equipped to facilitate. 'By focusing on processes (which includes power relations), we can avoid the pitfalls of periodisation (that the postcolonial moment began on...) while still retaining some notion of the historical and cultural specificity of each society's journey' (Roscoe, 1999, p.21).

Overall then, I believe postcolonial theory has a lot to offer in relation to a New Zealand context, and this study in particular, but only if applied with care. As McClintock cautions, 'without a renewed will to intervene in the unacceptable, we face the prospect of being becalmed in a historically empty space in which our sole direction is found by gazing back spellbound at the epoch behind us, in a perpetual present marked only as "post" (1995, p.396). If applied with care then, postcolonial theory allows us to deconstruct inflexible categories such as 'nation', 'culture', 'race', 'immigrant', and so on. Within mainstream discourses about immigration for example, the category of 'immigrant' is often appropriated in very narrow and unproblematic terms: immigrants all come for the same reasons, all want the same outcomes (assimilation) and are all dying to get into the country, so the assumptions go. But the increasing amount of writings about 'diaspora identities' for example would indicate a far more complex

relationship between 'national identity', 'immigration' and 'home'. Since this relationship constitutes a central topical theme[14] in *Broken English*, I discuss diaspora and transnational identification, before focusing on a specific New Zealand context.

## 4.6: Diaspora and Transnational Identities

The main emphasis in studies of diaspora is on 'everyday' identifications (in Stratton's sense[15]), and herein lies their main attraction in my opinion. In other words, they can illuminate the extent to which official discourses influence identity formation on a day to day basis, and they may simultaneously throw into question the (in)adequacy of the homogenising force of official categorisation. There is an increasing amount of such studies internationally (e.g. Gillespie, 1995, Kolar-Panov, 1997, Skrbis, 1999, Cunningham *et al*, 2000), but relatively few in New Zealand (e.g. Ip, 1996, Trlin & Tolich, 1995, Roscoe, 1999, Macpherson *et al*, 2001). An important part of this thesis is based on that recognition.

Ang defines diaspora as follows:

> Diasporas are commonly understood as transnational, spatially and temporally sprawling sociocultural formations of people, creating imagined communities whose blurred and fluctuating boundaries are sustained by real and/or symbolic ties to some original "homeland". (.) It is the myth of the (lost or idealized) homeland, the object of both collective memory and of desire and attachment, which is constitutive to diasporas, and which ultimately confines and constrains the nomadism of the diasporic subject (1992/1993, p.6).

The emphasis here is on culture and identity as a process, which builds on my previous

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[14]As discussed in chapter 3.

[15]This is discussed in depth in chapter 5.

discussion of 'hybridity' and 'articulation'. Importantly though, the notion of diaspora foregrounds the relationality and specificity of particular contexts, both historically and spatially. It thereby also draws attention to the limits of these ways of imagining communities, or the importance of 'borders'.

In this way it allows for flexibility in the sense that its focus goes beyond the borders of the nation as imagined space, without ignoring the ongoing importance of this space. According to Brah for instance, 'diaspora space as a conceptual category is 'inhabited' not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of *diaspora space* (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put' (1996, p.181).

The concept of diaspora in its contemporary usage is thus based on its original meaning, which is often specifically associated with the historical dispersion of the Jews, but it has been opened up in important ways, and treats this historical association as a starting point. According to Skrbis,

> Conceptualising diaspora in this broader fashion reinforces the link between globalisation processes and rapid diaspora formation, and breaks with the past tradition which perceived diasporas as a consequence of necessarily traumatic and massive uprootings. The formation of modern diasporas is not necessarily linked to such developments but could be seen as a product of a combination of economic, cultural and/or political factors' (1999, p.5, see also Spoonley, 2001, p.82).

There are a number of advantages in broadening the scope of diaspora in this way. Most importantly, it shifts the concept away from connotations of exile and victimisation, which are linked to its historical meaning, to a recognition of agency. As Sinclair and Cunningham observe, 'exile and diaspora are not coterminous. Exiles are not

necessarily dispersed into several countries, as would occur in a diaspora, while diasporas are not necessarily sparked by cataclysmic events. Furthermore, while exiles cannot go home, some other kinds of diasporic people can and do' (2000, p.11).

While thus broadening the scope of diaspora as a concept has important advantages, there is also a need for caution. For while it was originally appropriated with a political edge, it has more recently been coopted into mainstream discourses by the mainstream New Zealand media. In this way, 'the Kiwi diaspora' becomes an all-inclusive term which includes New Zealand travelers on their 'OE' and expatriate business people. In short, it appears to be in danger of becoming a nodal point, thereby emptied of its critical edge.

Keeping this in mind, diaspora as a critical concept relates to migrations of various types, and complicates migration 'as a complex process of cultural maintenance and negotiation, or resistance and adaption' (ibid, p.4). It is a useful and relevant concept to this study in that it provides a framework through which we can analyse how different migrations are being articulated in a New Zealand context, and to what extent these articulations are influenced by this local context and by global factors. For example, to what extent are particular migrations 'voluntary'? What influences the extent of 'resistance' or 'adaption'? What role do aspects of class, gender and race play in this? And how does this differ across generations? What is the influence of dominant 'bicultural' imaginings of New Zealand on the strength of 'diasporic' imaginings of 'homelands'? What role do politics in 'homelands' themselves play in this?

The concept of diaspora employs a number of useful metaphors with which to conceptualise these kind of questions, such as 'home (lands)', 'borders/boundaries', local/global, 'memory' and so on. According to Brah, 'the concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire which is not the same thing as desire for a 'homeland'. This distinction is important, not least

because not all diasporas sustain an ideology of 'return' (1996, p.180). Furthermore, return is not always a possibility.

Skrbis makes two important and related points in this respect: 'Firstly, a diaspora population *may* result from the disappearance of a homeland from the world political map. (.) Secondly, a diaspora population may retain its diaspora status *despite* the existence of a 'homeland' (1999, p.4). In the latter case, the reasons are varied, but they are in significant ways related to the position within the host nation. 'In a world in which the modern nation-state still forms the dominant framework for cultural identification and construction of imagined community, the question "where you're from" tends to overwhelm and marginalize that of "where you're at" (Ang, 1992/93, p.4).

'Visibility' (read 'race') plays an important part in this, particularly if the nation is imagined in largely homogeneous ways. Ip notes for instance that 'the arrival of the new Asian immigrants and the backlash of mainstream New Zealanders have forced Chinese New Zealanders to redefine their position and identity. Chinese New Zealanders also have become much more aware of their 'Chineseness' (1996, p.9, see also Yue, 2000). However, that does not mean that this is an either/or kind of process, but more likely a matter of degree, and as Skrbis notes, 'the relationship between people's loyalties to an ethnic homeland, and their integration into the new host society, is not necessarily a mutually exclusive one. Rather, it is contingent on circumstances' (1999, p.40). He is referring here to first generation migrants, but this idea could be extended to second or third generation migrants as well, albeit to differing degrees.

Also, there is a difference between a 'homing' desire and a desire to physically *go* home. As Brah explains, 'the *concept* of diaspora signals processes of *multi-locationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries.* (.) The double, triple, or multi-placedness of 'home' in the imaginary of people in the diaspora does not

mean that such groups do not feel anchored in the place of settlement' (1996, p.194). But, and this is important because it highlights particular constraints in specific localities, 'it is quite possible to feel at home in a place and, yet, the experience of social exclusions may inhibit public proclamations of the place as home' (ibid, p.193).

This highlights differences between the private and the public sphere which are very relevant to this study: the way people define their position in New Zealand as a nation may be very different in the private sphere of their homes than in a more formal (and thus more public) setting of a focus group discussion[16]. Yue, for example, talks about this public sphere when she observes that 'intense exposure to the nationalist gaze is typical for Chinese communities living in fairly homogeneous societies where cultural diversity is the exception rather than the rule, and where the East is seen as the exotic Other' (2000, p.181). She is referring to a German context, but I suspect this to be fairly similar in a New Zealand context.

'The question of home, therefore, is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances' (Brah, 1996, p.192). These circumstances change, for instance as a result of immigration policy, which causes particular identifications to change and adapt as well. One of the respondents in Ip's study notes for example that, 'all my life I have regarded myself as Chinese. Suddenly these last few years I have become "Asian"' (1996, p.9). This is in response to a specific New Zealand context, but these kind of re-articulations of identity can also be in response to events in 'homelands' (e.g. 'Tiananmen Square' or the Balkan wars[17]), or to economic changes on a global level and so on. Furthermore, 'the intensity of attachment between diaspora individuals and

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[16]See chapter 8.

[17]The intense media focus on these events in China (1989) and former Yugoslavia in 'host nations' makes particular identifications more salient and can be seen to cause re-negotiations of identity (see for example Kolar-Panov, 1997).

their homelands varies and depends upon their temporal and spatial proximity to and/or distance from the homeland' (Skrbis, 1999, p.39). All of these factors interact in complex ways and become more or less salient in specific contexts.

Overall then,

> The *concept* of diaspora places discourses of 'home' and 'dispersion' in creative tension, *inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins*. The problematic of 'home' and belonging may be integral to the diasporic condition, but how, when, and in what form questions surface, or how they are addressed, is specific to the history of a particular diaspora. Not all diasporas inscribe homing desire through a wish to return to a place of 'origin'.
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> (Brah, 1996, p.192/193)

Finally, the concept of diaspora allows us to complicate the powerful metaphor of the border/boundary. The distinction between geographical, cultural and psychic borders is very attractive in this respect. As Brah notes, 'borders are arbitrary constructions. Hence, in a sense, they are always metaphors. But, far from being mere abstractions of a concrete reality, metaphors are part of the discursive materiality of power relations. Metaphors can serve as powerful inscriptions of the effects of political borders' (1996, 198). Similarly, Cottle argues that 'boundaries define the borders of nations and territories as well as the imaginations of minds and communities. By definition, and often by design, they serve to mark out the limits of a given field, territory or social space' (2000, p.2).

This is an important recognition of complexity if we relate it for instance to discourses about globalisation and the relationship between 'the local' and 'the global'. The often asserted notion that in the contemporary global context, national borders are increasingly porous should be approached with caution. For example, if geographical

155

borders, in New Zealand's case, become more flexible (by means of a more inclusive immigration policy) it does not automatically follow that psychic borders are relaxed in tandem.

At the same time, this flexibility is often characterised by economic motives (not cultural ones), which means that borders can also be tightened (e.g. 'Fortress Europe'[18]). And within the national space, psychic borders, based on historical continuity, may stay firmly in place. Cottle observes in this respect that, 'over time, boundaries can become deeply embedded in the structures and institutions of societies, in their practices and even in their 'common sense'. Once institutionally sedimented and taken for granted, these boundaries all too often harden into exclusionary barriers legitimized by cultural beliefs, ideologies and representations' (2000, p.2).

At the same time however, these barriers may be crossed from only one side, in which case 'cultural diversity' is constructed as 'a manifestation of the nation's unity' (Koundoura, 1998, p.72). This is often an effect of official policies of multiculturalism where cultural and psychic borders are actually being strengthened[19]. What Koundoura calls '*Borderlands*' ('cultural' expressions from the margins) 'can be and has been incorporated into the canon either as an act of tokenism or as an act of radical chic' (ibid, p.72). We will see in subsequent chapters to what extent this applies to *Broken English*.

Globalisation then can be characterised by increasing flows of capital, people and information across borders, but not all at the same speed and not all in equal measures, and importantly, not all with the same effects. What studies of diaspora illuminate is the

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[18]There has been a significant increase in cooperation between different European nations in the 1990s, in a concerted effort to keep out 'undesirable' migrants, particularly from North Africa, but increasingly also from 'the East'.

[19]I will expand on this in chapter 5.

heterogeneous nature of these various border crossings; the recognition that it is not just a one-way flow from center to periphery, but rather a complex interaction between local and global power structures through which some borders are opened up and others are tightened. Keeping in mind my earlier discussion of Dirlik's argument about class[20], this does not mean that earlier 'boundaries' (of class, gender, race and so on) are thrown overboard, but rather that the demarcating lines are reconfigured and drawn differently. As Sinclair and Cunningham assert, 'at one level, diasporic movement is a *cause* of the globalisation of capital. (.) Yet, for many more people, their diasporic movement is an *effect* of global investment patterns and international inequalities (2000, p.12).

If we extent the border metaphor to the media 'landscape' of which cinema is an important part, different studies are beginning to show the complexity and the effects of globalisation in local contexts. New communication technologies for example are changing the ways in which identities are articulated, providing new opportunities for some, but at the same time creating new boundaries for others (digital divide). In relation to the opportunities, Cottle notes for instance that 'these technologies facilitate instantaneous flows of information and ideas as well as the ritual exchange of symbols and images, thereby serving to construct and affirm 'imagined'- and now increasingly- 'virtual' communities' (2000, p.3). As Dayan observes, some of these new 'imaginings' 'emanate from the private sphere: the circulation of home videos and the multiplication of diasporic pilgrimages' (1999, p.24, see also Kolar-Panov, 1997). To this we could add Internet use (Spoonley, 2001, p.89) and satellite 'feeds'. Dayan distinguishes this from media use related to the public sphere (e.g. 'minority' or 'community' television such as *Triangle* in New Zealand). He comes to the conclusion that 'far from excluding each other, the various media mentioned here interact with each other. They enter into all sorts of combinations' (ibid, p.24). Again, I would like to expand this to 'mainstream' television and cinema, for I believe all these forms of media use interact

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[20]See chapter 4.5, pp.146-148.

with and influence each other, and by extension the way identity comes to be articulated in particular contexts.

In conclusion then, the concept of diaspora can be very productive, but should be approached with some caution. 'The word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings. They are contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure' (Brah, 1996, p.193). The emphasis is thus on 'potential' and 'process', and by extension on destabilising existing power structures. Ang formulates this as follows:

> Since diasporas are fundamentally and inevitably transnational in their scope, always linking the local and the global, the here and the there, past and present, they have the potential to unsettle static, essentialist and totalitarian conceptions of "national culture" or "national identity" with origins firmly rooted in fixed geography and common history. (.) A critical cultural politics of diaspora should privilege neither host country nor (real or imaginary) homeland, but precisely keep a creative tension between "where you're from" and "where you're at". I emphasise *creative* here to foreground the multiperspectival *productivity* of that position of in-between-ness (1992/1993, p.13, see also Ang, 2000).

For, as she warns, 'when the question of "where you're from" threatens to overwhelm the reality of "where you're at", the idea of diaspora becomes a disempowering rather than an empowering one, a hindrance to "identity" rather than an enabling principle' (ibid, p.12).

I believe the notion of diaspora, as formulated in this way, and in combination with 'hybridity' and 'the third space', is very useful in the following chapters where I analyse

first of all how *Broken English* represents the issues it deals with, and subsequently relate this to the ways in which the film makers and different audiences interpret these issues, and by extension articulate their identity. This analysis thus involves an exploring of 'borders', both geographical and cultural, as well as psychic, and the power structures that inform them.

Most importantly, I treat diaspora (or its articulation) as a process or, with Sinclair and Cunningham, 'as a collocation of class, ethnic, origination, education, work and financial configurations, whose status as a "community" is the product of strategic unities and alliances, sometimes engendered more from without than within, rather than ethnic "essences"' (2000, p.13). As mentioned before, the ways in which this process functions, and the unities and alliances it creates and informs, is highly context-specific, and I therefore conclude this chapter with a discussion of the specificity of the New Zealand context.

## 4.7: The New Zealand Context.

Historically, discourses on race and ethnicity in the New Zealand context have gone through a number of significant changes, related to particular historical events and political interventions. In relation to particular ethnic groups, these discourses go through periods where they become salient, often followed by periods of relative calm. At present, discourses about race and ethnicity are uneasily situated between notions of mono-culturalism, bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism; they are thus often cloaked in the 'safety' of cultural differences within a 'unified' nation and in debates about national identity.

In Wilson's words, 'culture and identity are inextricably intertwined. The current debate surrounding culture in New Zealand must therefore be seen as part of the weaving of different cultures situated in the New Zealand landscape into an identity of the people that is unique in itself, but which does not detract from the contributing cultures' (2000,

159

p.14). It is in this perceived detracting from the contributing cultures that conflicts arise; some cultures are seen as more dominant than others. For it is here that the struggle for representation is fought. In other words, who decides who gets to contribute, and what are the limits of this contribution? How does this contribution or non-contribution relate to particular positions in New Zealand society as a whole? Wilson acknowledges this when she notes that, 'in the New Zealand context there is a politicisation of culture, which affects the debate of cultural rights. This politicisation of culture is part of the process of a search for identity by individuals who feel alienated from their cultural roots, and by the country as a whole that seeks in a time of increasing globalisation to affirm an identity that is distinctive' (2000, p.15/16).

The link with globalisation is interesting and emphasises that New Zealand is not alone in this search for identity. However, although there are similarities with other nations, it is important to recognise local particularities. As mentioned before, constructions of identity by definition require boundaries and notions of what and who falls outside of these boundaries. Marotta notes in this respect that 'boundaries are ambivalent because they are both constructive and destructive; they provide the conditions to construct an identity because they establish difference between self and other, and they can also provide the grounds to suppress and exclude the identity of the other' (2000, p.177). He speaks from a migrant position and critiques the earlier mentioned positivity of the concept of hybridity in relation to a New Zealand context: 'the idea of a bicultural and multicultural experience implies that the distinction between self and other is less clearly defined because the hybrid experience renders boundaries fluid. Consequently, being situated in an in-between, borderless zone may lead to creativity, but it also leads to new forms of power relations, misunderstanding and unease' (ibid, p.187).

This critique raises two related questions: firstly, who is included in the discourse of biculturalism, and secondly, who appropriates the discourse of multiculturalism and for what reasons? In the former case, biculturalism is often talked about in terms of a

partnership between Maori and Pakeha. But both these categories are highly contested, so much so that the term Pakeha was replaced by 'New Zealand European' in the 2001 census. In other words, where the term Pakeha implies a hybrid identity, many New Zealanders obviously do not feel comfortable with this 'official' hybridity. Apart from that, many other New Zealanders do not feel included in this category, since it carries the implicit signifier 'of British descent' or 'white' (see Barlow, 1991/1996, p.86/87).

In a contemporary context, it also implies a political commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and it is therefore no coincidence that the discourse of multiculturalism is often appropriated to undermine the significance of the Treaty[21]. It is important in this context to recognise who gets constructed and also who constructs him/herself as Other in a relational sense, and most importantly for what reasons. Representation is a key aspect of these constructions, both in historical and contemporary contexts, and can therefore tell us much about power relations involved in this process. 'Central to postcolonial discourse is the way in which representation itself becomes a site of cultural and political contestation' (Jaber, 1998, p.38). It is therefore no coincidence, in a New Zealand context, that postcolonial discourse has had a significant impact on the ways in which otherness is (re)constructed. On a theoretical level, much of this has resulted in a 'recovery' of previously marginalised histories and by extension a deconstruction of previously dominant representations (e.g. Walker, 1990, 1999, Smith, 1999, Ip, 1996, 1998, Belich, 1996).

In a historical sense, the mainstream cultural and political power base in New Zealand society has been Pakeha for a long time, and still is to a large extent. As Smith observes, 'one of the problems of connecting colonialism in New Zealand with its formations elsewhere is that New Zealand, like Canada and Australia, was already privileged as a white dominion within the British Empire and Commonwealth, with the indigenous

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[21]This argument is discussed in more depth in chapter 5.

populations being minorities. (.) Within these states the indigenous people were absolute minorities' (1999, p.70). This has had a significant impact on the way in which 'otherness' has been constructed in the past, at least in mainstream discourses, which in turn influences the ways in which it is being constructed in contemporary discourses.

Many of these constructions are related to the project of nation building[22]. As Fleras and Spoonley note, 'relationships between the coloniser and the colonised were couched in the framework of assimilation, the inevitability of progress, Social Darwinian struggles, the demise of the indigenes, 'smoothing the pillow' of a dying 'race', and 'white man's burdens' (1999, p.3). In an important sense then, these frameworks were similar to wider, global enlightenment discourses (see Malik, 1996), but with different effects in local power structures.

In terms of colonial representations of Maori by Pakeha, Pihama identifies three dominant paradigms: 'the native/ inferior Other, the deficient/ depraved/ negative Other, and the activist/ radical/ excessive Other'. (1996, p.191; see also Smith, 1999, Blythe, 1994). These paradigms follow a historical trajectory in that the latter paradigm can be seen as an elaboration and a more contemporary adjustment to the former two. These paradigms are for the most part rather negative. Interestingly, in light of my earlier discussion of Foucault's incorporation of desire in relation to power[23], McCreanor identifies roughly three other paradigms in colonial discourse: 'the noble savage', 'the ignoble savage', and 'the romantic savage' (1997, p.36; see also Salmond, 1991). To this we could add 'historical savages' and 'dying savages' (Fleras and Spoonley, 1999, p.67).

Although 'positive' to some extent, these discourses are firstly rather patronising and

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[22]See chapter 2.

[23]See chapter 4.3, p.130.

Eurocentric, but at the same time enormously powerful because they allow for a high level of adaptability when they are strategically appropriated. As McCreanor notes, 'the dual construction, the characteristics of Maori designated positive and negative, and the possibility of dividing Maori against themselves to strengthen and justify the processes of colonisation and domination make up the common ground. These observations support a theoretical expectation that such patterns in Pakeha talk have a core of durability over considerable time frames' (1997, p.42). This is important because this study deals in part with the way discourses of race and ethnicity adapt to new circumstances while retaining some of the core ideas that underpin them, and as we shall see, this is not necessarily a conscious process, but is related to the limits of discourses at a particular point in time; it also highlights the importance of power involved in this process.

'As recently as the mid-1970s, New Zealand basked in the glow of international praise in the management of Maori-Pakeha relations' (Fleras and Spoonley, 1999, p.42). They go on to say that 'New Zealand identity was firmly anchored in a conformist attachment to the United Kingdom, together with an endorsement of egalitarianism and the ideals of tolerance and civility. (.) No one thought of New Zealand identity in 'racial' terms as White (ibid, p.43). It was this seemingly stable situation that changed quite dramatically during the 1970s and 1980s, under the influence of a number of factors, the most important of which are: 'Maori migration to cities in search of postwar employment, shocks to the economy because of international developments, the inflow of immigrants from the Pacific Islands, and African-American civil rights campaigns' (ibid, p.43/44, see also McIntosh, 2001). Amidst these developments were a number of specific events which had a strong impact, for instance the Maori land march in 1975, Bastion Point in 1978, and the 1981 Springbok Tour (see Walker, 1990).

*Maori Sovereignty*

It was in this context that Donna Awatere's *Maori Sovereignty* (1982/1984) was

published which can be seen as a germinal 'postcolonial' text in New Zealand and has had a profound impact on how nationhood, and by extension discourses of race and ethnicity, are being articulated. All of these factors together have 'opened up a space for accounts and perspectives that have until recently been marginalised, and has prompted a reconsideration of New Zealand's colonial history' (Roscoe, 1999). I will therefore firstly discuss some of the main arguments of Awatere's thesis, particularly its challenges to previous notions of race and ethnicity, before moving on to its significance in a contemporary context.

> Maori sovereignty is the Maori ability to determine our own destiny and to do so from the basis of our land and fisheries. In essence, Maori sovereignty seeks nothing less than the acknowledgment that New Zealand is Maori land, and further seeks the return of that land. At its most conservative it could be interpreted as the desire for a bicultural society, one in which taha Maori receives an equal consideration with, and equally determines the course of this country as taha Pakeha. It certainly demands an end to monoculturalism (Awatere, 1984, p.10).

Awatere defines Maori sovereignty in this way, before offering a deconstruction of mainstream New Zealand history. Much of this is based around conflicting interpretations of the Treaty of Waitangi which is widely written about elsewhere (e.g. Durie, 1998, Orange, 1987, Maaka & Fleras, 1997). For my purposes, the interest lies in the way she constructs race in her arguments, and the uneasy overlap with culture which I have discussed above. She creates a set of binary oppositions which are essentialist and relate to both 'race' and 'culture': 'the white way and the Maori way have always been incompatible' (p.14).

On the whole, *Maori Sovereignty* can be seen as a deconstruction of power relations in New Zealand. Awatere uses a series of statistics as proof of separate social development historically, and links this to cultural imperialism which according to her has caused

'the total exclusion of Maoritanga from the physical, economic, political, and philosophical development of this country' (p.14). Thus, culture is for the most part seen as the link between power in society and race. 'By denying they ['white people'] are *part* of a culture, they can deny the destructive impact that culture has on others, such as the Maori. They see this culture as being so normal and all other cultures as being so abnormal, less advanced, barbaric, that they cannot even *begin* to realise that it is *their* culture which is in fact savage, inhuman and barbaric' (p.59).

This is of course a highly essentialist notion of 'white people' and 'white culture', but in the context of the social climate at the time, it can be seen as a strategic intervention, a 'wake up call'. As Fleras and Spoonley note, 'contesting sovereignty not only directly contradicted a tenet of Pakeha egalitarianism- namely, one people under the law with a common set of rights- but Maori sovereignty discourses also pitted Maori against Pakeha by proposing distinctions on the most contestable (and contemptible) of grounds: 'race' or ethnicity' (1999, p.46). It thus shattered the myth of harmonious race relations and let no one off the hook: 'this is the crux of it; whites stick together, whatever their class, for the benefits they give each other' (1984, p.45).

The main importance of *Maori Sovereignty* then was that it caused a rethinking of power relations and the effects of those, thereby shifting the balance to some extent. In relation to this research, an important aspect of Awatere's thesis is the power to define and represent. She identifies both a spatial and temporal marginalisation of Maori (culture) and stresses the importance of moving to the 'center': 'the goal is to have all time and all space Maori. At present "Maoridom" is confined to the marae and to certain times. Spatial and temporal constriction' (p.101). In other words, Maori culture is firmly placed on the margins in a spatial sense, and only moves to the center in Pakeha defined and therefore highly selective forms (e.g. as tourist attraction). In a temporal sense she refers to Maori culture being defined as firmly situated in the past, as part of a pre-colonial times and therefore overtaken by 'progress' ('historical

savages'). We will see later how this relates to contemporary cinema.

In short then, *Maori Sovereignty* can be seen as an early example of indigenous identity politics in a postcolonial framework which has had a profound impact on academic discourses and beyond. It can be seen as part of a political project which has caused significant shifts. According to Smith, 'the past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices- all may be spaces of marginalisation, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope' (Smith, 1999, p.4). She then points to the strategic use of identity in particular political contexts: 'the term [indigenous peoples] has enabled the collective voices of colonized people to be expressed *strategically* in the international arena' (ibid, p.7, my emphasis).

This also draws attention to the context-specific aspects of identity formation, both in temporal and spatial terms. 'Indigenous peoples' is a relatively recent term which emerged in the 1970s (.) It is a term that internationalizes the experiences, the issues and the struggles of some of the world's colonized peoples' (ibid, p.7). But she further notes that in a local, New Zealand context, the terms Maori or tangata whenua are more frequently used, as well as names of specific iwi, hapu or whanau. This complicates these categories and to a certain extent de-essentialises them. However, that also points to one of the central dilemmas involved in appropriating postcolonial theory: how to break out of (colonial) binary structures and essentialist categories, while at the same time having to position oneself according to those categories for strategic reasons.

In other words, an important part of postcolonial theory consists of deconstructing binary oppositions and colonial constructions of 'otherness', but to be strategically effective there is a need to retain a certain measure of otherness. What it ultimately comes down to is on who's terms this otherness is being defined and who appropriates the terms in which this is being done, or in other words, it becomes a matter of agency. This understanding makes postcolonial theory therefore very attractive, since it can be

appropriated from a wide variety of positions in 'postcolonial' societies (e.g. indigenous, but also immigrant positions), but at the same time makes it rather problematic, for theoretically it can also be appropriated by the majority population.

Consider for instance Smith's critique in this respect of Pakeha appropriation of the term 'indigenous':

> It has been coopted politically by the descendants of settlers who lay claim to an 'indigenous' identity through their occupation and settlement of land over several generations or simply through being born in that place- though they tend not to show up at indigenous peoples' meetings nor form alliances that support the self-determination of the people whose forebears once occupied the land that they have 'tamed' and upon which they have settled. Nor do they actively struggle as a society for survival of indigenous languages, knowledges and cultures. Their linguistic and cultural homeland is somewhere else, their cultural loyalty is to some other place. Their power, their privilege, their history are all vested in their legacy as colonizers'.
>
> (1999, p.7)

What she alludes to here is a common Pakeha discourse which has partly developed in relation to the challenges posed in *Maori Sovereignty*.

*Beyond Maori Sovereignty?*
As Dugdale observes, 'debate resulted in a large number of white/settler New Zealanders choosing to identify themselves as 'Pakeha', that is, as authentically New Zealanders, non-indigenous but not *tau iwi*, not 'foreign', either' (2000, p.191). King for instance asserts that 'what we are acknowledging here is not something foreign: it is a *second indigenous New Zealand culture*' (1991, p.19, see also Archie *et al*, 1995, King, 1985, 1999), and by implication white.

Again what we see is a type of strategic essentialism which Turner (1994) defines as follows: 'Strategic essentialisms seek a middle ground by treating traditional identities *as though* they mattered. Identity politics and the politics of difference are part of this tug of loyalties to politicise and promote the differences of a threatened collectivity-often involving minority demands for separate yet equal recognition of cultural differences within academic or cultural institutions' (quoted in Fleras and Spoonley, 1999, p.230/231). This highlights two issues that are important for this discussion: firstly the issue of 'authenticity' and secondly the link with institutions.

Nowhere does the earlier mentioned 'slippage' between 'race' and 'culture' become so clear as in discussions surrounding authenticity. The following McIntosh quote is telling in that respect: 'I have been asked many times why I self-identify as Maori, the underlying thrust of the enquiry being less a question than a challenge; that is, a questioning of the authenticity of my claim. My authenticity is questioned due to the simplest of things: colour. My fair complexion means that my persistence in identifying as Maori is seen by some non-Maori as a form of romantic stubbornness, whilst others see it as merely perverse' (McIntosh, 2001, p.142). Thus, debates about authenticity are often grounded in older 'nineteenth century' views of race and racial difference' (Smith, 1999, p.72). They are thereby also highly political in nature and grounded in relations of power. Questioning authenticity provides an avenue of fragmenting and consequently marginalising 'those who speak for, or in support of, indigenous issues' (ibid, p.72).

It is important to note in this respect that questioning authenticity is not only confined to 'in group- out group' dynamics, but is a powerful discourse within indigenous politics as well, as can be seen in the debates between urban and iwi-based Maori, and debates surrounding te reo Maori. But as McIntosh notes, 'to be Maori is to be part of a collective but *heterogeneous* identity, one that is enduring but ever in a state of flux' (2001, p.143). Because the same could be said for any identity, the issue becomes one of strategic essentialism.

Smith acknowledges the constructedness of identity when she follows her exposition of elements that make up Maori identity with the following assertion: 'Although this may seem overly idealized, these symbolic appeals remain strategically important in political struggles' (1999, p.73). Her idea of strategic essentialism is thus more related to culture as evolving than to race. 'What counts as 'authentic' is used by the West as one of the criteria to determine who really is indigenous, who is worth saving, who is still innocent and free from Western contamination. There is a very powerful tendency in research to take this argument back to a biological 'essentialism' related to race, because the idea of culture is much more difficult to control' (ibid, p.74). I return to the issue of authenticity throughout this thesis, as it is vitally important in the politics of representation (see for example Barclay, 1990).

The second important issue related to strategic essentialism is its position within institutions like universities or in this case the New Zealand Film Commission. Matahaere-Atariki provides a very powerful critique of the way postcolonial theory is positioned in a contemporary institutional context, and thereby questions its effectiveness. 'If colonialism is the primary organising principle that structures attempts at decolonisation, then, to be effective, resistance must take account of how particular representations and voices are produced' (1998, p.68, see also Chow, 1998). In other words, she feels anxious about her position within an institution that allows her to speak, but only within clear and 'manageable' boundaries. 'Resistance to colonialism as an official doctrine often reinstates boundaries of acceptability. There exists within New Zealand an oppositional discourse that is a recognisably proper, sane, and rational mode of dissent' (ibid, p.72).

The question here is whether postcolonial theory can effect change when it is clearly 'contained' within the walls of a colonial structure; this presents a clear contradiction of on the one hand a position of privilege, which is simultaneously also a position of

marginality. As Matahaere-Atariki notes, 'in our readiness to speak on behalf of Maori women we must be attentive to those mechanisms of power that allow us to speak yet also distance us further from other women. As academic women, we tend to carry the burden of representation whether we like it or not, and it is this contradiction that reminds me most urgently of colonialism's ability to reproduce itself' (ibid, p.73).

When carefully applied, I believe it is precisely this kind of self-reflexivity that makes postcolonial theory dynamic and capable of effecting change. Also, the 'burden of representation' she talks about is of particular relevance to the cinema, and often refers to the pressure to represent 'culture' in narrowly defined terms. As Barclay notes, 'a Maori film might have nothing whatsoever to do with what both Maori and Pakeha are pleased to think of as "the Maori style of life"- communal attitudes, a respect for the elders, a love of the land' (1990, p.20, see also Mita, 1996). He goes on to say: 'I have a dream. I want to make a Maori kung fu movie. I think a proposal to make an exciting Maori kung fu movie would create hostility in almost every quarter. Maori and Pakeha, liberal and conservative- and that is exactly why one part of me wants to do it' (ibid, p.21). The reason why this would create hostility is because of particular boundaries which have been erected around the concept of 'culture', and a Maori kung fu movie may not fit into those boundaries.

This situation can be seen as a direct result of, and reaction to, what has come to be broadly called the 'Maori renaissance' and *Maori Sovereignty* played an important part in placing this 'renaissance' firmly on the political and academic agenda. There is some irony to be found in the term 'renaissance' itself, in that it has connotations of culture in a narrow 'Western' sense of the word (as in 'high' or 'low culture'). In relation to this emphasis on culture, Poata-Smith provides a powerful critique of what he calls 'cultural nationalism' which is important to consider in this respect, and identifies a need to diversify. 'Cultural nationalism and the politics of Maori identity have been the perfect social theory for the upwardly mobile Maori middle class because it presents the

interests of Maori in contemporary capitalist society as essentially unitary. (.) This ignores the critical importance of differential access to economic and political power within and across Maori society' (1996, p.112).

He thus problematises the underlying essentialism and reductionism inherent in Awatere's thesis, both in terms of Maori and Pakeha: 'The emphasis on Maori solidarity conceals the historical reality of social class stratification within both 'traditional' and contemporary Maori society. (.) The idea that Pakeha are innately materialistic, exploitative and aggressive is fundamentally problematic. It assumes that the underlying values and behaviour of Pakeha as exhibited in capitalist society are primordial and static. This ignores the fact that the construction of identity at any point in time is socially constructed and historically contingent' (ibid, p.112/113, see also McIntosh, 2001).

His article is part of a study of the evolution of Maori protest, and he identifies an 'increasing use of culture and identity as a strategy for dealing with Maori disadvantage and powerlessness' (ibid, p.115), which he believes is too narrow and as a result ineffective. He therefore argues for a far more inclusive basis from which to struggle for social change, a basis which should include factors of class, gender, sexuality and so on, and not just race or culture in an isolated sense. 'While culture and identity remain absolutely essential to Maori social wellbeing, it does not automatically follow that cultural identity alone should provide the organisational basis for the fight against racism and Maori disadvantage. Because identities are blurred and multiple, any fight against Maori oppression must be based upon building the strongest possible liberation movement by uniting different oppressed groups into a common struggle' (ibid, p.116). This is not to deny the importance of race or to somehow diminish it, but rather to recognise that race as a category is related in complex ways to other social categories which therefore need to be incorporated in order to be effective.

Up until this point, my analysis has focused on the Maori/ Pakeha interconnection for a number of reasons. Most importantly, in reaction to the 'Maori renaissance', New Zealand has since the late 1980's seen 'a growing commitment to biculturalism as policy and practice. (.) A Treaty-driven bicultural framework would give greater recognition in the public domain to Maori customs and rights rather than to immigrant minorities' (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999, p.121/122). This 'official' bicultural orientation has led to an emphasis on studies about Maori and Pakeha identity, at least until recently (e.g. C. Bell, 1996, Graham, 1995, A. Bell, 1996, Rangihau, 1992).

*The impact of the 1987 Immigration Act*

However, the late 1980s also saw significant changes to immigration policy, and the 1987 Immigration Act effectively ended the 'unofficial White New Zealand' policy which had been in place up to that point in time (Brooking & Rabel, 1995, p.46, see also Fleras & Spoonley, 1999). As a result, 'the ethnic mix of migrants entering New Zealand has altered since the late 1980s. In particular, the proportion of Asian immigrants has grown dramatically' (Brooking & Rabel, 1995, p.46). In turn, there has been an increase in recent years in academic work that deals with migrant and diaspora identities (e.g. Leckie, 1995, Trlin & Tolich, 1995, Roscoe, 1999, Nola, 2000, McPherson, Spoonley, Anae *et al*, 2001), as well as an engagement with postcolonial theory from migrant positions (e.g. Mohanram, 1998, Jaber, 1998, Marotta, 2000).

Perhaps not surprisingly, a common thread running through these works consists of a critique of the bicultural framework which is frequently adopted in mainstream discourses about New Zealand nationhood. I discuss the tension between biculturalism and multiculturalism in greater depth in the next chapter, but for now I will discuss some of the related issues of race and ethnicity within this context.

Marotta points to one of the main contradictions in the bicultural discourse in the following way: 'those who construct a bicultural self imply that cultural boundaries

have become porous, while simultaneously holding a position which assumes that Maori and Pakeha cultures are fixed and bounded' (2000, p.184). In other words, the 'bicultural self' implies a hybrid identity, and if we define hybridity in Bhabha's terms[24] this would mean an open-ended and in-between kind of identity. Seen in this way, the monocultural self is regarded as negative and destructive, because it is closed-off, while the bicultural self is seen as positive and constructive. However, as Marotta warns, 'hybridity does not necessarily do away with boundaries, it only re-defines them' (ibid, p.186), and it thereby erects new boundaries.

Mohanram stresses the primacy of visibility in connection to the nation as a way of explaining the position of race in these debates. 'Proper races in their proper places is a powerful argument upon which nations predicate themselves. As the norm, the visibility of racial belonging attains the status of the true, of the unmarked, ultimately of the invisible, displacing the trauma of visibility, of being marked, and being identifiable (as a subversive or as not belonging) on to the (dark) foreigner, who functions as the falsehood present in the bossom of the mother nation' (1998, p.23).

Based on this recognition, she develops a powerful critique of biculturalism, and deconstructs the concept by asking the important question of who benefits from it. 'Insofar as biculturalism constructs a particular New Zealand identity, it also constructs a particular body of the bicultural New Zealander which, in its inclusion of the Maori and the Pakeha body is biracial' (ibid, p.25). She then draws attention to a central paradox which can be seen to lie at the heart of the relationship between biculturalism and the document (the Treaty) which legitimises it. 'The predicament is this: either the Treaty can legitimise the presence of only people of British ancestry in New Zealand or biculturalism (predicated on Maori/ Pakeha relations) cannot hinge on the Treaty. This slippage from Treaty to Pakeha to whiteness reveals that biculturalism as it is now

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[24]See part 3 of this chapter.

conceived is predicated not on British affiliation, but on race- whiteness and blackness that does not extend beyond the Maori' (ibid, p.27, see also Jaber, 1998).

This echoes Marotta's earlier critique of 'strategic' hybridity, but it makes the new boundaries that are consequently erected more explicit: 'the black immigrant disturbs the biracial Maori/ Pakeha body by revealing the hierarchy of bodies. In this hierarchy, Pakeha come first, Maori second, and the black immigrant a distant third' (ibid, p.27). The 'Asian' body, in this view, would be equally low in the hierarchy and equally visible (see Ip, 1998).

These critiques highlight the tensions between different ways of defining New Zealand as a unified nation, particularly the discourse of biculturalism and the impact of globalisation which has led to increasing diversity in terms of the nation's ethnic make-up. Because *Broken English* can be seen as both dealing with these tensions in its subject matter, as well as illuminating some of the power relations involved in this process, I specifically deal with the tensions between bicultural and multicultural discourses in the next chapter. Ang argues that, 'the important task here, is to deconstruct the very desire for 'one nation'- a modernist ideology which can no longer be sustained in a post-modern globalised world' (2000, p.128). Judging from the critiques above, she may have a point.

# CHAPTER 5: Bicultural and Multicultural Discourses

As discussed in the previous chapter, the concept of 'culture' is stubbornly ambiguous and slippery in contemporary discourses, both in relation to constructions of nationhood and of race and ethnicity. It is precisely this ambiguity which makes it an attractive concept to appropriate in a variety of contexts and as part of a wide range of political discourses. For this also makes it a highly flexible concept. It is hardly surprising then that the concept of multiculturalism, with its prominent 'culture' component, is similarly and frequently appropriated for different strategic reasons, often in equally vague terms, to the point where it became a 90s 'buzzword' within social-cultural debate.

As Bennett observes, 'multiculturalism has served variously as code for assimilationism and cultural separatism; campus marxism and ethnic nationalism; transnational corporate marketing strategies and minority competition for state resources; radical democracy and cosmetic adjustments to the liberal-democratic status-quo' (1998, p.1/2). It consequently has a close relationship with that other 'buzzword': globalisation. 'Multiculturalism is in many ways an epiphenomenon of globalisation. (.) The word itself has had a diasporic career, entering and inflecting numerous national debates about the politics of cultural difference, the "limits of tolerance", and the future of the nation-state' (ibid, p.2). These different debates relate to different aspects of globalisation which can be roughly divided between economic discourses and cultural discourses. The former are concerned with competition for skilled labour on a global scale, while the latter relate to debates about for example national and cultural identity.

*Broken English* was released in 1996, and on different levels the film finds itself in the thick of many of these debates, not only in terms of its content, but also in terms of its production and reception contexts. This chapter therefore explores the concept of multiculturalism and the discourses that surround it, as well as discuss some of the

main critiques leveled against it, and particularly its uneasy relationship with biculturalism in a New Zealand context. Together with the previous chapters, this lays the foundations on which my interpretation of the film(text), the production context and the analysis of my audience research is based. In other words, it forms the final stage in outlining a 'discourse map' which informs the subsequent chapters.

## 5.1: Defining multiculturalism(s).

The term multiculturalism has three components which Parekh outlines as follows: 'First, it has something to do with culture. Second, it points to a plurality of cultures. And third, it refers to a specific manner of responding to that plurality, hence the suffix 'ism' which here, as elsewhere, signifies a normative doctrine' (1997, p.165). In relation to the last component, I have widened the suffix to 'isms' since there are a variety of ways of defining, and responding to, plurality. In other words, multiculturalism as a general term lends itself to appropriation in different contexts, the manner of which is directly related to historical circumstances. I have problematised the concept of culture in previous chapters, so I mainly concentrate here on the third component.

The term multiculturalism has a relatively short history. It developed from 'multicultural', a term that came into general usage only in the late 1950s in Canada. The first official usage of the term was in a Canadian government report which was published in 1965 (Stratton & Ang, 1998, p.138). This is no coincidence as it can be clearly linked to a number of developments in the West after World War II, in particular the postcolonial end of empire, the emergence of a variety of social movements (e.g. the civil rights movement in the US and the rise of feminism), and increasingly 'globalising' economies, resulting subsequently in an increase of various migrations.

In New Zealand the most important of these social movements was the Maori

Renaissance which has consequently resulted in biculturalism as a dominant discourse. 'Viewed historically, multiculturalism could be understood as the consequence of the failure of the modern project of the nation-state, which emphasised unity and sameness- a trope of identity- over difference and diversity' (ibid, p.138). To an important extent then, multiculturalism can be seen as a strategy to come to terms with a perceived disruption of the 'homogeneous' nation. 'Homogeneity, of language and culture as well as race, was, throughout the nineteenth century and up until very recently, the most basic concern of the nation' (Stratton, 1998, p.9). The discourse of multiculturalism (and to a lesser extent biculturalism) allows for diversity, but often in a narrow definition of that word. The underlying principle is still homogeneity in the name of the nation, this time in terms of values and ideals. As Goldberg notes, 'the *fact* of great heterogeneity, where it is acknowledged at all, is taken to necessitate the *aspiration* to a set of unifying, homogenizing ideals' (1994, p.20).

I have discussed the development of 'the nation' in its modern guise and the underlying assumptions of that concept in chapter two. Keeping that context in mind, I would like to draw attention to a crucial distinction between multiculturalism as a lived reality, and multiculturalism as a state policy. Stratton talks in this respect about the difference between everyday multiculturalism, 'the mixing, merging and reworking of cultural forms in people's everyday lives' (ibid, p.34), and official multiculturalism. This is an important distinction: everyday multiculturalism relates to hybridity as discussed before. In contrast, official multiculturalism tends to fix cultural identities as a kind of 'mosaic'. Official multiculturalism has this 'fixing' effect because of its need to define cultural identity.

On a recent visit to Auckland (March 2000), Jean Baudrillard referred to culture as 'signature', which relates to the inherent contradiction in official multiculturalism. In other words, at the same moment that we define a culture and write this definition down (for instance in legislation), it has already moved on, slipped away from the 'frozen'

definition on the page. As Stratton & Ang argue,

> The problem with official multiculturalism is that it tends, precisely, to freeze the fluidity of identity by the very fact that it is concerned with synthesising unruly and unpredictable cultural identities and differences into a harmonious unity-in-diversity. So the metaphor of the mosaic, of unity-in-diversity, is based on another kind of disavowal, on a suppression of the potential *incommensurability* of juxtaposed cultural differences (1998, p.157).

Stam similarly distinguishes between what he calls 'the multicultural fact and the multicultural project. (.) Multiculturalism as historical fact is as banal as it is indisputable' (1997, p.188).

This is a particularly important distinction in a New Zealand context, where multiculturalism, particularly in the urban centers, is clearly an undisputable fact. 'As an empirical statement of fact, New Zealand is multicultural in that it has a diverse population who identify as Maori, Tagata Pasifika, Pakeha, and New Zealanders of Asian origins' (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999, p.235). However, it is on the level of 'official multiculturalism' where the concept is mainly contested, for it is here that issues of representation, both political and cultural, come to the fore and where boundaries are drawn which define the spaces in which multiple cultures are allowed or not allowed to manouevre.

