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Abstract

In her groundbreaking book, *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, Juliet Mitchell emphatically states, '[i]ncest is the crossing of boundaries, or perhaps, if we think about its sibling base, the absence of them' (62). When Te Rua, the narratorprotagonist of Patricia Grace's 2001 Kiriyama Prize winning novel, *Dogside Story*, copulates with his sister and fathers her child, he is clearly crossing these boundaries, and violating in the process what is considered by many to be the ultimate taboo. In nearly all modern cultures 'breaking the incest ban strikes at the core of the family and society, if not the viability of the species' (Turner & Maryanski 1), and for this reason, anthropologist Robin Fox believes that 'at the very least, the idea [of incest] seems to make us easily uneasy, and at worst, downright hysterical' (5). Grace's use of the incest motif in *Dogside Story* utilises this 'near-universality' (Richardson 553) of the incest taboo to reinforce an innate, universalising fear — the fear of (and revulsion towards) the violation of the incest prohibition and the progeny it produces.

ANN PISTACCHI

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A dog will do what a dog will do. Sister, mother, grandmother, mother-in-law, it makes no difference to a dog. (*Dogside Story* 272)

In her groundbreaking book, *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, Juliet Mitchell emphatically states, ‘[i]ncest is the crossing of boundaries, or perhaps, if we think about its sibling base, the absence of them’ (62). When Te Rua, the narrator-protagonist of Patricia Grace’s 2001 Kiriama Prize winning novel, *Dogside Story*, copulates with his sister and fathers her child, he is clearly crossing these boundaries, and violating in the process what is considered by many to be the ultimate taboo. In nearly all modern cultures ‘breaking the incest ban strikes at the core of the family and society, if not the viability of the species’ (Turner & Maryanski 1), and for this reason, anthropologist Robin Fox believes that ‘at the very least, the idea [of incest] seems to make us easily uneasy, and at worst, downright hysterical’ (5). Grace’s use of the incest motif in *Dogside Story* utilises this ‘near-universality’ (Richardson 553) of the incest taboo to reinforce an innate, universalising fear — the fear of (and revulsion towards) the violation of the incest prohibition and the progeny it produces. Grace then takes these ‘universal’ fears about incest and challenges the assumptions that are at the heart of them to create a text that re-territorialises a reading of the causes of brother-sister incest — and the Dogside community’s reaction to it within a specifically Maori-centric framework.

This article explores these re-territorialised aspects of *Dogside Story*’s incest narrative, taking into account the ways in which Grace, by acknowledging and then deconstructing ‘classic’ (Western) literary incest tropes, provides ‘culturally appropriate’ alternatives (Pistacchi) to dealing with sibling incest that are not rooted in fear, hysteria, or the ostracisation of the ‘offending’ members of the community. The reading also acknowledges the ways in which Grace, like her *Dogside Story* characters, simultaneously invites and rejects an essentialist reading of the incestuous act, resulting in a text which ultimately evades moralistic positioning regarding long-standing prohibitions on brother-sister incest.

CONTEXTUALISING SIBLING INCEST IN *DOGSDIE STORY*

A reading of the incest motif in *Dogside Story* is dependent on a scientific/evolutionary and a sociological/literary history that has long held a sense of horror and fascination with the tabooed act. From Aphra Behn's *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684), to Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), the incestuous act, especially as it occurs between brother and sister, has been treated as both a frightening and an utterly captivating literary trope. Grace herself has shown a long-standing fascination with the violation of the incest prohibition and the ramifications of such transgressions in both her novels and short stories. *Mutuwhenua* (1978) makes reference to one of Ripeka's aunts who 'married a second cousin' (92)¹; *Cousins* (1992) addresses a widow's need to flee from her family's ancestral land out of fear the elders will force her to marry a relation she views as a 'brother'²; the short story, 'Flower Girls' (1994), addresses the devastating effects of father-daughter incest; and the character Baby, the namesake of *Baby No-Eyes* (1998), is the product of an incestuous relationship between her parents (who are cousins)³ and a descendent of Rorikohatu, a great-great uncle guilty of impregnating his niece.⁴ These early experiments with the relationship between incest prohibition and narrative foreground Grace's much more exhaustive examination of the subject in *Dogside Story*.