To these distinctions we can add a third one: critical multiculturalism, which can be seen as a taking up of a critical theoretical position from which to critique for instance 'official' multiculturalism. This is the sense in which Shohat & Stam use the term and it is intimately linked to a critique of Eurocentrism. 'Multiculturalism is actually an assault not on Europe or Europeans but on Eurocentrism- on the procrustean forcing of cultural heterogeneity into a single paradigmatic perspective in which Europe is seen as

the unique source of meaning, as the world's center of gravity, as ontological "reality" to the rest of the world's shadow' (1994, p.1/2). In a similar vein, Goldberg talks about 'the monocultural commitments to which multiculturalism arose in response, what it is thus baldly against' (1994, p.3).

I return to critical multiculturalism shortly, as it informs my reading of *Broken English* to a significant extent, but at this point it is useful to clearly list the different levels of meaning at which multiculturalism can be interpreted, as mapped out by Fleras and Spoonley:

a. fact (what is)

b. ideology (what should be)

c. policy (what is proposed)

d. practice (what happens)

e. critical discourse (what is being contested)

f. social movement (collective resistance)

(1999, p.222/223)

These levels are not completely separate, but interact in complex ways, and are drawn on selectively in debates and discourses surrounding multiculturalism.

Many of these aspects can be seen to apply to biculturalism as well, which foregrounds the importance of historical contexts. New Zealand, as a liberal democracy and a settler society, has certain general similarities with other such nation-states (e.g. Canada, the USA and Australia, as well as South Africa and Zimbabwe), but it also has some important differences. I will therefore trace its particular historical context in relation to these other settler societies, but before I do I would like to draw attention to a final important distinction in my analysis.

Kymlicka distinguishes between 'multination states (where cultural diversity arises from the incorporation of previously self-governing, territorially concentrated cultures into a larger state) and polyethnic states (where cultural diversity arises from individual and familial immigration)' (1995, p.6). New Zealand can be more or less seen as a combination of these two descriptions. Discourses about multiculturalism and biculturalism often ignore this distinction, which results in seeing multiculturalism and biculturalism as bipolar opposites that rule each other out. Following from this line of thinking is the often stated idea that 'multiculturalism must wait its turn', to which I return later. But Kymlicka's distinction makes clear that the objectives of both are very different.

In relation to 'multination' states, 'national minorities typically wish to maintain themselves as distinct societies alongside the majority culture, and demand various forms of autonomy or self-government to ensure their survival as distinct societies' (1995, p.10). In a general sense, this has resulted in the bicultural framework in New Zealand in response to the 'Maori Renaissance'. By contrast, in 'polyethnic' states, 'cultural diversity arises from individual and familial immigration. Such immigrants often coalesce into loose associations which I call "ethnic groups". They typically wish to integrate into the larger society, and to be full members of it. (.) Their aim is not to become a separate and self-governing nation alongside the larger society, but to modify the institutions and laws of the mainstream society to make them more accommodating of cultural differences' (ibid, p.10/11).

Clearly, this is somewhat of a generalisation and highlights the liberal-democratic agenda which informs Kymlicka's work. I agree to some extent with Parekh who argues that Kymlicka takes multiculturalism to be solely about minority rights and therefore generalizes from a limited subject matter: 'his theory of multiculturalism remains too monocultural and simplistic to capture the full range of multicultural movements' (1997, p.185). This critique follows his own elaboration of five different types of

180

multiculturalism, drawn from three different case studies[1], and again highlights the problematic nature of the term.

Benhabib similarly argues that Kymlicka confuses '*societal culture* with the *dominant culture*, and pleads for the preservation of such cultures' (1999, p.55). Shachar adds to this that 'certain types of identity groups fit neither into Kymlicka's 'indigenous' category nor into his 'immigrant' category (1999, p.92). Kymlicka has responded to these critiques by significantly expanding his range of 'minority groups' to include for instance religious groups (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000, pp.18-24). However, these groups are still conceptualised as coherent units, or pieces in the mosaic, albeit only for administrative purposes, without recognising internal differences. 'The multicultural focus on 'identity'- as embedded in religious, racial, ethnic, or tribal affiliation- fails to capture the multiplicity of group members' affiliations; and even more importantly, it is blind to the particular vulnerability that certain traditionally subordinated classes, such as women, may suffer in the context of their own cultures' (Shachar, 1999, p.91, see also Baumann, 1999).

This again highlights the tensions between official and everyday multiculturalism, and their interconnections. Not only does official multiculturalism ignore heterogeneity within these clearly defined cultures, it also ignores differences *between* different cultures. In other words, it starts from the assumption that every minority culture is disadvantaged which is not necessarily the case. Moreover, some minority cultures are disadvantaged in some contexts, but not in others, as we shall see later. Also, the direct link between multiculturalism and immigrants has a tendency to fix different cultural groups as 'forever' immigrants, even if some of their members have migrated

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[1]Parekh distinguishes between Isolationist Multiculturalism, Accommodative Multiculturalism, Autonomist Multiculturalism, Critical or Interactive Multiculturalism and Cosmopolitan Multiculturalism (1997, pp.183-185). Not all of these are specifically relevant to this study, and I therefore will not include them in this discussion. However, this serves here to draw attention to the heterogeneous nature of the concept.

generations ago.

And finally, there is a difference between individual identity expressed in the 'private sphere', and group identity expressed in the 'public sphere'. The latter is more directly related to institutional practices and may therefore be strategically essentialist for that very reason. When Pearson asserts that in New Zealand, 'the state has not overturned the familiar tensions between collectivism and individualism. It has simply modified them to try to adapt to new political demands' (1995, p.263), it is precisely these complexities he is referring to. In Goldberg's words, 'the central concept is not identity/difference but heterogeneity. Forms of corporate and managed multiculturalism will be criticised accordingly because they necessarily reify homogeneity' (1994, p.20). It is therefore useful to contextualise the relationship between official and everyday multiculturalism in New Zealand, both in a historical and global sense.

## 5.2: A Comparative Perspective.

As has become clear by now, there are many different discourses surrounding multiculturalism. In general though, 'as a discourse, multiculturalism can broadly be understood as the recognition of co-existence of a plurality of cultures within the nation. Celebrated by some and rejected by others, multiculturalism is controversial because of its real and perceived (in)compatibility with national unity' (Stratton & Ang, 1998, p.135).

In view of this, it becomes important to trace an historical context because it can illuminate how this 'national unity' has become a norm in the contemporary situation, something which is directly related to power relations. This historical context inevitably shapes the particular definition and discourses of multiculturalism within any one country. In tracing this historical context then, we must however be vigilant in stressing the contested nature of this 'unity'. I agree in this respect with Benhabib when she asserts that, 'the vitality of a culture is constituted by the narrative struggles among

182

generations who focus on how, where, and when to transmit it. Culture is this multivalent and polyvocal conversation across generations which unites past, present, and future through contested narratives' (1999, p.56).

In terms of official multiculturalism, Stratton & Ang identify an interesting historical distinction between the USA and Australia, which is relevant in relation to New Zealand as well. The idea of a foundation myth is an important aspect of all 'imagined communities', but particularly of 'postcolonial' settler nations. 'The experience of the colonial settler society involves the transference, through migration, of a particular national culture, generally that of the coloniser' (Stratton & Ang, 1998, p.140). In New Zealand's case, Williams argues for example that, 'at issue was the long struggle of a displaced British people to feel 'at home' in New Zealand and this required the evolution (or construction) of a single coherent Pakeha culture' (1997, p.21). Migration is hence a key factor in this construction of a historical identity, because it can by and large be controlled by legislation and institutional practices.

The structural difference between Australia and the USA, which surfaces in their respective approaches to immigration, is directly related to this foundation myth. Where the USA as a nation was founded on 'an Enlightenment doctrine of universal ethical and political principles which transcended ethnic and racial differences and hence any links with specifically British cultural traditions, Australian national identity was founded on a principle of racial particularity and cultural homogeneity, which enabled Australia to retain its ties with the imperial mother-culture while seeking administrative autonomy from Britain' (Bennett, 1998, p.15). Stratton & Ang then argue that this has resulted in 'the fact that in the USA the politicisation of multiculturalism has been largely from the bottom up, whereas in Australia multiculturalism is a top-down political strategy implemented by government' (Stratton & Ang, 1998, p.137).

I would argue that in contemporary New Zealand, biculturalism is broadly speaking

more closely related to such a top-down political strategy, whereas multiculturalism, despite the fact that it is 'top-down' controlled through immigration policy, is in effect mostly contested from the 'bottom up', although there are areas of overlap. Despite their common heritage, there are thus significant differences between New Zealand and Australia. The main difference is that Aboriginal Australians have historically been marginalised (both physically and discursively) to a far greater extent than Maori in New Zealand, which has effectively excluded them from discourses of 'national unity'. In contrast, although Maori have been significantly marginalised in terms of political power, they have historically been included in discourses of 'unity' (even if by necessity of numbers), as the Treaty of Waitangi has acquired a central position in New Zealand's foundation myth.

The distinction between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' becomes clearer when we consider the kind of policies that result from it:

> When a government adopts an active policy of multiculturalism, it does so on the explicit assumption that cultural diversity is a good thing for the nation and needs to be actively promoted. Migrants are encouraged- and, to a certain extent, forced by the logic of the discourse- to preserve their cultural heritage, and the government provides support and facilities for them to do so; as a result, their place in the new society is sanctioned by their officially recognised ethnic identities. This interventionist model of dealing with cultural pluralism is to be found in Australia. Where no such government policy is present, on the other hand, migrants are left to themselves to find a place in the new society, on the assumption that they will quickly be absorbed into and by the established cultural order. This describes the *laissez-faire* approach of the United States (ibid, p.138).

The fundamental distinction here is that 'while the United States designed its national identity through *ideological* means, Australia did it through *cultural* means' (ibid,

p.141). In other words, where in the USA national identity is based on 'shared moral precepts (norms, values and attitudes)' (ibid, p.144), Australian national identity is now 'more pragmatically conceived as a potential reality, characterised by a managed unity-in-diversity' (ibid, p.156). In the American 'imagined community', *culture* is subordinate to the American 'way of life' which is ideological in nature and to which immigrants are expected to assimilate. In the Australian 'unity-in-diversity' model, cultural differences are considered to be more permanent (as in the earlier mentioned 'mosaic') but enriching the nation, *if carefully managed.*

Of course, these differences are theoretical in that the respective tensions they create cannot always be contained and hence overlap in many respects. In relation to the workings of the American 'melting pot' metaphor for example, Appadurai scathingly observes that 'it accommodates, sometimes on the same page or in the same breath, a sense that plurality is the American genius and that there is an Americanness that somehow contains and transcends plurality' (1999, p.230), and this 'Americanness' is then seen as centered and unproblematic. In official versions the dual or so-called 'hyphenated identities' (e.g. Italian-American, Chinese-American) do not 'impair or threaten a strong commitment to the democratic principles of the country or to its legal or educational institutions' (Watson, 2000, p.98).

I would argue that in a New Zealand context, biculturalism is more closely related to a 'unity-in-diversity' model, albeit based on two 'distinct' cultures. The more *laissez-faire* approach to multiculturalism is underpinned by an implicit expectation that immigrants will assimilate to a 'New Zealand way of life'. It is *laissez-faire* in that there is very limited funding available for settlement assistance needs of recent migrants, as recent research shows (Ho *et al*, 2000). Of course I'm talking here about what I perceive to be the fundamental principles that underlie official discourses about biculturalism and multiculturalism in New Zealand; it goes without saying that these are continuously contested, and they frequently overlap. Also, although 'race' is not

185

officially acknowledged in these contemporary discourses, it has played an important role historically, which makes it an implicit factor in contemporary discourses.

Keeping that in mind, Fleras & Spoonley note that, 'New Zealand is not multicultural in terms of policy since such policy statements do not exist. Policy statements tend to emphasise biculturalism as a preferred goal, even if this commitment has not been explicitly enshrined as law or constitution. As practice, however, New Zealand is arguably multicultural in that organisational realities are driven by a multicultural commitment to engage with diversity through the removal of discriminatory barriers and the promotion of ethnic equality' (1999, p.235). The latter argument relates closely to the American model in that those values (read 'egalitarian') are historically considered to be an important aspect of the 'New Zealand way of life'; removing discriminatory barriers is here considered enough to effect assimilation.

Given the lack of clarity in terms of official policy, 'one line of argument is that New Zealand remains a monocultural society, in outcome if not in intent. The ground rules of society are inescapably rooted in Eurocentric values and structures; the game plan is unmistakably tilted towards perpetuating Pakeha power and culture' (ibid, p.235). I outline some of these arguments shortly, but first I discuss the main historical processes which have led to this contemporary context. Discourses of race, as I have discussed in chapter two, have informed and continue to inform immigration policy in important ways.

## 5.3: Historical Context

In his discussion of the history of immigration policy, Palat describes New Zealand as follows: 'Projected as a rural extension of England, New Zealand was constituted as an off-shore farm for the 'mother country' (1996, p.40). Similarly, Brooking & Rabel note that [after a 'pre-history' of whaling and trading contact] 'New Zealand was viewed by successive governments as a Utopia for the chosen few; preferably white, protestant

Britons' (1995, p.23). This 'foundation myth' served for a long time to legitimise selective colonial settlement and more or less informed immigration policy until the late 1980s. Given that there is a fair amount of literature which traces the history of New Zealand immigration policy in depth (e.g. Brooking & Rabel, 1995, Leckie, 1995, Ip, 1995, 1998, Ongley, 1996, Fleras & Spoonley, 1999), I limit myself here to the most important trends throughout this history, which are important for this study.

The first explicit exclusionary policy concerning immigration in New Zealand was the Chinese Immigrants Restriction Act of 1881 (Brooking & Rabel, 1995, p.24) in reaction to Chinese gold prospectors. The dominance of the social Darwinist discourse provided 'legitimacy' in this respect, but it was not the only factor. 'This overt racial prejudice was underpinned by fear of economic competition and was espoused even more vehemently by the labour movement, than by wealthier 'conservatives' influenced by the beliefs of social Darwinism' (ibid, p.25). Following this was a host of different amendments and revisions, broadly creating a persistent pattern until after World War II.

As Ip observes, 'to protect the country against the mysterious "Yellow Peril", which might threaten the racial purity of the re-creation of a Britain in the South Pacific, various ingenious deterrents were introduced. Policies such as the introduction of a tonnage ratio, the levying of a poll-tax (the Chinese remained the only ethnic group subjected to it), the enforcement of thumb-printing, and the introduction of a quasi-literacy test all served to further reduce the number of Chinese immigrants in general, and that of Chinese women in particular' (1998, p.44).

In relation to these early immigration policies, it is important to keep in mind that until 1948 there was no New Zealand nationality; settlers were British citizens. And 'it was not until 1952 that the first Chinese naturalisation actually took place' (ibid, p.48). The extent to which immigration policy was intimately linked to race becomes clear in the

dilemma posed by Indians who were members of the British Empire. To get around this 'obligation', New Zealand introduced a language test as part of the 1899 Immigration Restriction Act (Brooking & Rabel, 1995, p.27). A similar measure was introduced in 1996 'to curb the flow of Asian applicants and curtail popular discontent over the scope of immigration' (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999, p.156). Following on from this, 'the Immigration Restriction Act of 1920 gave the Minister of Customs special discretionary power to exclude individuals' (Brooking & Rabel, 1995, p.28), which is still the case today.

In relation to other non-British subjects, such as the Dalmatians[2], who came in the 1890s to work the gumfields north of Auckland, similar exclusionary clauses were introduced. 'A Kauri Gum Industry Act was even passed in 1898 to reserve gumfield areas for the exclusive use of naturalised British subjects in an attempt to deter future migrants' (ibid, p.28). Despite the fact that immigration policy towards Dalmatians remained restrictive until the 1950s, a sizeable Dalmatian community flourished, particularly in relation to other ethnic groups. There are a number of possible reasons for this, but issues of 'race' and 'passing' play an important part in this, as we will see.

Not all immigration restriction policies were directly related to race; for example 'The Undesirable Immigrants Exclusion Act of 1919 focused on Germans, Marxists, and socialists' (ibid, p.31). And as Leckie has shown, these kind of policies also had a significant impact on the gender composition of non-British immigrant communities.

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[2]The dominance of a small area of origin on the central Dalmatian coast is one of the key features of Croat migration to New Zealand. In New Zealand, the term 'Dalmatian' ('Dally', 'Dallies') has positive connotations associated with the development of Northland and West-Auckland. Partly for this reason, among others, the term and self-identification has been widely accepted and employed by migrants and their descendants. In contrast, the term 'Croatian' is widely perceived and used to distinguish support(ers) of Croat nationalist independence. Since 1991, a significant number of New Zealand's Croat 'Yugoslavs' have switched their allegiance to the cause and reality of an independent Croatia (Trlin & Tolich, 1995, p.220/221). See also Kolar-Panov, 1997, Skrbis, 1999.

'Certain ethnic communities in New Zealand, such as the Chinese, Indians, Greeks, and Yugoslavs, were overwhelmingly comprised of males until after World War II' (1995, p.53). All of this resulted in the fact that 'at the end of World War II, New Zealand was one of the most ethnically homogeneous of all European settler societies. According to the 1945 census, Europeans (the great bulk of whom came from the countries now known as Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Eire) comprised 93.57 percent of the total population, indigenous Maori accounted for 5.8 percent, and the remaining 0.63 percent were 'race aliens' (mainly Chinese, Indians and Pacific Islanders)' (Brooking & Rabel, 1995, p.36). This inevitably led to the largely monocultural way in which the emerging nation was 'imagined' and articulated.

It is important to stress that these policies were not implemented in isolation; there are significant similarities with other settler nations. Australia, for example, had an explicit and strict White Australia policy until after World War II (see Stratton, 1998). The post-war years created an economic need to liberalise these policies, as they did in New Zealand. In relation to immigration policy in New Zealand after 1945, Ongley identifies three distinct phases which are closely linked to patterns of global and local economic development: 1.'the boom years', 1945-1973, 2. Recession, 1974-1985, 3. Liberalisation, 1986 onwards (Ongley, 1996).

The first phase was a reaction to 'uneven development in the global capitalist economy which created excess labour demand in industrialised or industrialising countries such as New Zealand after 1945 and surplus labour supplies in less developed regions such as the Pacific Islands' (Ongley, 1996, p.14). The combination of these factors informed immigration policy over this period, and importantly also caused major migrations within New Zealand. 'The high demand for labour over this period was met through the increasing participation of women in the paid workforce, the migration of Maori workers from rural to urban areas and through immigration' (ibid, p.17).

Immigration however was carefully managed over this period and consisted of two different types. 'Two major immigration streams were encouraged, one emanating from the United Kingdom and Europe [particularly Holland] and consisted largely of skilled manual and white-collar workers, the other from the Pacific Islands consisting largely of unskilled or low-skilled manual workers' (ibid, p.17, see also Fleras & Spoonley, 1999, p.151). This policy provided the basis of what Spoonley has called 'the racialisation of work in Aotearoa/New Zealand', which resulted in divisions in the labour force that were subsequently 'exacerbated by changes in the labour market since 1984' (1996, p.56).

This leads me back to Poata-Smith's earlier mentioned critique of contemporary Maori protest as being limited by too much emphasis on cultural identity and thereby ignoring issues of class. Awatere for instance charges that 'Pacific Island immigrants and their descendants form an uneasy alliance with the White Nation against Maori Sovereignty' (1984, p.36), which does not give enough attention to possible alliances and thereby isolates the Maori struggle. As Poata-Smith argues, 'any fight against Maori oppression must be based upon the strongest possible liberation movement by uniting different oppressed groups into a common struggle' (1996, p.116).

Overall then, despite having to make certain concessions for economic reasons, the underlying principle of immigration policy in the post-war years was explicitly geared towards prevalent ideas about assimilation. These ideas are summed up by the Department of Labour in 1970:

> The greater and more obvious the differences between the immigrant and the average New Zealander, the longer and more difficult the period of assimilation and the greater the tendency of immigrants to hive off into little colonies which become self sufficient and resistant to the process of assimilation. This tendency is present not only in groups of non-European origin, but also in people from some European

countries whose social and cultural heritage differs widely from our own.

(quoted in Brooking & Rabel, 1995, p.41/42)

This is interesting as it shifts the rhetoric from the explicit mentioning of race to cultural differences, which is still a very strong discourse today, and which led to a new phase in immigration policy.

The second post-war phase in immigration policy was a reaction to a number of dramatic changes. On an economic level, it was 'prompted by the collapse of the long boom in the global economy at the time of the oil crisis of 1973-1974. For New Zealand, the international crisis was compounded by the withdrawal of privileged access for its agricultural exports in the UK market' (Ongley, 1996, p.20). Brooking & Rabel argue that these factors in combination with other international developments such as decolonisation, the US civil rights movement, and the Vietnam war, 'increasingly threw into question the implicit assumptions of cultural superiority and 'British' identity which had hitherto guided New Zealand's assimilationist immigration policy' (1995, p.42). However, this had initially little influence on immigration policy. High levels of unemployment, as a consequence of the recession, prompted new restrictions which reflected earlier ones. 'In the case of British migrants, efforts were made to stem the flow, while in the case of Pacific migrants, the intent was to reverse the flow' (Ongley, 1996, p.21). In the latter case, this led to the infamous 'dawn raids'[3].

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[3]The Labour government (1972-1975) began the process of identifying what became known as 'overstayers', people who had arrived in New Zealand for one purpose and a limited time, and had then stayed on. As far as the public and agencies such as the Department of Immigration and the police were concerned, 'overstayers' were by definition Tagata Pasifika, even though subsequent research by the Race Relations Office (1986) demonstrated that Tagata Pasifika constituted only one-third of all 'overstayers', but 80 per cent of those prosecuted. This campaign reached a climax in the mid-1970s, especially in 1976, when police and immigration officials carried out raids on houses very early in the morning in attempts to catch 'overstayers' (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999, p.197).

191

All of this can be seen as a last effort to hold on to economic policies based on regulatory interventionist strategies which had typified the post-war years. But both internal and external pressures resulted in 1984 in the beginning of what has been called New Zealand's economic 'revolution' or Rogernomics. This was characterised by 'the reduction of trade barriers, the removal of producer subsidies, financial deregulation, cuts in government spending and state sector corporatisation and privatisation' (ibid, p.23). In terms of immigration, former Prime Minister Norman Kirk had as early as 1971 suggested that 'the country required an immigration policy based on equality and ignoring questions of race, colour and religion', as part of an argument that 'New Zealand's future lay with Asia and the Pacific' (quoted in Brooking & Rabel, 1995, p.43).

It was not until a policy review in 1986, and the Immigration Act of 1987 that this idea was officially recognised, albeit for purely economic reasons.

> Although rejecting the assimilationist preference for migrants from 'traditional source' countries, the new legislation did not establish cultural diversity as the most important goal of immigration policy. Instead, there was a greater emphasis than ever before on selecting migrants whose skills would compliment the needs of the domestic labour market and new incentives were provided to encourage 'business migrants' (ibid, p.46, see also Ongley, 1996, Palat, 1996).

Ip similarly argues that 'the change of policy was not prompted by racial tolerance or egalitarian ideals. It was dictated by the hope that Asian business acumen could help to 'kick-start' the country's sluggish economy' (1996, p.126).

In other words, although the 1987 Immigration Act formally ended the more or less 'White New Zealand' policy, it was mostly for different reasons than the prevailing rhetoric would have it. One final reason I would like to mention here is what today has

come to be called the 'brain drain', which can be seen to form the catalyst for increased immigration, and is thus again mostly undergirded by an economic rationale. Ip notes that changes in policy were in part 'to compensate for the continual exodus of the bright and young who had been flocking across the Tasman at an average rate of 20.000 a year since 1976' (ibid, p.125).

Since 1987, this policy has been more or less in place, despite some minor adjustments in the 1991 Immigration Amendments Act (see Trapeznik, 1995). Fleras & Spoonley describe this policy as 'a balancing act between the pragmatic (the 'points-and-pass' categories of 'General' and 'Business Investor'), the compassionate (including 'Family', 'Humanitarian', and 'Refugee'), and the statutory (the Western Samoan category)' (1999, p.166). It is flexible in that targets are established annually. However, this 'flexibility' also allows for significant instability, as it depends to an important extent on the whims of politicians, particularly around election time.

One example of this is the rise of New Zealand First in the 1996 elections, which was to a significant extent based on anti-immigration rhetoric, and specifically 'Asian' immigration (a kind of parallel 'Pauline Hanson-effect'). This was followed by a tightening of the 'language skills' requirement (ibid, p.156), which effectively harks back to historical anti-Asian immigration policy, as outlined above. It is precisely this 'flexibility' that allows for these kind of measures. 'A conventional 'taps-on, taps-off' immigration mentality remains in effect, despite earlier talk of sustainable economic growth through fixed annual targets' (ibid, p.163). This mentality is related to the perceived destabilising effect of immigration. As Ongley argues, 'the migratory process, which is itself an outcome of the forces of global and local economic development, has fundamentally altered the nature of ethnic relations in New Zealand by introducing non-indigenous ethnic minorities and locating them disproportionately in certain sectors of the economy' (1996, p.32).

The connection he makes here with 'class' is important, and has changed the content of anti-Asian sentiment from 'backward and inferior race' in its nineteenth century version, to resentment for 'their' material wealth and stereotyping as excessively acquisitive and status-driven' in contemporary versions. (ibid, p.33, see also Fleras & Spoonley, 1999, p.156/157, Ip, 1996). This again shows the earlier mentioned slippage between 'race' and 'culture'. This slippage is probably most clear in the bicultural/ multicultural debate. I agree in that respect with Brooking & Rabel that 'it seems highly probable that future policy and dominant attitudes towards immigration and cultural diversity will be determined by the outcome of that larger ongoing debate about the meaning of New Zealand national identity- a debate which has been dramatised, above all, by the choice between bicultural and multicultural visions of nationhood' (1995, p.48/49).

## 5.4: Biculturalism vs Multiculturalism: Positions and Contradictions

Debates about biculturalism and multiculturalism in New Zealand are often framed in an either/or fashion, and within this framework, New Zealand has made a 'choice' to pursue biculturalism as a state policy, at least in official terms. Since the above mentioned Maori Renaissance, the Treaty of Waitangi has occupied a central place in this official policy. As Pratt asserts, 'the Treaty of Waitangi cemented into New Zealand culture and political life the idea that relations between Maori and Pakeha- colonisers and colonised- should be conducted on the basis of a 'partnership of equals' (1999, p.316). As noted above, this is the fundamental difference between the New Zealand and Australian historical contexts.

It is the 'choice' element that makes this idea problematic in that it is prescriptive and hence ideological in nature. For a start, it raises the question of who made this 'choice' and for whose benefit? And who gets excluded as a result of this 'choice? 'A prescriptive rather than descriptive definition, official biculturalism in New Zealand marginalises ethnic minority groups who do not see themselves represented under the

umbrella term "Pakeha", while at the same time presupposing a homogeneous "British" culture as the binary opposite to Maori' (Nola, 2000, p.207, see also Mohanram, 1998, Ip, 1998). In other words, biculturalism excludes important sections of New Zealand society, at least in official discourses.

It is precisely this underlying binary structure that leads for example Thakur to the following conclusion: 'The debate in New Zealand is about biculturalism, not multiculturalism: the two are mutually exclusive. The Maori are the oldest immigrants to New Zealand, and Pakeha the second oldest. Groups which are neither Maori nor European are frozen out of the debate on the identity and future of the country and disenfranchised with respect to the politics of multiculturalism. They are rendered impotent in setting the agenda of the debate or defining its conceptual vocabulary' (1995, p.271/272). This raises a number of issues.

Firstly, it draws attention to a temporal hierarchy which biculturalism establishes. This hierarchy ultimately tends to lead to a situation where 'biculturalism is seen as the central platform from which a future multicultural society will be launched. The argument goes like this: in order to develop a model of ethnic relations that can answer to the democratic demands of a whole range of minority groups, it will first be necessary to develop representational structures that will empower the largest minority group' (Maxwell, 1998, p.199). It is in the reaction to this argument that the confusion between the different 'culturalisms' as official policy and everyday experience becomes clear.

Consider for instance the following statement by Rajen Prasad (former Race Relations Conciliator): 'I don't think it's as simple as saying, "First achieve biculturalism, then we'll look at multiculturalism". One can't wait for the other' (quoted in Nola, 2000, p.207). Indeed, everyday multiculturalism does not wait, but official multiculturalism is a political project and it is therefore possible to put this project on hold, or to 'silence' it

in mainstream discourse. The effect of this is that some groups are constructed as 'late comers', or in Bhabha's words, 'by being "after" the original [Pakeha and Maori], or in "addition to" it, gives it the advantage of introducing a sense of "secondariness" or belatedness into the structure of the original' (1990, p.305).

Another aspect of Thakur's critique of biculturalism is the idea that Maori are the first in a long line of immigrant groups. This is problematic because it denies Maori special status on the basis of indigenous rights, and it ironically mirrors a common Pakeha discourse that constructs settlers as 'simply extending an ancient line of voyaging and settling rather than interrupting, as colonizers, an established world' (Williams, 1997, p.25). And as Fleras & Spoonley argue, 'unlike voluntary immigrants, indigenous peoples such as Maori did not voluntarily consent to be ruled or dominated. Nor did they expect to have language and culture eroded because of colonialism or assimilation' (1999, p.246). Of course the 'voluntary' aspect here is a matter of degree and is not always as straightforward as they imply here, but it does draw attention to differences between 'indigenous' and 'multicultural' positions.

Whereas a 'multicultural' position argues that biculturalism is too limiting, and not inclusive enough, an 'indigenous' position is often based on the idea that biculturalism does not go far enough in terms of its inherent promise of power sharing. Mohanram draws attention to this power aspect when she writes that, 'the concept of equitable power-sharing, so desirable for both Maori and Pakeha, is ultimately revealed to be something that can be initiated only by Pakeha, because it is Pakeha who control the resources' (1998, p.26). In terms of similarities then, both positions could be seen as attacking Eurocentrism, albeit from different perspectives. Because both 'culturalisms' in their official guises can be seen as prescriptive ideologies, they can, in practice, often be seen as strategies to 'manage diversity'.

As Pearson argues, 'such ideologies preserve fundamental power differentials by

masking class (and gender) divisions with a gloss of "ethnic difference". Ethnic communities, real or imagined and their "leaders", are co-opted into the state and polity and are encouraged to view themselves as part of nations that are, in reality, still dominated by the monocultural core values and practices of their ruling classes' (1996, p.249, see also Stratton, 1998). 'Ethnic difference' refers here to culture in the narrow and material sense of the word. In relation to biculturalism for instance, Walker identifies this slippage and argues that there are two versions of biculturalism: 'The Pakeha version, which means learning a few phrases of Maori language and how to behave on the marae, and the Maori version, which entails Pakehas sharing what they have monopolised for so long, power, privilege and occupational security' (quoted in Maxwell, 1998, p.198).

In other words, if 'culturalisms' are seen in this narrow sense, the issue of power becomes elided from the equation. Mohanram indicates how this is beneficial from a Pakeha point of view. 'Commonsense or popular understanding of this term bicultural suggests that it is the Pakeha who initiates and deploys power-sharing in order "to do the right thing". In their bicultural relationship with Maori, Pakeha are transformed into democratic, liberal, generous, culturally sensitive citizens' (1998, p.26). The conditions under which the recent Maori television channel (and the previous one)[4] came into being spring to mind as an example here. This works in a more or less similar way in relation to a 'multicultural' relationship.

To argue then that biculturalism and multiculturalism are incompatible and cancel each other out is to accentuate their differences and to ignore their similarities. To some extent, both these positions are attacking Eurocentrism, albeit for different reasons.

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[4]The previous and current governments have allocated a certain amount of funding to establish a Maori television channel and have set certain conditions. Although the amount appears large, it gets quickly swallowed up by the huge costs involved in establishing a television channel. Furthermore, it is a mere fraction of mainstream television budgets.

From a multicultural position, the aim is to 'graft bits of diversity onto a mainstream core' (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999, p.246). In other words, it is aimed at creating a space to firstly recognise and respect cultural diversity, and secondly to incorporate this diversity into mainstream society and culture. This is what Charles Taylor has called 'the politics of recognition' (1992/1994).

In short, it is aimed at inclusion where there is perceived exclusion. And inclusion here does not mean assimilation. On the contrary, by stressing diversity, this aim contains an implicit critique of assimilationist policies and attitudes. According to Mfodwo for example, 'the current spectrum of ethnic identities in New Zealand cannot be assimilated into various forms of subordinated Anglo-centric identity that have hitherto been the dominant modes of diversity management in New Zealand. There are currently too many non-European "others" in New Zealand who cannot be made over into some manageable version of Englishness' (1997, p.100). From a multicultural position then, the aim is not in the first instance to overthrow the existing political structure, but rather to modify it.

From an indigenous position however, the aim is not so much to be incorporated into an existing political structure, but rather to reconfigure that structure and create a position of power from which to define the structure. This does not just apply to politics proper, but also to institutions throughout society. Because of these different aims, and because they are often used in overlapping and confusing ways, Fleras and Spoonley propose a new term, 'bi-nationalism', which draws on Kymlicka's distinction between 'multination' and 'polyethnic'[5]. This is interesting because it recognises the possibility of simultaneity of both these projects, as opposed to a 'one first, then the other' argument which I believe is ultimately unsustainable. They propose a 'multiculturalism within a bi-national framework' (ibid, p.248). Keeping in mind my earlier reservations

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[5] See chapter 5.1, p.180.

about Kymlicka's distinction, I do think this distinction is helpful, particularly because it recognises both the similarities between multiculturalism and biculturalism as well as the differences, and it allows for a potential open-endedness of the outcome.

I say 'potential' because that depends for a large part on how such a social-political objective gets defined and by whom. The main reservation I discussed about Kymlicka's thesis relates to the perception that it is too monocultural, which similarly applies to Fleras & Spoonley's model. It leads to a kind of mosaic of 'fenced-in' cultures, with the dominant culture, as largest piece, firmly in the center. As Stratton argues, 'the policy of multiculturalism is organised according to a metaphorical spatial structure in which migrant, 'ethnic' cultures are peripheral to the core culture' (1998, p.10). This underlying essentialist and often narrow notion of culture makes it problematic and leaves it open to the aforementioned slippage between culture and race.

This also makes it vulnerable to various critiques. These critiques 'share a conception of a "culture" as a discrete and integrated entity, and a belief that certain cultures are less compatible than others. (.) The consequence of this line of thinking is that certain cultural groups, usually marked by visual racial signifiers, are more acceptable within Australian society than others' (ibid, p.14). This is part of Stratton's analysis of the Pauline Hanson phenomenon in Australia, but it has been a common discourse in New Zealand as well, and was particularly strong around the 1996 elections, the year that *Broken English* was released. The underlying logic is that 'certain cultures are incompatible and that this incompatibility threatens the claimed unity of the Australian national culture. Race then becomes a marker of that cultural difference' (ibid, p.64).

Walker's critique of multiculturalism is a good example of this slippage. What starts off as a critique of multiculturalism as a perceived threat to biculturalism, quickly turns into a process of selection where some 'cultures' are seen as more desirable than others. He begins with the earlier mentioned idea that 'multicultural ideology is a direct

negation of the Maori assertion of the primacy of biculturalism' (1995, p.286). This is followed by a critique of immigration policy as purely based on economic considerations under the guise of a liberal rejection of racial factors in immigration policy. His critique is fair up until that point; but what follows is a staggering collection of stereotypes, firmly rooted in the historic 'Asian invasian' discourse, but rationalised in terms of 'cultural' incompatibility: '...overcrowding, pollution and repressive governments are reasons for immigrants abandoning their own countries' (p.293); 'New Zealanders now have the dubious honour of sharing their country with Asian Triads' (p.295); 'They usually employ their own people in these enterprises' (p.295); '...the environmental impact of bringing people into New Zealand who do not have an ethic of conservation' (p.300).

None of this is referenced nor based on any research apart from the anecdotal variety. Walker even talks explicitly about an 'Asian invasian' and contrasts this with more desirable 'immigrants from *our own* region in the South Pacific' (my emphasis, p.295). One could ask of course where 'our own region' ends, but this serves for now to indicate the flexibility of the concept of 'culture' in discourses which are essentially about 'race'. This is rarely as explicit as in Walker's article; instead it is often more implied, as in the following statement: 'New Zealand can no longer afford the luxury of bringing in the uneducated and the unskilled, particularly if these migrants come from *cultures* with no real understanding of, or familiarity with, modern technology and its educational prerequisites' (Greif, 1995, p.15, my emphasis).

In short then, there are a number of problematic assumptions within both biculturalism and multiculturalism as official policies and ideologies. These are primarily based on inflexible notions of culture in relation to national identity. I believe we need to dislodge these categories and widen their scope and possibilities. This would involve contextualising them and looking for significant linkages, as opposed to approaching them as diametrically opposed under all circumstances. Critical multiculturalism as

outlined by Shohat & Stam provides us with that possibility.

Stam describes this critical 'project' and position as follows:

> Radically egalitarian, polycentric multiculturalism sees world history and
> contemporary social life from the theoretical perspective of the fundamental
> equality of peoples in status, intelligence, and rights. But this project does not
> emerge from nowhere; it is the local manifestation of a deeper and long ongoing
> "seismological shift"- the decolonization of global culture. In the wake of centuries
> of colonial domination, multiculturalism aspires to decolonize representation not
> only in terms of cultural artifacts but also in terms of power relations between the
> communities "behind" the artifacts. Its task is double, at once one of deconstructing
> Eurocentric and racist norms and of constructing and promoting multicultural
> alternatives (Stam, 1997, p.189).

Much of what I have written so far is based on these principles and comes from this
position. 'Central to multiculturalism is the notion of *mutual and reciprocal
relativization*, the idea that the diverse cultures placed in play should come to perceive
the limitations of their own social and cultural perspective' (ibid, p.201). This
'relativization' involves deconstructing inflexible categories in which these debates are
often couched, such as 'nation', 'culture', 'race', 'immigrant', and so on, and
particularly the ways in which these categories are appropriated and employed
discursively. These categories are not only employed in relation to 'multiculturalism
versus biculturalism' debates, but are appropriated in complex combinations in relation
to the three levels of analysis in the tripartite model; in short, they form the basis of
most of what follows. This chapter then concludes the 'discourse map' on which the
following three chapters are based. *Broken English* forms the focal point around which
a wide variety of discourses, thus mapped out, are drawn together.

# CHAPTER 6: *Broken English*: Production Context

In the previous chapters, I have mapped out a theoretical framework which relates mostly to issues that are confronted in *Broken English*. In other words, the *content* of the film deals quite specifically with aspects of national identity, race and ethnicity, multiculturalism and diaspora, and represents these issues in a particular manner, drawing on particular discourses. As has become clear by now, this theoretical work has involved a deconstruction of some of these discourses, and consequently a critique of their construction.

However, as I mentioned in my introduction, merely deconstructing these discourses on a theoretical level, while useful, does not seem enough. The question should rather be *how* these discourses are being appropriated in various contexts, and more importantly *why*. This then tells us something about the power relations involved in this process. The theoretical framework thus serves as a foundation on which I aim to build an analysis of the discursive practices as appropriated by various agents in the production context. This does not mean that I 'test' these discourses against this framework in a staightforward manner; the aim is not to prove certain discourses 'right' or 'wrong'. The aim is rather to situate their appropriation in a field of social power relations.

In this chapter then, the emphasis is on the production context of *Broken English*[1]: who was involved in the production of the film and in what ways; who provided the funding and according to what criteria; what discourses do different agents in this production process subsequently draw on when they talk about their involvement in the film, and about the content of the film? This chapter therefore moves from the general to the specific; from an analysis of the structure of the different institutions and organisations involved in the production of *Broken English*, to a more descriptive account of the

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[1]For a full list of the film's credits, refer to Appendix IV.

specific production process of this film; and finally to an analysis of the ways in which some of its key personnel discuss its themes and topics. Throughout this chapter, I refer back to earlier chapters; these earlier chapters thus serve as frames of reference in my analysis.

### 6.1: *Broken English*: Production and Funding Institutions.

*Broken English* was produced in New Zealand by Communicado (Robin Scholes), and funded by Village Roadshow, the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) and New Zealand on Air (NZOA). In what follows, I provide an outline of these different organisations and their objectives. Some of this material draws on material from interviews which I have conducted with several people involved in the production process of the film[2]: Robin Scholes, Gregor Nicholas (writer/director), Alan Sorrell (Chairman of the Board, NZFC), Davorin Fahn (Croatian language/ culture consultant) and Don Selwyn (Maori language/ culture consultant). This material has been fully transcribed, and any statements which are not referenced are based on these transcripts. It should be noted here that I was seeking to conduct further interviews with Alan Finney of Village Roadshow, co-writer Johanna Pigott and Chinese language/ culture consultant Hou Dejian. The latter two could not be contacted, and the former, who now works for the Disney Corporation in Sydney, failed to reply to numerous requests for an interview.

*The Producer(s): Communicado.*

Communicado is New Zealand's largest and most prolific independent television and film production company. Robin Scholes is described in the Sony Classics homepage as Deputy Chairwoman and one of its founding partners. She initiated and established a wide range of television series before producing Communicado's first feature film, *Once Were Warriors*, in 1994 (1/8/01). In 1997, shares in the company were divided as

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[2]A discussion of the production process of *Broken English*, and a justification for the selection of interviewees follows in section 6.4 of this chapter.

follows: Investment Company Direct Capital, 37.96%, Robin Scholes, 13.7%, Garry McAlpine, 12.83%, Paul Holmes, 11.63%, Managing Director Mike Hutcheson, 10.69%, Murray Roberts, 8.93%, Lawyer Karen Soich, 4.27%. This was after the late Neil Roberts (who was co-founder and a shareholder at the time *Broken English* was produced) sold his stake and went to TVNZ (Drinnan, 1997, p.20). In July 2000, Communicado merged with production company Screentime, according to the ShareChat homepage (24/8/01). Its latest film production is *Crooked Earth* (Sam Pillsbury, produced by Robin Scholes) which was released in New Zealand cinemas in August 2001.

Given the structure of the company, it was my assumption from the outset that as a private company, Communicado's primary objective is to return a dividend to its shareholders; its objectives are therefore mainly market driven. All three films cited above are thus characterised by relatively high budgets and production values. This also means that certain ideas about target audiences play an important part in production decisions. Scholes formulates this as follows:

> I think of the local audience first. As a New Zealander who makes New Zealand stories, I'm very keen to make films which appeal to New Zealanders. We've got very little research on the New Zealand cinema audience. When you make for a New Zealand cinema audience, you don't have that accurate an information to go on. So you're striving to make a good story that has to have an appeal to younger people, because that is the main sort of audience, they are younger. Young people, sort of Maori, Polynesian, makes up quite a lot of the New Zealand, the Auckland audience. I wouldn't be attracted to doing a film that didn't seem to me to have an audience, you know? That's obviously the driving, driving thing as the producer, to make something that will have an appeal to an audience.

This points to some important motivations from the producer's point of view. Firstly,

there are clear commercial objectives in that there is a keen awareness of the main cinema going audience in New Zealand, and particularly in Auckland as its largest population center. In other words, while she initially talks about 'New Zealanders' as an all-inclusive category, which includes herself, she goes on to refine this by specifying a particular age group and specific ethnic groups; in the process, she narrows 'New Zealand' down to 'Auckland'. According to Sorrell, 'the producers felt that the film would appeal to eighteen to thirty year olds. They predicted that it would have a strong appeal, in addition, to some of the ethnic groups depicted in the film'. In other words, despite the claim that there is very little research available in terms of cinema audiences, there is a kind of broad feeling that the main paying audience falls within that age group, and secondly, that a significant proportion of this audience is 'Maori or Polynesian'. This may in part explain the strong Maori presence in the cast of all Communicado films cited above.

Similarly then, Sorrell moves from the general ('eighteen to thirty year olds') to the more specific ('some of the ethnic groups'), and thereby draws on quite specific discourses about what constitutes 'New Zealanders'. This term functions in the former case as an empty signifier, while it is specifically named in the latter case. Within this construction, the 'in addition' is of vital importance as it constructs these 'ethnic groups' as added onto a core, as pieces of a 'multicultural mosaic'[3].

Thirdly, Scholes talks resolutely about 'New Zealand stories, made for New Zealand audiences'. In relation to *Broken English*, she asserts that 'it's totally New Zealand, absolutely, totally and utterly New Zealand, and becoming more so'. When asked to explain this further, she said: 'I mean basically, you know, the power pylon in the backyard, the Aitutakian neighbours, the barbecues; all of those elements are totally New Zealand. And immigrants are totally New Zealand. I mean, when I walk around

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[3]As discussed in chapter 5.

New Zealand streets now, I see a rich mix of people'. In a similar way, 'immigrants' are here constructed again as 'add-ons', as a 'rich mix' to add to a core, which thereby stays firmly centered. Also, in relation to discourses of national cinema, the emphasis here is on what Hjort calls a 'banal aboutness'[4] or specific tangible elements, rather than on particular themes that could be called 'New Zealand'.

I return to the themes of the film later in this chapter, but in terms of Communicado's objectives, to produce 'New Zealand stories' can be seen as partly a self-imposed objective, and an implicit means by which to secure funding from state institutions like the NZFC and NZOA, although the producers did not specifically state this. In addition it can be seen as making commercial sense in that it gives Communicado's 'products' a particular local edge in the global market place. The inclusion of significant Maori elements only reinforces this type of 'differentiation'. Of course, these are elements that influence the decision making process, and the emphasis here is on process. It is not a set of rules, or a list of elements that has to be ticked off, but rather a set of circumstances that shape the particular context in which films are produced in New Zealand; every film has to follow a tortuous and often long road to its completion, and *Broken English* is no different in that respect.

According to Sorrell, 'the first funding was for a project called *Sleepy Hollow*. And the producer was Trevor Haisom, and his company was called Film Konstruction.' The NZFC approved four thousand dollars for script development in April 1990, and a further four thousand dollars in May 1990, 'probably to complete a treatment and scene breakdown. Movie Partners then assimilated the project into their structure, what we called 'super pot' in those days, which were large producer operated development schemes'. Haisom and Gregor Nicholas went their separate ways in 1992. It was after Nicholas directed the short film *Avondale Dogs* in 1994, that Communicado got

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[4]See chapter 3.

involved.

Scholes had just finished *Once Were Warriors*, and its director, Lee Tamahori, was a friend of Nicholas, and introduced the project to her; that was at draft stage four. Scholes looked at *Avondale Dogs* and really liked it, but she did not think *Broken English* had a particularly strong story at that stage. She suggested doing another film, but 'he absolutely wanted to make *Broken English*. So I said I would help him make it as strong as possible. It had had a lot of writing and it had been developed over a long period of time'. But, 'all of the elements that are there, in the film, were in Gregor's mind when he came to me.' So Communicado bought out Movie Partners' interests for the rights to the project in 1994.

Scholes then introduced *Broken English* to Tim White, 'a kiwi who lives in Australia and has made a lot of films'. White took an executive producer role on the film and took the screenplay to Alan Finney of Village Roadshow, who liked it and got his company to agree to come up with the money to put into the film. It then came back to the NZFC for the final stages of financing with 'a very significant advance from Village Roadshow attached to it, around $800.000'.

According to Nicholas, it was the combination of his reputation (*Avondale Dogs*), Scholes' reputation (*Once Were Warriors*), and Village Roadshow's commitment, that made their meeting with the NZFC 'a fait accompli. It was sort of a meeting that didn't really need to be a meeting. It was a crossing the t's and dotting the i's type meeting'. Different discourses are beginning to mingle here, as Nicholas' reputation as a director draws on 'auteurist' ideas, whereas Scholes' reputation, and particularly Village Roadshow's involvement, are more related to commercial considerations. However, these discourse do not necessarily conflict, as the use of Nicholas' reputation may be based on name recognition in a commercial sense.

*The Funding Organisations: Village Roadshow.*

Like Communicado, Village Roadshow is a fully commercial business and its main objective is therefore to make a profit. According to its homepage, it is a large Australian entertainment company, based in Melbourne, which operates core businesses in film, radio, theme parks and new media. These businesses are complementary, targeting a similar customer demographic (under forty years old) and providing significant cross-promotional opportunities (1/8/01).

The company began operating in 1954, owning and managing the first drive-in cinemas in Australia. From there it has steadily expanded, entering the vertically related businesses of film distribution in the 1960s and film production in the 1970s. Village Roadshow is now a billion dollar international media and entertainment company. Accounting for over half of its assets, exhibition has been central to its success. They now own and operate an international cinema circuit of around 1,564 screens in 192 separate sites, in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Greece.

Village Roadshow was one of the first companies to develop the multiplex concept, and more recently has developed a 'divisions strategy' in an attempt to broaden its demographic and 'extend the movie going experience'. This has involved the creation of 'Cinema Europe' which offers a selection of movies aimed at specific tastes and outside traditional and recent releases (ibid, 1/8/01). On the one hand this fits with general globalising trends of 'diversification' and 'fragmentation' of audiences, and on the other hand it complicates the earlier mentioned binary of 'Hollywood' versus 'arthouse'. In New Zealand, Village Roadshow owns Rialto Cinemas which can be seen as part of this same trend, and since its merger with Hoyts Cinemas, this effectively gives them control over around 95% of New Zealand cinema screens. This also means, in terms of their involvement in production, that they have a ready-made distribution and exhibition network for the films they invest in.

Given this situation, it is interesting that Ruth Harley, who was appointed as chief executive of the NZFC in April 1997, has approached distributors and exhibitors in New Zealand to become involved in the production of feature films. 'Village Force's Joe Moodabe and Rialto's Kelly Rogers read scripts; provide script assessments. (.) I think it's a real opportunity to lift the sights of New Zealand audiences by lifting the game at the distribution and exhibition end' (Harley, 1998, p.5). This can be seen as a significant change of direction for the NZFC which I discuss shortly, but it serves for now to emphasise the powerful position that Village Roadshow holds in the New Zealand cinema context.

Roadshow Distributors is a 50/50 joint venture with the Greater Union Organisation, distributing theatrical movies to cinema, video, pay TV and free to air television in Australia and New Zealand. In addition to holding the exclusive rights for movies produced by Village Roadshow Pictures, Roadshow Distributors has arrangements to distribute movies from Warner Bros., New Line, Miramax, and other independent production houses.

In terms of production, Village Roadshow Pictures has long been involved in producing television series and feature films (e.g. *Mad Max*, 1979, George Miller, and *The Castle*, 1997, Rob Sitch), often with a variety of strategic partners, in this case Communicado. However, it is questionable whether they would have invested in *Broken English* today. In 1997, the company took a strategic review which concluded that a concentration on producing mainstream Hollywood style movies would generate the greatest returns and offer improved synergies across the group. It has since restructured its production division and transferred its head office to Los Angeles, where a production partnership with Warner Bros. was formed, which has resulted in films like *Three Kings* (2000, David O. Russell) and *The Matrix* (1999, Larry & Andy Wachowski) (Village Roadshow Homepage, 1/8/01).

In short then, Village Roadshow's involvement is purely commercial in that its main objective is to return a dividend to its shareholders. This would have informed its investment in *Broken English*, and given its substancial investment in the film, the company would have seen commercial potential in the project. The latter is partly based on the script, and partly on the credentials of its key production personnel, as mentioned above.

*The Funding Organisations: The New Zealand Film Commission.*
While the objectives of Village Roadshow as the primary funding organisation of *Broken English* are thus relatively straightforward, the objectives of the NZFC and NZOA are more complicated, as they have different responsibilities and deal with public money. In the NZFC's case this public money accounts directly for ten percent of its budget (in the form of a direct government grant), and indirectly for 71 percent (in the form of a grant distributed by the Lottery Grants Board); the remaining 19 percent of its budget comes out of investments and sales (NZFC's Homepage, 6/8/01).

Given this reliance on public money, their objectives need to be carefully formulated and deal explicitly with discourses of 'art', 'culture' and 'national identity', as well as 'economics' to varying degrees. The development of both the NZFC and NZOA in a historical sense has been analysed in depth elsewhere (e.g. Waller, 1996, Smith, 1996), so I limit myself here to the most important and relevant aspects of these histories in relation to this study.

The NZFC formally came into existence on 12 October 1978, through an Act of Parliament (Waller, 1996, p.248), but it did not start from scratch. It came out of an institution which had hitherto dealt with film, the Queen Elizabeth the Second Arts Council (QE II Arts Council). This institution succeeded the Arts Advisory Council in 1964. 'Commissioned by Parliament to encourage, foster, and promote the arts in New Zealand, the Arts Council's initial public policy statement refers explicitly to ballet,

drama, orchestral music, opera, visual arts, brass bands and choirs, but not to film' (ibid, p.244). The emphasis was thus on the 'traditional arts' and explicitly on the 'creative artist'. In relation to this, film was seen as 'popular culture' and therefore 'less worthy' of support.

Interestingly, this may have changed in relation to the growing status of the European art cinema and its 'auteurs' in the 1960s. Additionally, and partly in relation to Britain's joining of the EU, there was a more general shift towards a concern with a 'national identity'. The combination of these two factors show that these changes are partly sensitive to a changing cultural context, but are at the same time driven by political changes to policy. It is not so much a matter of one follows the other, but rather that the two are intimately linked and reinforce each other.

As Waller notes, 'film did become of direct concern when the Arts Council, as part of a more general government-driven assessment of 'National Development', organized 'Arts Conference '70'. This three-day meeting included a symposium on 'The Role of Film and Television in Establishing a Nation's Identity' (ibid, p.244). Out of this symposium emerged a formal Film Industry Working Party which was to compile a report of recommendations and arguments on the desirability of state support for New Zealand cinema. Based on the underlying assumption that government support of film would 'yield great social, artistic, and economic benefits', the arguments it came up with are more or less a combination of all of Higson's categories[5] to varying degrees:

> New Zealanders have a right to see films and television programmes related to what is important to New Zealanders. (.) A viable, national film industry will ensure that New Zealanders are not subjected to a constant diet of programmes from other cultures. Once up and running, this industry will (inevitably?) produce films that

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[5]As discussed in chapter 3.

reflect our way of life with truth and artistry showing New Zealand to New Zealanders and the world (ibid, p.245/246).

While the 'cultural defense' argument, based on protectionism, is central here, there is an implicit economic rationale in the final '...and the world'. This economic rationale became more dominant in Jim Booth's 1977 proposal for the establishment of a Film Production Commission, which was modeled on the then-expanding Australian film industry. Booth argued that a film commission should be run 'strictly on an investment basis with an eye very firmly on the market, while the funding of 'art' or 'experimental' films remain the purview of the Arts Council (ibid, p.246). He concluded that 'the benefits of a market-oriented film commission will be immense in terms of promoting, first, cinematograph expressions particular to New Zealand, to counter the largely unrelieved diet of films from foreign cultures; and second, exportable, income-generating product that will do much to announce the existence of New Zealand to the world at large and so begin to counter the country's notorious antipodean cultural cringe' (ibid, p.246).

So here we see the basic arguments in favour of state support which are still very relevant today, even though the emphasis shifts from time to time, depending on the political and economic climate. 'The NZFC's 1985 annual report, for example, began with the assertion that a film industry is about culture and money. It involves an endless tug of war between finance, investment and economic returns on the one hand and art, culture and national identity on the other' (ibid, p.251). Three principal reasons for government support were spelt out as follows: 'the cultural role of film as a tool in the expression of the New Zealand cultural identity; the identification of New Zealand overseas, especially to a discriminating and sophisticated world market; and the in-country economic benefits, as well as export income' (ibid, p.253).

These three principal reasons illuminate the inevitable tension and incompatibility

between them, which is inherent in the terminology in which they are framed. They draw attention to the inability of the Film Commission to determine a singular policy, which in turn necessitates an engagement with these debates for every individual film project. This terminology then serves as a key example of the fluidity of terms such as 'nation', 'culture' and 'identity'. But while these terms are on the one hand impractical, they are also intangible, which makes them highly flexible and suitable to be appropriated in official policy documents like this. In short, they come to function as nodal points, relieving them of the need to be *specifically* defined.

However, formulating its role and objectives in this way of course still requires a partial definition of what constitutes a New Zealand film and how this is to be defined. This was spelled out in the New Zealand Film Commission Act 1978[6]. Clause 18 of this act relates to the content of films, which is defined in relation to subject matter, locations, nationality of key personnel, sources of funding, equipment and technical facilities, and any other matter deemed important by the Commission (Martin & Edwards, 1997, p.200). In 1985, this definition was made more 'flexible' to include co-productions. Subsection (2A) of the Act states that 'a film shall be deemed to have a significant New Zealand content if it is made pursuant to an agreement or arrangement entered into in respect of the film between- (a) The Government of New Zealand or the Commission; and (b) The Government of another country or relevant authority of another country' (ibid, p.200). Modified in this way, the Act still informs today how a 'New Zealand' film is defined, although of course it allows for different interpretations. Stretched to its limits, it results in the NZFC funding a film like *Loaded* (1994, Anna Campion) with the only connection to New Zealand being its director, a permanent resident in England.

In an apparent recognition of the difference between 'banal aboutness' and specific 'topical themes', the 1986 annual report introduced a new cinematic category into the

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[6]For a full version of this Act, see appendix I.

NZFC discourse: 'New Zealand language films, that is, films of high quality made for New Zealand by New Zealanders, but without necessarily having international appeal and thus dependent on government subsidy' (Waller, 1996, p.253). This reveals the influence of particular industry lobbyists, but it is an interesting argument in that it reveals once again the tension between different objectives, between commercial pressures and the telling of 'our own stories'. Of course what is ignored in this argument is that it may precisely be the local aspects that make them internationally marketable.

In an overall sense then, the history of the NZFC could be seen to mirror political, social and economic developments in a general sense. In the 1980s and 90s, it was thus profoundly influenced by 'Rogernomics' on the one hand, with its emphasis on deregulation and the general scaling back of the state's involvement in many social and cultural areas, and on the increasing emphasis on official biculturalism on the other hand.

In light of the former development, it is noteworthy that the NZFC has consistently received political support, albeit to varying degrees. According to Alan Sorrell, 'Richard Prebble[7] spoke in support of passing the Act. You'll find that the National Party introduced the Act. So right from its birth, the two main political forces in this country, National and Labour, have supported the Film Commission. Their capacity to fund it has varied from time to time, according to their perception of economic requirements'. In other words, the existence of a 'national cinema' is seen as important across the political board. However, while this may imply a 'shared' discourse, I would argue that it is precisely the above mentioned fluidity of the terms framing this discourse, which allows it to be appropriated for different reasons and political agendas.

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[7]Richard Prebble is now leader of the ACT New Zealand party, a small libertarian party which occupies the far right of the political spectrum. He was formerly a Minister of Broadcasting in a Labour Government between 1987 and 1990.

In terms of the second development, an increasing emphasis on the political discourse of biculturalism led to NZFC funding of two films directed by Maori in the late 1980s: *Ngati* (Barry Barclay, 1987) and *Mauri* (Merata Mita, 1988). In 1992, the NZFC prepared a new 'expanded Statement of Purpose: New Zealand films, and the New Zealand film industry, are reflective of the cultural diversity of the nation and in this spirit the Film Commission supports the aspirations of Maori film makers' (Waller, 1996, p.254). This draws attention to the question of control over the Commission's resources and funding decisions. In other words, up until 1987 all New Zealand feature films were directed by Pakeha, including those films 'reflective of cultural diversity' (e.g. *Sons for the Return Home*, 1979, Paul Maunder, and *The Silent One*, 1984, Yvonne Mackay). Waller quotes industry commentator Bruce Jesson who noted in 1985 that 'the composition of the Film Commission is Pakeha, professional, and predominantly male, with effective control of decision making vested in the chair, deputy chair, and executive staff' (ibid, p.248). Judging by the current composition of the NZFC, this may be slowly changing, and here again we see a parallel with wider political developments in New Zealand society.

At the time *Broken English* was produced in 1995/1996, the National Party had been in government since 1990, and had cut its grant to the NZFC in 1991 by NZ$2.7 million. The new members they appointed to the NZFC included Phillip Pryke, an investment banker who had earlier advised the government in its sale of Telecom and other state-run operations. Pryke took over as chair of the NZFC early in 1993, and vowed to further 'devolve' control to the private sector and bring 'market-driven' operating principles even more to the fore. In February 1994, the former director of Film Queensland, Richard Stewart, was hired as the NZFC's new CEO. Stewart's immediate objective was to encourage greater private investment in the industry and to establish co-production and co-financing arrangements with the Asia Pacific Region, meaning not so much Pacific Island nations, but Australia and, particularly, Japan (ibid, p.255).

In short, the emphasis shifted quite strongly towards commercial and economic objectives, as it did in the Broadcasting environment of the 1990s. Seen in this light, it is easy to see why Gregor Nicholas described his meeting with the NZFC as a foregone conclusion: *Broken English* had a co-production arrangement with a large Australian media corporation and a guaranteed distribution deal, thereby limiting the investment risk of the NZFC. Sorrell put it this way: 'What's an acceptable risk to undertake in relation to this project? Well, here is an international sales agent who's prepared to front up with $800.000 which, if no one goes to see the film, they'll lose. We held the view that that endorsed its commerciality [sic]'. Indeed, this gave the NZFC so much confidence that its 'proportion of the investment in this project [*Broken English*] was actually quite significant. I think it was close to two thirds'. This decision was thus based on economic factors rather than 'cultural' ones.

According to Sorrell, 'our objectives are transparent; the Act says what we do. We publish a business plan'. The 1995/1996 business plan contained the following objectives:

> Mission: to develop and sustain a vibrant, innovative and culturally relevant film industry in New Zealand, and to position our country globally as a source of quality films. Objective for development and production financing: to encourage vibrant, creative and sustainable production of quality New Zealand films. Outcomes cultural: films that entertain and enrich domestic and international audiences. Economic: employment opportunities and generation of foreign exchange.

These were the parameters which were reported to Parliament that year. Of course, these objectives are not as 'transparent' as Sorrell would have it; on the contrary, they contain a number of potentially conflicting notions. For example, who decides what is 'culturally relevant' and according to what criteria? Similarly, how are 'quality New Zealand films' defined and by whom? The most problematic among these objectives is

the 'cultural outcomes' section, for this is notoriously hard to measure. Again, who decides what constitutes a desirable cultural outcome and according to what criteria? Does this depend on the amount of prizes won at various film festivals? Or is it to be measured by 'bums on seats' as Harley puts it?

Since the appointment of Dr. Ruth Harley in 1997, and particularly since the election of a Labour-led government in 1999, the focus of the NZFC has shifted again, albeit not as far as the rhetoric would have it. 'Bums on seats now officially takes precedence over films-as-work-creation schemes' (*OnFilm*, July 1998, p.1). This is of course a rather sarcastic view, and Harley herself explains the shift in a little more depth:

> We've got a tweak in the strategic direction which takes us from a 70s-based Act, which was all about sustaining and supporting an industry, into a more 90s-based model which I think is about "why is the government in this business?" The government is in this business for a cultural outcome- there is no other answer to that question. If you're in there for a commercial outcome you'd get out of it very quickly, quite possibly get into trees or tourism or something, so they're there for a cultural outcome (1998, p.5).

Sorrell similarly argues that 'it's quite transparent what drives the Film Commission. And that is to provide a cultural return to the New Zealand tax payer'. Again, this is not as transparent as it sounds, for it involves defining 'a cultural return' which, as I mentioned above, is very difficult to measure. Sorrell talks about a 'cultural dividend' in the following terms:

> Cultural dividend [to the New Zealand tax payer] is seeing images of themselves on film that are interesting, entertaining, educational, to a greater or lesser extent. And projecting that into the world, and to do that you need a strong and vibrant film industry. So that's the prioritisation. But a film must have an audience. And we try

and find that it has an audience, not simply, and not primarily, because that results in box office, but because it means that New Zealanders are sufficiently satisfied with it.

The main contradiction in this definition arises from the use of all-encompassing terms such as 'New Zealanders' and 'themselves', which are here unproblematically constructed in opposition to 'the world'. For images that are interesting, entertaining and educational to 'ourselves' are not necessarily so to 'the world'. However this definition of cultural dividend implicitly suggests that they should be. This relates quite specifically to Turner's notion of the 'metropolitan gaze'[8], and his argument that this leads to a communicative space which depends for its existence on how 'others' see it.

In an attempt to create a framework in which the 'cultural dividend' can be measured, the NZFC commissioned an economist, Dr. George Barker, in 1997 to design a model which would 'make a bridge between cultural values and the principles of economic rationalism; to create a context in which the government's role in the arts and culture may be seen coherently in relation to the government's role in other sectors' (Harley, 2000, p.v). His study came out in 2000, and the NZFC relies extensively on his analysis in its subsequent policy statements.

'Cultural dividend' is here expanded to the wider concept of 'cultural capital'. Harley defines cultural capital as follows:

Cultural Capital is shared experience. It is an endowment like a genetic inheritance in an individual's life and tends to change over generations. It is collectively owned and passed on, with individual artists and art works contributing to its development. In so far as cultural capital constitutes an individual's birthright, it is an intrinsic

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[8]As discussed in chapter 3.

218

part of their identity. In so far as cultural capital is collectively owned, it is core business for the state (2000, p.vi).

She draws here on a common discourse about national identity, which frames this identity in terms of family relations, but she takes this a step further by drawing on biological terms such as 'genetic'. The main contradiction here is between culture as individual expression, and collective ownership of this culture. By positing individual expression as the result of a 'genetic inheritance', and therefore 'collectively owned', she naturalises the role of the state in this process. This in turn serves to mask the process of selection, involved in deciding what is to be included as part of this collectively owned 'cultural capital' and who decides which artists and artworks are reflective of this 'genetic inheritance'.

In its most recent 'three year plan', the NZFC stresses its focus on 'contributing to the development of cultural capital and New Zealand's identity, and also its consequential role in stimulating the development of a New Zealand film industry within a global knowledge economy' (NZFC's Homepage, 6/8/01). This still shows the same confusion of objectives, but it is articulated using different terms; the 'knowledge economy' has quickly become a new nodal point around which these debates are now centered.
The focus of this three year plan is also considered to be in tune with the Government's overarching goals, 'most particularly to strengthen national identity and uphold the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi' (ibid, 6/8/01).

This focus then leads to five goals: distinctively New Zealand films (reflecting the richness and diversity of New Zealand culture including Maori and Pakeha), better films, bigger New Zealand audiences, higher returns on investment, and more films. Although the results of the latter three goals can be accurately measured, the former two are much more problematic, as they involve selective judgements. Firstly, 'richness and diversity' is here specifically defined according to a bicultural framework. Secondly,

who decides what constitutes 'better film', and according to what criteria? Within these goals, the greatest priority is given to the goal of bigger New Zealand audiences ('bums on seats'). 'Without a higher percentage of the domestic box office, the opportunities for cultural and financial returns will remain limited. Progress towards this goal will require a multi-prolonged effort from the early stages of script development decisions to all aspects of marketing the cinema release' (NZFC's Homepage, 6/8/01).

In other words, the NZFC plans to get more intensely involved in the production process at an early stage and intends to stay involved right through to exhibition stage, in an effort to look more closely after 'the tax payers' investment. This shows a rather paternalist attitude which directly contradicts the implied belief that culture can emerge 'naturally' and even 'genetically'. It also shows the above mentioned contrast between 'individual expression' and the selectivity involved in deciding which of these individual expressions is worthy of inclusion in a collective cultural capital. And again, we can see the potential tension between different objectives and agendas, as aspects of 'culture' and 'identity' are not clearly defined, and economic objectives are couched in 'cultural' terms. In other words, objectives relating to commercial export and tourism are unproblematically intermingled with discourses on the nation's cultural health.

Waller's conclusion to his study captures this tension between different interests and discourses perfectly:

> Throughout the cultural policy discourse during this period [1970s-1996] 'film' gets redefined and carries multiple meanings: specifically in the NZFC's shifting categories (i.e. short, experimental, low-[or no-]budget feature, Maori film, New Zealand language film, 'culturally relevant film') and more broadly in the sense of film as, for instance, growth industry, investment opportunity, government-supported art, auteurist expression, vehicle for national self-expression, commodity for the international market, public service gesture, signifier of the nation or

postcard from the Antipodes (1996, p.256).

If we measure *Broken English* against this list, it can be seen to fit any one of these categories to some extent, which makes it an interesting case study. Different organisations and different people involved in its production draw on different discourses, depending on the position they occupy. However, the terms with which to justify these different positions appear to be sufficiently flexible to do so.

*The Funding Organisations: New Zealand on Air*

The final funding institution involved in *Broken English* was New Zealand on Air. NZOA was established in July 1990, and succeeded the New Zealand Broadcasting Commission (Smith, 1996, p.113/114). It was developed in response to radical changes in the broadcasting environment in New Zealand in 1989. Until 1999, its budget consisted entirely of income from the public broadcasting fee. In 1995, this provided the organisation with a budget of NZ$95 million (ibid, p.114). The broadcasting fee was scrapped by the National/NZ First government in 1999, and since then NZOA receives its income directly through a government grant. In the 1999/2000 financial year, this was NZ$87.2 million. Board members are appointed for a term of three years by the Government under Section 45 of the Broadcasting Act 1989 (NZOA Homepage, 6/8/01).

According to Roger Horrocks (board member at the time *Broken English* was produced), NZOA contributed between NZ$400.000 and NZ$500.000 dollars to its production (Horrocks, 2001). NZOA regularly funds feature films, despite the fact that this is not specifically mentioned in its purpose statement:

> NZ On Air's role is to help fund a range of locally-made programmes and to ensure
> that there is diversity on television and radio. In particular, NZ On Air television
> funding is allocated to the production of 'at risk' categories such as drama and
> documentaries, and to programmes catering to the interests of women, children,

persons with disabilities and minorities in the community including ethnic minorities (NZOA Homepage, 6/8/01).

When compared with the objectives of the NZFC, this shows a more explicit emphasis on public service. In other words, NZOA can be seen as a 'safety net' for a 'national culture'; it focuses more specifically on a national context. Of course this still requires a process of selection in terms of judgements about what the above mentioned 'interests' might entail.

NZOA provides funding for certain feature films for two main reasons that are related to this purpose statement: firstly, because feature films can be 'slotted in' under the 'at risk' category of drama (Horrocks, 2001). New Zealand feature films are likely to get a screening on free-to-air television, although this is left to the discretion of the broadcasters; NZOA cannot exert direct influence over this. Feature films that get a cinema release follow a so-called 'windows' structure: from cinema to retail video sales to video rental outlets to pay-TV, and eventually to free-to-air television. If or when a feature film gets a screening on free-to-air television hence depends on programming decisions on the broadcasters' part. In a ratings driven broadcasting environment like New Zealand, this will depend to a large degree on commercial considerations. *Broken English* is yet to screen on free-to-air television, while *Via Sattelite* (1998, Anthony McCarten) and *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?* (1999, Ian Mune) for example have been screened on TV 2 and TV 3 respectively.

The second reason for NZOA funding relates to the subject matter of *Broken English*, and to another 'at risk' category: 'ethnic minorities' (Horrocks, 2001). This can be seen as an acknowledgement of New Zealand as 'multicultural', something which is absent in the NZFC's policy statements which are defined quite explicitly in bicultural terms. Moreover, a significant difference between these two organisations is that NZOA's purpose statement, unlike that of the NZFC, does not make specific mention of 'Maori

culture and language', despite the fact that this is included in its statutory functions (NZOA Homepage, 6/8/01). The parallel existence of Te Mangai Paho[9] may account for this.

### 6.2: *Broken English*: Production Process.

As mentioned before, the script of *Broken English* was developed over a relatively long period of time; early drafts were being developed in 1990. The NZFC's involvement in the script development was limited to this early stage in this case. As Sorrell explains, 'we have, as with this project, external assessments done. We send the script to somebody who is regarded as an expert. They may be in New Zealand or overseas. And in the multi-drafting process that's involved in getting it through to a shooting script, a script is modified taking into account that input'. Another common practice is that early drafts get taken to 'the market', and early reactions to it thus get taken into account and influence production decisions to some extent. Nicholas took an early draft of *Broken English* to the Sundance Film Festival for example.

From the moment producer Robin Scholes committed herself to it, the development was accelerated. She did not think the story was 'particularly strong', and once Village Roadshow was 'on board', another writer was added: Johanna Pigott. Pigott, who is married to a New Zealander, is an Australian actor, guitarist and songwriter, but her long resume also includes many Australian television scripts (e.g. *Sweet and Sour* and *The Restless Years*). She collaborated with Nicholas on a number of drafts (the fifth draft is dated 6th of July, 1995), before another writer, Jim Salter, was brought in to add to the final shooting script. Johanna Pigott also wrote the script into a novel, which followed the release of the film (see Pigott, 1996).

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[9]The government established Te Mangai Paho, the Maori broadcasting funding agency, in August 1993, to 'promote the Maori language and Maori culture by making funds available for broadcasting and the production of programmes' (Smith, 1996, p.122).

This 'novel' generally follows the script quite closely, but is 'spiced up' a little with added background about the war in former Yugoslavia, a little more emphasis on Clara and Wu's plight, and more swearing. In other words, the background stories and sub-plots are slightly more developed. Together with the accompanying soundtrack (1996, Epic/ Sony Music Entertainment, NZ), this reinforces the commercial focus of the film's distribution, and can be seen to contain elements of 'high concept' (see Wyatt, 1994), albeit on a very small, local scale.

*Pre-production and Casting.*

The key operative words in the pre-production process and the casting were 'authenticity' and 'credibility'. This was particularly important to Gregor Nicholas. He explains that 'I wanted the ethnographic qualities in the movie to ring true. I went to great lengths to try to make sure that we were not imaging these cultures in inappropriate ways'. In an effort to get this 'right', he went through a lengthy process of interviewing different immigrants, which was part of the research and informed the script in important ways.

> There is nothing in the movie that didn't actually happen to some immigrant. I spoke to lots of immigrants and recorded our conversations. Even little dialogue things came out of the transcripts. Little phrases, like when Clara says she wants to 'have a small kiwi'; I mean, that came straight out of the mouth of a Chinese immigrant woman who was telling me that she wanted to have a child here and she wanted it to be a New Zealand child. So although it has a kind of classical structure of melodrama, almost every incident is drawn from life.
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> (see also Sony Classics Homepage, 1/8/01)

Of course this raises the question of why 'authenticity' was so important. Was it a concern to accurately reflect local culture? Or was it an attempt to make it a more convincing sale? Or a combination of the two? This preoccupation with 'authenticity'

also informed the casting to a large extent, particularly as far as the main characters were concerned. 'Especially in the limited pool of acting talent that we have here, you're forced to cast people to play people they're not. And I realised very early on that this movie would not work unless we cast the real thing. Maybe some of the satellite characters we could get away with, but the main characters had to be real, they had to be the real thing'. Again, we might ask what 'the real thing' means here, and what criteria are used to determine this. In other words, does it incorporate elements of language, factors of race, the use of accents?

Nicholas was very excited to secure the services of Rade Serbedzija, who he had met at Sundance, for the role of Ivan. Serbedzija, a Serbo-Croat by origin, was one of the biggest movie stars in former Yugoslavia. 'He has appeared in over fifty feature films by Yugoslav directors. In the early 1990s he became a dissident figure at odds with the nationalist regimes in Yugoslavia and Croatia and left the country' (Iordanova, 2000, p.71). Since then he has been based in London, acting in numerous European and Hollywood films. He met Nicholas while promoting *Before the Rain* (1994, Milcho Manchevski) which won numerous awards in 1994. According to Nicholas, *Broken English* was a story which had 'a lot of personal resonance for him [Serbedzija]. The fact that it was about a Croatian nationalist- and that whole nationalistic thing that took place in former Yugoslavia and broke it apart is what forced Rade to leave his homeland. So he brought a huge amount of authenticity to the story, because of his personal experience' (Sony Classics Homepage, 1/8/01). With this emphasis on 'authenticity', Nicholas appears to construct the film as a drama-documentary, whereas the publicity material calls it simply a 'love story'.

Serbedzija got very involved in the role of Ivan, and he was 'really attuned to detail, like the way in which Croatian migrants mixed Croatian and English in the way that they spoke. The stuff that he brought to the movie, all those nuances and details, was fantastic'. In short Serbedzija (or 'Sherbedgia' as he is called in the credits of his

Hollywood films in an attempt to make it 'pronounceable' for American audiences), had a certain amount of influence on the script. His presence had the added commercial advantage of being attractive in the international market, particularly in relation to the sizeable Croatian diaspora. None of the production personnel explicitly named this factor as a main concern, but more as an added bonus.

The other 'coup' was the 'discovery' of Aleksandra Vujcic for the role of Nina. Again, it was very important for Nicholas to find the right actor for this main part. 'We must have put about sixty to seventy actresses on tape. Some of them were kind of "semi-star" status people, and we still weren't happy' (Sony Classics Homepage, 1/8/01). It is here that various objectives begin to mingle; for not only did she have to be 'authentic', she also had to have 'star' potential. Vujcic, who worked as a receptionist at a modeling agency at the time and had never acted before, was spotted in an Auckland bar by casting director Fiona Edgar, who offered her a screen test. She was born in Croatia and had only moved to New Zealand several years previously (Phan, 1997, 2/8/01).

For the screen test, both Serbedjia (in London) and Vujcic (in Auckland) did a scene by themselves, which Nicholas then cut together; this sealed the casting of the main characters. This 'discovery' story of Vujcic was later extensively used in the publicity material and the marketing of the film. Vujcic, for her part, influenced the film in particular ways. She notes that, 'we spent a lot of time together beforehand working on the project in pre-production. Gregor was very open to using improvisation and open to shaping and reshaping the characters. In the original script, the family had come from Croatia thirty years ago and my character was born in New Zealand. But they had to adjust the script to my English abilities, so we made her English more broken' (ibid, 2/8/01).

Vujcic thus had quite a large influence on the script, to the point that she helped write some of the dialogue, the opening voice-over for example. This process was similar with

Jing Zhao and Li Yang, who played Clara and Wu in the film. Nicholas notes that, 'we found them in Melbourne and they, again, informed the story. I felt I was able to ask the actors whether they could reassure me whether it was authentic or not, because they had actually lived that life. They had fled China with nothing and gone to live in a foreign country, not knowing a word of English and had encountered the very problems that were depicted in the movie'. This shows some of the limits of the concern with 'authenticity', as the actors had 'lived that life' in Australia, not New Zealand. The implication here is that the two are virtually interchangeable in this respect, despite significant differences[10].

In terms of the other main actors in the film, Julian Arahanga who plays Eddie, and Temuera Morrison who plays his brother Manu, were both still basking in the glow of Communicado's previous success, *Once Were Warriors* (1994, Lee Tamahori), and would thus have been commercially attractive choices for these roles. Martin Csokas, who plays Nina's brother Darko, is a New Zealand born actor, whose father is Hungarian, 'which has given him an insight into the Eastern European intensity required for his role' (Sony Classics Homepage, 1/8/01). Again, we can see the limits of 'authenticy' here, as this stereotype is constructed through a denial of the very real differences between Eastern European nations and cultures. Finally, the extras in the film were drawn from 'ready made' communities: the Dalmatian Cultural Society[11] and

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[10]As discussed in chapter 5.

[11]Communicado (through Fiona Edgar) had initially approached the Croatian Cultural Society, seeking its cooperation in filming certain parts in the Society's community hall. However, members of the Society had read excerpts from the script and expressed reservations about these. They decided therefore to seek reassurance by asking three questions: 1) What is the attraction of the Society's hall? 2) Why a Croatian family, rather than a Greek, Bulgarian, Romanian, Hungarian, Macedonian, Serb or Italian family? And 3) Could we have a 'quick glance' through the film's script? Since Communicado failed to answer any of these questions, the Society decided against participation in the film. It was then that the Dalmatian Cultural Society was approached (personal notes of a member of the Croatian Cultural Society who shall remain anonymous).

the Taiokotai-anga Cultural Group; 'that was a group that was formed to celebrate Aitutakian culture' (Scholes).

What all of this makes clear for now is that the notion of the director as 'auteur' is highly problematic, particularly in this case where there is a lot of collaboration and a lot of input from different sources. However, this discourse of 'auteurism' is nevertheless typically drawn upon in different media contexts, in some cases to construct the notion of 'individual artist' (either for personal or commercial reasons). It also complicates the notion of 'agency', as significant parts of the film (including dialogue) were initiated by the actors, not the writers. But I will return to this later, in relation to the film's critical reception as a 'Gregor Nicholas film'. Another problematic aspect of the production process is the role of language and culture consultants, especially in this case where there was extensive input from the actors. This led to some frustration on the part of these consultants.

*The Role of Language and Culture Consultants.*

Given the emphasis on 'authenticity', three consultants were employed during the production process of *Broken English*, Davorin Fahn (Croatian), Don Selwyn (Maori) and Hou Dejian (Chinese). According to Dimech, 'consultation is a process for enabling participation in decision making. It is a tool to bring about participation and can be considered as only one aspect of participation' (1994, p.167). But importantly, it also has a political dimension, and the way consultation arrangements are worked through can reflect certain power relations in a particular context. 'A political definition of consultation raises questions about who makes the decisions and what power various participants have over the processes of deliberation and their outcomes' (ibid, p.167).

It is this power dimension which is directly related to issues of representation, especially if it involves 'other' cultures. Scholes explains the role of consultants from a producer's point of view:

228

You strive very, very hard to make the experience of the culture as authentic as possible. But there will always be different interpretations, especially with Maori culture, because it is a living culture within New Zealand. And there will be a lot of commentary whether it is correct or incorrect or whatever. And so from a producer's perspective, you can only protect yourself by taking advice from people who have a lot of credibility. Then, you know, if people criticise it, they are criticising the person that you've employed, more than the film itself.

When asked whether consultants have a lot of influence she said: 'Yeah absolutely. But they don't have a final say at all; I mean it's Gregor's film'. She draws here on a number of discourses, which overlap in complex ways. 'Authenticity' requires the employment of consultants which suggests a collaborative effort. However, it is ultimately 'Gregor's film', which firstly shows the limit of this search for 'authenticity' and secondly implies that 'Gregor' is an 'auteur', and thus an 'individual artist'. In addition, there is a keen awareness of future interpretations of the film, and it is interesting that she singles out Maori reaction to the film, as it is a 'living culture within New Zealand'. This implies that other cultures are somehow not 'living', or in other words more static, arrested in historical time. It also draws on a dominant underlying framework which is bicultural. Finally, from a commercial production point of view, she relieves herself, in a rhetorical move, from the ultimate responsibility if 'authenticity' is not achieved.

Nicholas himself seemed to regard the consultancy process as necessary to start out with, but only insofar as it fitted his vision (read 'as an auteur'). 'You gotta speak to these cultural consultants and stuff, which was great, but something happened beyond that which was really interesting'. He is referring here to the input of the actors as described above, which in this case mostly overtook the role of the consultants. Film making in a New Zealand context then has a certain degree of randomness about it in most cases, more so than for example a Hollywood production. The tasks of different

people in the production process are less clearly defined and hence more prone to flexibility, which also goes for the role that consultants play.

Both Fahn and Selwyn were involved in the pre-production process, commenting and discussing the script, but neither of them were on the set during the shooting of the film. Fahn had never done consultancy work before, but works in the New Zealand film industry as a camera operator. At the time he was approached he had been in New Zealand for about a year and a half. He describes his involvement thus:

> Gregor knew I was Croatian and he asked me to read his draft. We had a long discussion about that; I didn't like that first draft at all. The only thing that changed from that draft was the ending, which from my point of view was completely unacceptable. But the general feel of the movie didn't change at all.

Fahn's input was more related to culture than language, but culture in a rather narrow sense of the word. I will return to this in the next section when I discuss themes of the film. But overall, his involvement did not have much impact.

> I didn't influence the movie at all, so it remained pretty far from real life, at least from a Croatian point of view. From some other point of view it's probably quite a good movie. It is not boring; it's colourful and it has values, no doubt about that. But from a Croatian point of view, it's definitely not a good movie. (.) That lamb on the spit and stuff like that is very Croatian; the movie is pretty rich from that point of view, but the story as such is wrong. I mean it has a wrong base.

Again, we see an emphasis on 'real life', but interestingly, he complicates the notion of 'authenticity', by distinguishing between what he calls cultural 'icons' (language, song and dance, food), and another level which relates to cultural values and underlying structures, something which Selwyn talked extensively about as well. It is on the latter

level, the level of topical themes, that he identifies a 'wrong base'. In other words, his argument in relation to the representation of Croatian culture in *Broken English* implies a 'banal aboutness', rather than an aboutness in a proper thematic sense. In addition, the point of view from which it is 'probably quite a good movie' relates to perennial themes such as love, honour and so on.

In contrast to Fahn, Selwyn is a veteran in the New Zealand film industry who has wide-ranging experience as an actor, director, and producer[12]. As a result, he has a lot of mana in the industry and is often called upon to do consultancy work. His role in *Broken English* was therefore a little more extensive, including casting, but nevertheless limited to the pre-production stage. His association with Scholes goes a long way back, but he had never met Nicholas before. Like Fahn, he was brought in when the script had already gone through a number of drafts; the storyline and the idea were already well down the track, which makes it rather difficult in his view:

> If you're imposing a cultural element on the story, it's difficult. If the character is coming out of a very strong cultural base, which the story has set up pretty well, it's not so difficult. (.) It has to be structured very well to be able to give him [Eddie] credibility. (.) We tried to get away from cliches, tried to get away from the haka and the concert party and the pois and all those things. So you delve very much into something that's much deeper in the cultural psyche. (.) I think that's a difficulty all the way through, that you do get those cliched elements; they jump out as cliches. There are too many elements that actually intrude upon the main thematic aspect of the story. (.) It always feels like we're catching up culturally, rather than having the story that drives the characters.

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[12]His latest work as a producer and director is *Te Tangata Whai Rawa o Weniti*, a Maori language version of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, which was ten years in the making and premiered in New Zealand on February 17, 2002 (*New Zealand Herald*, 16-17/ 02/02).

He thus draws attention to a similar distinction between what he calls cultural 'appendage' and culture at a deeper, less tangible level. The latter is more vulnerable to being overlooked. Selwyn notes that from his perspective this had partly to do with coming into the process at a late stage and being pushed for time. Most of the 'appendage' elements in the film, like the pohutukawa tree and the taiaha, were already in the script.

> You might decide we're gonna put in this taiaha thing. And you train the actor and teach the actor and bring the best expertise to teach the actor. And all that might be brilliantly done, but it doesn't quite fit the context of the film. (.) I can define what's credible and what's not credible. I've got no control over the way in which that is fine-tuned into the major script. (.) The difficulty also is that you're not necessarily on set when the key scenes are being done.

In a more general sense, Selwyn expressed frustration with the consultancy process and the often limited control that comes with it. At the time of the interview he had just finished working as a consultant on *Crooked Earth* (2001, Sam Pillsbury), where he had run into similar difficulties.

> I must say that you get very disappointed over a period, because you're always struggling with someone else's view on what the cultural content ought to be. And after a while you get tired of it. You actually become more interested in doing your own stuff, so you've actually got more control with the writing; so you define... (.) I realised that the dialogue and the language that was used [in *Broken English*] was Tai Tokerau[13] dialogue. Most of my work is dealing with other tribal dialects and

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[13]Northern Maori tribes, roughly north of Auckland.

culture. But I prefer the writers from those areas to do that[14]. There is a tendency for Europeans to grab the context of Maoridom and say it's all the same, because they don't understand the cultural structure; they don't understand the particular dialectual [sic] thing, the particular inland as opposed to the sea culture. You know, why people actually exist and live within the resources around them. They tend to say "Oh, that's Maori, so we'll put on a poi dance", you know? And that's very disturbing for me.

Overall then, the consultants had some influence during the production of *Broken English*, but in this instance, it was rather limited. However, an analysis of their role is important in relation to this study, as it can illuminate, to some extent, the relations of power involved in cross-cultural representation in a New Zealand context. Selwyn's comments suggest that limited input from consultants is fairly common in a New Zealand context, but it depends to a large extent on the discretion of the people who have creative control, like the producer and director. There are examples of films where the involvement of consultants is more extensive, including a presence on the set. One example is Keri Kaa's contribution to *Ruby and Rata* (1990, Gaylene Preston)[15]. Since I am specifically talking about *Broken English*, I do not suggest that this applies to the New Zealand film industry as a whole, but Selwyn's comments do draw attention to the politics of representation, and the power relations that inform these politics. While this concludes a general outline of the production context, the following discourse analysis may deepen our understanding of how different participants in this production process position themselves in relation to the themes and topics of *Broken English*.

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[14]Selwyn's father was Te Aupouri (Te Tai Tokerau), but he grew up in Taumaranui (Waikato/ King Country).

[15]For a description of Kaa's involvement, see Cairns & Martin, 1994, pp.171-174.

The following material is based on a number of interviews I conducted in 1999 and 2000. They are interviews with the Chairman of the Board at the NZFC, the director of *Broken English*, the producer, and two language and culture consultants. In addition, some of the material is based on interviews with the director and the main actress (Aleksandra Vujcic) published elsewhere. These people played an important role in the production process of the film, but they are not the only ones. The director, Gregor Nicholas, describes one example during the shooting stage of the film, where other production personnel had a significant influence, which illustrates my point.

My instinct was to back off on the amount of colour we gave the Aitutakian neighbours. My production designer, who was also costume designer, Michael Kane, who is a really brilliant guy, felt very strongly that we should push it up a bit to make the contrast stronger. On the one hand I agreed with him, on the other I didn't. Then ultimately I thought, in terms of an international audience, this is actually going to help people understand who these people are, because they're not Maori, they're not Eddie's people, they are a Polynesian immigrant community. My decision really came down to try to make that as clear as possible to an international audience. But to a local audience, it's too much, too caricatured, you know?

This is an interesting and very blatant example of Turner's argument about the 'metropolitan gaze', and again reinforces the importance of the international dimension in the New Zealand context.

The interviewees were chosen according to my perception of their importance in the production of the film, before I started the process. I have made several attempts to conduct interviews with a representative from Village Roadshow, co-writer Johanna Pigott, actor Julian Arahanga, and Chinese consultant Hou Dejian, but these fell through for various reasons. In other words, this material is not exhaustive, but it does paint a

significant picture, as the people I did interview had a fair amount of creative control and decision making power on this project.

Another important point to consider is the context in which these interviews took place. Each person interviewed occupies a particular position which has an influence on not only their willingness to participate, but also on the extent and depth in which they are willing to discuss the production process and the film itself, and particularly the themes and topics of the film. Sorrell, for example, was very quick in agreeing to an interview. This can be seen in the context of the NZFC's statutory obligations and functions, one of which is 'to encourage and promote, for the benefit of the New Zealand film industry, the study and appreciation of films and film making' (NZFC Homepage, 6/8/01). The latter is an important aspect of national cinema, and its validation[16]. However, his responses to my questions (which he had requested to read beforehand, to which I agreed) were often very 'guarded', and he was reluctant to offer opinions which could be construed as representing the 'NZFCs position'. Scholes' responses were similarly guarded, as she seemed equally reluctant to offer her personal opinion about certain themes.

In contrast, Nicholas was very open and willing to discuss the content and themes of the film. This is of course partly due to the fact that it is 'his film', and as a 'creative artist', he represents himself rather than a particular organisation. But he also expressed some frustration at the local reviews the film had received, and seemed happy with the opportunity to react to some of this criticism.

There was some difference between the two consultants which relates to their position in the New Zealand film industry at large. As mentioned before, Fahn has been in New Zealand for a relatively short time, and is still trying to find his place in the local film

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[16]As discussed in chapter 3.

industry. As this industry is relatively small, he had to consider his position within it, which is understandable and shaped his responses to some extent. In contrast, Selwyn is a veteran in this industry with a lot of mana, and was therefore in a position to be a lot more open in his criticism. Furthermore, he has a wider and deeper experience to call upon.

It is important in my view to outline these different positions and different contexts, as they have a significant impact on the way in which particular discourses are being appropriated, particularly when it comes to some of the more contentious themes and topics in the film. This works on different levels: firstly in the sense of positions in wider society as outlined above, and secondly in terms of the immediate interview context and my position as an academic researcher vis-a-vis the interviewees.

In relation to what follows, I finally wish to stress that my aim is to analyse the *process* of making and creating meaning, and to test the boundaries of certain discourses and the way in which they get appropriated in combination with other discourses. Drawing attention to certain inconsistencies and contradictions is therefore an important aspect of this analysis, and should not be seen as an attempt to 'catch the interviewees out'[17].

*Discourses of Nation and National Identity.*
As an 'imagined community', New Zealand is 'imagined' on a number of different levels. An important part of national identity is imagining certain versions of the nation. The present is in this way situated between imagined versions of the past, and imagined versions of the future, to form a continuum that runs along a linear line, 'moving steadily down (or up) history' (Anderson, 1991, p.26). The nation is thus seen as 'body' or 'sociological organism' which steadily grows older and more 'mature'. And according to Selwyn, 'the film industry has a big responsibility in that maturity'.

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[17]For a full version of my interview questions, see appendix II.

A 'national cinema' is thus ideally situated to provide particular versions of the nation, both historical and contemporary versions, as well as projections into the future. Seen in this way, it is not merely a reflective medium, but is also seen to play an important part in (re-)shaping particular ways in which the nation is imagined, steering it into certain directions. Part of this (re-)imagining process is the drawing of particular boundaries of (non-)admittance; in other words, who is considered to be part of this imagined community and who is not, and to what extent. This process of re-imagining was an important motivation behind *Broken English*, from Nicholas' perspective:

> One of the things that I find slightly frustrating about New Zealand culture is its lack of diversity, ethnic diversity, especially in relation to our immediate neighbour Australia, which has a much more diverse immigrant community, which is quite dominant in the Australian community as a whole. And also in the Unites States, the massive immigrant diversity there. I just find it a really kind of stimulating pot-pourri I suppose. And here, the immigrant base is very mono-cultural.

This draws attention to Billig's assertion that nationalism is an *international* ideology. 'Without constant observation of the world of other nations, nationalists would be unable to claim that their nations meet the universal codes of nationhood' (Billig, 1995, p.80). It is significant in this respect that Nicholas uses Australia and the USA as comparisons here, as some nations are more 'like us' than others. Conversely, 'we' would like to be more like some nations than others. Again, we can see a combination of reflection and projection. Scholes, for example, notes in a reflective sense that 'it's becoming like Toronto in Auckland with an enormous number of immigrant people; they are part of our population'. This implies that this is a relatively recent phenomenon, something which Sorrell alludes to as well when he says that '*Broken English* reflects a particular social group, a culture, which is increasingly becoming a fixture in New Zealand, but especially in Auckland'. However, he then links this to something which is

in his view fundamental to a New Zealand identity:

> We're a small country where overseas influences are significant. (.) I mean, New Zealand is a place that spends a huge amount of its energy interacting with people who have been in New Zealand for a greater or lesser period of time. So a New Zealand story is frequently going to involve interaction of that kind, whether it is our first...whether it is Maori arriving to deal with Morioris or...right through to the present day, *Broken English*.

This is interesting in terms of the historical dimension of national identity, as it creates a linear history which runs in an unbroken line from early settlement to the present day. It is thus a rhetorical move which creates an inclusive 'we', and at the same time glosses over historical differences and power relations. For within this linear narrative of 'unity', Maori are effectively denied a special position as indigenous people, which legitimises historical settlement and contemporary institutional contexts. Fahn draws on a similar discourse, before making an important comparison with 'Europe':

> New Zealand is an immigrant country; everyone here is an immigrant. But some people came a hundred years ago, some just last year; there's no difference. (.) But all these people are immigrants, and people are aware of that. And that makes things much easier. I mean, any other country...like in Europe, very old, you know, traditional countries; it's different, it's far different. (.) If you are for example German or Italian, that's it: you are Italian. (.) People just don't think that way here. People are much more aware of the fact that this is really a much younger country. So it's much easier to be more open to immigrants.

This firstly foregrounds the historical dimension of nationhood; in other words, the perception is that the longer a nation has been imagined in a particular way, the more inflexible and exclusive its identity becomes. In contrast, New Zealand is a 'young'

country, and therefore not only more flexible, but also more open to different ways of imagining its identity.

This leads me to questions of how this national identity is defined and in what context. As I have mentioned before, the claim that this is a 'young nation of immigrants' has important political implications and serves a strategic purpose in relation to a colonial history. It serves rhetorically to create a sense of sameness while at the same time clouding over difference and conflicting interests. In other words, while all of 'us' could be said to have come from 'somewhere else', 'we' did not all share the same agendas, and 'we' did not all have the same impact on those that came before.

Interestingly, Nicholas appeared to be caught in between two potentially conflicting discourses. On the one hand, he seemed frustrated by mainstream discourses of New Zealand identity and their homogenising effects; he had a keen awareness of the exclusionary effects of these discourses. However, he was also very aware of the potential implications of offering a more multicultural version of the nation, particularly by drawing on the Australian and American examples.

> What was in the back of my mind was not only revealing to New Zealanders a community, and a clash of communities that they may not be aware of, but I was also interested in revealing to the world that New Zealand wasn't this idealised, clean, green environment where everything is very harmonious, you know blah de blah. Probably ninety percent of New Zealanders live in highly urban environments. So the whole rural kind of myth that is perpetrated in almost all the arts in New Zealand is actually a bubble that I wanted to burst. Unfortunately, it had already been burst by *Once Were Warriors* (laughs). (.) You know the Australian and American examples are not great, because the indigenous people in those countries got really fucked over, you know, so much so that their cultures were destroyed compared to what happened here.

There is an interesting tension here between potentially contradictory discourses. Firstly, when he talks about 'revealing to New Zealanders' he clearly means Pakeha (and possibly Maori) New Zealanders. This has the problematic effect of placing that identity firmly in the center as the mainstream, thereby positioning the 'communities' he wants to reveal effectively outside the category of 'New Zealanders', and thus on the margins[18].

Another common discourse he draws on, in relation to indigenous peoples, is that New Zealand's colonial history was very different from other colonial histories. Where 'they' (e.g. the Australians) destroyed Aboriginal culture, 'we' had more of an interactive relationship with 'our' Maori. This 'harmonious race relations'- discourse has a cleansing effect on history; even where it acknowledges violence in New Zealand's history, it makes it appear somehow more benign in comparison. It is interesting that this is part of the same 'harmony' discourse that Nicholas wishes to subvert. What we see then is a wish to subvert in an uneasy combination with a 'common sense' discourse which constructs New Zealand as a paradise in comparison to other nations. Again, I should stress here that it is not my intention to 'catch him out' in an inconsistency, but rather to show that some of these discourses are persistent because they are highly flexible and can be appropriated for different strategic effects. Discourses on nationhood and national identity then are intimately linked to discourses on race and ethnicity.

*Race, Ethnicity and (Post-)Colonial Perspectives.*
The link between the nation state and the construction of its 'others' is based on an important recognition which forms the basis of the way in which the different interviewees talked about 'difference' in general, and 'race' and 'ethnicity' in particular. Not surprisingly in view of my earlier discussion, these categories are frequently talked

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[18]This issue will be revisited in chapter 7.

about under the header of 'culture'. Jennings identifies three discursive formations in relation to these categories: 'the assimilationist formation, the liberal multiculturalist formation, and an independent formation' (1993, p.20). The interviewees draw on these formations in particular ways and in particular combinations, with different effects.

Nicholas, for example, seems to mostly draw on 'the liberal multiculturalist' formation when he talks about his motivations for making *Broken English*.

> The immigrant base here is very mono-cultural. So I was keen to investigate alternative immigrant communities in Auckland. One community stood out as being very attractive to me, and that was the Croatian community, because that was probably the only large-scale European community in Auckland...well, there's the Dutch of course. I was curious about their lack of visibility. (.) I thought they were really cool people and they were really passionate and really expressive; all the things that the mono-cultural, protestant English community were not, like very repressed, very inexpressive, very restrained. Now these people were quite different and I was just drawn to that, and I was very attracted to it. (.) I was sort of seduced by the Croatian lifestyle: the way they live, the way they eat, the way they talk, the way they drink, the way they dance, the way they laugh, you know? They are really incredibly attractive to me, and I think it's probably because they were very different to my background.

If I was to analyse this from a postcolonial position, I could identify clear markers of 'orientalist' discourse here. Words like 'investigate', 'seduced', 'attraction' and so on clearly point in that direction, and raise questions of 'knowledge' and 'desire' in relation to the power to define. However, I believe it is rather more ambiguous than that. He sets up a binary structure here in which Croatians are defined as 'other' and everything 'we' are not. This binary works along a positive/ negative axis, and he positions himself on the 'positive' side by association. In other words, he removes himself rhetorically from

'the mono-cultural, protestant English community' by constructing himself as possessing more 'cosmopolitan' sensibilities.

There is , however, an awareness of the problematic nature of this binary and particularly its implications for cinematic representations. Nicholas was partly inspired by Martin Scorsese's film *Goodfellas* (1990) which he calls 'a weird fusion between a gangster movie and a documentary on Italian Americans in the United States. It's an intermingling of genres: it's a gangster movie, but it's also an amazing ethnographic kind of treat of Italian American life'. Consequently, he wanted to create a more complex representation of difference.

> It's not exactly an advertisement for ethnic diversity in your neighbourhood. I wanted to make a film that touched on all these diverse ethnic characters and cultures. I didn't want to turn it into a promotion, you know, or treat those characters with kid gloves. You know, let's make them nice characters; where's the drama in that?

But where the film offers complexity, it does so by means of different characters who are nevertheless still largely defined in terms of the above mentioned binary. For example, 'passion' and 'expressivity' are to some extent 'naturalised' as an inherent part of Croatian identity, but they surface in different forms. Through Nina, they come to signify sexual passion and an independent fighting spirit, while through Ivan, these are translated into excessive violence and racism. In other words, while this complicates the category 'Croatian' to a certain extent, it does so by imbuing this category with 'good' and 'bad' possibilities which ultimately still stay essentially different.

Considering my discussion of the theoretical literature on representations of

'difference'[19] , it should come as no surprise that it is Nina who represents the 'positive' aspects of her 'culture'. This draws attention to the race/ gender intersection which is an important aspect of representations of the Other. It is interesting in this respect that my questions about this gender dimension were for the most part greeted with confusion as to its importance, which may indicate that this is largely taken for granted and treated as 'common sense'. Only Selwyn had a very direct answer:

> Sexist! A lot of scenes are driven by male writers or directors. I think it's a very subconscious thing and I think that it's very male-driven. (.) But it's a universal thing, isn't it? It's been the subject of hundreds of movies. I don't think it has anything to do with the culture. Nina was tremendously attractive, sensuous, you know? She had all those qualities, and she looked great on the screen.

Although he recognises this gender dimension, the reference to 'the universal' has the effect of making it part of a kind of 'common sense' practice, and thereby 'inevitable'. On a micro level (the interview context), we might interpret this as a rhetorical move, managing what Wetherell & Potter call 'a dilemma of stake or interest' (1992, p.97). In other words, while acknowledging male bias as a factor, he neutralises what could be perceived by me as his own complicity in this by drawing attention to 'universal' cinematic codes and conventions.

Interestingly, both Sorrell and Nicholas use similar arguments in this respect. While Sorrell initially questioned the validity of my question to some length, he eventually acknowledged this gender dimension, but put it down to being a 'universal' dramatic devise.

> In my business [Barrister, specialising in commercial litigation and advice] they call

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[19]See chapter 4.

that a 'have you stopped beating your wife yet- question'. (.) My observation is that frequently the woman joins the circle of her spouse. That's not a Maori/ Pakeha phenomenon. In any cross-cultural marriage, that's what seems to have historically happened. (.) If we are talking about: is it an interesting story to look at someone coming from another culture and assimilating to a new culture and that environment; of course it is! It's a dramatic device, surely. (.) Cross-cultural romances have a long history in drama worldwide. I don't think it is correct to say that that dramatic convention is particularly found with a cross-cultural romance. (.) Society is likely to be consistently sexist. And therefore, what is consistent behaviour may nonetheless be sexist.

This argument creates a sense of 'inevitability', which relieves the speaker of responsibility to some extent. This fairly defensive reaction may have been caused in part by the way my question was phrased, despite my attempt to keep it fairly general and neutral[20]. Nicholas had not really thought about this gender aspect in these terms. He said it 'basically grew from a father-daughter relationship that I knew'. He then made an interesting observation: 'You know, it wouldn't have worked the other way around; I mean, it would have seemed strange'. This accentuates the 'common sense' aspect of this gender dimension and indicates that it could indeed be a 'subconscious' process.

Finally, there was a significant variety in the responses to my question about the absence of Pakeha characters in the film, despite the director and producer being Pakeha. This may in part be due to the relative instability of the term Pakeha and how this is defined; apart from that, it is not a neutral term but politically loaded to some extent. There are interesting overlaps in this respect between 'Pakeha', 'New Zealander', 'Kiwi', 'Maori' and the ways in which these terms are used in relation to other terms like 'immigrant', 'Asian' and 'Croatian'. My question was based on the observation that the various

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[20]See appendix II.

characters in the film are quite specifically marked as 'immigrants', 'Croatians', 'Maori', 'Chinese' and 'Pacific Islanders'.

According to Nicholas, there was a Pakeha character in earlier drafts of the film, but due to time and space constraints, he was abandoned in later drafts.

> Once you're dealing with that many characters, there's only a certain amount of screen time you can devote to them, and the more characters you put in, the more you undermine your main characters. (.) He [the Pakeha character] was the middle man in the immigration thing who connects Eddie and Nina with Clara and Wu. His part was a bit bigger, but it got the chop. He was a really great character actually; it was interesting because his accent stood out in the movie, because it was a Kiwi accent and all the other accents in the movie are from different countries, different languages. There was something archetypically [sic] Kiwi about him too, his mannerisms and stuff. So it wasn't really a conscious decision, but it was sort of fueled by wanting to present New Zealanders with an image of their society that they're not familiar with.

The emphasis was thus on 'difference', and in this sense, it is no coincidence that the Pakeha character had to go, because the difference is here clearly defined against Pakeha as 'the norm'. It is significant then that this was not a 'conscious' decision, which again indicates a sense of 'matter of factness' about what constitutes difference in this context. I have outlined above how 'Croatians' are defined against this norm. This works in a similar way in relation to definitions of 'Chineseness'.

> New Zealanders are a very complacent bunch of people I reckon. They feel that what we've got here...they deserve it and it's their right and they don't have to work particularly hard to maintain it. There is this sort of generational complacency that's come about here. When Kiwis see Chinese people come into this country and

working their butts off, and then suddenly they're driving a car and they're buying a house; it freaks them out. (.) That's something I definitely noticed when I was doing all my research is that complacency of New Zealanders, you know white New Zealanders, in the face of these people who have been through such extremes of adversity.

This creates another binary in relation to 'Chineseness', this time related to a different work ethic, which again sets up a kind of fundamental difference. In addition, this highlights an easy slippage between 'New Zealander', 'Kiwi' and 'white New Zealander'. Also, Nicholas positions himself in this way as both outsider and insider by variously using 'they' and 'we'. But 'Chinese' here clearly means 'other' and not part of the unified category of 'New Zealander'.

Whereas Nicholas, Fahn and Selwyn all accepted the starting point of my question (that *Broken English* features virtually no Pakeha characters) in an unproblematic fashion, Sorrell refuted this as follows:

> I regret to say I don't accept your basic proposition. Most of the characters are Pakeha. [Are they? And by Pakeha you mean?] White, non-Maori. You go to somewhere like the Oxford Dictionary and look up the word Pakeha; you'll find the definition is white as opposed to Maori. Now, whether that includes people of Asian ethnicity, I'm not sure. (.) Pakeha New Zealander is an embellishment on Pakeha, and Maori generally take the view that you're Maori if you believe you are.

Whereas the term Pakeha carries connotations of British descent (see Barlow, 1991, p.86/87), Sorrell extends that here, and takes it to mean 'white' in general. He then implies that this may exclude 'people of Asian ethnicity'. This has important implications for notions of biculturalism and multiculturalism to which I shall turn in a moment.

Selwyn on the other hand acknowledged my question, and drew attention to the political implications of what could be seen as the inclusion of Maori in 'the multicultural pot pourri'. He also expressed this specifically in relation to issues of representation:

> Primarily we're a burden, so anything that the media can do to make it more embarrassing and push us over there, as people who are refugees within their own country. And that's still the psyche in this country. Most producers in this country think the same way too. They've got a conscience and they say, "well, we better have Maoris in this thing". But all the Maori characters are either druggies, thieves, or they screw white people and the parents aren't happy about it.

Again, this highlights the complicated tension between notions of biculturalism and multiculturalism to which I shall now turn.

*Biculturalism, Multiculturalism and Diaspora.*
While the tension between biculturalism and multiculturalism is a central theme in *Broken English*, it is interesting that my question relating to this tension caused very different reactions, which were clearly linked to the positions of the different interviewees. Where both Nicholas and Selwyn were critical of biculturalism as official policy, Fahn neutralised this tension by drawing on his personal experience. Both Scholes and Sorrell could be seen to represent a particular organisation and institution, and were therefore very guarded in their response. Scholes responded to the question as follows:

> It's so far from the film that I don't really feel qualified to answer it. I feel qualified to answer about the creation of *Broken English,* but I don't feel qualified to answer about, you know, multicultural New Zealand. I don't have enough information really to give you a correct, an appropriate answer.

Of course, the question was not designed to elicit a 'correct' or 'appropriate' answer, but rather to get a sense of her position in relation to an ongoing debate. Sorrell did confront the question, but tried to keep his answer relatively neutral, by not framing it as his own opinion:

> I don't acknowledge there's tension. What I say is we proceed in partnership with Maori. Stories are offered for funding to us, and they tend to reflect a wide range of cultures. The Commission has a role in financing films, rather than directing the content of those films.(.) If someone came along and offered us a film that said: New Zealand is and should be a bi-cultural community, and it was a story well told, we might well finance it. If someone else came along with another film that said: we're a multi-cultural community and that's the way the world is going, and it's a story well told, we might well finance that. They're both capable of contributing significantly to our objectives. So I don't feel we need to take a view as to which one of those views is correct.

The initial reference to 'partnership with Maori' clearly draws on an institutionalised bicultural framework in the official policy documents of the NZFC[21]. The 'we' in 'we proceed' is a little ambiguous, in that it could either refer to the NZFC, or to Pakeha in general. Within the overall answer, Sorrell attempts to construct a sense of 'objectivity' by reducing issues which may require particular value judgements to the merits of the story ('...a story well told'). In other words, good stories will always be told; it is up to individuals to write them. And 'good stories' are here implicitly defined according to 'universal' criteria, which constructs the NZFC as unproblematically capable of sound assessment. This glosses over structural social inequalities, relating to access to the means of communication, by constructing it as a matter of individual responsibility.

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[21]As outlined earlier in this chapter.

In contrast, Nicholas talked from a more personal position and was therefore quite willing to offer his views on this issue, as it formed an important theme in 'his' film.

> I really don't like the phrase bi-culturalism, because I think it's really misleading. I mean you're probably very aware of it, but I mean bi-culturalism means there's this culture, and there's this culture, and they live side by side and they're somehow finding harmony. But what about all the other cultures? Why exclude them? (.) I mean it's actually a racial thing isn't it? But even then it's not accurate, because what it is really is Maori and Pakeha. (.) The phrase bi-culturalism has emerged in the time of this [Maori] renaissance, you know narrow sense of identity, which is great, you know, but there's a kind of lock-out, fascist quality to it. What it's doing is shutting the door on other cultures. And I just find that anathema, because I love cultural diversity; I think it's really stimulating.

It is interesting to firstly note here that he clearly takes Pakeha to mean 'of British descent'. And secondly, he echoes much of the academic literature on the problematic nature of bi-culturalism, and its exclusionary implications, as I have discussed before. He is however less clear on the implications of more multicultural versions of the nation for indigenous politics. By linking biculturalism explicitly to the Maori renaissance, he constructs it as an issue that concerns Maori, rather than Pakeha. In this way, he lays the blame for its exclusionary implications squarely at the feet of Maori, and thereby ignores structural inequalities which relate to a colonial legacy. In other words, 'they' are locked into an ahistorical, narrow sense of identity, while 'we' (liberal, generous, culturally sensitive) have moved on, and embrace 'diversity'. His views on immigration are in line with this 'liberal multiculturalist' position: 'Open up the flood gates and see what happens. It's better to let as many people in, from as many diverse places as possible, as far as I'm concerned. Something extraordinary would happen eventually'.

Selwyn was rather more cautious in this respect and he was also more aware of the

power aspects involved in these discourses, which he sees reflected in institutions. His comments draw extensively on the Maori sovereignty discourse and interestingly, he was the only interviewee who made explicit mention of the Treaty of Waitangi.

It doesn't matter whether it is with that [the film industry] or whether it's education or whatever. You're dealing with an institutionalised philosophy which bears no resemblance to reality. (.) You see it [New Zealand] is not bi-cultural, because we've never come to terms with our bi-culturalism. If it was bi-cultural, we wouldn't have to worry so much and fight so much for our own language. If it was bi-cultural then there would be better equity; you know, we have to fight for our equity. We have to actually pull out the Treaty to get some equity. We're always viewed as a percentage of the population. There's no equal status, so there's no bi-culturalism. It's convenient for us to move into multi-cultural things so we can deny the bi-cultural responsibility we've got.

His use of 'we' and 'our' in this context serves strategically to construct Maori as an 'essential' political category. This forms a contrast with his earlier comments in relation to issues of representation, where he went to great length to critique essentialist notions of Maori as a category. He draws on a number of discourses here which all relate to the power issues involved and clearly point to the tension between official versions, whereas Nicholas' views relate more to 'everyday' versions of multiculturalism. In an 'official' sense, bi-culturalism becomes something which runs along a time line and needs to be 'achieved'. The perception in this discourse is then that multiculturalism is something which can be put on hold, while we wait for biculturalism to be achieved.

It is also in these official versions that 'culture' easily slips into 'race' as an essentialist construct, which in turn leads to what Ang calls 'a politics of numbers' (2000, p.127) and what Selwyn refers to as 'a percentage of the population'. Consequently, this underlies his views on immigration:

I know some Pacific Islanders who are sort of saying, "Oh, but Maoris are getting this; why can't we get it?". I say, "you go home and get it". You know, they ride on the backs of our dilemma. (.) Immigration is a convenient political need, whereby our own people get surpassed, whereas other people come here and get jobs and things like that, and I worry. (.) I don't think anybody wants to be invaded at the expense of their own existence. That's what the Pakeha did.(.) I believe the only people who really have a passion for this country are the Maoris. There are some individuals, Pakehas, I'm not racist, but you know they have the same sense. But it is about people who come here and they exploit; people who leave here and they go overseas and exploit everywhere else.

This clearly shows the political need of 'strategic essentialism' in relation to official versions, while the often stated 'I'm not racist' functions as a 'disclaimer'[22] and indicates where the tension with everyday versions arises. The way in which this strategically essentialist version of Maori ('we', 'our') is constructed relies here on discourses of indigenous people as having a special relationship to the land. This is then set in binary opposition to 'immigrants' ('they') who merely exploit that land. The word 'invasion' draws on the historical discourse of the 'Asian invasion', but is here extended to immigrants in general. The implication here is that this lack of connection to the land simultaneously translates to a lack of commitment and loyalty to the nation: 'they' take what they can, and do not put anything back. Finally, 'on the backs of our dilemma' implies that biculturalism needs to be 'completed' first before we can think about multiculturalism, as discussed above.

These different discourses are linked to relations of power in important ways. It is therefore no coincidence that at some point during the interviews, and specifically at the

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[22]These are intended to manage opinions and impressions, that is, what our conversational partners will think of us (Van Dijk, 1998, p.39/40).

point where these issues were discussed, both Nicholas and Sorrell, as well as Scholes, all stressed that *Broken English* is 'only a film', and therefore 'not that serious'. Selwyn never brought this up and instead stressed the responsibility of film in creating mutual understanding at different points during the interview. This may indicate that issues of representation (and not only in relation to cinema) are more politically pressing from a Maori point of view.

Fahn had a different, and less politically charged, view on these issues, as he drew on a more diasporic sense of identity in certain ways.

> I don't think New Zealand has a big problem with that [biculturalism vs multiculturalism]. I mean, as soon as you have many cultures in any country, it's a bit difficult to organise life. But I think New Zealand is handling that pretty well. As a newcomer I didn't feel any tension against me exactly. Of course it's much more difficult to be successful when you're a newcomer, that's quite normal. You have an accent, and you don't know people, and you're a bit strange, you know? The people who live here for generations, they are just different; I understand that. (.) It's not a country which actually tries to persuade immigrants to assimilate completely. You have to assimilate to a certain degree, that's quite normal. You have to learn the language, you have to follow the rules. But in cultural terms, you don't have to assimilate at all. This country actually encourages you to preserve your roots and to maintain your culture. That's my feeling.

He speaks here mostly from a personal perspective, and like Nicholas, talks about multiculturalism mostly in terms of 'everyday' versions. There is a clear sense of the difficulties involved in settling in a different country, but at the same time there is an awareness of particular responsibilities and a feeling of being at ease with these. Interestingly, in relation to his own identity, he draws attention to 'identity as a process' by stressing generational differences in Croatian identity.

I personally find these early Croatian immigrants much more different from me than New Zealanders are. They're quite different people. I don't understand their life values, and they don't understand mine. (.) I mean Croatia is a very strange country, because there are very different people there. People from the coast are quite different from people from the continent. They were influenced by different nations.

This is interesting because it shows a recognition of heterogeneity within a category like 'Croatian'. However, at the same time it positions these early Croatian immigrants permanently outside the category of 'New Zealanders', as forever different. He positions himself closer to 'New Zealanders', and thus somewhere between these poles.

Finally, while Fahn acknowledged the 'burden of representation' in terms of his role in the production of *Broken English*, he only became acutely aware of this on a return visit to Croatia, and not so much in New Zealand.

At that moment I wasn't aware of how serious that can be, but two or three years later, when I visited Croatia, I realised that the whole involvement wasn't very happy for me, because some people in Croatia saw that movie and they had a really bad feeling about that movie; didn't like it at all. And because they saw in the credits that I was involved as a cultural advisor; that didn't give me a good reference there, so to say.

Fahn is not actively involved in 'cultural maintenance' in organised forms such as cultural clubs or societies, which partly explains his surprise here. We will see the difference in this respect when I discuss focus group material in a later chapter. But his experience does show the power of cinematic representations in particular contexts. Fahn's responses can be seen as clearly part of a diasporic consciousness. He does not identify with Croatia in a straightforward manner, and is more attuned to the

mainstream in a New Zealand context, although not entirely part of it. He can thus be seen to occupy a position of 'in-between' in Bhabha's sense[23] and importantly, is quite at ease with that. Consequently, this position allowed him to be more detached in his responses, which were less emotionally charged than, for example, Selwyn's.

Overall, these different actors involved in the production of *Broken English* draw on different discourses in relation to the themes and topics of the film. Some of these relate to their position in the production context, and some are more related to their position in a wider societal context. Where the former are directly linked to aims and objectives of the organisations and institutions they represent, the latter are more aligned to general debates about New Zealand identity and nationhood. However, the two overlap and intersect in complex ways.

Thus, Scholes and Sorrell talked about the themes and topics of the film mostly in terms of an 'interesting story' and 'dramatic potential', and carefully avoided the political implications of representations of difference. In other words, interesting for who? And according to whose definition? Similarly, while Nicholas was concerned with challenging mono-cultural and bi-cultural versions of New Zealand nationhood, he framed this challenge mostly in terms of a 'stimulating display of diversity', largely for the benefit of a mainstream (and by implication Pakeha) audience. In contrast, the consultants, and Selwyn in particular, were keenly aware of the power of representations, and linked their experiences in the production process more explicitly to power relations in a wider societal sense.

Overall then, this chapter gives an indication of the complexities of power involved in the production and creation of cinematic forms, and how this relates to power relations in wider society. Although we have to pay careful attention to 'agency' and the different

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[23]See chapter 4.

sources of input in this production process, some agents have more influence than others, which has certain effects and political implications. A textual analysis in the next chapter may shed some light on these effects and implications.

# CHAPTER 7: The Construction of *Broken English* as a Text.

Textual analysis is the second component of Thompson's tripartite model, and strangely also the one that receives the least attention in his outline. He calls this second component 'the *construction* of the media message. The messages transmitted by mass communication are products which are structured in various ways: they are complex symbolic constructions which display an articulated structure' (1990, p.304). This chapter thus concentrates to an important extent on the way *Broken English* is constructed.

This involves an analysis of cinematic codes and conventions: genre, narrative structure, sound, editing, cinematography, and so on. Part of this analysis includes placing the film in a comparative framework; in other words, what influences can be identified in terms of these codes and conventions? Where and how does it 'borrow', and where and how does it 'differentiate' itself? This may then tell us something about the complex relationship between the 'local' and the 'global'.

However, this is not the only way in which the film as text can be analysed. Another way of analysing the text would be to employ a discursive analysis. On this level, the film is treated as a discursive event, which has three components: 'It is simultaneously text, discursive practice and social practice' (Titscher *et al*, 2000, p.150). This allows us to move beyond the text as only a formal structure, and into the realm of representation. To put it differently, cinematic codes and conventions are not only geared to tell a particular story, but also to represent a particular point of view. In doing so, film makers draw on different discourses, while ignoring or directly opposing others. A discursive analysis thus involves identifying which discourses a film draws on and then placing these discourses in their historical context. Within the tripartite approach of this study, it is discourse analysis which provides the links between its three realms. Therefore, the discourse analysis of the historical context of New Zealand as outlined in

256

earlier chapters provides the map or framework for the discourse analysis of this chapter.

It is the latter type of analysis that Thompson is rather unclear about: 'when we focus on this aspect we give priority to what I have called formal *or* discursive analysis: that is, we analyse the media message as a complex symbolic construction which displays an articulated structure' (1990, p.305, my emphasis). This is then followed by examples which all relate to formal analysis, which is not enough as I have argued.

This chapter then takes the shape of a two-part structure: a formal analysis followed by a discursive analysis. Of course this is not to say that these two realms are entirely separate; on the contrary, they interact in complex ways and feed off and into each other, and I will signal where and how as I go along. Moreover, the expectation is that concentrating on both these realms gives an insight into the relationship between the 'local' and the 'global'; where the two converge and diverge. The concepts of 'perennial' themes and 'topical' themes, in combination with 'banal aboutness' as discussed in chapter 3, come into play here, as they can help explain why *Broken English* can be seen as 'universal' and 'locally specific' at the same time.

## 7.1: Synopsis.

In the case of *Broken English*, it is important to begin with a relatively extensive synopsis, as the story is quite complex in terms of its representations. There are significant differences between main characters and peripheral characters in this respect. Since this has important implications for both the formal and discursive analyses in this chapter, this synopsis serves as a starting point for the next two sections.

*Broken English* tells the story of a love affair between Nina and Eddie. Nina has recently migrated to New Zealand with her family to escape the war in Croatia. This was relatively easy because her mother (Mira) was born in New Zealand. The Vujcic

family lives in West-Auckland[1] and consists of Nina's father Ivan, her brother Darko, her sister Vanya and her two children Jura and Sashka. They live next door to a Cook Island family.

After a brief prelude in which we hear, through Nina's voice-over, of the destruction in Vukovar, her home town, the story begins with Ivan and his mates playing cards around the family table in Auckland. Nina serves them drinks. After a while, Vanya sneaks outside with a man and they have sex in his car. When Ivan sees this through the window, he calls out to Darko and the two run outside, carrying baseball bats and followed by their rottweiler Strabo. As the man runs away, pulling his pants up, Ivan and Darko smash his car, while Nina looks on in disgust, before leaving for work.

Nina works as a waitress in a restaurant called Palermo. It is here that she meets Eddie, a young Maori, who works in the kitchen as a chef. Also working in the kitchen are Clara and her boyfriend Wu; both are Chinese and have recently migrated to New Zealand from Beijing. The restaurant is owned by Jasmin, a Japanese 'business migrant', who is also involved in arranging marriages for the purpose of obtaining residency permits. Clara and Wu are saving money to pay her.

Nina and Eddie fall in love at first sight. The first friction between the two arises when they are kissing outside Eddie's apartment, and Nina accidently knocks his pohutukawa tree over (his 'whakapapa tree'). After initially failing to see its significance, Nina gets upset and leaves in a taxi.

The next day, the Vujcic family watch a home video from Croatia, which causes anger for Ivan. He shouts and smashes some ornamental pieces, while Nina looks on in horror. He also vows to bring his aunt Marya, who appears on the home video, to New

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[1]Historically, West-Auckland, along with Northland, has had a large concentration of Croatian immigrants.

Zealand.

That night, Nina and Eddie make up, and they make love, damaging the bed in the process. Nina, who is feeling sorry for Clara and Wu, offers to marry Wu so they can obtain a residency permit. Jasmin agrees to this and pays her ten thousand dollars for it. With this money, she buys a car and a new bed. She also decides to move in with Eddie and out of the family home. As she picks up her belongings, Ivan arrives home and the two have a heated confrontation during which Ivan hits her, but she is defiant. As she drives off with Eddie, Ivan spots him for the first time.

Later, Clara and Wu arrive at Eddie's flat, insisting that they have to move in to make the 'marriage' look real; Eddie and Nina grudgingly agree. That night, Ivan and Darko arrive at the restaurant to invite Nina to a feast in celebration of aunt Marya's arrival and coinciding with Croatian independence day. Nina accepts on condition that she can bring some friends (Eddie, Clara and Wu). They arrive as the party is already underway, as is another party next door. The atmosphere is tense. At some point, Nina and Eddie make love in the house when aunt Marya walks in on them. Also, Ivan tells Eddie to leave Nina alone as they are 'too different and it will never work; she will always be one of us'. In the meantime, Darko has been engaging Wu in drinking games, and as Wu reaches a point of advanced intoxication, he tells an already agitated Ivan that he is going to marry his daughter. Ivan then slams Wu's head into the steel power pylon. As the four of them drive away, a heated argument ensues, culminating in Eddie walking off and leaving them stranded on the motorway.

After a period of feeling depressed, Nina decides to go up north to visit Eddie, who has gone up there to see his brother Manu, who operates a tourist boat in the Bay of Islands. They go out to sea, and Nina swims with the dolphins. After she leaves, Manu tells Eddie that she is pregnant. This changes the situation for Eddie who decides to return to Auckland. When he arrives at the flat, Nina has almost had a miscarriage and Ivan and

Darko have taken her to the hospital. Eddie arrives at the hospital just as they are leaving. As Darko speeds away with Nina in the backseat, Eddie accidently runs Strabo over. This leads to another verbal confrontation with Ivan.

Back at the Vujcic house, Ivan and Darko decide to literally lock Nina in her room, with the help of wooden pallets and long nails. Nina goes into a rage. In the meantime, Eddie has dug up his whakapapa tree and begins to plant it in the garden outside Nina's room. When Ivan spots him trying to break the pallets off the window, a fight ensues. Eddie uses his spade as a makeshift 'taiaha' and almost kills Darko with it. When Eddie and Nina eventually leave, Ivan vows never to see her again. In the end, Nina and Wu get 'married', and Nina and Eddie have a daughter together.

## 7.2: Formal Textual Analysis

This formal analysis will open with a genre analysis. This genre in turn influences and shapes other formal elements, most importantly the narrative structure, but also cinematography, editing, sound and production design. However, I would argue that these latter elements generally offer more possibilities for 'artistic license' on the part of the production personnel, and it is therefore in these elements where we can identify a 'personal vision' or a 'local flavour', both of which are important in the context of national cinemas (particularly in its critical reception), however vague or 'banal' they may be.

*Genre & Narrative Structure*

In terms of its story line, *Broken English* can be read in a straightforward fashion as a (serious) 'love story', which is in fact how producer Robin Scholes unproblematically described it[2]. On the level of narration then, *Broken English* conforms clearly to a classical Hollywood narrative structure, and more specifically a kind of contemporary

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[2]Refer to chapter 6.

version of the tried formula of 'Romeo and Juliet'-odd couple- romance, a formula that has attracted large audiences throughout cinema history. Moreover, 'the familiar format of a reworked Romeo and Juliet story across ethnic boundaries has also had a long and successful history in New Zealand film' (Simmons, 1997, p.11). Examples include *Rewi's Last Stand* (1940, Rudall Hayward), *Broken Barrier* (1952, John O'Shea) and *Other Halves* (1984, John Laing) among others (see Blythe, 1994); a more recent and related example would be the Communicado-produced television drama *Greenstone* (1999, Chris Bailey & John Laing).

Wartenberg defines what he calls the 'unlikely couple film' as 'the attempt to form a romantic couple across social difference, be it class, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation' (quoted in Simmons, 1997, p.11). Considering the way in which New Zealand has been 'imagined' historically as a nation, the popularity of this format seems obvious, as it is highly adaptable. In other words, whether it is geared towards the construction of an assimilationist account of the nation, a bi-cultural version or a multi-cultural version, this 'formula' can quite easily be bent in any of these directions. This would also explain its popularity in Hollywood, as it easily slots into an American context for similar reasons. In short, it allows for a variety of political subtexts to work simultaneously: in this case social division, specifically ethnic conflict, and social unity or harmony, which relates to bicultural and multicultural discourses.

Given the subject matter of this particular genre, classical Hollywood narration is highly suited to its generic requirements. Consider for example Bordwell's general description of classical narration:

> The classical Hollywood film presents psychologically defined individuals who struggle to solve a clear-cut problem or to attain specific goals. In the course of this struggle, the characters enter into conflict with others or with external circumstances. The story ends with a decisive victory or defeat, a resolution of the

problem and a clear achievement or nonachievement of the goals. The principal causal agency is thus the character, a discriminated individual endowed with a consistent batch of evident traits, qualities, and behaviors. (.) The plot consists of an undisturbed stage, the disturbance, the struggle, and the elimination of the disturbance (1985, p.157).

*Broken English* can be read as conforming quite closely to this narrative structure. The film has two goal-oriented main characters in Nina and Eddie, with Nina providing the principal point of identification. The main conflict and obstacle is personalised and presents itself in the character of Ivan who's character traits (violently patriarchal, intolerant, racist) are consistent and clearly set in opposition to those of the main characters. Ivan, aided by Darko, thus serves as the 'disturbance' and the focus of the 'struggle', and he is therefore symbolically 'eliminated' at the film's conclusion.

Bordwell further identifies a 'double causal structure, two plot lines: one involving heterosexual romance, the other line involving another sphere- work, war, a mission or quest, other personal relationships. (.) Often the two lines coincide at the climax: resolving one triggers the resolution of the other' (ibid, p.157/158). Accordingly, Nina and Eddie's main goal is to form a romantic couple, while the other line for Nina involves achieving 'peace of mind' by settling successfully in New Zealand. The climax of the film resolves these two lines symbolically, by way of an epilogue, through the birth of their daughter.

While the film can be 'read' on this level, these characters are rather more ambiguous than in the average Hollywood film, but from a commercial point of view, they nevertheless are accessible to large audiences familiar with Hollywood's narrative structure. The relative box-office success of the film in New Zealand reinforces this point; after two months it had grossed nearly NZ$600,000 which, at the time, made it the eighth highest grossing New Zealand film ever (*OnFilm*, Dec.'96/ Jan'97, p.5).

However, I would argue that the film shows influences other than Hollywood, which makes it a far more 'open' text than the above would imply. I agree with Simmons when he suggests that '*Broken English* is divided between a concern for social realism and artistic and narrative structures that belong to the realm of romance and melodrama' (1997, p.11). This is echoed by producer Scholes: '*Broken English*, like *Once Were Warriors*, uses realism to help make the drama more believable, more powerful. My shorthand for it is that it's a cross-cultural love story' (Film Festivals Homepage, 24/8/01). This raises two important issues which have dominated the critical response to the film: firstly the emphasis on 'realism', and secondly the comparisons with *Once Were Warriors*.

The concern for 'social realism' suggests another major influence in New Zealand cinema. Apart from Hollywood, New Zealand screens (both cinema and television) are dominated by British drama, albeit to a lesser extent. Generally, US imports dominate New Zealand cinema and television screens, but British film and television has long had a presence and a significant social impact. Certain trends in British cinema, like the 'kitchen sink' films of the 1960s (see Thompson & Bordwell, 1994), and more recently 'social realist' dramas by Ken Loach and Mike Leigh among others, can be seen to have had a certain amount of influence. The influence here however relates mostly to stylistic features, and particularly a concern with 'authenticity'. This partly explains the extraordinary efforts that went into achieving this 'authenticity'[3].

Ironically, the critical response, particularly in New Zealand, was dominated by a stress on a perceived *lack* of authenticity. Consider for example Philip Matthews in *The Listener*: 'Like the first Communicado-produced feature *Once Were Warriors*, Gregor Nicholas' *Broken English* swims in art-directed poverty and stylised alienation. No

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[3]Compare director Nicholas' comments in chapter 6.

263

grim kitchen-sink realism here- scenes play out in an advertising agency's idea of lower socio-economic Auckland sprawl' (1996, p.44). Michael Lamb, in the *Sunday Star Times* called it 'a film of pretty surfaces with no real heart' (1996), while Costa Botes, in *The Dominion*, noted that 'interesting, powerful themes of ethnic and national identity are raised, then skirted around, by a passionate yet all-too-predictable and melodramatic screenplay' (1996).

The basis of these critiques lies in the perceived mismatch of its generic aspects. In other words, as a 'social realist' film it is not 'real' enough, while as a 'melodrama' it is too formulaic and predictable. Thus, *Broken English* can be seen as a 'hybrid' in a similar way as *Once Were Warriors* is often considered a 'hybrid', which explains the frequent comparisons. For example, when Simmons argues about *Once Were Warriors* that 'what we have here is a productive friction that at a textual level allows the film to interrogate contemporary social reality and appeal to a large commercial audience at the same time' (1998, p.332), he could just as easily be talking about *Broken English*. Not coincidently, both Nicholas (see chapter 6) and Tamahori (see Spooner, 2000) cite Martin Scorsese as one of their major influences; in other words, 'realism with style'. Both films also employed the same producer and production designer (Mike Kane).

Whereas most critics thus considered the film fatally flawed for unsuccessfully mixing various generic elements, Simmons argues that this is precisely its strength, and he further identifies a kind of 'new', *local*, hybrid film language (as employed by *director* Nicholas) which, he argues, has a lot of similarities to Latin American 'magic realism', found in both literary and film texts:

> *Broken English* is a creole, not because it seemed to some reviewers a clumsy version or debased jargon of an established (film) language, nor because it simply contains examples of 'broken' language and 'baby talk', but because it manages to successfully facilitate communication and freedom of movement in a multi-lingual

community and it also achieves this at the level of style and filmic technique.

(1997, p.12)

Simmons develops an interesting argument here, and I agree that the film draws on a variety of established film languages to arrive at a kind of hybrid style of its own. However, I would argue that this hybridity works *only* at the level of style (and I return to that shortly); in terms of narrative structure it follows clear genre conventions, as outlined above.

The linguistic metaphor of creole language is particularly attractive in the context of national cinemas, because it provides a locally specific language which is at once culturally specific but also leaves room to incorporate the older linguistic and narrative systems from which it stems. This draws attention to the important role of critics in constructing definitions and valorizations of national cinemas[4], which is highly relevant in a 'postcolonial' New Zealand context, and in particular from a Pakeha point of view. The following explanation of the attraction of the creole metaphor reinforces this point: 'creoles were for a long time considered inferior, haphazard, 'broken', bastardised versions of the older, longer established languages and it is largely thanks to the work of contemporary linguists like Derek Bickerton that these prejudices and misnomers have been overturned' (ibid, p.12). In a sense then, these kind of critiques serve to claim a cultural space which is 'authentic' to New Zealand, and can be seen as a direct reaction to the still often heard claims that 'Pakeha have no culture' (e.g. Awatere, 1984).

*Style/ Aesthetics*

Considering the argument above, if we employ Simmons' 'hybrid' reading of *Broken English* on a stylistic level, it still only holds up in part. The editing (by David Coulson)

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[4]As outlined in chapter 3.

for example is mostly very conventional and geared towards aiding the linear narrative. This includes speeding up the pace and parallel editing as the film draws to its conclusion. For the most part then, the editing is seamless, in line with both classical Hollywood and social realism. This seamless editing is aided by the sound in a similarly conventional manner: the music frequently 'sews' different shots together. In addition, the soundtrack (by Murray Grindlay and Murray McNabb) is used to reinforce the emotions of the characters and to increase dramatic tension.

As Gorbman notes, 'traditionally, nondiegetic music is used for illustration, that is, to draw on conventional effects of instrumentation, harmony, melody, dynamics, or rhythm to underscore, emphasize, dramatize, point out, or even mimic aspects of onscreen action' (2000, p.52/53). With the exception of the garden party, where the characters themselves sing, and the scenes in the Palermo restaurant, where the band plays its deliberately tacky tunes, the music is thus for the most part non-diegetic and used in this way. However, even the diegetic music symbolically serves a narrative function, which is exemplified by the stirring rhythm of the Aitutakian drums which open the garden party scene, foreshadowing the subsequent rocky events. In addition, the music in this example simultaneously serves as an 'ethnic marker', and depending on your point of view as 'ethnic spectacle', as does the Croatian folk music.

Where the editing and sound are thus fairly conventional, it is on the level of cinematography (cinematographer John Toon) and art direction (Michael Kane) where we may discern a more 'personal'[5] style. It is therefore no coincidence that Simmons' elaboration of *Broken English* as 'magic realist' is mostly centred on these realms. The cinematography and art direction are characterised by three important aspects which I will discuss in turn: firstly the camera angles and a specific way of framing the

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[5]*Broken English* shows clear similarities in this respect to earlier short films by Nicholas, like for example *Body Speak* (1983) and especially *Avondale Dogs* (1994). Neither Toon or Kane were involved in those short films.

characters; secondly the use of some isolated stylistic 'devices' (like slow motion, freeze-frame, and 'home-video' footage) at important moments in the film; and thirdly, and most problematically, an extraordinary concern with material 'cultural' details.

In relation to the first aspect, the camera angles and framing of the characters is mostly fairly conventional again. However, the film adds a 'personal touch' in the way different scenes are introduced and also concluded. Frequently, opening frames of individual scenes are used for symbolic effect. Thus, Eddie's 'whakapapa tree' and power pylons fill the entire screen at the opening of individual scenes, before the camera moves into the main action. These images are in this way used to signify the importance of 'family ties' on the one hand, and 'electrifying tension and conflict' on the other, and are intrinsic to the establishment of individual scenes. In a similar vain, the camera frequently tilts to the power pylon at the conclusion of these scenes, and then lingers on it for a little while.

Whereas this is fairly straightforward and unambiguous, there is another aspect to the framing of the characters which is rather more subtle, and has to do with the act of looking. Virtually all characters are frequently engaged in looking, in many cases to the point of surveillance, as the look is not returned. Thus we see Ivan looking through the Venetian blinds; Nina through the lace curtains of the neighbours and later through the pallet which is stuck to her bedroom window; Eddie through the Venetian blinds as well; and Ivan and Darko through the marijuana leaves in the garden. In many cases, the camera focuses on this *act* of looking, before showing what is being looked at. But in all instances, the look is partly obscured. This emphasis on looking works on different levels, and is also motivated differently for different characters.

In *Broken English*, with its central theme of cross-cultural interaction, it signifies curiosity on the one hand, and impending danger and surveillance on the other; desire and hatred alternately. For example, when Nina looks from a distance at the neighbours,

she does so with a curious smile. Here, the lace curtains form a 'soft' barrier to understanding difference, and offer future possibilities. Conversely, the Venetian blinds through which Ivan looks can be controlled to sometimes offer him an unobscured view, while preventing a returned look when he chooses to close them. This serves his purpose well, as his look is one of surveillance and borne out of his siege mentality. What makes these looks particularly ambiguous is the frequent lingering of the camera, beyond the time it takes for an audience to register a particular emotion. This is exemplified by the final scene of confrontation, where we see extensive close-ups of both Ivan's face and Darko's, which have the effect of moving beyond one-dimensional interpretations and opening up space for more complicated readings of these characters. Not coincidently then, Nicholas named this scene, during our interview, as the one he was most proud of.

But besides the look of the characters within the film, there is also the look of the camera itself. As Nicholas explained in chapter 6, apart from a love story, he wanted the film to have 'ethnographic' qualities. In other words, not only are the characters placed on a road to 'discovery'; so is the director. This shows itself partly in a concern for 'ethnographic' detail to which I will return shortly. In terms of the camera work however, it is not always clear who's point of view the audience gets to see. In other words, while there are many camera shots which are clearly subjective, some are rather more ambiguous in this respect. To name an example: when Eddie returns from Kawakawa, we see him approaching his apartment from within the apartment through the blinds. This initially implies Vanya's point of view, as we soon find out that she is in the apartment. However, when Eddie eventually meets her, she does not react as if she knew he was on his way. This leaves the question: who's point of view was it?

There are other examples like this in the film, which indicates that apart from the characters, the camera itself is at times engaged in 'surveillance/ investigation'. It can also be seen as part of an attempt, on Nicholas' part, to create an atmosphere of

claustrophobia; in this case, he appears to be prepared to sacrifice narrative comprehension in order to achieve that atmosphere. The use of the camera as a tool of 'surveillance/ investigation' has certain implications in terms of cross-cultural film making, to which I shall return in the second part of this chapter.

The second aspect of the cinematography and art direction relates to a number of cinematic devices which, although motivated to some extent by the story line, also contribute to the film's perceived 'glossiness' and may have been incorporated with an anticipated 'youth audience' in mind. As the opening credits roll, the film opens with grainy footage[6], shot from a bus, of the destruction by war of 'Vukovar', while we hear Nina's voice-over[7]. This serves on the level of narration as Nina's back story (she refers to it later in an early encounter with Eddie), but it works on different levels in terms of its visual qualities.

Firstly, it closely resembles news footage of the Balkan wars, which could have been considered fresh in the minds of audiences in 1996. It thus functions to ground the story in historical reality. Secondly, its graininess combined with its dull colours provide a clear contrast to the lush red of the scene which immediately follows it. This sets up the notion of New Zealand as an escape from these historical conflicts, which in turn carries a subtext of New Zealand as part of the 'new world'; an 'uncorrupted paradise', but nevertheless vulnerable to imported tensions, which are personified in the character of Ivan.

While the voice-over continues, the audience is visually introduced to Nina who appears to be floating in slow-motion, in an almost dream-like state, although there is

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[6]The footage was shot by a Spanish film crew on the day that Vukovar fell to the Serbs. It was shot from a refugee bus leaving the town (Sony Classics Homepage, 01/08/01).

[7]Aleksandra Vujcic collaborated with Nicholas in writing the opening narration (Sony Classics Homepage, 01/08/01).

some ambiguity about whether this is her state or the camera's. Slow-motion is only used twice after this opening; the first time it is psychologically motivated and reflects Nina's internal turmoil after her first major confrontation with Ivan; she walks away in slow-motion to the slow and ominous rhythm of beating drums. The second time is when Eddie runs along the Auckland streets with his 'whakapapa tree' on his way to rescue Nina. This second instance is less 'motivated' and therefore appears more gratuitous, or purely there for stylistic effect. In combination with his change of attire (he now wears a black leather vest), it somewhat resembles a music video or an advertisement. Nicholas' background, like many New Zealand directors, includes the direction of advertisements, and there are a number of scenes which show this influence. Another example in this respect is the fast-paced cross-cutting between the different kinds of music being played during the party scene. In short, while temporarily interrupting the 'realist' feel of the film, I would suggest that these cinematic devices are partly motivated by the action, but mostly there purely for stylistic effect.

The third aspect relates more closely to the art direction and concerns the unusual emphasis on 'cultural' details. The film is full of these details and markers, to the point of saturation. Where they serve unintrusively as a backdrop or part of the story in some instances (e.g. the statues of catholic icons in the Vujcic household, which bear the brunt of Ivan's fury), in other instances, the flow of the plot is effectively interrupted while the focus is squarely on these details *per se*. This is most obviously exemplified by the opening shots of the party scene, which alternate between 'traditional' music, costumes and instruments. But there are other examples: when Clara and Wu have moved into Eddie's apartment we see a montage sequence of Chinese toothpaste, a bird cage, a Chinese lantern, a packet of noodles and plastic slippers. And of course there is Eddie's whakapapa tree and makeshift taiaha.

Apart from these material details, there is also an emphasis on myths, folk tales and little bits of history that different characters tell each other. Examples here are Ivan and

Darko's demonstration of 'what the Turks did to our people' and Clara and Wu's advise to Nina in the form of the 'star river' story, among others. But again, while they serve a narrative function in some instances, they appear rather gratuitous at other moments. In my view, it is precisely this apparent imbalance of these details that explains the often very negative critical response. According to Chow for example, '*Broken English* is a mainstream love story portraying its Chinese Mainland immigrant characters as clowns. There is no serious study of the cultural background of any immigrants in the film whatsoever, only stereotypes' (1996, p.3). Matthews, in *The Listener*, argues that '*Broken English* amps up its various cultural conflicts and images, piling them up to create complex resonances. (.) But these resonances only make us aware of how hard the film is trying to be volatile and multicultural' (1996, p.44).

While acknowledging the problematic nature of this concern for detail, Simmons argues that these kind of critiques in fact miss the point. 'It might be said here that the effort of arriving at the rendition of reality in fact swamps that reality in the sense that the artfulness of its presentation, the impression of the contrived, its texture, becomes what is most noticeable' (1997, p.12). But he then goes on to argue that this is precisely the point of 'magic realism':

> If his [Nicholas'] reality seems abstract and studied, it is because his is an art of the intentional rather than its fact, a rendering of reality that is its considered theatricalisation and deliberate (melo)dramatisation. The reason for this is that what he is interested in is not the reality that lies on the surface but that which seethes underneath: the racial hatred of a brutal war, the constant glances over the shoulder of those involved in the drug trade, the frustration and rootlessness of those who find themselves in exile, the desperate urgency of the displaced immigrant to fit into a new society, the tensions of desire and sexuality in a multicultural community
>
> (ibid, p.12/13).

As noted, the film combines stylistic elements of both mainstream Hollywood and social realism: the setting is mostly a grim urban landscape in which the main characters move (e.g. the concrete backyard of the Vujcic family, the power pylons, the confrontation in the hospital underground car park, Eddie's apartment next to the railway tracks and the accompanying industrial noise), but the colour schemes (dominated by metallic blue and in particular red) add a certain gloss which is probably closer to a mainstream Hollywood visual style[8].

The added element for Simmons, and the one that provides him with a bridge to magic realism, is the way it makes use of the above mentioned myths, legends, and rituals. On the surface, this seems like an exaggerated emphasis on 'ethnic circuses' and 'gloss'. The general thrust of the critiques of the film is thus based on an argument that this concentration on cultural details was included as a 'misguided' means of representing marginal groups to mainstream audiences.

But if we follow Simmons' line of thought, this can be seen as a 'misinterpretation' based on an urge to slot the film into one of the 'old' languages. In this way, the film is consistently seen as not 'authentically' realist enough, with too much emphasis on melodrama. According to Simmons however, this is precisely the point of magic realism: 'Magical realist texts explore boundaries- ontological, political, geographical- and facilitate the fusion or co-existence of worlds or systems of belief that would normally be unreconcilable' (ibid, p.13).

This makes sense and seems very attractive for a film which examines inter-racial and inter-cultural differences. It would explain the seemingly excessive emphasis on contrasts between cultural practices (like during the party scene) which in the process could be seen to acquire a larger-than-life quality and guide the characters in all the

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[8]Some of the films of directors Tony and Ridley Scott could serve as examples here. Incidently, both also have an advertising background.

major decisions they make (e.g. Eddie's whakapapa tree). In this way, it does not treat myths as stories grounded in fantasy, as so often is the case, but as interwoven with subjective realities. In other words, myths are very much part of the 'real' world of the characters in the film, and provide guidelines on which many of their decisions are based (e.g. the 'star river' myth).

This 'magical' aspect does not only work on the subjective level of the individual characters in the filmic world, but is also structured to work on the level of the audience. Subjective camera shots often follow the subjective gaze of individual characters. Examples of these are the frequent gazes through the haze of windows and blinds, Nina's gazing at Eddie through flames and through the fish tank with the brightly coloured fish (pre-*Romeo* + *Juliet...*[9]), Eddie's looking at Nina in the sparkling bright blue sea, as she swims with the dolphins. On a non-subjective level, examples include the (again) brightly coloured contrast between the Croatian and Cook Island parties, and the earlier mentioned contrast between the dull colours of the video footage (signifying 'reality') and the saturated reds of the card game ('magic realist').

Although it is attractive to read the film in this way for reasons mentioned above, and although the film is open to some extent to such a reading, I would argue that its 'hybridity' with regard to the filmic languages it draws on is also its major flaw for two reasons. Firstly, this 'hybridity' should be seen strictly in terms of aesthetics; on the level of narration, the film is much more conservative as I have argued above. And secondly, on that level of aesthetics, the balance is such that it cannot be seen as consistently 'magic realist'.

7.3: Discursive Analysis

One central contradiction to come out of the 'production' chapter of this thesis is that

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[9]*Romeo* + *Juliet* (1996, Baz Luhrmann) features a similar scene where Romeo and Juliet look at each other through a fish tank.

the film makers on the one hand showed a preoccupation with 'realism', while at the same time often dismissing the power of that idea and the resulting responsibilities on their part, through the disclaimer that 'it's only a film'. But, as Shohat & Stam argue,

That films are only representations does not prevent them from having real effects in the world. (.) Although there is no absolute truth, no truth apart from representation and dissemination, there are still contingent, qualified, perspectival truths in which communities are invested. Poststructuralist theory reminds us that we live and dwell within language and representation, and have no direct access to the "real". But the constructed, coded nature of artistic discourse hardly precludes all reference to a common social life. Filmic fictions inevitably bring into play real-life assumptions not only about space and time but also about social and cultural relationships. Films which represent marginalized cultures in a realistic mode, even when they do not claim to represent specific historical incidents, still implicitly make factual claims (1994, p.178/179).

Keeping this in mind, *Broken English* deals directly with issues like immigration and diaspora; the subject matter of the film centers specifically on multiculturalism in a contemporary New Zealand context, but it does so in a rather problematic way. The fact that the director of the film is a Pakeha New Zealander becomes foregrounded when we realise that this film features virtually no Pakeha characters. It can thus be seen as treating immigration as a 'social problem', symbolically removed from mainstream Pakeha society. This is reinforced by the emphasis on cultural details which means that individual characters are strongly identified with specific social and ethnic groups. The party scene in the concrete backyard of the Croatian family exemplifies this: the camera literally looks into this 'melting pot of different cultures'.

But as the camera zooms in, the multicultural harmony myth is shattered as we quickly move from exotic spectacle to social problem. In this way, the film makes certain

claims about the meaning and value of concepts like multiculturalism and immigration, and by extension takes a particular position on social and cultural relationships within a contemporary New Zealand context. Furthermore, and inevitably, it takes a certain position on New Zealand as a nation: where it used to be, where it is now, where it *should* be going. However, these wider social-political discourses merely operate on the level of subtext.

Following the structure of this thesis, I therefore first discuss discourses on nationhood and national identity, in connection with the film's position in New Zealand cinema. This is followed by discourses on race and ethnicity, and the way it situates itself in the biculturalism/ multiculturalism debate. Overall then, the focus is here on the fourth level of analysing national cinemas, as identified by Higson, 'the concern with what the films are about'[10].

*Discourses on Nationhood and National Identity*

The issues that are raised in *Broken English* can be seen to constitute particular themes, and I will draw here on Hjort's distinction between 'perennial' themes and 'topical' themes[11]. As outlined above, the overall narrative of *Broken English* is driven by perennial themes such as heterosexual love, passion, pride and family relations. These themes are more or less 'universal' in that they form the basis of many, if not all, fictional feature films. What makes these locally specific however is the way in which they are adapted to a specific local context, and thus how they are linked to 'topical' themes such as 'immigration' and 'multiculturalism' in New Zealand. An added factor in this is to what extent the film makes use of a particular kind of 'banal aboutness'.

In a sense, *Broken English* can be seen as constituting a 'break' within the context of

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[10]See chapter 3.

[11]See chapter 3.

New Zealand cinema and an 'interruption' of hitherto dominant ways in which New Zealand (and New Zealanders) had been cinematically 'imagined'. According to Martin and Edwards for example, '*Broken English* is notable among New Zealand films for its representation of many ethnic backgrounds and its non-representation of the dominant European culture' (1997, p.189). However, the film centers on the love affair between Nina and Eddie. In a sense, this firmly grounds it in the discourse of universalism, 'a tradition which seeks to resolve all issues of difference by translating them into the realm of universal values' (Gunew, 1990, p.116). Although they have to go through a learning curve littered with misunderstandings, they eventually work through their differences.

As noted above, this main plot line of cross-cultural romance, 'flirting with miscegenation in order to produce national unity' (Blythe, 1994, p.12), has a long history in New Zealand cinema, and solving racial problems with romantic love is a strong trope of Hollywood cinema as well (see Shohat & Stam, 1994). It is a kind of Romeo and Juliet narrative which in New Zealand traditionally featured 'the Maori maiden' as Juliet. In *Broken English*, these roles take on a new meaning as Nina has become the exotic Other, and Eddie has moved to the center, albeit the center of the margins. In other words, within mainstream terms, Eddie functions as the naturalised other, while Nina is the exotic other. Moreover, their unity does not threaten central New Zealand race relations; in a sense, their interracial love and the interracial conflict it provokes, are external to the mainstream.

The misunderstandings along the way to their unity raise a number of important issues with respect to national identity that are briefly touched on, then left behind. Costa Botes wrote of *Broken English*: 'In the days of liberal-preachy film making, inter-racial love stories carried a curious subtext...that people are essentially the same everywhere and racial and cultural differences are only superficial things. *Broken English* is far less glib and far more confrontational than this...' (1996). So in what way is it

confrontational?

If we consider that New Zealand was hitherto largely imagined in either monocultural or bicultural terms, at least cinematically, *Broken English* can be seen to broaden this perspective by placing 'other' cultures center stage. Furthermore, it does not treat these other cultures in a uniformly positive way, and appears to engage with differences in migrant experiences, the resultant frictions between them, and the complex interaction between 'home' and 'host'. In the process, it appears to interrogate not only monocultural and bicultural versions of New Zealand as a nation, but the concept of national identity itself. The film touches on very important issues surrounding national identity and how this is defined in particular contexts at particular points in time. The importance of time and how this relates to being 'more or less' New Zealander, and its relation to the concept of citizenship is raised a number of times, but never explored in depth.

First of all there is of course the title: all main characters, bar Eddie and Manu, speak 'broken' English, which from the outset positions them on the margins of a 'proper' English speaking 'mainstream' which is not featured in the film, only implied. Based on Nina's 'broken' English, Eddie asks her during their first encounter: 'Where are you from?', to which Nina replies: 'I'm a New Zealand citizen, just like you'. His incredulity ('yeah, right...') forces her to explain herself further: 'No really; my mother was born here'. Later, she has a similar exchange with Jasmin.

Although Nina talks about her past in Croatia and the war in almost nostalgic terms, as if it was all a dream, she seems confident enough to claim her place (and her future) in New Zealand in this way. In contrast, Ivan sees New Zealand only as a temporary shelter, and a place to exploit through his little marijuana 'business', and is primarily preoccupied by events in Croatia. After watching a home video from Croatia in which his aunt is pleading for help, he exclaims in a fit of rage: 'This [New Zealand] is not my

country!' After he has brought her to New Zealand, he organises a feast in honour of her arrival, which coincides with the celebration of Croatian independence day. This, in combination with Ivan's behaviour and attitude throughout, is confrontational in that it firstly debunks the liberal myth of all immigrants being desperate to reach these shores, and infinitely grateful thereafter; in other words, it can be alternately interpreted as a questioning of loyalty to the (host) nation or perhaps raising the question to what extent immigrants *should* be loyal to their adopted nation. Thus, by placing the characters of Ivan and Nina in opposition, the film implicitly brings notions of memory and amnesia, so important to national identity[12], into play. However, the complexity that this would imply is largely neutralised by their positions in the binary structure ('good' versus 'bad') on a narrative level. In this way, the film implicitly rejects his narrow identity and suggests this as an obstacle, both literally and figuratively, to the racial harmony symbolised by the love story.

Ironically, where Ivan's character raises this kind of ambiguity, Clara and Wu represent precisely that liberal myth: desperate to gain residency permits, legally or otherwise, they are prepared to work around the clock in dire conditions to pay for them. The sole explanation the film offers for this is that they want to 'make small kiwi'. After the disastrous ending to the party that should have brought everyone together, Nina replies to this: 'You better ask his [Eddie's] permission for your dreams, because he was here first before all of us. And we all better fuck off really and go back to where we came from'. Again, this raises important issues about the position of Maori in the construction of New Zealand nationhood, but they are never explored and serve here merely as a convenient narrative turning point. They are thus merely included in the form of an obligatory statement within multicultural and especially bicultural discourses in New Zealand. It is notable in this respect that any mention of the Treaty of Waitangi is carefully avoided in this exchange, as in the entire film.

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[12]Compare to chapter 2.

*Broken English* can also be seen as confrontational in a different sense, which relates to landscape and the popular myth of New Zealand as a clean, green 'pastoral paradise' (see C.Bell, 1996, Spooner, 2000). As we have seen, Nicholas explicitly wanted to challenge this myth by drawing attention to the fact that most New Zealanders live in highly urbanised environments[13]. The film therefore positions its characters in an urban environment. And similar to *Once Were Warriors*, this urban setting 'conveys sensations and images of containment and claustrophobia' (Spooner, 2000, p.93). The frequent images of power pylons looming large in the background have been mentioned, as have the sounds of monotonous mechanical noise. Together with the largely concrete surroundings, these images and sounds create an impression of an urban ghetto, its occupants segregated from the rest of society, thereby 'challenging any concept of New Zealand as integrated, racially harmonious and egalitarian' (ibid, p.94). Again however, what makes this particularly problematic is that this segregation clearly runs along ethnic and racial lines; the rest of society is here unambiguously implied to be Pakeha, and by implication not part of this particular social formation.

So, while the film on one level critiques this supposed ghettoisation, it is simultaneously complicit in the perpetuation of this image, by populating the landscape along those lines. It is therefore no coincidence that the film drew similar criticism to *Once Were Warriors* from the ethnic groups represented in such a way. However, where *Once Were Warriors* creates a clear-cut city/urban versus country/land binary opposition, *Broken English* is a little more ambiguous in that respect. Within this binary, the city/urban ghetto is associated with 'modernity, social deprivation and lack of traditional culture', which is then set against 'country/land with its implied associations with Maori cultural identity and salvation' (ibid, p.95). Although *Broken English* draws on this binary to some extent, particularly through the character of Eddie and partly in the form of his

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[13]See chapter 6.

279

pohutukawa tree, the 'urban ghetto' also provides a space of comfort in which 'traditional' culture is celebrated, as exemplified by the party scene.

In other words, despite the brooding racial tension, the dope trade and the gambling, this is also an empowering space of cultural maintenance and identification with 'home'. I would argue then that the film can be positioned somewhere between what Stratton identifies as official multiculturalism and everyday multiculturalism[14]. On the level of official multiculturalism, it appears to implicitly critique the inflexibility of categorization in immigration policy, by showing diversity within ostensibly static categories, at least in terms of its Croatian characters. On the level of everyday multiculturalism, it makes an attempt to represent the way culture is lived in an everyday context, and the kind of hybridity that results from that. But what makes it problematic in that sense is that it often lapses into 'exotic spectacle', to which I return shortly.

To come back to the urban/rural dichotomy, Callahan identifies a number of topical themes (in Hjort's sense) in New Zealand cinema that apply to *Broken English* as well. 'A couple often undertake a mythic journey into the country, as in *Arriving Tuesday* (Richard Riddiford, 1986), *Absent Without Leave* (John Laing, 1993) or *Broken English*' (2000, p.101). To this we may add recent examples like *Memory and Desire* (Niki Caro, 1998), *When Love Comes* (Garth Maxwell, 1999), *Snakeskin* (2001, Gillian Ashurst) and *Rain* (Christine Jeffs, 2001). 'In this, New Zealand film is articulating a common topos of not just New Zealand writing but New Zealand life as a whole, where contact with the rural [or the beach] is not simply gestured towards as a mark of authenticity but actively sought by large sectors of the population' (ibid, p.101).

Although this topical theme is undoubtedly present in *Broken English*, it is again

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[14]See chapter 5.

employed in a rather ambiguous fashion. In a way, it is no coincidence that it is Eddie who undertakes this journey, having lived in New Zealand all his life. He escapes the 'claustrophobic' conditions of the city to go 'home' to the wide, blue open spaces of the Bay of Islands. However, 'home' here is not an idyllic Maori rural settlement with an iconic marae, the sounds of karakia[15], with Eddie surrounded by kuia[16]. It is rather a place where his brother Manu runs a tourist operation and where they can smoke a joint in peace. This is interesting, because it not only avoids positioning Maori as an integral part of the tourist landscape, as so often is the case, but on the contrary puts them, through Manu, confidently in control of this tourist landscape. From a postcolonial perspective, this could be read as a reclaiming of the cultural landscape, but one clearly accepting the transformations of the colonial period. However, the film suggests that it is also the place where Eddie rejuvenates himself and gets 'in touch' with his Maoritanga; on his return he is ready for his final battle with Ivan, dressed in black leather 'warrior gear'.

Finally, Callahan identifies another topical theme: 'New Zealand films are known for their bleak visions of family dynamics' (ibid, p.97), an important aspect of the so-called 'cinema of unease'[17]. *Broken English* can be seen as a continuation of that tradition in the form of the Vujcic family, and particularly Ivan's position within it.

With men posited as a series of Man Alone figures, romantic individual heroes, and

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[15]Karakia consist of pleas, prayers and incantations. There are many types of karakia; some have special ritual functions, while others are used for protection (Barlow, 1991/1996, p.37). They have a distinctive and recognisable sound which is often used in the mainstream media to 'frame' for example news stories.

[16]Kuia are the elderly women of a family or tribe. They have a unique role in welcoming visitors onto the marae by performing the karanga or ritual call of welcome (Barlow, 1991/1996, p.59).

[17]In Sam Neill's terms; see chapter 3.

challengers of convention, one of the conventions they heroically challenge is that of being a good parent. (.) When there are fathers around, they tend to tyrannise, brutalise and repress, whether selfishly and cruelly, as in *Heart of the Stag* (Michael Firth, 1984), or through misplaced notions of authority and discipline, as in *An Angel at my Table* (Jane Campion, 1990) (ibid, p.99).

Ivan epitomises this tyrant figure almost to the point of caricature, despite implicit explanations being offered for his behaviour and attitude. To begin with, he is fiercely patriarchal and obsessed with actively controlling the actions of both his wife and his offspring, with limited success. The opening frames set the tone in this respect: sitting at the head of the table in his home, in the center of the frame, he is surrounded by 'mates' playing cards, while the women walk around in skimpy dresses, serving drinks. While apparently in total control, it soon becomes clear that this control is slipping; Vanya sneaks out the backdoor to have a 'liaison of the flesh' on the backseat of her boyfriend's car. It is the car which bears the brunt of Ivan's resultant fury. Horrified, Nina tells him that he is 'out of control'.

Nina's reaction implies that he has not always been like this, but is driven to extremes by other factors. His conflict with her reaches its initial climax when she tells him she's moving out; in desperation, Ivan hits her. His subsequent efforts to make it up to her, by allowing her to bring her friends (Eddie, Clara and Wu) to the party, help to create a character who can be seen as pushed to the limit by a world which is falling apart around him. This world is not only his immediate home environment, but particularly events in Croatia. Watching home video footage from war-torn Croatia clearly gives him a feeling of impotence, as he is unable to intervene in the destruction; he is clearly traumatised.

But the sympathy that this may provoke is simultaneously shot down by another character trait. For Ivan is also a violent racist of the pathological variety. His attitude

towards the neighbours and to Wu, in combination with consistent racist remarks and jokes throughout the film, attest to that. During their final confrontation, he tells Eddie that he's 'made sure she [Nina] lost that black piece of shit out of her'. This attitude is problematic as it can be seen as implicitly offering an 'explanation' for the Balkan wars, while it revolves at the same time around the extent to which Ivan is seen as a victim of these wars; but I return to this shortly. Overall, *Broken English* appears to continue a tradition in New Zealand cinema that suggests 'that families stand more of a chance with mothers than fathers, if there has to be a choice' (ibid, p.100). Eventually, Nina chooses (however reluctantly) to literally remove her father from her life.

While the above relates to a combination of perennial and topical themes which, in combination with its narrative structure, may be easily related to on varying levels by both local and international audiences, *Broken English* also offers a number of elements which resemble a kind of 'banal aboutness' in Hjort's sense, and thus address a international audience, with a frequent knowing wink to a local audience. In this way it seems highly aware of what Turner has called 'the metropolitan gaze'[18]. These elements can be divided into those that give the film a specific 'New Zealand' feel and those of an explanatory kind, aimed at an international audience.

In terms of the former, producer Scholes specifically named for example the power pylons as an important part of the New Zealand landscape[19]. Other recognisable elements for a local audience include Eddie's whakapapa tree, which is specifically named as a pohutukawa tree; the song in the Palermo restaurant is "Whakaaria Mai" which many New Zealanders would recognise; or the children jumping off the bridge as Nina drives to Kawakawa. Apart from these kind of elements, the film is mostly shot on

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[18]See chapter 3.

[19]See chapter 6; this of course begs the question why these power pylons are particular to the New Zealand landscape, as they can be found everywhere across the globe.

location, and many of these locations, both in the city and out of the city, would be more or less familiar to New Zealand audiences. In some cases, these 'banal' elements are specifically aimed at this audience, like when aunt Marya gets blinded by the sun at the beginning of the party. This functions as a kind of insider joke which may be lost on an international audience; 'we' know the strength of the UV rays in the Southern hemisphere.

Other elements are aimed specifically at this international audience, like the exchange about the Cook Island neighbours. One of Ivan's mates, gesturing across the fence, asks Eddie: 'Why don't you get your friends over there to keep it down a bit?', to which Eddie replies: 'He tangata whenua; ahau!' This is designed to explain the difference between indigenous Maori and Pacific Island immigrants to an international audience; and judging by some overseas reviews, this may be justified. For example, Laura Miller writes in *Sight and Sound* that 'the Croatian wives, encrusted with the garish sunglasses and plastic jewellery of immigrant aspiration, are juxtaposed with the *Maoris*' insouciant beachwear and flower garlands' (1997, p.42/43, my emphasis). Overall, it is particularly the blatancy of these latter elements that may explain the largely negative reviews in New Zealand, in combination with problematic representations of race and ethnicity, to which I will now turn.

*Discourses on Race and Ethnicity.*
As mentioned before, the central part of the production dynamic of *Broken English* is that the film is directed and produced by Pakeha New Zealanders, but features virtually no Pakeha New Zealanders. Many of the most problematic aspects of the film can be said to derive from this recognition for two reasons: it firstly means that they are operating from the center, and are representing the margins from that center. Secondly, it means that there are no Pakeha that could similarly be represented in such broad strokes as the other characters. Positioning its main characters in a particular space within the national 'landscape' raises a whole range of important issues from a

'postcolonial' perspective[20], which relate to the representation of the Other, and more specifically to problems of 'cultural translation'. This process works on a number of different levels in the film: race and ethnicity are obvious ones, but gender, class and generational differences are strong themes as well.

Wang quotes Susan Sontag as saying that 'modern sensibility moves between two seemingly contradictory but actually related impulses: surrender to the exotic, the strange, the other; and the domestication of exotic, chiefly through science' (1989, p.35). If we recognise the film camera as an instrument of science, it becomes clear what she means, particularly because the film camera is not just an innocent instrument of science, but also a tool implicated in wider structures of power, for example (post) colonial relations of power in a New Zealand context. Chow points to 'the inequality inherent to the binary structure of observer/observed that is classical anthropology's operating premise and that has become *the* way we approach the West's "others"' (1995, p.177). In other words, representing others comes out of a long anthropological tradition which is connected to power structures. We should keep Nicholas' comments about ethnography in mind here[21]. It is thus connected to questions like who has the right to look? In some ways, the 'look' of the camera in *Broken English* mirrors the politics of looking in the film's diegesis, as outlined above. 'Structured into this assumption of the right to look is the power to define and categorize and this is crucial in determining who may or may not initiate or return the look' (Young, 1996, p.48). The absence of Pakeha characters then reinforces the political connotations of the film's aesthetic style, as outlined above.

Along with this tradition of 'scientific' anthropology come value judgements of 'good' or 'bad' translations. In other words, it is susceptible to charges of 'betrayal' or

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[20]See chapter 4.

[21]See chapter 6.

'infidelity' (or lack of 'realism'), since there is a perceived need to capture some 'authentic' essence of the translated culture. Chow problematizes this drive for authenticity and notes that 'charges of "betrayal" or "infidelity" are themselves far from being innocent; they are part of a defensive nativism that is itself deeply rooted in the hierarchical criteria of traditional aesthetics' (1995, p.178). She goes on to offer a way out by treating 'this notion of the other- not as the idealized lost origin to be rediscovered or resurrected but as our contemporary- which allows for a context of cultural translation in which these "other" cultures are equally engaged in the contradictions of modernity' (ibid, p.196). This is similar to Brah's earlier mentioned attempt[22] to steer away from binary oppositions by treating both as already hybrid and full of contradictions related to a wide range of constantly changing contexts, without, however, ignoring the relations of power involved. I would argue that *Broken English* can be uneasily situated between an awareness of these kinds of contradictions on the one hand, while at the same time frequently regressing to a 'colonial gaze', to varying degrees.

*Broken English* represents a number of different ethnic groups; some of them play a major role in the film, others only serve as peripheral characters to add to the 'melting pot' idea. The film draws on a variety of different public discourses pertaining to each of these groups. The main groups it centers on are Croatians and Maori, through the principal characters of Nina and Eddie.

As mentioned before, the film opens with 'authentic' homevideo/ news footage of Vukovar, Nina's Croatian hometown, ravaged by war. This firstly draws on recent images of Croatia as part of former Yugoslavia, and the idea of a 'senseless' war in the Balkans, the 'powder keg' of an otherwise peaceful Europe, always ready to explode. The underlying implication is that Europe would be peaceful and stable if it was not for

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[22]See chapter 4.

the Balkans. In other words, not only do 'they' spoil the peace, but they also involve 'us' (the more 'rational' international community) in 'their' problems. This is closely related to fear of the conflict 'spilling over' and an uneasy anticipation of an immanent 'wave' of traumatised refugees descending upon 'us'. Two recent studies about the impact of the war on Croatian communities in Australia (Kolar-Panov, 1997) and New Zealand (Trlin & Tolich, 1995) show the difficulties and contradictions involved in the forging of identities in the face of these developments. Trlin & Tolich for example quote one interviewee as saying that 'concealment of his ethnic origin, anonymity, even being mistaken for an Italian, was preferable to being a Yugoslav' (1995, p.238). *Broken English* does little to undermine the attitudes that lead to his; on the contrary, it actively reinforces them through the stereotypical characters of Ivan and his son Darko.

*Broken English* specifically draws on the fear of irrationality and traumatisation through the behaviour of Ivan and Darko: the hysterically smashing up of the car and the somewhat outrageous boarding up of Nina's bedroom are the most obvious examples here. A related discourse to the 'powder keg' idea is a long history of ethnic strife in the Balkans. In other words, hatred and ethnic conflict are inherent in 'their' way of life and taught at a very young age (see Ignatieff, 1993/1994 for a powerful critique of this discourse). The episode with the pig is a clear example here: Darko shows his young nephew Jura 'what the Turks did to our people' by slowly running a spit through the pig's body. 'Humans can live for hours like that', he adds, as Ivan nods in agreement.

In terms of discourses specifically concerning Croatia, there are implicit references to Croatian collaboration with Nazi Germany during World War II. As Kolar-Panov observes:

> The labels of extremist, fascist and terrorist, and especially the 'Nazist' orientation of Croatians, most recently fuelled by the fact of the existence of a political party in the newly formed Republic of Croatia, which was and is based on the former

Ustasa movement during the NDH[23] were a potent part of the popular mythology operating in the everyday discourses about the war in former Yugoslavia. These discourses are also operational inside the wider discourse of the Balkans as the 'powder keg' of Europe (1997, p.86, see also Ignatieff, 1993/1994).

Apart from Ivan's violently volatile behaviour, his ideas about race in particular draw on these kind of discourses, albeit not in an explicit fashion. In addition to the examples already mentioned, Nina reminds him of 'what fine race we are', and after watching his aunt Marya on video he vows to bring her to New Zealand, 'my mother's sister; my flesh; my blood'. Later, he warns Eddie to stay away from Nina in the following terms: 'She's one of us; she'll always be one of us. You like onion? [he picks up an onion ring with a large knife] It's good for blood. People are so different. You know nothing about us; who we are, what we are'. 'She's told me about it', Eddie replies. 'You could never understand it. You know what I'm talking about. Forget her, alright?' There are clear echoes here of social Darwinist ideas about race, and Ivan's regressive ideas in this respect are represented as being arrested in the past, as opposed to Nina's liberal and forward looking attitude. In this way, their oppositions also have a generational and a gender dimension. Ivan's inflexibility is contrasted with Nina's ability to 'move forward', which includes the ability to procreate and thereby literally effect a 'hybrid' future in the form of a child.

In this way then, the film sets up an opposition between desirable immigrants and less desirable immigrants. It implies a delicate balance between cultural maintenance and forgetting, and Nina has apparently found the 'right' balance. The Croatians are clearly represented as an uprooted people that carry a lot of 'baggage' into New Zealand. Some

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[23]NDH: Nezavisna Drzava Hrvatska. This is the Independent Croatian State which functioned as a Nazi puppet regime during World War II. The creation of the modern Croatian state, the Republic of Croatia, in 1990 has revived and refueled the old (but not forgotten) mythologies about Croatians, leaving a residue of suspicion towards the Croatian Republic (Kolar-Panov, 1997, p.92/93).

of this 'baggage' is shown to be admirable, but only if appropriated in the 'right' way; and again, this runs along gender lines. In other words, attributes ascribed to Croatian 'culture' are 'passion', 'sensuality', 'expressivity' and so on. These kind of attributes, as embodied in Nina, are represented as exciting and exotic, brimming with a positive sexuality; in this way, they are implicitly contrasted with the absent mainstream. In Ivan, on the other hand, these same attributes come to stand for violence, madness and criminal behaviour.

Eddie represents another type of uprootedness, namely within New Zealand, and related to Maori. Discourses surrounding Maori in the film focus on the urban-rural dichotomy. Eddie has moved to the city but this has come at a price; his 'authentic' Maori culture is in danger of erosion in the concrete surroundings of life in the city. However, he is not completely cut off; when the going gets tough, he can and does go back to his turangawaewae[24] to 'regain strength' for his final battle. He has a strong connection to the soil and his ancestors in the form of his whakapapa tree. Whenever there is conflict, Eddie draws on te reo Maori and his ancestors to give him strength.

The clearest example of this 'authentic' rural Maori culture discourse, occurs when Manu, who has stayed put in the countryside, senses that Nina is pregnant by observing the behaviour of the dolphins during Nina's swim. This fits in tightly with the indigenous peoples discourse as being in tune with their natural surroundings; it is at the same time somewhat of a colonial caricature ('the romantic savage'[25]) and indicates a liberal acceptance of Maori spirituality. Significantly, Eddie is oblivious to this which implies that the city has had an 'eroding' effect on him. When Manu brings it up as the reason why Nina traveled to Kawakawa, Eddie initially does not believe him: 'You smoke too much weed'. It is not until Manu speaks in te reo, that Eddie pays attention.

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[24]Literal translation: a place to stand. It refers to a link to a tribal homeland.

[25]See chapter 4.

Although he had given up on Nina after the party, this episode changes the situation. As Manu points out: 'That's whanau in there bro'.

On his return, he is prepared to fight for her and the baby. The family connection is emphasised when he digs up his tree and begins to plant it in the Vujcic's backyard[26], all the while calling on his tipuna[27] in te reo Maori. After he breaks his spade trying to remove the pallets from Nina's window, he uses it as a taiaha and performs a haka in front of Ivan and Darko. All during the fight, he only speaks in te reo. Interestingly, none of this is subtitled, as opposed to some of the Croatian language parts earlier on in the film. This assumes that part of the audience will understand it, and those who cannot will be able to infer either its meaning or at least its significance.

Overall then, through its representation of Nina and Eddie, *Broken English* appears to successfully steer away from the treatment of 'culture' as existing in isolation. It can be seen as confrontational in that it treats culture here as living and breathing, not as a static concept that can be 'rescued', 'restored' or 'preserved' in its original 'authentic' from. It thus complicates the concept of culture, by representing it as possessing beneficial properties, while it can be restrictive at the same time, depending on the context, and how it is appropriated by different characters.

However, while its representations of both Croatians and Maori are often contradictory and ambiguous in this way, this ambiguity is rather less visible in relation to the representations of the other ethnic groups, which frequently leads to stereotyping, particularly in the case of the Cook Island family that lives next door to Nina. Shohat and Stam sound an important warning, related to power relations, which is highly relevant here:

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[26]Ironically, Pohutukawa do not like to be transplanted much!

[27]Ancestors.

While all negative [or positive] stereotypes are hurtful, they do not all exercise the same power in the world. The facile catch-all invocation of "stereotypes" elides a crucial distinction: stereotypes of some communities merely make the target group uncomfortable, but the community has the social power to combat and resist them; stereotypes of other communities participate in a continuum of prejudicial social policy and actual violence against disempowered people, placing the very body of the accused in jeopardy (1994, p.183).

In *Broken English*, the Cook Island family is a large (in both senses of the word), religious family (Essie is a reverend), who seem to do little else besides painting their house in bright colours, and singing and dancing in 'traditional' costumes. Apart from that, they smile a lot. There seems to be little else beyond these obvious stereotypical depictions. The extent to which these kind of stereotypes are related to issues of power and access to the means of representation is exemplified by Shepard's discussion of Sima Urale's short film *O Tamaiti* (1997): 'The film was shot deliberately in black and white to counter kitsch images of Pacific Island culture' (2000, p.207). In contrast, the 'colourfulness' of this family in *Broken English* was deliberately 'amped up'[28]. To some extent then, the representation of these peripheral characters stands in contrast to the slightly more complex figures of Eddie and Manu.

When it comes to the Chinese characters, the situation is again a bit more ambiguous, but still heavily reliant on stereotypes. Clara and Wu speak very 'broken' English and often completely misinterpret situations, which leads, in Wu's case, even to physical damage at the hands of Ivan. According to Chow, 'although these sequences emphasise Ivan's out-of-control and violent impulses, they also amplify the weakness and cowardice of the Chinese man. His drunken frolic simply functions as a joke, much as

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[28]See chapter 6.

new Chinese immigrants are often regarded by other New Zealanders' (1996, p.21). Although I agree that the film invites this reading, the above sequence can alternatively be read as invitation to feel sorry for Wu, as his 'clumsiness' can only lead to disaster. In the latter case, it relies on the implicit discourse of poor Chinese immigrants being exploited wherever they go; the effect is ultimately that these characters are locked into the position of victim. Clara and Wu are being exploited by a Japanese 'business' immigrant called Jasmin, who is ruthless in her pursuit of money, and does not show the least bit of sympathy for their plight. What makes them for the most part very one-dimensional is their complete lack of articulated reasons to be in New Zealand, beyond their repeated insistence on 'wanting to make small kiwi'. To this end, they are willing to pay large amounts of money which they earn through their numerous cleaning jobs. They are very eager to commit fraud, in the form of a fake marriage, to reach their goal of gaining permanent residency.

All of this fits quite comfortably into the 'Asian invasion' discourse which has a long history in New Zealand[29]. Chow notes in this respect that 'the stereotypical qualities of the Chinese immigrants, i.e. being illegal, buying citizenship, working in restaurants as cheap labour, wanting children madly because of the one-child policy in China are all presented through two Chinese characters in *Broken English*' (ibid, p.21). These are to a large extent updated adaptions of the historical 'Asian invasion' discourse. Furthermore, these characters exemplify just how adaptable this discourse is. For Clara and Wu are not threatening in a straightforward fashion; on the contrary, they are clumsy and require help to survive. But the 'Asian invasion' discourse is flexible enough to lock them in a no-win situation: either 'they' accept 'our' help in which case they become a burden on 'us' taxpayers, or 'they' help themselves in which case they are competing for 'our' jobs.

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[29]See chapters 4 and 5.

Jakubowicz talks about the related 'boat people' discourse in Australia in the following terms: 'the vulnerability of the nation to 'penetration' narrative suggested a weakness and incapacity of the state to protect the nation/ ethnic group/ family from pollution' (1994, p.93). He goes on to say that, 'indeed, the more intensely they desire (us?), the more urgently we fear (them?)' (ibid, p.96). Although he talks here specifically about migrants from South-East Asia, the recent 'Tampa' events[30] highlight how adaptable and persistent these kind of discourses are.

But although this discourse is lurking beneath the surface, the ambiguity arises from the fact that Clara and Wu are so clumsy that it could be seen to invite the audience to feel sorry for them, as noted above. Read in this way, the film could be said to offer an implicit critique of the 'Asian invasion' discourse. Only on one occasion do they accurately grasp the situation. This is when Nina is feeling blue after Eddie has left her. Wu offers her some 'ancient Chinese wisdom' in the form of a popular Chinese myth, which is the catalyst for her trip to the Bay of Islands. But apart from that, they move around in a constant panic and state of paranoia, afraid people will rip them off.

Although not explicitly stated, we can of course infer their reasons for wanting to be in New Zealand. A frequent discourse surrounding Asian immigration relates to the perceived conditions in Asian countries: overcrowded and polluted cities. This goes hand in hand with the fear factor in the 'Asian invasion' discourse: 'they will come and pollute 'our' clean cities, if 'we' are not careful'. This pollution will take place not only literally, but also morally. These kind of discourses seem to fit Clara and Wu's behaviour, and particularly Jasmin's.

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[30]In August 2001, a Norwegian freighter called the 'Tampa' picked up around four hundred mainly Afghan refugees from a leaky fishing boat near Christmas Island. The Australian Government subsequently refused to let them land on 'Australian soil'; this 'tough stance' gained wide popular support in Australia, and arguably led to the re-election of the Howard government.

However, ambiguity arises again when we consider that on a narrative level, Clara and Wu are structured to be aligned with Nina and Eddie; they hence also invite empathy. Their desire to make a 'small kiwi' and the extraordinary lengths they are prepared to go to in order to achieve their goal, can thus be interpreted as an admirable act of self-sacrifice for the benefit of their (yet to be conceived) child. If read in this way, the implication is that 'we' should welcome people with such attitudes with open arms. Although *Broken English* is ambiguous in the sense that it can, in the latter case, be seen to offer an implicit critique of New Zealand immigration policy, it does, at the same time, do little to counter the stereotypes that result from this policy; on the contrary, it often appears to reinforce those stereotypes.

These are of course my personal readings of the film and partly provide a content analysis and critique of its subject matter and the way it represents this. The next chapter of this thesis provides perspectives from different audiences. But if we put the film in the wider context of New Zealand cinema in general, we notice the marginal position it occupies in terms of representations of ethnic minority groups in New Zealand. Gunew detects a problem with so-called minority arts in general which is relevant in terms of representations of minorities as well. She notes that 'any manifestation is immediately subject to the critique (impossible to satisfy) of its non-representativeness which begs the question as to why such art should somehow be more representative than mainstream art' (1994, p.8).

This relates closely to my own critique of the film as being too stereotypical which could be interpreted as not 'authentic' enough by implication. However, it is not so much that the film's representations are not 'authentic' enough, for this, in my view, is a dead end. There is no 'authentic' representation of any culture, as this would imply an essentialist, closed-off notion of culture. It is more that the lack of alternatives means that *Broken English* is virtually the only film in New Zealand to date that deals directly with issues of immigration and tries to represent ethnic minority groups, however

problematically. This means that the film is in danger of being the only circulating version of certain ethnic minority groups. And because of its uneasy position between 'art' and 'entertainment', it seems to rely heavily on easily recognisable stereotypes.

This also relates to the fact that most of its creative personnel consists of Pakeha New Zealanders representing Others, which brings up a number of issues mentioned before. This is a position which *Once Were Warriors* narrowly escapes with a small number of Maori produced films[31]. In the case of *Broken English*, this meant that a number of consultants were employed in an effort to 'get the cultural component right'. The employment of such consultants can be seen in part as a defense mechanism against charges of not being 'authentic' enough. This practice is again based on the belief that there is such a thing as an 'authentic' culture which can be 'adequately' represented.

But as Helene Wong rightly points out, 'you cannot expect any one Asian consultant to speak for everyone in their community' (1999, p.7). She goes on to say, in her attempt to make a case for access to the means of representation: 'I am not saying that only Asians can make programs [or films] about Asian subjects, but I am saying that they should be encouraged to start. Because someone who knows the culture intimately has a greater chance of coming up with ideas and creative choices beyond the square, beyond the stereotype, to give a fresh angle' (ibid, p.7).

Importantly, she is not falling into the essentialist trap of saying that only a member of a particular ethnic group can 'adequately' represent that group. She merely argues for a more balanced overall view, which involves access to the means of representation. She is thus talking about alternative views, 'to make room for another set of perspectives, not just as cultural curiosities, but as another set of voices to be included in the conversation about national identity' (ibid, p.7). In other words, in a truly multicultural

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[31]For example *Ngati* (1987, Barry Barclay), *Mauri* (1988, Merata Mita) and *Te Rua* (1991, Barry Barclay). See also chapter 3.

society, the emphasis is on power sharing and dialogue between the different cultures that make up that society. Judging by the cinema, New Zealand has yet to move beyond the monologue stage.

Based on the conceptualisation of 'the audience' as outlined in chapter 1, this chapter provides an analysis of the process of making meaning in a focus group context. This empirical research partly deals with *Broken English* as a cinematic text, and thus explores different audience readings of this text. However, it is not limited to readings of the text itself. On the contrary, *Broken English* is employed here as a catalyst from which to engage with themes and topics that the film deals with, or may be perceived to deal with, and which relate to issues of importance in a wider societal context. My questions were designed to facilitate this movement from the specific to the general[1], but I return to that shortly. The most important of the themes and topics have been discussed in earlier chapters, for example issues of national identity, representations of race/ ethnicity and culture, multiculturalism versus biculturalism, and national cinema. These earlier chapters serve as a historical framework, as they explain how specific discourses have developed and under what circumstances. This chapter is thus organised around these sub-headings.

The main assumption made here is that viewers are *active* as opposed to *passive*. This means that viewers *negotiate* meanings when they watch a particular media text. The text itself draws on particular discourses in its representations. Different viewers will bring their own perspectives and experiences to this text and will interpret it differently, drawing from the range of different discourses that they have access to. In other words, the assumption from the outset is that there is not an infinite variety of interpretations, but rather that factors of class, race, gender, sexuality and so on are very important in providing different frameworks of interpretation.

This analysis focuses on both macro- and micro-levels. In other words, the assumption

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[1]See also appendix III.

is that the ways in which focus group participants express themselves is partly influenced by their position in a wider societal context (macro-level), but also partly by the immediate focus group context and its particular dynamics (micro-level).

The empirical audience research part of this study consists of six different focus groups with a total of thirty-six people. These people came together in two groups each for the main ethnic groups represented in *Broken English*: Croatian, Maori and Chinese. But before I discuss the specific contexts of each of these groups and a justification for their selection, I will first outline focus group research as a method, and explain the appropriateness of this method for this particular study.

## 8.1: Framing the Audience: Focus Group Research

Focus group research is an established qualitative method of audience research[2]. Its increasing use in social science research since the 1980s (e.g Morley, 1980, Liebes & Katz, 1990) is part of a general move toward qualitative methods (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). The latter move runs parallel with changing conceptualisations of 'the audience' in general, and in particular with the development of reception studies[3]. This study is situated within the latter development, and focus groups seem particularly well-suited to a project which aims to show how people make meaning in specific contexts. To some extent, they provide a context which approximates 'everyday' conversations, although this is only partly the case, and I qualify this shortly.

In this case then, conducting focus group research entails a combination of 'ethnographic' research and discourse analysis of the resulting data. The former indicates that it is of utmost importance to pay careful attention to and describe the specific context in which people make certain meanings. The latter involves a careful

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[2]For an outline of its historical development, see for example Berg, 1995.

[3]As outlined in chapter 1.

examination of these data, which includes an analysis of a variety of factors which may influence this process of making meaning, for example the specific group dynamics and the position of the researcher. 'A focus group study is a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment' (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p.5).

Although it is ideally permissive and nonthreatening to a certain extent, it is nevertheless not entirely 'everyday', since it is organised for specific reasons, and the content is controlled to a large extent by the researcher. I would argue then, that the context can be more or less seen as a combination of 'public' and 'private' spheres, to differing degrees. It approximates a 'private' sphere to the extent that participants mostly know each other and talk to each other regularly in everyday situations. Furthermore, in most cases the discussions take place in an environment which is familiar to them. On the other hand, it is 'public' to the extent that the researcher is an outsider, representing a public institution, which means there is an awareness amongst the participants that their contributions may end up in the public domain, despite assurances that their identities will not be revealed. The latter point is exacerbated by the fact that the discussions are audio-taped. It is therefore important to take Scannell's following warning into account when analysing the data: 'Talk-in-public is "on the record" and this has consequences for what can and cannot be said and for ways of saying or not saying' (1998, p.260).

The method of focus group research usually involves bringing together between six and ten people and providing a site for extended conversations about a particular topic, in this case a media text and its related themes and topics. There is a general consensus in the literature that it works best with six to eight people (Lunt & Lingstone, 1996, p.82). Accordingly, two of the groups in this study consisted of seven participants, and one of eight. However, two other groups consisted of five participants, and one of four. The latter three groups were originally planned with six to eight people, but part of

organising focus groups in relation to a doctoral study means firstly that the researcher is alone and not part of a team, and secondly that there are significant budgetary constraints, which precludes the researcher from the ability to offer significant incentives. Consequently, there is a necessary reliance on the participants' goodwill.

This means that there is always a possibility that on a prearranged date and time some participants will not show up for various reasons. This requires a decision, in the final instance, on whether to proceed with fewer people or whether to postpone. Given the often lengthy period of preparation, including previous cancellations because of the Olympic Games on television[4], I decided in these cases to go ahead with the discussion.

Smaller groups can have certain advantages as well, which are relevant in this case. Greenbaum for example distinguishes between what he calls 'full groups' and 'mini-groups'. Mini-groups are limited to four or six. The main advantage here is that they are firstly easier to moderate, and secondly that 'the time per person is doubled, thus (theoretically) enabling the moderator to get more information from each individual' (Greenbaum, 1993, p.3).

The second aspect of this method relates to the question of how many groups to organise. Given the above-mentioned constraints, this study uses a relatively small sample. However, a small sample is not necessarily less 'valid' in this case. My argument here would be that the aim of this study is not so much to arrive at generalised conclusions about particular topics, but to analyse the *process* of how these topics are discussed in specific contexts. I agree in that respect with De Cillia *et al* when they argue that the focus group 'allows one to observe the local co-construction of meaning

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[4]One of the 'Croatian' groups was planned well in advance for a particular date. This group had to be postponed eventually, as it coincided with the opening of the Olympic Games in Sydney (September 2000). A majority of the confirmed participants canceled because they wanted to watch the Croatian team on television during the opening ceremony.

of concepts (like 'nation' and 'identity') during an ongoing discussion, by individuals, but under the interactive influence of the group' (1999, p.152/153).

The third important aspect of this method relates to the composition of the groups. According to Lunt & Livingstone, 'much of the innovation in focus group design has involved moving away from the survey sampling approach to engage naturally occurring groups of like-minded people' (1996, p.82). These are what Green calls 'affinity groups; people who already know each other, independent of the focus group experience' (1999, p.4). This has a number of advantages, the most important of which is that participants do not spend most of the time getting to know each other, and therefore may be expected to feel more at ease, which facilitates a more free-flowing discussion.

Another relevant and more practical advantage in this case is that it allows the researcher to make use of so-called 'gatekeepers' (see Roscoe, 1999, p.30). As mentioned before, the ethnic groups represented in *Broken English* are clearly marked as such, which provided an important rationale behind the selection of participants for the focus groups. In other words, the groups consisted of people who identified *themselves* as either Croatian, Maori or Chinese. This is important to keep in mind as it provides a key to the public discourses they offered during the discussions. Particularly in the case of the Croatian and Chinese groups then, I relied extensively on these 'gatekeepers' to select participants and organise times and locations, as I mostly had little contact with these groups before this study. One disadvantage to keep in mind here, is that people who already know each other are more likely to be brief in their answers, as they assume in some instances that the other participants already know their opinions (see Green, 1999, p.5). This thus requires a certain amount of vigilance in both moderating and interpreting the data.

Finally, small focus group samples mean that they do not necessarily represent the

broader social group from which they were drawn. The researcher therefore needs to be very careful with generalisations when interpreting the transcripts. What is perceived to be problematic here is a 'lack' of reliability, validity, and representativeness (e.g. Schroder, 1999). Implicit in these critiques is that this type of research is 'worthless' because its results cannot be 'tested' or 'replicated'. However, I agree with Lunt & Livingstone who argue that 'the critique assuming test-retest reliability as an ideal misses the point that qualitative methods are concerned to capture difference and variation rather than to reduce variance through experimental control' (1996, p.92/93). In other words, the aim here is not to arrive at a finalised conclusion about a particular social group, but rather to provide an in-depth analysis of how a wider social context influences specific instances of social *practice*. This requires what Davies calls a 'conceptual leap from a central focus on being *someone* (that someone being revealed by ways of speaking) to a focus on *discourse* as something which can be used in particular ways with particular powerful effects (one of which might be the constitution of 'me' as a particular kind of person)' (1998, p.135). One final factor to consider in relation to this particular study, is the cross-cultural context.

*Cross-Cultural Context*

When conducting cross-cultural research, as this study does, there are some specific issues to consider, both methodological and ethical. In terms of methodology, coming to a research context as an 'outsider' can pose some problems. Some researchers argue for example that you may not understand the cultures you study (e.g. Tolich & Davidson, 1999). The role of 'gatekeepers' is crucial in that respect, as they take part in both the selection of participants and the focus groups themselves. Apart from that, if ethnicity (or race) is used as the dominant factor in the selection process, as in this study, there is a danger that this ethnicity becomes the major issue in the discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

In this case, issues of race and ethnicity are an important part of the subject matter, so

302

they constituted a 'major issue' to begin with. The focus on this issue is thus to some extent reinforced by my choice of groups and questions[5] in this case. However, they were certainly not the only issue, and part of the selection process took other factors into account like age, gender, and duration of residence in New Zealand; these factors may be equally important and in some instances more important. Ross for example makes the point that '*other* cross-cutting characteristics such as class, religion, gender and generation can and do have a significant affect on the outcome of interviewer-subject interactions, and sharing, apparently, the same ethnic or 'racial' background is no guarantee of success' (2000, p.138). In short, ethnicity and 'race' are important factors and need to be carefully considered as part of the research context, but they are not the only factors.

The second consideration in this respect is of an ethical nature and relates to issues of power. 'When undertaking research, either across cultures or within a minority culture, it is critical that researchers recognize the power dynamic which is embedded in the relationship with their subjects' (Smith, 1999, p.176). This is relevant both to the immediate research context, and to the subsequent analysis of the data and what is done with it. For Ross, 'the issue is, broadly, about who speaks for whom, with what right and in what voice?' (2000, p.137).

Overall, while I believe it is very important to be sensitive to and keenly aware of the power dynamics involved, I do not agree with the position that the researcher necessarily needs to be 'of the culture' in order to engage with the participants 'with empathy and a necessary sensibility', as Wittmann for example argues (1998, p.15). This position is problematic because it essentialises notions of race, ethnicity and culture in ways which I have discussed in chapter 3. I would argue instead that cross-cultural research simply draws these factors into a more central role than normal, but

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[5]For a full version of the initial framework of questions, see appendix III.

the characteristics of the researcher are always a relevant factor to take into account; I see it thus more as a matter of degree.

In summary then, a crucial aspect of doing focus group research is to consider your own position as a researcher very carefully. The questions are never neutral; there is always a particular 'agenda' behind them, and the way you moderate the group has a significant impact on the resulting 'text'. Also, in interpreting the transcript, there is a danger of favouring certain opinions over others because they suit for instance your own interpretation of the film. But these factors are common in most audience research. In short, it is important to ask yourself questions like: What was my own position in the interviews? To what extent did your position influence certain responses? How did I fit into the group dynamics? How did the discussions take place and what were the reasons for participants to take part? If we employ a sufficient amount of self-reflexivity, I believe focus group research can be a very useful research method.

I close this section with a quote from Liebes & Katz's 1990 study of cross-cultural interpretations of *Dallas*, which shares some interesting parallels with this study, albeit on a much larger scale. They describe the value of focus group research as follows:

> Focus groups serve well precisely because they permit tentative interpretations to be floated by someone and shot down by someone else, because they permit bullies to try to impose themselves on the others, because expert opinion is sought out for guidance, because interpretations are moulded and twisted to fit underground loves and hates that permeate interpersonal relations. This is what happens in life (p.82).

## 8.2: Selection of Participants and General Research Context

Given the scope and limitations of this study on the one hand, and the intensive nature of the tripartite approach, combined with discourse analysis, on the other, a decision was made at an early stage to limit the number of focus groups to between six and nine.

Eventually, six group discussions were organised, one of which 'failed' for reasons I explain shortly. Studies that share certain similarities, like the earlier mentioned Liebes & Katz study of *Dallas* (1990), have conducted considerably more group discussions, in their case sixty six. However, this was unfeasible in this case due to time constraints, for financial reasons and because of the 'individual' nature of doctoral research.

As mentioned before, *Broken English* represents a number of different ethnic groups which are clearly marked as such. Moreover, their *ethnicity* can be seen as one of the major organising principles of their respective characterisations. The two main characters are Croatian and Maori, while the supporting characters are of Chinese, Cook Island and Japanese descent. Within the sub-plot, the Chinese characters play the most important part. The selection of participants was based on this recognition, and it therefore became important to select participants who identified *themselves* according to these categories. Alternatively, I could have easily chosen only Pakeha participants. However, this thesis was from the outset based on a recognition that ethnic minority groups in New Zealand were marginalised in mainstream discourses about the nation, albeit to varying degrees. Therefore, targeting different ethnic minority groups, as opposed to the dominant ethnic group, seemed an obvious way of gaining a range of responses related to the central issues of this thesis. This in turn influenced the type of knowledge gained; ethnic minorities were given a forum to address the mainstream. So overall, I was looking to some extent for more critical audience members; those who were more likely to be reflective of ethnic characterisation.

Again based on some of the themes and topics in the film, a decision was then made to organise two or three groups for each of these main categories, which eventually became two. Within the Croatian groups, a distinction was made on a generational basis: one group of recent immigrants to New Zealand, and one group of long-term residents, who were either born here or had immigrated thirty to forty years ago. A similar distinction was made for the Chinese groups. In contrast, the Maori groups were

selected according to a rural/ provincial background as opposed to Auckland (urban) residents, which again relates to one of the film's central themes.

On a practical level, some of the groups were selected by drawing on my own social and professional network, whereas in other cases I relied on existing community organisations and the aforementioned 'gatekeepers'. Thus, the 'rural/ provincial' Maori group was organised in consultation with family members, while the 'urban Maori' group consisted of some of my own students and their friends. The 'recent Chinese' group was organised in consultation with a friend who migrated here just over a year ago, and is involved in Chinese student associations at the University of Auckland. For the other Chinese group, the Auckland Chinese Community Center was approached, and the participants, time and place were thus selected through a 'gatekeeper'. Similarly, in terms of the Croatian groups, due to the fact that I did not know any Croatians in New Zealand, the Croatian Cultural Society was approached and the groups were organised in consultation with a spokesperson at the Society.

In both these cases the aims and objectives of this study were explained in detail, and the eventual selection of participants for the individual groups was left to the discretion of these 'gatekeepers'. This way of recruiting participants has several advantages from a researcher's point of view. Firstly, participants are approached by someone they are familiar with, which ensures little pressure and therefore a relatively free decision on their part to participate. Secondly, should they feel uncomfortable with the questions during the discussion, the presence of a 'go-between' makes it easier for them to withdraw. And thirdly, going through this process makes it more likely that the participants are familiar with each other, which generally ensures a more free-flowing discussion, as explained before.

All participants were asked to sign a consent form and were offered the assurance of anonymity in the resulting thesis. With regard to the latter, the participants will be

306

'coded' in the following analysis, within their specific groups. Thus, each participant will have a group code and an individual number; for example 'group A, participant 2' will from here on be referred to as 'AP2'. Let me now turn to a description of the context for each individual group.

*Group A: Long-term Croatian Immigrants.*

Group A was held on October 20, 2000 at the Croatian Cultural Society in Te Atatu, West-Auckland. The focus group consisted initially of nine people, but one male participant got agitated after a few minutes and left; he appeared to be a little unclear about the whole process, which may have been partly the result of a language barrier. The resulting group thus consisted of eight people: five women and three men, roughly ranging in age from 35 to 70, with five of them between 45 and 55. All of them were born in Croatia, but have been living in New Zealand for at least thirty years and mostly longer. All participants knew each other through regular meetings at the Society. Also present, besides me, was my partner who did not partake in the discussion, but took notes for transcription purposes. Apart from that, there were about four people following the discussion from a distance, with people walking in and out of the room from time to time.

The discussion immediately followed a screening of *Broken English* using a projector. Between twenty and twenty five people were present for this screening, from which the resulting participants were drawn. In consultation with the organiser, it was decided that this would be the most practical way of organising it.

During the screening, there was frequent talk between people, consisting in many cases of younger people explaining certain plot developments to the older people. However, there were a number of instances where people became quite animated in direct response to particular scenes; the smashing up of the car was one, the interaction between Ivan and his family another. Interestingly, there was a lot of laughter

throughout the screening of the film, but rarely for the reasons 'intended' by its producers. Particularly in relation to the Maori 'culture' sequences involving Eddie, there was widespread laughter. Although I was initially unsure whether this showed a certain disdain for the culture itself, it quickly became clear that this was rather a kind of mocking laughter at the way the film's producers had represented these 'cultural' aspects. Similar laughter greeted Clara and Wu's frequently stated desire to make 'a small kiwi'.

Apart from this frequent laughter, there was a sense of anger and shock at the way the film represents its Croatian characters, particularly in the scenes involving sex and violence; this was quite vocal at times. In other words, rather than a sense of embarrassment which comes with watching explicit sexual content and 'offensive language' in a group situation (something which applied to other groups), this group was rather more incensed that direct links were made to 'their' culture. This could thus be seen as an instance of 'the burden of representation' to which I return throughout this chapter.

*Group B: Long-term Chinese Immigrants.*

Group B was scheduled to be held at the Auckland Chinese Community Center (Eden Terrace, Auckland) on November 3, 2000. This group took a long time to organise, around four to five months after first contact was made with the organisation. There were a number of reasons for this, one of them being that the organisation was preparing celebrations for their thirty year anniversary when I first approached them. My correspondence took place by phone and mail, mostly through the vice-chairwoman of the organisation, and in the later stages through the chairman, both of whom were present on the evening in question. I had explained the aims and objectives of my research thoroughly and repeatedly to both, in writing, in person, and by phone.

The focus group consisted of six members of the Community Center, and one outsider: five men and two women. Their ages ranged from mid-thirties to late-seventies. While one participant was a recent arrival, the majority had settled here thirty to forty years ago. I arrived with a friend who is fluent in both Mandarin and Cantonese, which had been agreed on beforehand; she was to take part in the discussion as well. On arrival, the participants spoke in Cantonese amongst themselves, but all had a reasonable understanding of English. On this occasion, they had come to the Center especially to take part in this focus group.

From the moment I started playing the video tape of *Broken English*, most participants talked amongst each other, apparently not concentrating much on the film. I had introduced myself beforehand and explained what my research entailed. I had also warned them that the film contained some fairly explicit material: sex scenes, violence and offensive language. Although I had on numerous occasions notified the 'gatekeepers' of the duration of the film (about one hour and a half), one of them told me he thought that was a little too long, just as we were about to roll the tape.

After about five minutes, he called me over and asked whether it was a documentary or a drama. I told him again that it was a drama, set in Auckland. The talking continued until about twenty minutes into the film. This was the start of a rather explicit sex scene between the characters of Nina and Eddie, and something extraordinary happened. Almost immediately everyone got up and appeared to be highly offended by this scene. The chairman told me this was 'too much' and that it offended them greatly. He also told me this was the end of the session, as they were no longer willing to cooperate from here on.

I stopped the tape and apologised, saying it was never my intention to offend. My apologies were accepted but I was told that the film was considered pornographic, which causes embarrassment in 'our culture', particularly since there were women in

the room. As my friend and I were shown out, I apologised again and I was told that there are 'too many cultural differences' for this to work successfully.

Reflecting on events afterwards, a number of factors could have played a role in the 'failure' of this particular group. Firstly, my own role could obviously be questioned here. Organising and conducting focus groups put me on a steep learning curve during the course of this research project; I had no first hand experience. Although I thought I had explained my aims and objectives thoroughly, I could perhaps have done more in that respect. Also, in this particular case, cross-cultural factors clearly had an impact on the event, and although I had assistance in this respect, it may have worked if I had not been present myself.

However, subsequent conversations with my 'assistant' indicated that she was rather surprised as well. She firstly thought it came down to a 'generation gap', and secondly considered this group to be rather 'rude'. In terms of the generation gap, Zhou in a recent seminar explained that the treatment of sex and sexuality in general in Chinese cinema was heavily censored for the entire period since the Communist Revolution until the so-called 'youth films' of the late 1980s (2001). Explicitness in this respect was generally regarded as 'decadent' and 'vulgar'. Considering the age bracket of the participants, this could have been a major influence here.

Secondly, on a more practical level, my 'assistant' has since made some enquiries at the University of Auckland, which indicate that researchers have experienced problems before with this particular organisation. In other words, acquiring some background information about this particular organisation beforehand, which I failed to do, could have led to the selection of another organisation. The day after this event, I sent a letter apologising for any offence caused and taking full responsibility for this.

*Group C: Urban Maori.*

Group C was held on November 11, 2000, at my home in Mount Eden, Auckland, which was decided upon in consultation with the participants. One of the participants served as a 'gatekeeper', and she lives not far from my home; it was easiest for her to meet up with the others at her house beforehand. Considering the earlier mentioned difficulty of getting people together in their spare time, I left this up to her discretion. Although this group was planned with six participants, two of them canceled at the last minute for work-related reasons, while the others were already there; it was then decided to go ahead with four, rather than to postpone.

All participants were women, roughly ranging in age from 20 to 40. Three of them are of Maori descent (Nga Puhi, Ngati Kahungunu and Tuhoe[6]), and one of them is of Cook Island descent; all live in Auckland. The latter participant is problematic in that she is not of Maori descent; this can thus be seen as collapsing different ethnic groups. Firstly however, I was unaware of this until we were well into the focus group discussion, and I decided at that point to proceed. Secondly, this group was a so-called 'affinity' group, and three of them were Stage I Film and Television students at the University of Auckland. Two of them had been in my own tutorial groups; all three had also attended parallel so-called 'Maori & Pacific Island' tutorials for Stage I courses, through which they knew each other. In other words, this collapsing of ethnicities did not appear to be problematic for them. Weighing up these factors afterwards, I decided that the resulting data were valid as long as these factors were taken into account. The fourth participant was my partner, who is a teacher and scriptwriter, and had not met the other participants before. She does however fit the main criteria for this group; like the others (and the character of Eddie in the film), she comes from a rural/ provincial background, but has lived in cities for most of her adult life.

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[6]Nga Puhi is one of the largest northern iwi (tribes); Ngati Kahungunu is the largest iwi in Hawke's Bay (East Coast), and the Tuhoe tribal area covers most of the Urewera National Park.

These are important factors to keep in mind in the analysis of the resulting data as they clearly influence the dynamics of the group, and particularly the researcher's position in relation to the group. However, as discussed above, the selection of these participants is based on the assumption that each focus group context is valid in its own right, as long as we take as many factors into account as possible.

The discussion immediately followed a screening of *Broken English.* There were frequent comments during this screening. One of the participants had seen the film before and was anticipating certain scenes; interestingly, the scenes she remembered were the significance of Eddie's whakapapa tree and the scene where Nina swims with the dolphins and Eddie finds out she is pregnant. There were some comments about the explicitness of the sex scenes and about the music. One of the participants got great enjoyment out of the soundtrack of the film. There were some remarks about the way Eddie was holding his Steinlager bottle in the beginning of the film, the suggestion being that Steinlager was probably one of the main sponsors of the film. There were also comments about the way the film framed Nina at the beginning; the expectation was that we would get to see a lot more 'body shots'. All of these comments suggest a relatively high level of 'critical readings', which bares a direct relation to their studies on the one hand, and my position as their former tutor on the other.

On a different level, there were comments about the 'very violent culture' of the Croatian family. Also, during the party scene, Eddie goes for a wander in Nina's family home, causing all of them to comment that this was highly unlikely behaviour 'for a Maori'. The implication here was that a Maori would never do this as he would have more respect for other people's homes. These are more 'referential readings' to which I return shortly. Finally, the use of te reo Maori was generally greeted with approval.

*Group D: Recent Chinese Immigrants.*

Group D was held on November 11, 2000, in a seminar room at the University of Auckland. The selection process of this group relied heavily on a 'gatekeeper'. The same friend who assisted me at the Auckland Chinese Community Center has well-established links to a number of student associations, and she was therefore well-positioned to select participants for this group; she also had a good understanding of the aims and objectives of this study.

This group consisted initially of eight, and eventually of seven people; one male participant left after about half an hour, as he had trouble following the film due to language barriers. The three men and four women roughly ranged in age from 20 to 40. Three of the women were Taiwanese, two of whom had been in New Zealand for around ten years. The others were from mainland China. All of them had migrated here during the last ten years, with some of them as recent as one year ago. All of them were or had been studying at tertiary level, and some were working as well. Two of the Taiwanese women were trained teachers and both worked part-time in Auckland. All participants live in Auckland, except one who was on a visit from Rotorua. Some knew each other, but not all, which could be seen to have a certain amount of influence on the way they positioned themselves, as they did not 'naturally' form a group, as we shall see shortly.

The level of English language proficiency varied, but all could make themselves understood in English. Partly for practical reasons as discussed earlier, I made a conscious choice to conduct this focus group myself and in English. I am aware that this puts certain constraints on the flow of conversation, but I will incorporate this factor into my analysis.

The discussion immediately followed a screening of *Broken English*. The participants watched the film mostly in silence, although there were some sighs and laughter at

313

times, particularly during the party scene and the 'star river' sequence. One participant in particular laughed quite a lot and at some stages buried his head in his hands; the film appeared to make him cringe in places. Laughter also greeted Nina's pronunciation of the word whakapapa, but this group watched intently and silently for the most part.

*Group E: Recent Croatian Immigrants and New Zealand Born Croatians.*
Group E was conducted on March 16, 2001, at the Croatian Cultural Society in Te Atatatu, West-Auckland. All participants had been at the previous screening, and expressed a desire not to watch the film again, to which I agreed. The organising of this group ran into some difficulties, as the 'gatekeeper' had some problems getting people together at the same time. One planned session got canceled at the last moment because it coincided with the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, as mentioned before; another factor was the 'summer holiday'. The original plan was to conduct two groups on the same evening, one with 'Croatian-New Zealanders' born here, and one with recent immigrants from Croatia. However, it was eventually decided to combine these two groups into one.

This group then consisted of five people: three women and two men, roughly ranging in age from 30 to 55. Three of them were relatively recent immigrants to New Zealand: one arriving fifteen years ago, one thirteen years ago and one five years ago. One of them was born in New Zealand; one of them was three years old when he arrived here. The discussion took place on the back veranda at the Croatian Cultural Society, as other events took place inside, the noise of which would have interfered with the audio taping of the discussion. All participants knew each other well through frequent meetings at the Society.

One member of the Society took me aside when I first arrived and gave me a collection of personal correspondence with newspapers and people involved in the production of *Broken English*, as well as some magazine and newspaper articles relating to the film,

some of which are in Croatian. This member was not part of the focus group, but had followed the first discussion from a distance.

*Group F: Rural/ Provincial Maori.*

Group F was conducted on April 15, 2001, at the farm of my parents in law, just out of Havelock North, Hawke's Bay. My mother in law has lived in the area all of her life, and therefore has an extensive social network to draw on. She also fits the general criteria for the selection process for this group. In addition, she expressed a keen interest in this study and was more than willing to function as a 'gatekeeper' for this group.

The group consisted of five people: four women and one man, roughly ranging in age from 30 to 55. All of them are of Maori descent (four of them Ngati Kahungunu; one Tuhoe[7]), grew up and live in the rural/ provincial region of Hawke's Bay. Two of the participants are training to become teachers, one works as a florist, one is a social worker, and one a labourer. Four of the participants have known each other for a long time, and know me as well, while one of them was a relative 'outsider'. The latter came along with my sister in law who was also part of this group. The participation of relatives could potentially be problematic, particularly if they have an intimate knowledge of the research project. However, this did not apply in this case, and after careful consideration, I decided that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages in this instance.

The discussion immediately followed a screening of *Broken English*. Apart from this group, my partner followed this screening from a distance as did her father and brother. The group watched the film mostly quite intently and in silence. There was laughter during some scenes, particularly the 'small kiwi' episode, and the part where aunt

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[7]See footnote 6.

Marya is about to walk in on Nina and Eddie making love. During the explicit sex scene, there was a sense of embarrassment, particularly on the part of one of the participants whose parents were present. On one occasion, the social worker, who was on standby for work, left the room for a few minutes to answer a phone call. This happened once more during the discussion. The only real exception from the general silence during this screening happened during the 'dolphin scene' when there was some discussion on where the location was.

Overall then, these were the general contexts in which the discussions took place. Clearly, despite careful planning, the eventual make-up of the groups cannot always be entirely controlled by the researcher. In some cases, unexpected developments influence the final context. In most of these cases, there is very little time for reflection and a decision whether or not to proceed is required pretty much 'on the spot'. Given the difficulties of getting six to ten people together, and asking them to give up at least three hours of their time, without any substantial rewards beyond some 'snacks and nibbles', it was generally decided to go ahead with the discussions as planned. However, this does not mean that the resulting data are 'less valid' in my view, as long as we pay careful attention to these specific contexts in our analysis. The next step in contextualising the data will therefore provide an explanation of the questions that were asked, and the rationale for these questions in relation to this thesis.

## 8.3: Research Context Continued: Framework and Rationale for Questions

Each focus group session began with a screening of *Broken English*. I briefly introduced myself beforehand as a researcher at the University of Waikato working on a doctoral thesis, but I deliberately did not explain my research until after the screening. The reason for this is that I did not want the participants to look for anything specific when they were watching the film. One of my first questions for the discussion was a general one about whether they liked or disliked the film, and what they thought was most

interesting about it[8]. I deliberately left this question quite open for two reasons, one practical and one related to the subject matter. In terms of the former, I believe an opening question which is quite general aids in making participants feel at ease, because it draws on non-specific knowledge. In other words, this was part of an attempt to establish a non-threatening environment in which all participants felt they could take part in the discussion. In terms of the latter, I wanted to see if participants would bring up any issues that I had not anticipated beforehand. If this was the case I wanted to incorporate these issues into the discussion where I deemed this relevant.

After the screening, I briefly introduced my study in general terms: a general outline and explanation of the tripartite approach, and an outline of the main themes of my thesis such as national and cultural identity, national cinema, multiculturalism, immigration and so on. This was followed by an explanation of my future use of the data, and an assurance of confidentiality. In short, I explained why I needed to use audio tapes, and that the participants would be asked to sign a release form at the end of the session, which included a safeguard of their anonymity. I further stressed that they should feel free to bring up any issues they wanted in relation to my questions.

The framework of the questions was designed to match the outline of this thesis. Depending on the group, I made a list of between eight and ten questions. Some of them were specifically related to *Broken English*, while others were more general in scope and related to New Zealand society in a wider sense. In other words, the framework of questions was designed to facilitate a discussion which would move from the specific to the general. The overall objective then was to get a sense of how different groups would make meaning out of this specific text, the kinds of discourses they would draw on in this process, and how this can be related to their position in a wider societal context.

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[8]For a full list of questions for the various groups refer to appendix 3.

In general then, my moderating was relatively unstructured. The aim was to foster an open discussion, focused on interaction between participants rather than between the group and the moderator. However, in some cases I actively took part in the discussion where I deemed this appropriate on the moment. This has an added advantage of establishing a more intimate rapport with participants, but at the same time demands some caution, as it may lead them in certain directions. I will therefore indicate these instances in my analysis of the data.

On the other hand, when the discussion reached a dead end or became less relevant or repetitive, I generally intervened by asking a new question. In the former case, I sometimes deliberately let a question go around the group, one by one. One of the reasons here was to allow everyone the opportunity to answer particular questions which I deemed important; for when a discussion ensues, not everyone always participates. In other words, I made some effort to let group dynamics dominate, and at the same time tried to avoid a situation where dominant speakers control the whole session.

Overall then, while the initial aim was to establish group interaction, this could not be successfully achieved at all times. As a moderator, I therefore intervened at those moments where I felt it necessary to do so. In addition, there was some variation between different groups. While there was a significant amount of group interaction and discussion in the Maori and Croatian groups, this was less so in the Chinese group, for a number of possible reasons. Firstly, almost all participants in the Maori and Croatian groups knew each other intimately; in the Chinese group, some pairs knew each other, but some participants had never met each other. In addition, there was significant variation in the level of English in this group, which had an impact on the flow of conversation. And finally, cultural differences may have played a part in this group, as the participants came from different cultural backgrounds, but this was difficult for me to ascertain.

*Rationale for Focus Group Questions*

As noted above, many of the questions were quite general, and these were mostly the same for all groups. However, since an important part of this empirical research is based on a comparative framework, some questions were exclusively geared towards specific groups, either as a complete question or in terms of its focus. These questions were based on the 'discourse map' as outlined in the first part of this thesis.

Questions for all groups included an opening question as to whether they had seen the film before, either in the cinema or on video and television. This was followed in all cases by some initial responses: did they like the film or dislike it? What did they find most interesting about? Apart from the earlier mentioned possibility of gaining unanticipated perspectives, this question also functioned as a so-called 'icebreaker'. The final questions were the same for all groups as well. The penultimate question asked specifically how they saw the role of cinema as a medium in relation to national identity, and whether they considered cinema to be important in this respect. This constitutes one of the central themes of this thesis. The final question asked participants in a general sense to describe New Zealand as a nation. For some groups, this question was worded as follows, drawing on the important 'family' metaphor[9] in relation to constructions of nationhood: If you imagine New Zealand as a family; how would you describe this family?[10] In some cases, I modified this to a more general: how would you describe New Zealand as a nation?, as not all participants understood the metaphor. Again, this question, though general in nature, is specifically related to one of the main themes in this thesis.

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[9]See chapter 2.

[10]For this question, I'm indebted to my colleague at the University of Waikato, Lisa Perrott.

The other questions were more tailored to individual groups, although they were similar on some level. In relation to the film, there were questions about what the participants thought about the way *Broken English* represents its Croatian, Maori and Chinese characters respectively, and whether they identified with their experiences. This relates to issues of representation[11]. Similarly, there was a question asking their opinions about the way the film represents the interaction between different cultures and ethnic groups.

Moving away from the film somewhat, at least in a direct sense, there were some questions about multiculturalism and biculturalism, in relation to New Zealand nationhood. These questions were thus more political in a wider sense, although they are in my opinion relevant to some of the implicit themes of the film[12]. Some of these questions only applied to specific groups. For example, one question for the Maori groups asked if they thought the film would have been different if the director had been Maori. This question was geared to engage with notions of 'third' or 'fourth' cinema[13], although I did not specifically mention those terms. Another question for the long-term Croatian immigrant group asked whether they had a lot of contact with more recent Croatian immigrants, and if this had an impact on their own sense of identity. This question was projected to allow engagement with notions of diaspora identities[14].

Overall then, these questions frame the resulting discussions in important ways, and in some cases could be seen as leading questions. At the same time however, these questions provided an initial framework. As noted above, the discussions often moved in unexpected directions, and this framework was flexible enough to allow for that. Furthermore, on many occasions the discussions overlapped with other questions,

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[11]As outlined in chapter 4.

[12]For a discussion of these, see chapter 7.

[13]See chapter 3.

[14]See chapter 4.

which meant I did not need to specifically ask those questions anymore. These spontaneous developments are ideal in my opinion, but they do not always happen. These questions then, in combination with my choice of film and selection of participants, set up a particular critical stance on the part of the researcher which needs to be taken into account. This concludes the context on which the following analysis is based, although I refer back to it where and when this is relevant.

<u>8.4: 'Reading' *Broken English* and Adopting Critical Positions</u>.

*Broken English* can be seen as a film *about* particular ethnic groups in New Zealand, but not necessarily *for* those groups, as mentioned before. The selection of focus groups according to the categories outlined above thus positions the participants in particular ways in relation to the researcher. One aspect of this context then is that they were more likely to respond *as members* of these respective communities, and consequently treat me, the researcher, as a 'channel' through which their concerns could get a 'public' airing (see also Roscoe, 1999). This was certainly the case in terms of the Croatian groups, but less so in the other groups. In some cases this treatment of the researcher as a 'mouthpiece' became very direct, particularly in the Croatian groups:

> Actually, how about if you write to the producer and director and ask for an apology, because they have portrayed us very badly . (.) I hope you portray us better in your thesis and you explain our feelings (AP1).

This participant thus directly constructs me as a 'mouthpiece' and a mediator between the film makers and his community, which is partly due to the way I introduced my study (I mentioned that I had conducted interviews with some of the film makers).

A second, and related aspect, was that bringing people together specifically to talk about a film to a representative of a university is likely to invite more critical responses to that film than would be the case in 'everyday' situations. This is not to say that the focus group context creates these kinds of responses, but it certainly provides a forum for them to be articulated, which in turn is stimulated by the way I framed the sessions, as outlined above. One participant in group F implied this:

> FP1: I suppose the first time I watched it was just mainly for entertainment, and this...you know, when you look at something again...

Keeping this in mind, it would be useful to appropriate Liebes & Katz's distinction between 'referential readings' and 'critical readings' which they define as follows:

> The referential connects the program and real life. Viewers relate to characters as real people and in turn relate these real people to their own real worlds. The critical frames discussions of the program as a fictional construction with aesthetic rules. Referential readings are probably more emotionally involving; critical readings are more cognitive, dealing as they do with genres, dynamics of plot, thematics of the story, and so on. They may be just as involving as referential readings, nonetheless, and just as pleasurable (1990, p.100).

Within these different readings, they make a further distinction between what they call 'hot' and 'cool' readings, which refers to different degrees of emotional investment (ibid, p.100). These different types of readings are not entirely separate, but interact in complex ways, both relating to what I have called macro- and micro-contexts. What I am interested in here then is what these different types of readings accomplish both in the immediate focus group context and in a wider context. To begin with, this section deals with *Broken English* as cinematic text.

*"Broken English" as Cinematic Text.*
Not surprisingly, the critical readings of *Broken English* in terms of cinematic codes and conventions were generally quite sparse. Partly due to the relatively non-specific nature of my questions in that respect, there was little engagement with aspects of genre and style for example. The critical readings on the whole took two distinct, but related directions. The focus here was on critical readings of the characterisations in the film, with a link to 'the market'. In other words, although the discussions were mostly dominated by referential readings, the critical readings served to neutralise the emotional investment in those readings by showing an awareness of the 'mainstream' audience and the commercial pressures of the market and its operations. Often, these

referential and critical readings were combined as in the following extract:

> You know how my heart beats like this, because I'm very, very angry. I know the producers and directors like to have a controversial film so they get an audience. But at the same time they're very, very insensitive because they really hurt us as a nation (AP1).

The producer and director are here critically constructed as exploitative, their motives dominated by commercial imperatives. Interestingly, the critical readings can be seen to increase towards the end of the discussions, as the initial emotions have subsided somewhat. Consider the following exchange from group A for example:

> AP2: Probably, the producer didn't mean it like that actually. They maybe just made it to make people laugh and...something different, you know?
>
> AP3: That's not exactly a comfort...
>
> AP2: No...no, not for us, you know, but...
>
> AP4: I agree, because sometimes...the Italians, they should always grieve, because they are portrayed as a mafia. The crime, the sex, whole families, but they take it. It's sensitive, because of the war.

These participants draw here on public debates about stereotypes, and in addition construct a sense of kinship with other Europeans ('Italians') through similar experiences. There is also a recognition that the offense caused maybe part of an unconscious process ('didn't mean it like that'). The final sentence here ('it's sensitive') firstly implies a diasporic connection to Croatia as 'homeland', and secondly shows an awareness of particular stereotypes related to Croatia's part in the Balkan wars[15].

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[15]See chapter 7.

After I had indicated that the target audience was 16 to 25 year olds, assumptions were made about teenagers and the media, again drawing on public debates:

> AP4: Yes, that is exactly what they want to see: sex, drugs and booze...that's all. (.) They probably didn't even think about Croatia or..or whatever, right?

The Croatian groups were fairly similar in this respect. Both initially went to great lengths to 'set the record straight' so to speak. Then, on reflection, participants began to engage with film as a medium itself, and also began to consider their own position in relation to their earlier comments. Interestingly, this was more a result of a developing discussion, rather than prompted by specific questions. The following extract from group E exemplifies this:

> EP1: Maybe it is just artistic expression, and of course directors have the freedom to take certain things out of context and focus on them; that's fine. But I thought that the Croatian family was *really* taken out of context and portrayed in that extreme view, disproportionally in relation to others in the movie. So that's why I felt really offended. (original emphasis)
>
> EP2: But possibly because we are of Croatian background, so we feel offended by it.

On a micro-level, the first part here functions as a disclaimer for the second part ('but...'). This makes the second part more forceful as possible counter arguments are taken into consideration. In addition, a comparative framework is established where 'we' are represented worse than others.

This group also made connections between their earlier comments and the power of film as a medium in general, some of which drew on wider discourses about cultural

imperialism, with a particular sensitivity to a perceived US cultural dominance. In this way, we can identify connections between micro- and macro-contexts. In relation to the macro-context, *Broken English* is seen as important to this group because it is perceived to have an influence on the way *other* people see them in society. In terms of the micro-context, these critical reflections position the participants in relation to each other and me as people who construct well-considered arguments and are knowledgeable about the subject matter, in contrast to the general public. The latter also relates in a more general sense to the dynamics of these particular groups. Both Croatian groups initially worked towards a consensus, and later in the discussion began to differentiate themselves more from the others through their personal opinions.

This was slightly different for the other groups, and part of the reason for that may be that the Croatian groups were participating from within a clearly defined organisational structure. This context can thus be seen to have a large influence on what Roscoe refers to as 'the burden of representation': as members of a particular community, participants feel it is their responsibility to challenge any representations of their community they feel are inaccurate, and to have their critiques taken account of in the future. 'As such they carry the burden of speaking for and on behalf of their community' (Roscoe, 1999, p.140). This 'burden of representation' was much less apparent in the other groups, which may be partly due to the fact that the other groups were not 'officially' representing any organisation. These other groups spent less initial time working towards a consensus, and most participants began to differentiate themselves early on in the discussions.

This was particularly striking within the 'Chinese' group. Although initially concerns about stereotypes were expressed, most participants quickly began to critically distance themselves in a variety of ways. Consider for example the following response to the

326

question whether they considered film to be an important medium[16]:

> DP1: I do, because I think it's the most accessible medium to most people
> nowadays. And back to that question about stereotype; I think there is a fine
> line between characteristics and stereotypes. If you want to represent a certain
> group, to what extent do you stereotype them, or to what extent do you
> characterise them? (.) This film portrays people of lower socio-economic
> class. So I'm sure there are well-educated Chinese people, there are wealthy
> Chinese immigrants. And I would like to get it clear that there's no danger
> really to portray that particular group of Chinese people. There's heaps of
> positive purposes actually; it makes people more aware of the issues I
> suppose. Cause basically, everyone in that film is from that socio-economic
> past or group, not just the Chinese, the Croatian people too.

This is interesting because this participant creates a critical distance by drawing on
class distinctions and thus goes beyond ethnic and racial markers which was rare, not
only within this group, but in all groups. In other words, she draws on a political
discourse which acknowledges class divisions, rather than prioritising ethnic categories
of difference. Also, she makes a very interesting distinction between 'characteristics'
and 'stereotypes', which implies a very sophisticated knowledge about the construction
of fictional narratives. On a micro-level, she went on to assert that this film did not
reflect her personal experience and even suggested that I should maybe 're-target my
interview', albeit in a joking manner. She thus quite explicitly attacked my motives
behind the selection of participants as 'ethnocentric' by implication.

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[16]This was clearly a leading question, as mentioned before, but deliberately so. It firstly
leaves little room for a 'no' answer, and secondly implies that *I* find it an important medium.
However, I was interested in the way they would explain why, and the question therefore
functioned as a set-up for that follow-up question, in case they did not expand.

Others were concerned with particular stereotypes, but like some of the Croatian participants, put this partly down to commercial pressures.

> DP3: Newspapers or TV always want to create news. I feel this film is just like creating news. (.) The director at first, I think, was to establish a commercial market. This means that the majority of the audience has to like this film. So, from my understanding, a director has no choice. It has been a market decision in the director's thinking. So we should not complain about the director.

Again, this shows a highly developed understanding of media processes and their associated commercial pressures. Although this is quite an extreme example in that he effectively removes any responsibility on the part of the director ('a director has no choice'), all groups had a firm and critical grasp on media processes, albeit to varying degrees.

Within this group, there was a frequent questioning of each other's opinions, and a strong tendency to put some of these opinions in perspective.

> DP4: But, you know I mean, the Chinese couple...they are not in the main story line; they are just a sideline really, so...
> DP5: I think we don't know the mainstream audience, so we cannot imagine how they think and what they'll think.

Again, like some of the Croatian participants, P5 here engages with the notion of audiences, and she effectively positions herself and by extension the whole group ('we') outside of the 'mainstream' audience ('they'). But in contrast to the earlier Croatian example, she does not make any assumption about how 'they' would read the film. This clearly shows the difference between 'hot' and 'cool' readings.

All participants in this group are involved in tertiary education and they may be used to taking a critical stance in group discussions. Educational background could thus be seen as an influential factor in all groups, not only in terms of 'knowledge' but more importantly in the manner in which participants discussed the themes and topics of the film, and in the negotiation of their position within the research context. This was again evident in the Maori groups, albeit with some subtle differences.

Within group C (Maori film students) for example, there was a general concern with stereotypes in the film, but this was not restricted to the representation of its Maori characters; it often extended beyond that to include the other groups.

> CP1: One of my complaints about the whole film was that it seemed real kind of exaggerated; it has taken one aspect and blown it right up. Like the singing for the Polynesians next door and the money thing for the Asians and...

Although this is implicitly framed as a critique of stereotypes, this reading is largely referential and concerned with representativeness, rather than accepting the need for shorthand in the construction of movie characters. Similar to the Croatian groups, this group was concerned with the perceived effects of representations, but in a less emotionally involved way; in other words, their readings could be seen as 'critical', but also relatively 'cool', as in the following extract:

> CP2: I think it's such a dangerous thing. (.) Cause everybody generalises, you know, once you see a film. We know America from television and films, you know what I mean? And if we only ever watched 'Doris Day' films about America, then that's what we would think America was like. (.) I mean, it's ignorant and it's sad, but it's true, you know? So, and for such a critical thing, like a country in a war, and associating marijuana with that...

Despite the disclaimer ('it's ignorant, but...'), this draws on a similar discourse to participants in group E (Croatian) about the influence of 'Hollywood', but extends it to all films. This again relieves the director of some responsibility, which stands in sharp contrast to the claim made in the other Croatian group that the director and producer should apologise.

There was thus quite a bit of concern about representations of other groups in group C, and interestingly, while some participants in this group took some pride in seeing 'themselves' represented, others adopted a kind of mocking, distancing position in relation to the representation of the Maori characters, and I return to that shortly. Similar to the other groups, there was an awareness of the 'commercial reality' of cinema, as in the following exchange:

CP3: You know, at the end of the day, you've got to sell the film.
CP2: Yeah, and to me this is exactly what this film has been made for.
CP3: Like a typical formula...
CP2: I'm not saying that's a good or a bad thing, because at the end of the day, you want to make a film and you want to tell a story, and some things just fit with the story.

This shows a kind of acceptance of the contemporary media environment. When CP3 calls the film 'a typical formula' she does not necessarily posit this as a negative thing, but rather as something inevitable with both positive and negative implications. In this way, it is a relatively 'cool' reflection.

Generally, these kind of critical reflections follow referential readings, and engagement with various stereotypes, and they therefore often function on a micro-level as a way of ensuring that participants are aware of the fictional nature of cinema, and an ability to put the content into perspective, as exemplified by this extract from group F, which

followed a discussion about the 'taiaha scene', and whether this could happen in 'real life':

> FP2: I mean, if you're talking about it from a film making aspect, you know, artistic license and that sort of thing. I think it wasn't...I found it quite amusing to go 'oh, it's a taiaha'. But I didn't think 'oh, that was stupid', you know, 'he shouldn't have put it there'. That didn't cross my mind at the time.

Interestingly, she offers different modes of reading here, one of which directly relates to the focus group context. In other words, she qualifies her initial reading somewhat as a result of perceived need for critical reflection in a focus group context, and thus partly due to my questions.

Overall then, there were significant differences between the groups in terms of emotional investment and critical positioning, and specifically *types* of critical positioning. These differences relate both to differences within and between groups. In terms of the latter for example, a much higher degree of emotional investment can be identified in the Croatian groups, as opposed to the Chinese and Maori groups. This does not mean that the Croatian groups were less critical in their readings of the film, but rather that there was a higher degree of 'hot' readings in this respect. Within these groups, these 'hot' readings diminished somewhat after the initial emotion of watching the film had subsided. And as noted before, the framework of questions plays an important role in this. Within the Maori and Chinese groups, there generally appeared to be more 'cool' critical distance from the beginning, and less of a perception of personal attack. While this relates to general ways of making meaning in these focus group contexts, the attention now turns to specific themes and topics as represented in *Broken English* and outlined in earlier chapters.

8.5: Negotiating Discourses of Race, Ethnicity and Culture: Articulating Difference.

By now, we can identify a persistent theme which runs through this thesis and relates to the discursive 'slippage' between race, ethnicity and culture. The terms are often appropriated interchangeably, as was the case in the different focus group discussions. In most groups, the discussions focused initially on representations of the respective *groups*. As mentioned above, these discussions were heavily dominated by referential readings of *Broken English*. It is important to reiterate here that this was to a significant extent set up by the researcher through the choice of groups and participants, and the line of questions[17].

'Culture' was here invoked in two different ways; firstly in terms of material aspects, such as for example 'Eddie's whakapapa tree' or the 'pig on the spit' during the party. I will include discussions of the appropriate use of language as part of these material aspects, as they follow a similar pattern. The discussions thus often focused on whether or not 'a Croatian' would use certain words, or whether 'a Maori' would challenge with a taiaha in 'real life'. Secondly though, 'culture' was often invoked in a deeper sense. Although the readings here were referential as well, the emphasis shifted to morals and values attributed to different 'cultures'. These type of readings often invoked historical continuities, and it is here that 'slippage' most frequently occurs, as these morals and values are in this way seen as a 'natural' part of a particular 'culture'.

In the later phases of the discussions, where the focus shifts from a concern about group characteristics as represented in the film to more personal negotiations of identity, considerable variations can be seen in the way individual participants position themselves in relation to this 'culture', which initially had been constructed as 'coherent' and 'closed-off'. It is here that a more hybrid and complex notion of 'culture' emerges. Of course these are general trends in the discussions, and it is a

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[17]Refer to 8.3.

matter of degree to what extent they apply to the different groups.

*Croatian Groups (Group A and Group E).*

Given the context outlined above, it is not surprising that the emphasis in the Croatian groups was on 'setting the record straight'. Within both these groups, there was a strong feeling that they had been 'misrepresented' as a group in *Broken English*, and furthermore that this was a general trend in an international sense. In other words, there was a strong collective sense of injustice. Interestingly, some participants drew connections in this respect with the timing of the film, in light of political events in the Balkans:

> My initial reaction to the film was that it was total propaganda against Croatia at the very crucial time that Croatia was becoming Croatia. They have a Serb actor in there, they have Serb accents; and it was done totally to demean and denigrate Croatia. That is my initial reaction. (.) To me it was trying to portray Croatia at that time. Not just the family, not just New Zealand, not just the interaction of the different ethnic minorities in New Zealand (AP1).

This firstly constructs a wider context of political misinformation and contest, before identifying a political agenda behind the film itself: a deliberate attempt at propaganda. Within this contest, Serbia may be implicitly inferred here, although it is not explicitly mentioned and thus may function here as an empty signifier. This underlying unease then triggered a discursive construction of Croatian identity which was both historical and relational. Initially specifically related to the film, responses became more general some way into the discussions, and eventually comparisons were drawn with the way other groups were represented in the film.

Some of the strongest objections in terms of material cultural aspects focused on the

language, and are thus intimately related to notions of 'authenticity'[18]. Consider for example the following exchange in group A:

> AP1: In the film, the film they are watching on television; there are several Serbian words coming through from the Croatian commentator. Because there is a difference in the accent, Serbian and Croatian.
>
> AP2: The language was definitely not Croatian there...
>
> AP1: That's very interesting...
>
> AP2: The behaviour wasn't Croatian, the language wasn't Croatian...
>
> AP1: That's very interesting, that the commentator, commenting on the war against Croatia there, who's supposed to be Croatian, is using a Serbian accent.
>
> AP3: They try to imitate Croatian people with these people, who live in Croatia, but they are Serbians, you see? So they try to imitate, but they can't escape the mother's language.

This is part of constructing Croatia in direct opposition to Serbia, something which was earlier on initiated, as the first extract shows. Particularly AP3's last statement implies that one cannot escape one's 'true nature'. Given the context of the recent Balkan wars, it is of course understandable that emotions quickly flare up, and it is precisely at those moments that the boundaries drawn are at their sharpest. This particular construction of 'Croatia' can thus be seen to follow a 'logic of equivalence'[19] in relation to 'Serbia', which was applied both in an international context as well as on a more local level (in relation to 'Serbs', or 'Serb sympathisers' in a New Zealand context). Part of the way this group identity is constructed is by drawing on a discourse ('language' and 'culture') not available to the mainstream public. The underlying inference here could be that New Zealand films should not be operating within this area.

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[18]See chapter 4 and 7.

[19]See chapter 1.

But although this differentiation in relation to Serbia was evident in both groups, it was not the only factor; in relation to other groups within New Zealand, particularly Maori, a different pattern emerged, which is closer aligned to the 'logic of difference'. Where in the former case terms like 'Croatia' and 'Serbia' function like 'nodal points' which move very close to 'empty signifiers' (they are perceived as not needing explanation in this context), in the latter case the opposite happens, as links and similarities are being stressed, as we shall see.

Again showing the concern with authenticity in these constructions, other material aspects of the culture were often focused on, sometimes in great detail, as in this exchange in group E, where details of the party scene are discussed:

> EP1: Croatian people never take an armchair, a sofa outside.
> EP2: No...
> EP3: That's something special in the house, isn't it?
> EP1: It's details just like that, you know? It's telling you something.

It is the attention to details which is here further developed ('it's telling you something') to support the argument of deliberate propaganda on the part of the film makers. Apart from this attention to details and their significance, a more dominant way of constructing Croatian culture was in terms of morals and values. In a sense, the material aspects can be seen as a kind of 'back-up' in these constructions, the basis of which lies in a sense of morality and a particular value system. In relation to *Broken English* then, it was particularly the interaction within the fictional family that caused concern.

> AP4: I thought that it was totally wrong. That's not a Croatian family way of life.
> AP5: Croatian people...majority of Croatian people are highly cultured people.

335

And this film actually portrayed us as a very primitive, barbaric nation. (.)
Also, it portrayed family unity very poorly. (.) The communication between
a mother and a daughter, the father and a son, it is totally wrongly
portrayed. (.) It actually portrayed us a people without a brain, with a lot of
boozing, and with very, very poor character.

Given these kind of concerns, it is no surprise that these groups went to great lengths to
construct a different version of 'Croatia', and this frequently involved the invocation of
history, both in a general sense and importantly also in a local, New Zealand sense. To
this end, in a general sense, AP5 constructs a dichotomy between nations: 'civilised'
versus 'barbaric'. Within this dichotomy, Croatia is positioned as part of a developed
Europe.

In addition, there was great concern about the reputation of the Croatian community in
a *local*, New Zealand context, which was perceived to have been damaged by the film.
The following extract from group E is exemplary in that respect:

EP4: The Maori culture [in the film] was very deep and very developed and
spiritual. We're like that; our culture, our civilization goes back thousands of
years. We have our own values, our own spirituality, our own culture, which is
very deep, if not deeper than those Maori values that did come out. And we
came across as not very understanding, very shallow, which we're not. (.)
We're very spiritual, and that's why the Maori people and the Croatian people
are very compatible, very close. We have been since we started coming to
New Zealand a hundred and fifty years ago. We've often been compatible
because those values are similar values, deep values, cultural aspects. And we
came across as very thick and not understanding, insensitive; we're not at all.

Again, we can see a complex interaction in this extract between the logic of

equivalence and the logic of difference. Within the context of New Zealand, the logic of difference is being appropriated here to construct particular links and similarities between Croatian and Maori 'culture'. The construction of Maori here is very familar and draws extensively on a mainstream Pakeha discourse of 'the romantic savage'[20]. Interestingly though, within this construction, there is no explicit mention of what this is in relation to. Within this context however, it is implied that the dominant (i.e. 'Pakeha') culture does not have these cultural attributes. EP4 then appropriates a local context for legitimacy to implicitly construct Pakeha as shallow. 'Pakeha' culture thus functions as an empty signifier here which does not need to be mentioned.

Of course this is highly context specific and therefore not always consistent throughout the discussions, but it gives a good indication of the way these groups constructed themselves in relation to others. Overall then, the Croatian groups could be seen to be engaged in a hegemonic struggle of constructing particular discourses about themselves with the ultimate aim of moving those discourses into the 'mainstream'; or in other words, they could be seen to be engaged in a process of elevating 'myths' into 'imaginaries'[21]. These focus groups, and my position as an outsider with links to that mainstream, were thus seen as a forum through which this could be achieved to some extent. Outsider here works on different levels; it refers both to my position as 'fellow European' (but not 'Pakeha'/ 'British') and to my position as academic researcher within a mainstream institution.

*Chinese Group (D).*
Where the Croatian groups were to a large extent concerned with presenting a 'united front', the 'Chinese' group moved in quite the opposite direction. In other words, this group showed a certain unease about the impact of homogenising discourses,

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[20]See chapter 4.

[21]See chapter 1.

particularly when it comes to stereotypes, and the emphasis was thus firmly on heterogeneity. Issues of class have already been mentioned in this respect, but attention was also drawn to gender aspects in *Broken English*, thus shifting the focus away from markers of race and ethnicity, or combining them as in the following extract:

> DP5: I think apart from a cultural stereotype, it is also a sexual stereotype. Like the man always rescues the woman, and then they become a couple. And like the Chinese couple; they always argue, and the man always says 'shut up!, shut up!'. He doesn't really let her say anything.

There is a recognition of a narrative formula ('the man always rescues the woman'), but the subordinated position of women in this formula is actively challenged as referentially unlike 'reality'. Similar to the other groups the issues were thus mostly discussed in direct relation to the film, in a referential manner. However, general stereotypes in wider society were also frequently discussed, in some cases prompted by my questions:

> DP2: Yeah, local people stereotype Chinese people obviously; wealthy Chinese people from Hong Kong and Taiwan in Howick...

Interestingly though, as earlier comments showed, some participants were quite positive about the film's representation of its Chinese characters precisely because it was perceived to move away from the above kind of stereotypes, which are more dominant. As Fleras & Spoonley describe it, 'Asians are stereotyped and resented as relentlessly driven people whose ostentatious displays and consumerist binges threaten to undermine the integrity of society and of its clean, green image' (1999, p.157).

DP3: It made me think of Winston Peters[22] in a TV excerpt: 'this is a Chinese migrant who lives in Howick and has a BMW'. So this film presents this in the opposite way. I think this is quite positive.

What we see here is an awareness of dominant stereotypes about Asian immigrants and their political implications. Interestingly, DP3 constructs a hierarchy here in which certain stereotypes are preferable to others. Not surprisingly then, the name of Winston Peters surfaced a number of times in this group; the timing of the film was seen as very significant in that respect, as the following exchange shows:

DP6: When was the film made?
HH: When? 1996.
DP6: That was the time that New Zealand society was hostile to Asian immigrants.
DP3: Yeah, 'Winston Peters time'...(laughs). Yeah, there's a reason I said there's a direct relationship to the market.

Within this construction of a particular social-political context ('Winston Peters time'), the relationship between mainstream discourses and the market is appropriated. This sharply contrasts with the Croatian groups, in that it is seen as justifying certain representations. In other words, it is seen as almost 'inevitable' in the commercial environment in which the film has been produced.

'Winston Peters time' functions here as a nodal point; everyone in this group (including me) is assumed to know what is meant by that. Related to this is the use here of the term 'Asian'. Throughout the discussion, 'Chinese' was used to refer to the characters in the film, but there was a shift to 'Asian' when wider issues of immigration were

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[22]Winston Peters, party leader of New Zealand First, played a dominant role in the 1996 general elections. A significant part of his election platform was based on anti-immigration rhetoric, specifically Asian immigration (this is mentioned in the introduction).

being discussed. This shows an awareness of the terms in which debates about immigration are conducted in mainstream discourses, particularly in the 1990s. Within these discourses, the term 'Asian' can be seen to function as an empty signifier, as it does not need to be explained, despite the fact that it is far too general a term to have any coherent meaning. In some cases, the terms were used almost interchangeably:

> DP6: When people talk about Asian culture, they say 'oh, Chinese food and kung fu', not really understanding Chinese culture. On the surface, in entertainment, there are different cultural activities to show the culture of different ethnic groups. But I think it is a culture in action; it should be deeper than that, not only just as a show.

This shows a keen awareness of the difference between material culture, and culture in its wider, anthropological meaning. Culture in a 'deeper' sense then is seen as including a moral dimension, and significantly also as 'in action' and not static. Overall then, this group was mostly concerned with emphasising hetereogeneity, not only within their self-defined group, but also in relation to other cultures and ethnic groups represented in *Broken English.*

*Maori Groups (Group C and Group F).*
Within the Maori groups, there was some interesting variation between group C and group F. Group C generally moved between a mocking disdain for the way *Broken English* represents its Maori characters, but at the same time, certain elements, particularly the use of te reo Maori, were felt to be empowering in some instances. A similar pattern emerged in this group in relation to the representation of the other ethnic groups in the film. In other words, while there was some concern about stereotypes, this was generally not accompanied by anger, as in the Croatian groups, but rather with a kind of consciously mocking attitude, bordering on cynical, which was far less evident in group F.

And as in the other groups, the discussions about 'culture' were largely referential. But given this more reflexive attitude, there was a balance between an empowering feeling of seeing certain elements represented on the screen, and a critical recognition of the context, as in the following extract from group C:

CP3: I liked the portrayal of Eddie. I didn't think it was just paying lip service to Maoritanga, to Maori.

CP1: Well, I did think it was weird when he went into their house, just on his own, and was kind of snooping around.

CP3: Yeah, he didn't ask her; he went in to look. But I liked the use of te reo and, you know, the challenge and just the calm and the way he spoke in Maori back to him. I liked the strength where he did speak in te reo; I liked that. I thought it gave more power, more 'umphh' in the script.

CP4: I don't know how often that would really happen though, but yeah...

CP3: No, well obviously, but I liked the way...

CP4: Well, that's exactly it. You don't see many people doing that around the streets of Auckland, but it's a lovely ideal (laughs).

In contrast to the Croatian groups, there was no discussion in this group about the specifics of the language use itself, but it was seen as empowering to see and hear it on the screen, irrespective of the likelihood of it being used in such a situation. In other words, the participants liked the idea, but were relatively sceptical about the possible motivations behind it. This then showed both an appreciation of 'positive' stereotyping and at the same time an acknowledgment that it was not referentially realistic. This latter acknowledgment was here specifically applied to an Auckland context. Other material elements, like for example Eddie's whakapapa tree, were discussed in a similar vein.

Like in the other groups, the most important variations occured when other, 'deeper' elements arose in the discussions, like certain values and historical continuities. Again, it is here that significant 'slippage' occurs, as some elements are constructed as 'inherent' to specific groups. However, despite this, some participants in both Maori groups stressed that there is an individual 'choice' element to 'culture'.

The following extract from group C shows the uneasy overlap between these different positions:

> CP4: I think it [culture] is a choice. You can choose whether you maintain it, or whether you put it aside, I guess.
>
> CP1: They're certainly stressing that whole thing of Maori going back to their own home area. Cause that's where their ancestors are. It's part of them as well, and they can get strength from that.
>
> CP3: I think that's the fundamental problem. Because Maori are responsible for the actions of their ancestors, they inherit them as well, but Europeans don't seem to have that same feeling. They are more like 'well, *I* didn't do it'.
>
> (original emphasis)

This extract shows the complicated relationship between macro- and micro-levels of making meaning, and particularly expressing meaning in a semi-public context. On a macro-level, the participants draw here on an important discourse about Maori culture, which relates to the importance of the links between ancestors and the present generation, where ancestors are seen as an integral part of the present, as opposed to being firmly relegated to the past. This element is often appropriated in discourses of difference between Maori and Pakeha (or 'European'), and at first sight, these responses seem to fit this particular discourse. In this way, this group is drawing on a wider discourse about race relations and historical grievances and injustices[23].

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[23]See chapters 4 and 5.

However, on a micro-level, the strategic use of this discourse, in terms of linguistic realisation, becomes rather more complicated. In line with the context of this focus group, as outlined above, the participants can here be seen to adopt a certain critical distance by rhetorically positioning themselves outside both groups they are describing. The way they achieve this distance in this case is through Van Dijk's (1998) linguistic category of 'attribution' rather than 'polarization'. In other words, the use of 'they' instead of 'we' has the effect of 'managing interest' (Potter, 1996) in the context of this focus group. 'They' is here used to refer to *both* Maori and Pakeha, and therefore functions to position the speaker rhetorically outside of these groups to a certain extent, looking in from a critical distance. This is likely to be influenced to some extent by *their* anticipation of *my* expectations of their responses.

Interestingly, this 'critical distance' was fairly consistent in this group, when it comes to discussions about differences between Maori and Pakeha. In relation to the other groups in the film, a more 'polarised' framework can be discerned, both in terms of aspects that were perceived as positive, and those perceived as negative. Hesitations are included in the following extract to clarify how 'interest management' works in complex and often contradictory ways:

> CP3: Well, the..the Island part, and yeah..there were certain parts where, you know, it does show up..the film makers.
> CP1: Happily exoticised aye, really?
> CP3: Yeah...
> CP1: Especially the Islanders and the Asian thing.
> CP3: Except for the Asians; I don't have a problem so much with the Asians, because I think that maybe..it is yeah..I believe I buy into that stereotype. Typical thinking is uhm...I think they are money orientated. Not all of them, but the...there's that stereotype and so that sort of fits in with..with the way

that I...sort of..yeah, I don't have a problem with that..money aspect.

Firstly, CP1 draws here quite explicitly on an academic discourse ('happily exoticised') about minority representations, and she specifies the peripheral characters in this respect. I have discussed the unproblematic use of the word 'Asian' above, and it is clearly appropriated here in an all-encompassing sense. However, the hesitations indicate that CP3 is very aware of the implications of 'buying into' that stereotype, as she anticipates the possibility of being seen as racist. She therefore initially tries to frame her argument in general terms ('typical thinking is...'), before assuming individual responsibility for it. This is then followed by a disclaimer which qualifies the opinion ('not all of them, but...'). The hesitations which follow indicate that she is not entirely at ease with this opinion, as she has problems clearly articulating the arguments that would justify it. The intention here is not to 'catch her out', but rather to show how different levels of discourse interact in complex ways, and are negotiated in direct relation to specific contexts.

In relation to the film's representation of Croatian 'culture', this group specifically introduced a discussion of the family dynamics in detail:

> CP2: Like her [Nina] and her father were so close, but all the moments that her and
> her father shared were quite gross really. You know, I just thought they were a
> bit sort of, you know, bordering on a bit sexual in a way.
>
> CP4: Incestuous...
>
> CP2: Yeah, incestuous.
>
> CP1: Seemed a bit suspect, aye?
>
> CP3: But the thing is, we're looking at it from an outside...You know, like if that's
> all she's known, then it doesn't seem strange to her. Like he [Eddie] was
> saying, an outsider looking at her, saying 'do you always do that?', you know?
> And to her that is normal, like with the uncle and things like that. Okay, *we*

don't do that to *our* uncles and brothers, you know? (my emphasis)

In relation to this particular aspect, there was an interesting overlap between the different groups in that all of them, except the Chinese group, discussed this at length. Furthermore, all groups expressed unease about this. The difference then was that for the Croatian groups, this was yet another example of the film makers 'getting it wrong'; their discussion thus focused on the unusualness of such family dynamics in a Croatian context. What we see in the above extract however is something different.

Rhetorically, the argument here follows a logic of 'polarization', but not in a straightforward way. There is an underlying assumption in Van Dijk's use of 'polarization' that within its 'ingroup-outgroup' construction, the 'others' are constructed as a threat (1998, see also Titscher *et al*, 2000). However, the above extract shows that it may be a little more complicated than that. In other words, although the argument follows the logic of polarization to some extent ('*we* don't do that...'), this is here not necessarily treated as a threat. It rather functions to postulate a kind of inevitability about this ('to *her* that is normal'), and to construct it as a 'natural' part of her character's culture. This is thereby not seen as something negative (as in a threat to *us*), but rather as a sympathetic way to 'excuse' her behaviour. On a micro-level then, it functions to make the speaker appear 'tolerant' when it comes to 'other' cultures.

Significantly though, both group C and group F accepted the way Croatian 'culture' was represented in quite an unproblematic manner, which is precisely what was anticipated by the Croatian groups, and caused a high level of anxiety. For example, when the 'pig scene' was discussed in group F, one participant said:

Well, that's obviously *their* culture; I mean, that's different to *our* culture.

(FP3, my emphasis)

These type of constructions changed quite significantly when the focus shifted from referential readings of the film to a more general and political discussion, as we shall see in the next section.

Group F initially followed a similar pattern of discussing cultural elements in the film in a referential manner, and the focus was thus equally on how these elements would translate to 'real life'. As with group C, the film was discussed in terms of the empowering sense of being represented on screen, but this was simultaneously accompanied by concern about some aspects that were represented (e.g. smoking marijuana), and importantly also about the lack of Maori woman characters.

The difference with this group was that discussions concerning issues of race, ethnicity and culture, quickly began to focus on individual experience as a way of expressing opinions, and thus began to move away from the film. In other words, the emphasis in this group shifted quickly to individual identity construction, and began to focus on differences between Maori and Pakeha. I quote this discussion at length, because it clearly shows the complex overlap and 'slippage' between constructions of race, ethnicity and culture.

> FP1: The norm is still middle-class, white, Pakeha; that's what's regarded as the norm. Well, especially in education, that's what it is. And they [Maori] have to fit into it.
>
> FP2: Maori is not catered for at all. Well...in education.
>
> FP4: Depends really whether you wanna be Maori or...if you're a Maori and you wanna be a Pakeha (laughs).
>
> FP1: Well, it depends on your ethnicity (laughs).
>
> FP2: You know, that's the whole thing. I mean, for people like me, being brought up as a Pakeha, but being a Maori...I'm a Pakeha. And when I try to fit in with the Maori people, in a lot of cases...I don't.

FP4: Well, I don't find that at all. You know, I've been brought up the same way, but I don't find that at all.

FP2: Well, I mean just in the job I had over summer, where they all spoke Maori, and they were all...they all lived Maori. And then me...almost like a token Pakeha, you know? And there was the other stuff; you know, the whole...the kapa haka[24], and they're all involved in that, and they all spend time on the marae, monthly, you know doing things like that. I...I can't get into that.

The first interesting aspect of this discussion, particularly in relation to the other focus groups, is that it is situated squarely in a 'bi-cultural' framework: the emphasis is on Maori-Pakeha relations, with 'Pakeha' functioning as a nodal point and thus largely taken as a given. This framing of the discussion in a bi-cultural framework can be explained to some extent by the everyday social context of this particular group.

The 'confusion' in this discussion lies precisely in the overlapping use of the concepts of race and culture. When FP2 talk about 'being brought up as a Pakeha, but being a Maori', Pakeha refers to culture in the sense of both material culture and a particular system of values, whereas Maori refers to race in this context. Seen in this way, 'culture' allows for the possibility of 'choice' ('whether you wanna be Maori'), as it can be 'learned', while race is seen as inescapable, as a 'natural' category. I have discussed the problematic nature of the concept of 'race' at length in chapter 4 and in particular its link with power relations.

These power relations, on a macro-level, became even more evident as the discussion developed, and I will highlight certain words which signal this in the following extract.

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[24]Kapa haka refers to organised performances by Maori cultural groups. Once a year, a national festival is held during which groups from all over New Zealand perform in a competitive setting.

FP3: But I think it comes down to choices though, whether you *want* to be Maori, or whether you want to be Pakeha *too*.

FP2: I tried to fit in. I tried to become..*not become*..you know, *to learn* more about *my* culture and about those sorts of things. And that's why I chose to do that. But it was harder for me to be accepted by that group, because of my upbringing, because of my Pakeha upbringing.

FP4: Hmm...I find that real strange actually...

FP3: My mother's side is Norwegian, and my dad's Maori, and we were brought up in Waipak [Waipukurau]; no marae there. We were at a catholic school there. There were two Maori families in the whole school. I used to go to Dannevirke to stay with my grandmother, and I used to ask if we could go and play with the Maoris down the road. *We didn't know that we were Maori* and *I was brought up very Pakeha*. Until I met [my husband] I'd never had a hangi, or I'd never been on a marae. (my emphasis)

Again, we can see a similar contradiction between an element of choice as related to culture, and the durability of the concept of race. In some cases, this contradiction appeared within a single statement.

FP5: Well, I think it's up to the individual. (.) It's your choice really to go and join in. If you don't...(.) Yeah, you're still looked upon as Maori or, you know, *different* coloured person. (my emphasis)

I've stressed 'different' in this statement, because it foregrounds where power is situated (as in 'different from what?'). And again, we can see how Pakeha functions here as an empty signifier; it is privileged as 'the norm', and therefore does not need mentioning. On a micro-level, the emphasis on 'individual choice' is important, as it can be seen as empowering to a certain extent. In other words, invoking 'choice' gives the speaker a certain amount of control and agency, whereas dwelling on the concept of

'race' could potentially be interpreted, by both myself and the other participants, as 'complaining' or adopting a position of 'victim'. As the discussion developed, this central contradiction became more and more pronounced.

> FP3: People take you at face value too. Cause I've been asked by lots of different groups to go onto committees and that *as a Maori*. But when they get to know you and find that you're not...*you're only on the outside, not the inside* (laughter), they're not interested in you. (.) They see you from the outside, and see you look Maori, and they think that you come with *everything*, you know? And then they treat you differently; that happens all the time. (.) Or I'll go to the theater, or go to the opera, and I'll be the only 'darkie' in the room. And you just sort of think 'God, where is everyone?' And you feel...yeah, you're on your own.
>
> FP5: But as I've said before, it's your choice. If you're not happy there, you can leave.
>
> FP4: Oh yes..no, I feel quite different. If I'm the only Maori there, I feel like 'well, I'm the only one there', you know? I'm quite arrogant about that fact though.
>
> (my emphasis)

This extract clearly shows a particular configuration of power, within which the concept of authenticity[25], plays a central role. In other words, within this configuration of power, there is very little room for hybridity. 'Race' and 'culture' are in this way intimately linked ('you look Maori and they think you come with everything'). 'Everything' here refers mostly to material and ceremonial aspects of culture. In addition, the framework here is one of 'official' biculturalism (hence the reference to 'committees'). Within this framework then, there is an assumption that being Maori

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[25]As discussed in chapter 4.

necessarily means that you have a knowledge of Maori protocol in official contexts[26].
This in turn creates an essentialist either/ or binary which FP3 is clearly uncomfortable
with. In other words, within this 'official' bicultural framework, race becomes a
privileged signifier ('darkie'), set against the norm (Pakeha), which narrows down
options and has a constraining effect in everyday contexts.

However, there was a sense towards the end of the discussion that these power relations
were slowly changing.

> FP3: I grew up believing that Maori were second class citizens to Pakeha. And I
> think now that more Maori people are getting educated, and they're able to
> stick up for themselves and speak out, that they're coming up. They're not
> quite there yet, but they're coming up as a parallel to Pakeha.
>
> FP4: Cause you are what you are. You cannot go along pretending you're a Pakeha,
> and you've got a Maori skin. You know, you're either one thing or the other.
> And I don't think Pakehas really want you to be...the other way.
>
> FP1: What...if you're dark, they don't want you to be white?
>
> FP4: No, they don't want you to be a Pakeha; and you're not.
>
> FP3: But you can use it to your advantage too, if you've got a colour (laughter).

The position that FP4 takes here is of particular interest, as she appears to contradict her
earlier emphasis on 'choice'. This may be due to the earlier mentioned sense of
empowerment, as the discussion has taken a turn here towards a more confident
assertion of Maori identity ('parallel to Pakeha'), where the emphasis was initially on a
more subordinated position. However, 'Pakeha' here is still constructed as a measuring
stick for Maori progress. Finally, FP3 shows a recognition of the value of strategic

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[26]Compare to Walker's critique of biculturalism in chapter 5.

essentialism[27] when it comes to categories of race within bicultural political context ('you can use it to your advantage too').

As noted above, this discussion was firmly situated in a 'bi-cultural' framework, in contrast to similar discussions in the other groups. The next section of this chapter will center on the relationship between this bi-cultural framework and multiculturalism, and the way these groups positioned themselves and others within these discourses; and how they chose to articulate these concerns within this one session.

## 8.6: National/ Diasporic Identity and the Bi-/ Multi-culturalism Debate.

As mentioned before, discourses of race, ethnicity and culture are highly context-specific, and the discussions above were thus intimately related to the way different participants situate themselves, both individually and as a group, within a wider *national* context, and in relation to bicultural and multicultural debates in New Zealand. In this section then, the emphasis moves away somewhat from *Broken English* to a more general and political discussion about national identity. As these debates generally followed discussions about the film, they can be partly seen to continue on a particular 'discursive track' that each group had already established. However, moving away from the context of the film also created a space in most cases to talk about national and individual identity in a different framework. This generally happened in all groups, but with interesting variations in terms of what aspects were accentuated.

*Croatian Groups (Group A and Group E).*

As the earlier extracts show, both Croatian groups were initially working towards a consensus on the way 'Croatians' were represented in *Broken English*. This entailed the construction of a different version of Croatian culture and identity. Within this construction, history played a vital role, not only in terms of Croatia, but importantly

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[27]As discussed in chapter 4.

also in terms of the Croatian part of New Zealand's history. Both groups made frequent references to the earliest Croatian immigrants to New Zealand in the nineteenth century and their history on the gum fields of Northland. There was a strong feeling in these groups that this part of New Zealand's history has not been adequately represented in mainstream versions of 'the nation'. Or in other words, that this part of history has effectively been silenced, thereby making the representation in *Broken English* even more difficult to accept. The following exchange, which still deals with the film, shows the extent to which these kind of emotions were stirred up in some participants:

> AP2: It upset me that in New Zealand, the country we have made what it is...
> AP3: Ooohh...
> AP1: Helped made...helped made...

Of course, the other two participants recognise here that AP2 is getting a little carried away, but this serves to illustrate the very real anger that these groups expressed. Driven by emotions, AP2 strongly constructs Croatian immigrants as the primary builders of New Zealand as a nation, which is subsequently modified because of group dynamics.

What is interesting here, from my point of view, is the complex overlap between concepts of 'nation' and 'culture'; in other words, where can the boundaries between these concepts be located, and how important are perceived views from the 'outside' in a relational sense? Consider for example the following:

> AP1: I'm telling you openly and honestly that this film is actually propaganda, to destroy the *image* of Croatian people in New Zealand and also in Croatia. Because you know, when we went through this stage of very recent war, *we were a nation in pain.* And for a long time nobody heard us..alright? We were described as a fascist, as a very, very bad nation. And it took ten years *for the world* to realise who really is a fascist; what's really going on in *our country.*

You see, we didn't cry and beg and ask; we fought ourselves. (my emphasis)

There is an interesting 'slippage' here between 'the nation-as-state' and 'the nation-as-people'[28], which surfaced in all groups at times, but particularly in the Croatian groups. Thus, 'New Zealand' refers here to 'the nation-as state' and to the geographical territory, which is seen as the immediate everyday context, whereas 'a nation in pain' transcends geographical boundaries and appropriates a more cultural sense of nationhood. It thus refers to an 'imagined community' of Croatians worldwide, with a common 'imagined homeland' ('our country'), and in this way can be seen as an important part of diasporic identity formation[29]. The reference to 'the world' in this extract draws attention to the transnational nature of such an identity. This 'discursive slippage' then serves a dual purpose: on the one hand, it functions as a way to claim a space within New Zealand as a nation, and on the other hand it functions to differentiate Croatian identity strategically from other ethnic groups within New Zealand, and therefore as a way to resist being subsumed in the larger category of New Zealander or 'Pakeha'.

The complex ways in which these different functions overlap became more evident when the participants were specifically asked to define New Zealand as a nation and their own position within it. Interestingly, when these groups talked about New Zealand as a nation, they often drew on common mainstream discourses, like for example New Zealand as an 'egalitarian society':

AP3: I love New Zealand; what a wonderful feeling it was that you...like you go into a butcher shop. It doesn't matter if you're a farmer, and next to you there's a specialist, eye specialist or somebody. You are just as important as he is. And

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[28]Compare to Billig's argument in chapter 2.

[29]As discussed in chapter 4.

sometimes in European countries, it's not like that. New Zealand is just wonderful. And I'm very, very happy, very privileged to get here.

AP1: Wherever you go, there is people from all over the world here; French, Italian, German, Dutch, Chinese, Islanders, Maoris. We've proven that we can all live together in one country.

AP4: New Zealand is a lovely country, and I love it; most of our Croatian people love it in New Zealand. New Zealand gives us freedom. We can do whatever we like, and as long as we respect the law and pay taxes, there's no problem. And also, we fit very well with other nationalities.

New Zealand is here positively constructed in opposition to Europe, which is in this context characterised by a deeply entrenched class structure. It thus sets up a dichotomy between the 'old world' (Europe) and the 'new world' (New Zealand), which draws on a historical colonial discourse. This shows the flexibility of these discourses in terms of their appropriation in various contexts, as it stands in sharp contrast to the earlier construction of Europe as 'civilised', as opposed to 'barbaric'.

In addition, virtually all participants in both groups emphatically stressed that this was a multicultural nation. However, there was an awareness that 'we' don't always represent 'ourselves' as such:

AP2: We very much portray ourselves as a Maori country, don't we? But we are very multicultural.

In this context, 'we' quite clearly refers to 'New Zealanders' in general, rather than 'Croatians'. Also, 'multicultural' is appropriated in the sense of 'multiculturalism as fact', rather than 'official multiculturalism'[30]. This was the dominant way in which the

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[30]See chapter 5.

term 'multiculturalism' was used in both groups, with some relatively covert references to its more political implications:

> AP5: We all have equal rights. I think we are multicultural, very multicultural. (.) I think New Zealand is coping very well with multi-ethnic groups. (.) We all respect each other's cultures, which maybe thirty years ago some didn't. (.) People are not having to change their names anymore, Anglocise it; so really, the multi-ethnic people are getting a bit stronger, and they want their rights, including Maoris. You know, they want their language recognised and they want their cultures respected a bit more and so on, and I think that's a good thing.

This qualifies the earlier glowing construction of New Zealand as an 'egalitarian paradise' somewhat, as it acknowledges that this has historically not always been the case. It also constructs multiculturalism as different ethnic groups living side by side while retaining their differences, as in a 'mosaic', not a 'melting pot'[31].

Overall then, group A discussed national identity in these relatively general terms. All participants in this group had migrated to New Zealand more than thirty or forty years ago. They were thus quite firmly settled in New Zealand, although all were actively involved in forms of cultural maintenance, which was reflected in their emphasis on their reputation *in* New Zealand. In contrast, most participants in group E were more recent migrants, and the discussion in this group took quite a different turn.

For the more recent immigrants in group E, the emphasis in relation to national identity focused more on individual identity. Within these expressions of identity formation, some key themes emerged which are typical of diaspora identities, like 'dislocation'

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[31]Refer to chapter 5.

and 'in-between' positions[32]. *Broken English* can be seen as an attempt to represent some of these themes, although not very successfully according to these groups. The following extract is quoted at length, because it beautifully captures some of the main dilemmas and contradictions, inherent in these positions.

EP2: What do I think of New Zealand as a nation?

HH: Yes, how would you describe it? And how do you see your own place within it?

EP2: It's like asking me what New Zealand culture is. It's still not defined; it's still searching for a nation and searching for a culture, and searching for identity, very much so. And personally, as a passport holder, I hold a New Zealand and Croatian passport. I'm probably searching for identity as well.

I feel very much de-rooted from Croatia, and I don't feel completely belonging here, because...One reason is the accent, another reason is that there are things happening in this society that I can't associate with, and I get bitter about. And then, you know, I try to distance myself and say I don't really belong here; I should not really get involved. And then I think again and I say, but my daughter is here and she is a kiwi by birth, and I should get involved because I should make it better for her. I'm very confused, and I think I'm in a typical straightjacket of an immigrant, who has lost, you know, the traditional sort of linkages.

There are different types of immigrants, or immigrants from Croatia. There is a type of *gastarbeiters* that went to Western Europe and used to work there, but still hold very strong links with back home; you know, they have different sort of problems. And there's us here, very far from Croatia. Although we do keep in contact, physically you're not there and you're forgotten most of the time by your friends and your relatives, except on Christmas and birthdays. And things have changed radically. And you did not take...at least I'm

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[32]Refer to chapter 4.

speaking for myself, I did not take part in those changes and so I can't claim ownership over that. And here I also don't feel, you know...

So I live in a micro-world. I feel very much at home at my work and at my home, but in between I'm just a visitor. And I very often behave like that.

Firstly, EP2 draws here on a number of elements which all influence a sense of national identity and belonging to an 'imagined community': language ('accent') is one factor, birthplace another ('kiwi by birth'). In addition, there are elements like family ties and historical factors, linked to geography. These kind of elements work together to different degrees and in different configurations. Depending on specific contexts, any one of these elements may become salient, strengthening particular ties on some occasions, weakening them on others.

In short, this shows common aspects of diaspora identities and it complicates the notion of hybridity. There are feelings of being 'in-between' cultures and feelings of longing for a 'homeland'. But, as other participants in this group noted as well, this 'imagined homeland' is often exposed as a myth by what I would call 'the shock of return'. At precisely that moment of return, the migrant is fixed in a kind of permanent limbo, or 'forever foreigner' as EP1 called it. Of course, this is not necessarily negative and can be an advantage in certain contexts, but as the above extract shows ('I live in a micro-world'), the 'celebratory' undertones inherent in the theoretical notion of hybridity are not always warranted.

This extract also draws attention to the complexity and heterogeneity of diasporic identities; in other words, it shows that the term 'diaspora' as a homogeneous category is far too limited (see also Sinclair & Cunningham et al, 2000). While diasporic identity formation by definition involves negotiation between 'the here and there', it is highly context-specific, and influenced by a wide variety of factors, both in the 'original homeland' and the 'adopted homeland'. These factors include political developments

(e.g. war), but also personal factors like family circumstances (e.g. children) and the level of cultural maintenance. All of these factors interact in complex ways.

To underscore this point, a couple of participants in group E were born in New Zealand and have lived here all their lives, but nevertheless identify first and foremost as 'Croatian':

> EP5: In my own life, I've always thought of myself as a Croatian who happened to be born in New Zealand. (.) I feel it goes beyond where you're born. Going to school not knowing English, hearing all the other children talking about what they did with their grandparents; you're an outsider, you're a foreigner. Doesn't matter whether you're born here. Going to the shop, speaking with your mother in Croatian, turning to the counter and speaking to the woman in English; that chop and change. You're not a kiwi, you can't be and you never will be.

This shows for example that 'dislocation' is not necessarily a prerequisite to diasporic identity formation, although it can be a strong factor in some cases. EP5 constructs national identity as consisting of two main elements: birthright versus language, with language being the dominant factor. The implication is that if one of these two elements is missing, there is no complete sense of national identity.

The participants in this group were aware of my own status as recent immigrant and 'non-British European'. This may partly explain why the discussion about 'national identity' was mostly framed in terms of personal experience, as there was a sense of common understanding which was often implicitly referred to in terms of 'you know what I mean'. As mentioned before, the same discussion in the 'Chinese' group took quite a different direction.

*Chinese Group (D)*

The discussion about national identity in group D centered on political themes, and specifically debates about bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism. This group identified some major contradictions in the way these debates are framed in a New Zealand context. And significantly, the participants felt they were largely excluded from this debate, and were in this way quite clearly positioned on the margins. The main difference with the Croatian groups was that this feeling also extended beyond political debates to 'everyday' contexts. Rhetorically however, a fair amount of effort went into assuring an impression of agency; in other words, the personal *choice* element of immigration was stressed repeatedly. On a micro-level, this can be partly related to my position in this group; thus, participants were clearly concerned not to be seen as complaining to an 'outsider connected to the mainstream', as the following extract shows:

> DP2: I mean, I like New Zealand. It was my choice. I chose the country, and I still think...it is a big space with few people, and a lot of nature. Culturally, I don't mind that the culture has become more and more Asian, obviously. (.) People are getting more ambitious, but the average New Zealanders are still relaxed, a rather laid back culture.
>
> DP3: For New Zealand, most people say, you know, that more and more migrants come from Asia, and that the nation is multicultural. But the reality is...I have to say this...there is the Maori culture and the Pakeha culture. So there's only two cultures. And for the others...ethnic peoples, just like me.
>
> DP5: I don't think New Zealand is a multicultural society, because...what you can see from the film. Yeah, it's quite separate; separate along the lines of mainstream society and minorities...yeah.

DP2 clearly wants to stress the positive aspects of New Zealand, and emphasises his own *choice* to migrate here. In doing so, he relies extensively on mainstream discourses

of national identity such as a 'clean, green country' and a 'laid back attitude', which is also the main tourist discourse. However, through his use of 'New Zealanders', he clearly positions himself outside of this category, which was particularly common for the more recent migrants in this group. Again, we can see an interesting slippage between 'culture' and 'race' here: when he notes that the 'culture' has become more and more Asian, he is most likely talking about a more visible Asian presence, but this is rather unclear. 'Culture' then functions as a nodal point in this context.

The other two participants here adopt a more critical position, although in DP3's case almost apologetically so ('I *have* to say this'). She specifically critiques bicultural imaginings of New Zealand, and implies that these imaginings marginalise different ethnic groups outside the norm (Maori and Pakeha) *as ethnic*. In other words, the norm does not have to be named as such[33]. Finally, DP5 similarly critiques an official version of multiculturalism as 'mosaic', by implying that this causes marginalisation.

The participants who have been in New Zealand longer expressed similar concerns, but were more confident about expressing them:

> DP7: Even though politicians or the media keep emphasising that New Zealand is a multicultural society...well, I really don't think so, because when we go to schools, even like the subject we study, they just focus on Maori education or Pacific Island education, but they never put the focus on Asians. Like how to accommodate their different learning needs, or even the Greeks or South Africans or other minority groups. So I don't think...I think there is still improvement we can anticipate.
>
> DP1: Okay, I think New Zealand is a monocultural country (everyone laughs), honestly. I mean, people are aware of issues like Maori and Pacific Island

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[33]Compare to Dyer's comments about 'whiteness' in chapter 4.

culture and New Zealanders of different cultural, ethnic groups in this country. But these groups are not involved in any decision making at all, not on any level, national level or community level. And I think until one day that we could really share a partnership with these different cultural groups, or ethnic groups, then we can't really say that it's a multicultural country.

In this way, the emphasis shifts from 'national identity' in a general sense to a more political discourse of cultural rights (note again the slippage with 'ethnic'). On a micro-level, the somewhat nervous laughter at 'a monocultural country' may indicate that the other participants largely agree with this, but feel reluctant to express it in such a strong and straightforward manner, particularly in a semi-public context.

Interestingly, the difference between DP7 and DP1 in the above extract is that DP7 expresses frustration with a bicultural discourse, whereas DP1 constructs a sharper dichotomy between the 'empty signifier' Pakeha and the rest. The former shows parallels with the way this was discussed in the Croatian groups (a similar frustration with the limitations and marginalising tendencies of bicultural discourses), whereas the latter is more confrontational in that it is more directly concerned with contemporary and historical *sources* of power. In this way, it is closer related to discourses that the Maori groups drew on, albeit for different reasons.

Finally, despite these critiques of bicultural discourses, the Treaty of Waitangi, which is often seen as the document that legitimizes these, was never explicitly mentioned in either the Croatian or Chinese groups, nor in the Maori groups for that matter. Particularly in the latter case, this was surprising as both Maori groups drew extensively on bicultural discourses in relation to national identity. It is difficult to gauge the reasons for this, but my hypothesis is that these could be twofold: on the one hand, the Treaty may have achieved the status of empty signifier, while on the other hand the term could be seen as too overdetermined in terms of its political connotations, thereby

hampering the construction of a clear argument. Seen in this way, the former would relate to the Maori groups in that it 'goes without saying' that the arguments are based on the Treaty as 'founding document', and I return to that shortly. The latter would apply to the other groups, in that the Treaty instantly invokes a bicultural version of the nation which these groups were at pains to critique.

*Maori Groups (C and F)*

In both Maori groups, as with the Chinese group, general discussions about 'national identity' quickly took a political shape. Within these discussions, there was an interesting tension between *what is*, and *what should be*. Both these groups firmly positioned Maori at the center of these discussions as a group with certain rights which *should* override those of other groups, in a way constructing a hierarchy which is historical in nature. Not surprisingly then, the 'biculturalism first'-discourse[34] was fairly dominant in these groups, necessarily accompanied by critiques of immigration policy.

However, this was in turn accompanied by the recognition that multiculturalism was a 'fact' in everyday life, and that this was not necessarily negative, although the political implications could potentially be negative from a Maori point of view. In short, the emphasis tended to be towards issues of power in relation to these concepts.

> CP4: It's not a bicultural country; it's a multicultural country.
>
> CP3: I don't think New Zealand has ever come to grips with biculturalism.
>
> CP1: No, same, and also it just seems that everyone comes and just hangs out in their own separate groups. And there's just not that much interaction or mixing between them.
>
> CP3: I don't think New Zealand is multicultural. You have a lot of different cultures, but they can't even deal with biculturalism. (.) New Zealand can't

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[34]See chapter 5.

deal with biculturalism, and yet they embrace all these other cultures as a means of diverting biculturalism and going straight to multi. I think it's a way of forgetting about the biculturalism between tangata whenua[35] and Pakeha. And when you have multiculturalism, it sort of pushes biculturalism to the side. That's my view of it.

CP1: But it kind of lumps minorities together aye?

CP2: Yeah, and also pushes Maori into the multicultural group, do you know what I mean?

Apart from the initial statements in this extract, which refer to 'everyday multiculturalism', the emphasis here is clearly on 'official multiculturalism'. Multiculturalism is being critiqued here as a policy with important implications for power relations in New Zealand as a nation. It is in this way seen as part of the nation building process, and CP3 in particular appropriates language which is central to this process, like for example 'diverting' and 'forgetting'[36]. Her critique is highly sophisticated and matches political critiques of biculturalism. Within the power relations thus invoked, there is a concern that Maori are 'pushed to the margins' of the multicultural 'mosaic', the largest piece of which is seen as Pakeha in the center.

There are clear echoes here of the 'Maori sovereignty' discourse, including its essentialist notions of 'culture'[37], but there is a sense that multiculturalism as an official policy, and by extension immigration policy, is responsible for this situation, and this discourse is thus employed for strategic reasons.

CP2: People come into this country and they think that New Zealand is Pakeha, you

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[35]Maori; literal translation: people of the land.

[36]See chapter 2.

[37]See chapter 4 and 5.

know what I mean? So they sort of try to integrate into a Pakeha society, whereas I think what they need to realise is that this culture is, and should always be, a Maori cultural society. And they should integrate into that first, and then fit into what their environment is calling for, or what they wanted to.

There are some interesting contradictions in this argument, which appear to arise from discrepancies between 'official' and 'everyday' versions. CP2 firstly challenges a bicultural discourse of New Zealand by invoking a monocultural Maori version, which in this argument *should* be the dominant 'culture' on which a New Zealand identity is to be based. She then draws on an assimilationist discourse which demands 'integration' with Maori, *before* cultural maintenance. The former relates to official policy, while the latter refers to everyday contexts. This clearly shows how these two contradictory notions often overlap in complex ways.

The discussion developed in this way towards an implicit critique of decision making power in New Zealand, and by extension to who is to be included in that process. There is a feeling then that Maori do not have enough influence on political decisions, which quickly became explicit:

> CP3: I think we're too small for that [American style 'melting pot']. I think we'd get swallowed up. It's just the dominant culture which has ruled basically, and hasn't really allowed Maori in...except for consultation and on ceremonial occasions. Other than that, they're not there in policy; it's only to consult with ('what do you think of this?'), but they're not there as decision makers. Right through government, except for the Maori Department, which is ultimately run by Pakeha. (.) What we've had is consultation; we've never had a process.

Interestingly, within this discourse, the first 'we' refers to New Zealanders in general, whereas the second 'we' refers to Maori. These two positions are frequently occupied

interchangeably, depending on the context, in an unproblematic way. On a micro-level, sensing that these views might be perceived as 'radical', CP3 interrupted herself here and almost apologetically said 'sorry, you've stirred me up', before further developing her argument.

> CP3: I've never really agreed with the multiculturalism concept. I think it just comes in, bulldozes over biculturalism, and they say 'hey, what are you worrying about?', you know, 'there's this culture here, and this...', you know? (.) I know there's a lot of people who are sick of Maori moaning and complaining about the same thing. But it's never been addressed properly for any process of healing to take place. In order for healing to take place, you've gotta address the past and what's happened.

This argument was subsequently reinforced by a number of examples of historical grievances, especially in education. Importantly, there is a high level of awareness here of mainstream discourses in relation to these grievances, but these are confidently countered. She constructs a version of the nation as a historical organism which can, and needs to be, healed before 'we' as 'an imagined community' can move forward through calendrical time[38]. In this way, CP3 talked about the friction between biculturalism and multiculturalism almost exclusively in political terms. Although there was a broad consensus in this group in a political sense, some participants interrupted this political focus on a number of occasions with 'everyday' aspects of multiculturalism, as in the following exchange:

> CP3: Just because a lot of different people live here doesn't mean that we all live together.
>
> CP4: Yeah, but we have to. We live in the same country. We're gonna have to find

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[38]See chapter 2.

bridges, you know?

CP1: Yeah, but where is the interaction? I don't know, how many Croatians do you know?

CP3: I mean, it depends what you mean by multiculturalism.

CP4: Well, we're many nations...

CP3: We are multi...we are many nations, yes, New Zealand is now many nations. However, because we haven't addressed that biculturalism, I don't think it paves the way for a multicultural nation.

CP2: That's the thing; it is multicultural but it is not harmonious.

CP4: I'm not saying it is. I'm just saying that's just the way it is. That's just what we are. That is the face of New Zealand and many cultures, but yeah, generally it's the Pakeha face that people will see.

Apart from the 'slippage' between 'cultures' and 'nations', there is a firm recognition of 'multiculturalism as fact' here, and a simultaneous engagement with its political implications. Generally, the nation is here constructed along a time line; the underlying assumption is that 'we' cannot progress in a linear fashion until biculturalism is 'achieved' first. Finally, in relation to Billig's assertion that nationalism is an international ideology[39], CP4 shows a concern with the way other nations see 'us', and implicitly a concern with the 'metropolitan gaze'[40] ('the face of New Zealand').

The critiques in this group were in this way mostly aimed at 'Pakeha' as the main source of power within New Zealand's social and political context. Although similarly drawing attention to contradictions inherent in bicultural and multicultural discourses, the emphasis in group F veered more towards *economic* implications of immigration policy, with a particular focus on responsibilities on the part of immigrants, which was

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[39]See chapter 2.

[40]Compare to Turner's argument in chapter 3.

366

largely absent in group C.

Initially, the discussion about 'national identity' in group F followed a similar pattern as in group C, as the participants began by questioning the concepts of biculturalism and multiculturalism, and the (im)possibility of their coexistence.

> FP1: I don't know if I should say no to immigration at all. But I just think it's a wrong term to say that we're bicultural, cause we're not to me. We're sort of...there's two...there's like an indigenous people, and then there's Pakehas. But I mean, the Pakehas are all different cultures anyway; they come from different places in the world anyway. There's Irish and English and all sorts...

This extract quite clearly shows the problematic nature of these terms. Initially, FP1 draws on the same 'biculturalism-first' discourse in an apparently unproblematic way, before realising that the two categories that form the basis of this discourse cannot ultimately be sustained in terms of 'culture', and could thus be seen as categories of 'race', which is a more contentious concept.

Her reference to immigration subsequently shifted the focus to a discussion of the merits of immigration, where a similar discursive 'slippage' between 'culture' and 'race' can be discerned. For example, while some participants on the one hand endorsed 'cultural diversity' as something considered to be 'healthy', at the same time, this group developed a consensus that this should not come at any cost to the nation in economic terms; or in other words, that immigration should be based on merit in the form of acknowledged qualifications.

> FP2: I don't like the formula they use to decide how many people they let in each given year. But I think that a good mix has got to make people more culturally aware, and that can't be a bad thing.

She then went on to tell an anecdote about a qualified Indian doctor who can't get work in New Zealand because her qualifications are not recognised. There has been a marked increase in these kind of stories in newspapers and on television during the last few years, and she appears to critique this situation here. However, she then seemingly contradicts herself:

> FP2: I think those sorts of things need to be ironed out a bit. But I don't think people should be able to come over here and live off the dole, you know? (.) It's gotta benefit somebody. It [immigration] shouldn't just be a drain for services like medicine and all of that; it shouldn't be a drain.

This is then taken up by the other participants, and a set of conditions is developed for immigration, with a particular focus on language. In this way, the culture aspect of 'cultural diversity' comes to mean culture in the narrow sense of the word; or in other words, difference is fine, and even beneficial, but only in its 'proper' time and place and on *our* terms. This is a common discourse when it comes to issues of multiculturalism and particularly immigration[41]. Within the linear progression of the nation, some immigrants ('they') are then seen to hold 'us' back.

> FP1: I think they [immigrants] should be able to speak English.
>
> FP5: I think if they come here to New Zealand, they talk our language, they learn our language. And there again, it's up to the individual. If you're going over there, overseas, it's up to you to learn theirs. You know, our language was here, has been here ever since we were here. They come here; they learn our language.
>
> FP2: Well, cause it does put a drain on the resources. Like in education resources;

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368

that money could be spent on other things.

FP1: Yeah, and they've made that choice to come here from another country, so why should we pay money for them to learn to speak our language?

As mentioned above, this emphasis on responsibilities on the part of immigrants was largely absent in group C. One possible explanation for this could be that cultural diversity in Auckland is a part of 'everyday' life, particularly for students, whereas group F could be seen to base their arguments concerning for example immigration on more *mediated* accounts, in some cases explicitly so, as in the following extract:

FP5: Well, you look at New Zealand now. You just look *in the papers*; just look *on the news*. You know, there's people starving in New Zealand overall. There's people coming from overseas here; they're taking our jobs. You know, we've got no homes, a lot of our kids have no homes, no money; they're failing in our schools today. (.) So why let them come in and dominate our language and our way of learning?

FP1: It's like, clean up your own backyard first, before you get on with...

(my emphasis)

The construction of New Zealand by FP5 here stands in direct contrast to the earlier image of New Zealand as a 'paradise' in the Croatian and Chinese groups. In addition, this assumes a win-loss equation in relation to immigration: if immigrants ('they') enter, then it 'naturally' follows that 'we' suffer. This is unproblematically positioned as 'common sense'.

In line with the hypothesis above, when this group later turned to a more general discussion of 'the nation', immigration was largely deleted as the framework became 'bicultural' which could be seen as a more accurate reflection of their 'everyday' context. Consider for example the following response to my request to describe New

Zealand metaphorically as a family[42]:

> FP2: Well, the siblings don't get on (laughter). The older brother thinks that the younger, 'tanned' brother isn't as good as the older, white brother in certain cases, and thinks that the only way to do things is the older brother's way, you know? They try to get on, but...

Firstly, FP2 constructs a common version of the nation as running along a linear axis of time, with an associated notion of progress. In terms of gender, this progress is then constructed as driven by males. Interestingly, she draws quite specifically on a colonial discourse of progress here by positioning Pakeha as 'older'. For 'younger' here positions Maori as further back in time in relation to this progress, and thereby needing to 'catch up'. At the same time however, she offers a 'postcolonial' critique of this situation by constructing Pakeha as implicitly arrogant and unwilling to form a partnership based on equality.

This was subsequently followed by discussions about a variety of topics, from politicians to the role of the family, from education to teenage pregnancy, but all of these discussions were grounded in a bicultural framework, which was largely taken for granted in this context, and thus functioned for the most part as an empty signifier.

Overall then, there were significant variations in terms of the kind of discourses these different groups drew on. These were to some extent influenced by the different micro-contexts of individual groups or in other words, by group dynamics. However, some of these variations also relate to the positions of these groups on a macro-level, and in a wider societal context and particularly their *perception* of this macro-context.

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[42]See 8.3 for the rationale behind this question.

In some cases this leads to different groups drawing on similar discourses, but from different positions and different angles, and for different reasons. For example, when group F argues that immigrants should not be a 'drain on *our* resources', and the Croatian groups stress that *they* work hard and integrate well, they both draw on a similar discourse. The difference is that group F claims a central position, based on historical continuity, against which 'others' are defined, whereas the Croatian groups in this instance define themselves against 'other' non-Croatian immigrants, vis-a-vis this center.

Again, these kind of positionings are never entirely predictable, nor are they always consistent; on the contrary, they frequently overlap and appear contradictory, depending on specific contexts. It would however be a fallacy to therefore conclude that this is a random process. In a way it is a highly structured process in terms of the discourses that these groups draw on. In other words, these discourses follow certain patterns which are recognisable, and relate to positions of power in specific contexts. However, at the same time they are highly flexible in terms of their possible combinations and in terms of the different guises in which they may appear, which makes them supremely suitable to be appropriated in a wide variety of contexts and with a wide variety of effects.

This chapter has attempted to show the complexity of discourses that different audiences draw upon, and the processes involved in this. This empirical research is certainly not representative, but it clearly shows the fluidity of meanings different audiences make of *Broken English*. However, it also shows that this fluidity is limited to a certain extent, and related to power relations in a wider social context. In other words, audiences approach this media text from within a particular social context, drawing on complex social experiences and frameworks. *Broken English* has provided a site for these discourses to be articulated, both within the text and in responses to it.

371

CONCLUSION

The focus of this thesis has been the 1996 New Zealand feature film *Broken English*. *Broken English* was produced in a particular social-historical context, and its subject matter draws on a wide variety of discourses which are socially and historically situated. Some of these are related to particular constructions of nationhood and national identity, with a link to national cinemas; some are in turn related to discourses of race, ethnicity, culture and diaspora; others are related to discourses of multiculturalism and biculturalism, which are particularly relevant in a New Zealand context. Although there is a lot of existing research which deals with different aspects of these discourses, there is little research which combines them and shows how they relate to each other and how they inform both media texts and engagement with those texts. This thesis has been an attempt to close those gaps to some extent.

From the outset, this study was based on the proposition that the film constitutes a 'break' in New Zealand cinema in respect of its subject matter. Where feature films before 'imagined' New Zealand overwhelmingly in either monocultural or bicultural terms, *Broken English* quite specifically provides a multicultural perspective, albeit problematically. The tripartite approach which forms the basic framework of this study, has provided an opportunity to explore the production context of this film, as well as the film text itself and its reception by members of the communities it claims to represent. In this way, this research project has been an attempt to trace a complex set of ideas related to constructions of national identity through the production, construction and reception of a key text (*Broken English*), within a specific social-historical context.

In essence, this approach is based on the recognition that the media in general play a highly significant role in constructions of nationhood and national identity, and the debates that frame these constructions. As an important part of these media, cinema

constitutes a site where many of these constructions and debates are contested. As I have argued, constructions of nationhood and national identity can be seen as part of an ongoing process of narration, involving both inclusion and exclusion. This in turn is an active process of selecting particular elements and ignoring or marginalising others, in an effort to represent particular versions of a unified nation. These elements can be historical, contemporary or oriented towards the future. In addition, I have argued that this process of selection is intimately related to access to the means of representation within specific contexts. In other words, who is in a position to define particular versions of the nation, and to what extent does this influence those versions?

A major part of this research has thus involved an investigation of the selection process in constructions of nationhood and national identity in a New Zealand context, and how this relates to discourses of race, ethnicity and culture. The latter elements are of vital importance within debates about biculturalism and multiculturalism. I have argued that the idea of the unified nation as an ethnically and linguistically homogeneous 'imagined community' is ultimately unsustainable in a postcolonial context, which is increasingly characterised by heterogeneity in that respect. However, the unified nation as an ideal is still a strong force in contemporary debates about nationhood, despite its sharp contradictions.

The major contradictions arise then from the tension between discourses of unified nationhood and national identity on the one hand, and their complex interaction with discourses of race, ethnicity and culture. Through an analysis of these discourses in a postcolonial framework, this research has suggested that there is a continual slippage between these different categories, depending on who appropriates them and for what reasons. Nowhere is this slippage more evident than in the debates about biculturalism and multiculturalism in a New Zealand context. These debates are often framed in terms of culture, which has more benign connotations than race. However, culture is often appropriated in discourses which are essentially based on historical discourses

about race and historical constructions of New Zealand nationhood.

The tripartite approach has allowed me to investigate how each of these major currents operate through *Broken English* at the different stages of media practice. In terms of the production context, *Broken English* provides an exemplary case study of some of the difficulties and contradictions involved in the production of feature films in New Zealand. Given the wider social-economic context in New Zealand, producing feature films involves a delicate balancing act between artistic aspirations, entertainment and constructions of nationhood on the one hand, and issues of funding and commercial returns on the other. Striking a balance between these different objectives is a vital ingredient in feature film production in New Zealand, and it has an impact on both the choice of production personnel and the film texts.

The production personnel of *Broken English* consisted mostly of Pakeha New Zealanders, while the film features virtually no Pakeha characters. This raises issues of power and representation. In other words, who has the power to define who, and for who's benefit? Although *Broken English* represents a number of different ethnic communities in New Zealand, these communities are ultimately not represented by and for themselves, but rather on someone else's terms. In addition, these representations are mostly directed at a mainstream (and thus largely Pakeha) audience. This situation may easily lead to 'exotic othering', and while *Broken English* does this to a certain extent, it is also ambiguous in this respect. Director Gregor Nicholas argued that he did not want to treat these communities with 'kid gloves'. However, this in turn leads, in the absence of Pakeha characters, to a situation where these communities are positioned to some extent as a 'social problem', literally removed from mainstream society. A number of culture and language consultants were employed in apparent recognition of these problematics. However, the interview data of this thesis suggest that they had relatively little influence on the final shape of the film, and were thus relatively powerless in this context.

The textual analysis of *Broken English* provides a link between this production context and the resulting film text. This analysis has focused not only on issues of representation, and the role of the production personnel in these, but also on the dramatic codes and conventions employed in the construction of the film. I have argued that the film follows a fairly conventional narrative structure, which closely mirrors classical Hollywood. Seen in this way, it is a relatively conventional love story, or odd couple romance, with two main characters who have a clear goal (forming a romantic couple). This narrative structure frames the content to an important extent. Within this structure, other characters are positioned as peripheral to the main story line.

I have also argued that the film is a little more adventurous when it comes to visual style. These two factors together have an important impact on the way it represents its characters and subject matter. For example, this structure allows for the two main characters to be developed in relative depth, while the peripheral characters are portrayed with broader strokes. In combination with an extraordinary concern for 'cultural details', this ultimately leads to representations which rarely move beyond particular stereotypes. The latter may explain the relatively negative critical response which the film received in New Zealand. Interestingly, as the production interviews showed, some of these cultural details were deliberately exaggerated with an international audience in mind, and were thus to some extent motivated by commercial imperatives.

The focus group research, which constitutes the third step in the tripartite approach, provided an opportunity for members of the different communities represented in the film, to engage with these representations. Although there was a concern with stereotypical representations across all groups, there were also significant differences in this respect. These can be partly explained by the research context, and my part in its construction. In other words, my selection of participants on the one hand, and

framework of questions on the other, shaped the responses to an important degree. This was most clearly demonstrated by the Croatian groups, which were selected from a cultural organisation actively engaged in cultural maintenance. In contrast, the other groups were less organised in this respect. The Croatian groups then were most critical when it came to the film's representation of its Croatian characters, and their responses were initially highly emotionally charged. They clearly felt a responsibility to 'set the record straight', and they saw me to some extent as a means of doing so.

Although the other groups were equally critical when it comes to stereotypical representations, their readings were on the whole more 'cool', and less emotionally charged. For the Maori groups, this may be explained by a certain level of familiarity with these kind of representations. In other words, they may be used to being represented in certain ways, and frequently adopted positions of critical distance in relation to these. Interestingly, this was similar in the Chinese group, where some participants went to great lengths to distance themselves from the characters in the film, as not being representative of them personally. Some participants in the latter group specifically talked about class issues in this respect, and thus went beyond ethnic and racial categories; in the process, one participant even questioned my motivations behind selecting participants for this group, and politely implied that these were ethnocentric.

Some of these readings of the film are thus intimately related to the positions of these communities in a wider societal context. This is not to say that readings of the film are not potentially very diverse; it demonstrates rather that these readings are to an important degree framed by social and historical contexts. As mentioned above, the latter has involved a very extensive preliminary exploration of these contexts, which hence forms a significant part of this thesis. This also points to one of the major constraints of the tripartite framework. Within the confines of this study, there was relatively little space to discuss in depth how each part leads into and informs the next. One important aspect of this type of research is that it requires a high level of attention

to detail when it comes to situating the empirical part of the research in a social historical context.

To this end, a significant part of this thesis has involved the development of a 'discourse map'. This is necessary to lay the groundwork for an analysis of the empirical research, as it provides a framework against which the empirical data can be tested. In other words, while I have been able to identify some major threads, by relating each stage back to the 'discourse map' outlined in the first part of the thesis at various points, the result is not exhaustive. However, I am not suggesting that this research is exhaustive, but rather that it illustrates the dynamics and complexity of the field. In order to explore some of the links between the three stages of the tripartite approach, this thesis has employed a discourse analytic framework. I have argued that this is a relatively recent approach, which is still in a developing stage, and it has only very recently been applied in New Zealand research (e.g. Roscoe, 1999).

This thesis has drawn on two 'schools' of discourse analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse Theory, which appear to have developed separately, but which in my opinion both offer very useful concepts for analysis. Although the former is more concerned with everyday contexts, and the latter is more abstract and focused on public texts, I have argued that the two can be usefully combined. Particularly in relation to the subject matter of this thesis, the combination of the two has provided valuable insights.

One of the main weaknesses and limitations of this type of research lie in the fact that it is very labour intensive. As noted above, it requires a great deal of attention to detail, and it is highly context specific. As a result, unless the researcher works as part of a large team, research samples are relatively small, as in this case. Consequently, it is difficult to arrive at generalised conclusions, and to test the results in a comprehensive manner. However, since it is a qualitative research method, it provides valuable insights in the *process* of making meaning. As such it can be used in combination with more

quantitative research methods. Alternatively, it could be expanded by selecting different texts at regular intervals and doing ongoing research over a longer period of time. This would provide an opportunity to compare how changing contexts influence the above mentioned process.

Overall, within the context of New Zealand cinema, *Broken English* can be seen as an important text and as part of a postcolonial negotiation of nationhood and national identity. The problematic ways in which it engages with its subject matter, and the variety of interpretations of this by different audiences, serve to illustrate the complex nature of such negotiations. For these are intimately linked to discourses of race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender and so on; and as I have argued throughout this thesis, these discourses, particularly those pertaining to race, ethnicity and culture, are highly flexible and can be appropriated for many different strategic reasons. They are thus highly context-specific, and when their appropriation is analysed in depth, they can tell us much about the power relations involved in this process. In short, there are many different versions of the nation which are contested on many different levels. Cinema constitutes an important site of such contestations.

*Broken English* presents a version of New Zealand which is culturally and ethnically diverse. In this way, it moves away from more hegemonic versions of New Zealand which are still to a large extent framed in either monocultural or bicultural terms. In part, this can be seen as a direct result of relatively recent changes in immigration policy, which have created an increasingly diverse population, particularly in Auckland where the film makers are based and where the film's story takes place[1].

On one level then, *Broken English* can be seen as an important attempt to bring different minority groups into the mainstream, and thus represents an inclusive version

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[1]The latest census figures indicate that this trend has increased since 1996 (*New Zealand Herald*, March 2-3, 2002).

of the nation. However, the problematic ways in which it does so, again illustrates the complexities involved in such a project. Although partly due to the constraints of film as a medium, and the resultant pressures of presenting complex subject matter in approximately one and a half hours, the film ultimately positions the different ethnic groups it represents outside of the mainstream. The fact that it is one of the only circulating cinematic versions of New Zealand nationhood which engages with ethnic and cultural diversity, only accentuates this.

Finally then, in terms of future challenges, I agree with Helene Wong when she argues for more access to the means of representation[2]. This is not to say that Pakeha film makers cannot make films about other ethnic groups, nor that only members of a particular ethnic group can adequately represent that group, for this is an argument that ultimately leads to essentialist notions of culture and identity, which I have been at pains to deconstruct throughout this thesis. It is merely to argue for an expansion of the channels through which national and cultural identities can be constructed, and to make them more inclusive. This would put more emphasis on power sharing and dialogue between different social groups that make up a New Zealand in transition to a postcolonial nation.

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[2]See chapter 7.

## New Zealand Film Commission Act 1978

Clause 18. Content of films.

(1) In carrying out its functions, the Commission shall make financial assistance available to any person in respect of the making, promotion, distribution, or exhibition of a film unless it is satisfied that the film has or is to have a significant New Zealand content.

(2) For the purposes of determining whether or not a film has or is to have a significant New Zealand content, the Commission shall have regard to the following matters:

(a) The subject of the film:

(b) The locations at which the film was or is to be made:

(c) The nationalities and places of residence of-

(i) The authors, scriptwriters, composers, producers, directors, actors, technicians, editors, and other persons who took part or are to take part in the making of the film; and

(ii) The persons who own or are to own the shares or capital of any company, partnership or joint venture that is concerned with the making of the film; and

(iii) The persons who have or are to have the copyright in the film:

(d) The sources from which the money that was used or is to be used to make the film was or is to be derived:

(e) The ownership and whereabouts of the equipment and technical facilities that were or are to be used to make the film:

(f) Any other matters that in the opinion of the Commission are relevant to the purposes of this Act.

((2A) A film shall be deemed to have a significant New Zealand content if it is made pursuant to an agreement or arrangement entered into in respect of the film

between-

    (a) The Government of New Zealand or the Commission; and

    (b) The Government of another country or relevant authority of another country).

(3) In carrying out its functions, the Commission shall in relation to the content of any film have due regard to the observance of standards that are generally acceptable in the community.


Subs. (2A) was inserted by s.2 of the *New Zealand Film Commission Act 1985*.

<div align="right">(Martin & Edwards, 1997, p.200)</div>

Interview Questions for the Production Personnel

*Gregor Nicholas (Writer/ Director) and Robin Scholes (Producer)*

Question 1: How did you get involved with *Broken English*? What attracted you to this project?

Question 2: Even though *Broken English* was produced in New Zealand, it cannot solely rely on the domestic market for commercial success; to what extent did this international dimension influence (your assessment of, RS[1]) the content and the narrative structure of the film?

Question 3: In your opinion, what makes *Broken English* a specifically 'New Zealand' film? If we assume that the Film Commission looks for stories that are specifically 'Kiwi' ('our own stories', so to speak), what aspects of the script did you emphasise when you applied for funding? (And what aspects did the Film Commission pick up on in their decision to partly fund it?, GN).

Question 4: Did you have a specific audience in mind, for instance a local one or an international one? What aspects of the film did you think would appeal to that audience (or audiences)?

Question 5: How did you sell it overseas? As a 'kiwi film', or as an international product? What makes it an international or universal story? (How does this relate to the different reception overseas that you've mentioned to me earlier?, GN).

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[1] I have put additions to these questions specifically applying to either the producer (RS) or the director (GN) in brackets.

Question 6: How would you characterise the film- does it fit into a genre? What would you say are its biggest influences in that respect? (And on a stylistic level?, GN).

Question 7 (RS only): *Broken English* represents a number of different cultures, which brings up issues of 'authenticity'. How important is the role of consultants in relation to this, in your view?

Question 7 (GN only): As a Pakeha film maker, representing different cultures, how do you deal with the issue of 'authenticity'? In other words, to what extent did you try to achieve an 'authentic' representation of the cultures you portrayed? What part did the consultants play in this process?

Question 8 (GN only): When dealing with a number of different ethnic cultures, there is always a tendency to emphasise the material aspects of those cultures, like song and dance, clothing, etcetera. There is a tension in film making between presenting richness and complexity of cultures, but at the same time making them 'recognisable'. How do you deal with this as a film maker?

Question 9: In terms of New Zealand as a nation, and in more general terms, how do you view the tension between biculturalism and multiculturalism in New Zealand? How do you see the future in relation to these debates, particularly in the relation to the position of Maori?

Question 10 (RS only): In terms of marketing, what aspects of the script attracted you to it? Were there any differences in marketing the film on a national level and international level?

Question 11 (RS only): How does *Broken English* fit in with the kind of films and television programs that Communicado produces? What are the kind of stories you are

looking for in general?

Question 12 (GN only): *Broken English* features virtually no Pakeha characters which leaves it open to criticism that it treats multiculturalism as a 'social problem', removed from 'mainstream' society. *Broken English* is quite ambiguous in this sense; it can be seen as a social critique, but at the same time offers assimilation and integration as the only way to solve the 'problem'. What are your thoughts on that?

Question 13 (GN only): The cross-cultural romance has a long history in New Zealand cinema (for example *Broken Barrier*), and it is often the Maori girl in these relationships who assimilates to the 'dominant' culture. In *Broken English*, it is Nina as an outsider who has to make personal sacrifices to 'fit in'. Why do you think it is usually the woman who takes on this role?

Question 14 (GN only): In terms of your own views on the political issues the film raises; how did they shape the film?

*Alan Sorrell (Board Member of the New Zealand Film Commission)*
Question 1: At what stage in the production of *Broken English* did the producers approach the Film Commission for funding? For script development or at a later stage?

Question 2: Even though *Broken English* was produced in New Zealand, no New Zealand feature film can solely rely on the domestic market for commercial success. What aspects of the script appealed to you (and the rest of the Board) in terms of this international dimension? In other words, what made it a 'universal' story?

Question 3: If we assume that the Film Commission looks for stories that are specifically 'kiwi' ('our own stories', so to speak), what, in your opinion, makes *Broken English* a specifically 'New Zealand' film?

<u>Question 4</u>: Did you have a specific audience in mind, for instance a local one or an international one, when you made your decision to partly fund it? What aspects of the film did you think would appeal to that audience?

<u>Question 5</u>: How would you characterise the film- does it fit into a particular genre?

<u>Question 6</u>: How strict are the guidelines for the Board? Do you have a kind of 'check list' with particular characteristics a script should contain? Or is it done more on a case by case basis?

<u>Question 7</u>: In terms of New Zealand as a nation, and in more general terms, how do you view the tension between biculturalism and multiculturalism in New Zealand? How do you see the future in relation to these debates, particularly in relation to the position of Maori?

<u>Question 8</u>: *Broken English* features virtually no Pakeha characters which leaves it open to criticism that it treats multiculturalism as a 'social problem', removed from 'mainstream' society. The film is quite ambiguous in that sense; it can be see as a social critique, but at the same time offers assimilation and integration as the only way to 'solve the problem'. What are your thoughts on that?

<u>Question 9</u>: The cross-cultural romance has a long history in New Zealand narratives (for example *Broken Barrier*, and recently *Greenstone*), and it is often the Maori girl in these relationships who assimilates to the 'dominant' culture. In *Broken English*, it is Nina as an outsider who has to make personal sacrifices in order to 'fit in'. Why do you think it is usually the woman who takes on this role?

<u>Question 10</u>: Does the Film Commission receive many scripts that deal with issues of immigration and multiculturalism?

Question 11: The Film Commission as an institution always seems to have to find a middle ground between public service objectives and 'commercial reality'. Do you feel that a change of government influences this balance? If so, in what way?

*Don Selwyn (Maori Language and Culture Consultant) and Davorin Fahn (Croatian Language and Culture Consultant)*

Question 1: How did you get involved with *Broken English*? What attracted you to this project?

Question 2: Do you often do consultancy work, or was it the first time? Was the part you played as a consultant more related to language, or to cultural practices, or both?

Question 3: At what stage in the production process did you get involved? Was it before the first draft was written, or at a later stage?

Question 4 (DS only): How would you describe the interaction with the writers and director? To what extent did you influence the script and the final outcome?

Question 5: Helene Wong has said: 'You cannot expect any one Asian consultant to speak for everyone in their community'. To what extent did you feel pressure to 'get it right' as spokesperson for a whole community? How does this relate to how you generally feel about the role of consultants?

Question 6: *Broken English* deals quite specifically with issues of immigration, and the film ultimately seems to carry a message of assimilation. What are your views on this? Do you think this should be the aim of immigration policy?

Question 7: When dealing with a number of different ethnic cultures, there is always a

tendency to emphasise the material aspects of those cultures, like song and dance, clothing, etcetera. *Broken English* does this to a certain extent. (Did the 'saleability' of these aspects, for example Eddie's whakapapa tree and performance of a haka, play a part in their inclusion in the film?, DS). (There is a tension in the film making process between presenting richness and complexity of cultures, but also making them 'recognisable'; this has mostly to do with time constraints. How did you as a film maker deal with this?, DF).

Question 8: The cross-cultural romance has a long history in New Zealand cinema, and it is often the Maori girl in these relationships who assimilates to the 'dominant' culture. In *Broken English*, it is Nina as an 'outsider' who has to make personal sacrifices to 'fit in'. Why do you think it is usually the woman who takes on this role?

Question 9: In terms of New Zealand as a nation, and in more general terms, how do you view the tension between biculturalism and multiculturalism in New Zealand? How do you see the future in relation to these debates, particularly in relation to the position of Maori?

Question 10 (DS only): *Broken English* deals directly with multiculturalism in New Zealand and seems to indicate a shift away from biculturalism. Do you think it denies Maori special status as tangata whenua by including them in the 'multicultural melting pot' as just another ethnic group amongst many, whereas Pakeha are excluded almost altogether (or not part of 'the problem')?

Question 11 (DF only): *Broken English* features virtually no Pakeha characters which leaves it open to criticism that it treats multiculturalism as a 'social problem', removed from 'mainstream' society. The film is quite ambiguous in this sense; it can be seen as a social critique, but at the same time offers assimilation as a way to 'solve' the problem. What are your thoughts on that?

Question 12 (DF only): How do you see the future role and status of Croatian immigrants or refugees in relation to New Zealand as a nation, and in terms of national identity?

Question 13: Did you have a particular audience in mind when you worked on the film? In retrospect, do you think that *Broken English* challenges or reinforces stereotypes audiences might hold?

## Questions for the Focus Groups

*Group A (Long-term Croatian Immigrants)*

Question 1: First of all, I wanted to ask if any of you have seen this film before, either in the cinema or on video?

Question 2: I first would like some initial responses. Did you like the film, or dislike it? What did you find most interesting about it?

Question 3: What do you think about the way the film portrays its Croatian characters, Nina, Ivan, and the rest of the family?

Question4: Do you think the film is sympathetic towards immigrants? Why/ Why not?

Question 5: What do you think of the interaction between different cultures and ethnic groups in the film?

Question 6: Do you have much contact with more recent Croatian immigrants? Does that have an impact on your own sense of identity?

Question 7: Do you think cinema is an important medium in relation to national identity? In what way? Or why not?

Question 8: If you imagine New Zealand as a family; how would you describe this family? (How would you describe New Zealand as a nation?)

*Group B (Long-term Chinese Immigrants)*: see chapter 8.

*Group C (Urban Maori)*.

Question 1: First of all, I wanted to ask if any of you have seen this film before, either in the cinema or on video?

Question 2: Firstly, I would like some initial responses. Did you like the film, or dislike it? What did you find most interesting about it?

Question 3: What do you think about the way the film portrays its Maori characters, particularly Eddie?

Question 4: How do you feel about the way the film represents Maori culture? Do you think this would have been different if the director had been Maori?

Question 5: What do you think of the interaction between different cultures and ethnic groups in the film?

Question 6: How do you feel about multicultural immigration in general? And in relation to the idea of New Zealand as a bicultural nation?

Question 7: Do you think cinema is an important medium in relation to national identity? In what way? Why not?

Question 8: If you imagine New Zealand as a family; how would you describe this family?

*Group D (Recent Chinese Immigrants)*

<u>Question 1</u>: First of all, I wanted to ask if any of you have seen this film before, either in the cinema or on video?

<u>Question 2</u>: First I would like some initial responses. Did you like the film or dislike it? What did yo find most interesting about it?

<u>Question 3</u>: Do you often watch New Zealand films or television drama? Why? Why not?

<u>Question 4</u>: What do you think about the way the film portrays its Chinese characters, Clara and Wu?

<u>Question 5</u>: Do you recognise some of the experiences that Clara and Wu go through? Does it look familiar? Clara and Wu seem to be prepared to go through a lot of hardship and trouble to be able to settle in New Zealand. How does this relate to your own experiences of settling in New Zealand?

<u>Question 6</u>: Do you think the film is sympathetic towards immigrants? Why? Why not?

<u>Question 7</u>: What do you think of the interaction between different cultures and ethnic groups in the film?

<u>Question 8</u>: Do you think cinema is an important medium in relation to national identity? In what way? Why not?

<u>Question 9</u>: How would you describe New Zealand as a nation?

*Group E (Recent Croatian Immigrants and New Zealand Born Croatians)*

Question 1: First of all, I wanted to ask you if any of you have seen this film before, either in the cinema or on video?

Question 2: First I would like some initial responses. Did you like the film, or dislike it? What did you find most interesting about it?

Question 3: Do you often watch New Zealand films or television drama? Why? Why not?

Question 4: What do you think about the way the film portrays its Croatian characters, Nina, Ivan, and the rest of the family?

Question 5: Do you recognise or identify with certain experiences these characters go through?

Question 6: Do you think the film is sympathetic towards immigrants? Why? Why not?

Question 7: What do you think of the interaction between different cultures and ethnic groups in the film?

Question 8: Do you think cinema is an important medium in relation to national identity? In what way? Why not?

Question 9: If you imagine New Zealand as a family; how would you describe this family? (How would you describe New Zealand as a nation?)

*Group F (Rural or Provincially Based Maori)*

<u>Question 1</u>: First of all, I wanted to ask if any of you have seen this film before, either in the cinema or on video?

<u>Question 2</u>: First I would like some initial responses. Did you like the film, or dislike it? What did you find most interesting about it?

<u>Question 3</u>: What do you think about the way the film portrays its Maori characters, particularly Eddie?

<u>Question 4</u>: Do you think the film challenges certain dominant ideas about Maori culture and society? Or do you think it reinforces them?

<u>Question 5</u>: How do you feel the interaction between different cultures and ethnic groups is being portrayed?

<u>Question 6</u>: How do you feel about multicultural immigration in general? And in relation to the idea of New Zealand as a bicultural nation?

<u>Question 7</u>: Do you think cinema is an important medium in relation to national identity? In what way? Why not?

<u>Question 8</u>: If you imagine New Zealand as a family; how would you describe this family? (How would you describe New Zealand as a nation?)

# APPENDIX IV

## *Broken English*: Full Credits

-New Zealand, 1996.

-*Director*: Gregor Nicholas.

-*Certificate*: 16/ 18.

-*Distributor*: Village Roadshow/ First Independent.

-*Production Companies*: Communicado (Broken English) Limited; Village Roadshow presents A Communicado production in association with the New Zealand Film Commission/ NZ on Air.

-*Executive Producer*: Timothy White.

-*Producer*: Robin Scholes.

-*Line Producer*: Janet McIver.

-*Production Co-ordinator*: Anne Nicolle.

-*Unit Manager*: Mike Tito.

-*Location Manager*: Phil Aitken.

-*Post-Production*: Supervisor, Colin Tyler; Co-ordinator, Andrea Towers.

-*Assistant Directors*: Alan Robinson, Sarah Miln, Setu Li'o.

-*Script Supervisor*: Gillian Steyne.

-*Casting*: Director, Fiona Edgar; Additional, Faith Martin.

-*Screenplay*: Gregor Nicholas, Johanna Pigott, Jim Salter.

-*Additional Dialogue*: Aleksandra Vujcic, Rade Serbedzija, Zhao Jing, Yang Li.

-*Script Consultant*: Greg McGee.

-*Director of Photography/ Camera Operator*: John Toon.

-*Editor*: David Coulson.

-*Production Designer*: Michael Kane.

-*Art Director*: Clive Memmott.

-*Costume Designer*: Glenis Foster.

-*Make-up/ Hair Supervisor*: Dominie Till.

-*Titles Design/ Production*: Animal Logic, Deborah McNamara, Simon Carr, Krisell Baker, Melanie Ritchie.

-*Opening Titles Design Consultant*: Saatchi & Saatchi.

-*Opticals*: Brian Scadden.

-*Music*: Murray Grindlay, Murray McNabb.

-*Recording Engineer*: Graeme Myhre.

-*Songs*: "Marijana" (trad.); "Kad Cujem Tambure" (trad.), arranged by Rudolf Bartus, performed by The Dalmatian Choir (Auckland); "Akarongo Ake I Tuoo Reo", by/ performed by Taokotaianga Cultural Group; "Daleko Mi Je Biser Jadrana" (trad.), performed by Ivan's card playing mates; "Whakaaria Mai" (translation of "How Great Thou Art") by Stuart K. Hine, performed by The Hit List; "E Ipoi" by Prince Tui Teka, performed by The Hit List; "Bamboo Lane" & "Huki Huki E" by/ performed by Bill Sevesi; "Ako Ikad Ozdravim" by Z. Runjic, E. Silas, N. Nincevic, performed by Oliver Dragojevic; "Na Teraci" by D. Sarac, K. Juras, M. Dosen, performed by Miso Kovac; "Tsubozaka- Jowa" by Takashi Taka, Shinji Tomita, performed by Satoko Yamano; "You Can't Hide Love" by Gerry Deveaux, Charlie Mole, Angela Stone, performed by Maree Sheehan.

-*Sound Design*: Don Paulin, Ray Beentjes, Kit Rollings.

-*Sound Manager*: John Neill.

-*Sound Recording*: Tony Johnson.

-*Sound Mixer*: Michael Hedges.

-*ADR*: Dialogue Editor, Chris Burt.

-*Foley*: Artist, Beth Tredray; Recording, Helen Luttrell, John Boswell; Dialogue Editor, Helen Luttrell.

-*Consultants*: Maori Language/ Culture, Don Selwyn; Croatian Language/ Culture, Davorin Krnjaic (Fahn), Anna Jankovaic; Chinese Language/ Culture, Hou Dejian; Eddie's Character, Peter Turei, Tiwai Reedy; Taiaha Instructor, Gordon Hatfield.

-*Fight Co-ordinator*: Robert Bruce.

-*Cast*: Rade Serbedzjia (Ivan), Aleksandra Vujcic (Nina), Julian Arahanga (Eddie), Marton Csokas (Darko), Madeline McNamara (Mira), Zhao Jing (Clara), Yang Li (Wu), Elizabeth Mavric (Vanya), Temuera Morrison (Manu), Michael Langley (Jura), Morena Tutugoro (Sashka), Mona Ross (Aunty Marja), Barbara Cartwright (Jasmin), Patrick Wilson (Dave), Greg Johnson (Doug), Stephen Hall, Stephen Ure, Vinko Bakich, Zeljko Bilcic, Rade Borkovic (Ivan's Mates), Chris Ruka (Reverend Essie), Nui Tuakana (Essie's Wife), Teariki Vaerua, Shane Harris, Tepori Vaerua, Naomi Kino, Rocky Pepe, Crystal Harris, Romey Ruka (Essie's Family), Chris Anderton, Dominic Blaazer (Palermo Band), Fred Sy (Chow), Sinisa Copic, Anna Jankovaic, Gordana Vluck, Bruno Relic, Makedon Stojkov (Croatian Relatives on Home Video), Taokotaianga Cultural Group, Tiromoana Mil, Tetapu Daniel, Apera Mangi, More George, Romey Ruka, Tai Tuakana, Junior Moss, Nancy Anthony, Roseanne Natua, Nora Eiao, Terangi Eiao, Dywane George, Mary Ball (Essie's Party Guests), The Dalmatian Club of Auckland, Berta Boric, Ivan Nobilo, Ajrin Nenadic, Marija Tomic, Pero Skoric, Nellye Vela, Jerry Lovrin, Rudi Bartus, Tony Pecotic, Mary Nola, Milka Bilcic, Mirija Jukic, Tihana Kovacevic (Ivan's Party Guests), Gilbert Goldie (Cab Driver), Emma Lovell (Nina & Eddie's Daughter), Amanda Rees (Nurse).

-8,30 Feet.
-92 Minutes, 15 Seconds.
-Dolby Stereo.
-In Colour.

(Miller, 1997, p. 42/43).

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