While incest is generally framed in Western literary fiction in terms of the shame and horror surrounding the act and its aftermath, as a theme in ancient creation myths the act is often portrayed pragmatically (Garry & El-Shamy 432). Incestuous marriages and copulations were 'commonplace among the gods of ancient peoples' (Cory & Masters 4), and creation myths from all over the world 'resort to incestuous peopling of the earth' for the commonsense reason that 'if the first humans were few in number, possibly only two, then their offspring had no choice but to mate with siblings' (Garry & El-Shamy 432–33). Polynesian creation myths are no exception. According to A.W. Reed's *Maori Myths & Legendary Tales*,

Tane had seen the beauty of earth and sky, but he was still dissatisfied. He felt that his work would be ended only when Papa was peopled with men and women. Children had been born to Tane and his brothers but they were celestial, never-dying gods who were not suited to the earth and its ways.

The gods came down to earth and out of the warm red soil they made the image of a woman... The gods purified her and named her Hine-ahu-one, woman-created-from-earth. Tane became her husband and they had several girls as their children.

Tiki, the first man, was made by Tu-matauenga, god of war. He became the father of men and women who peopled the earth and inherited all the wonder and glory that Tane had made for them. (Reed 20–21)⁵

In this version of the myth, mortal people of the Maori world are all considered to be descendents of Hine-ahu-one and Tiki, an incestuous genealogy that is viewed pragmatically, because its inception predates concepts of incest taboo and

prohibition, and because, according to psychologist Karin Meiselman, ‘as a theme in mythology and literature, sibling incest has been treated more frequently, and with much more sympathy, than parent-child incest’ (263).⁶

Because, in a Maori cultural framework, ‘all things are connected in time and space in the great spiral of existence’ (Gwin 147), Grace is able to weave these ancient legends into *Dogside Story*’s modern incest narrative in a manner that lets her interrogate the taboo. The story of Dogside ancestors Ngarua and Maraenohonoho’s obsessive and possessive love of their brother⁷ exists culturally and narratively in reciprocal dimensions, allowing it to simultaneously invoke the ancestors (the pre-history children of Hine-ahu-one and Tiki), inhabit the past (in the recorded history of Dogside’s ancestors), and unfold in the present (in Rua and Ani’s story). Rua and his sister Ani’s incestuous relationship therefore spirals out of this layering of ancient myth and legend. They are the descendants of two sisters whose love for their husbands ‘never ever matched the love they held for their brother’ (8) and who ‘would have died rather than let the other have their brother’s heart, their brother’s love’ (10). They come of age in the physical landscape of Dogside, an area colonised and developed out of thwarted incestuous sibling desire and whose very name, according to ethnographer Elsdon Best, evokes long-standing incestuous connotations in te reo Maori:

Incest is termed *irawaru*, *moe tuahine*, and *ngau whiore*, the expression *kai whiore* being a variant form of the latter. Three of these terms are connected with dogs. *Irawaru* is the name of a person in Maori mythology who was turned into a dog by the magic arts of Maui, and who was afterwards looked upon as the origin, or tutelary deity, or parent of dogs. *Ngau whiore* means ‘tail-biter’. Those who commit incest are compared to a dog which turns and bites its own tail. (31)

Rua and Ani are, therefore, ultimately members of a community whose ‘tail-biting’ foundations put them on the losing side of a number of hegemonic oppositions: Godsiders are ‘cultured’, Dogsiders are ‘rough’; Godsiders are ‘devout’, Dogsiders are ‘ungodly’; Godsiders are ‘principled’, Dogsiders are ‘without morals’ (13). As one Godsider says of Rua and his incestuous past, ‘[a] dog will do what a dog will do. Sister, mother, grandmother, mother-in-law, it makes no difference to a dog’ (272). In spite of all of this, Grace acknowledges her bias for these rough and rebellious Dogsiders, admitting in the first chapter that the remainder of her novel is ‘one sided — it favours Dogside’ (14).

By taking these infinite pains to position Ani and Rua’s relationship so firmly in the mythological, historic and linguistic background of Dogside, Grace seems to be preparing her readers to accept that the children’s breaking of the incest taboo is determined from the opening pages of the narrative. From a Godsider’s (read: outsiders) perspective, Ani and Rua appear to be from ‘bad stock’; they are the descendants of ‘useless hua’ and simply cannot be expected to act any better than ‘mongrel dogs’ (13). Seemingly giving credence to this reading, Grace backgrounds the children’s upbringing in classic clinical lines, laying all of the groundwork for what researchers have found to be the common denominators

in the settings for brother-sister incest: a lack of parental/adult supervision (Meiselman 263);⁸ a dysfunctional family that exhibits violence (Turner & Maryanski 71);⁹ the absence of suitable sex partners in the community (Masters 83);¹⁰ the rebellious desire (by at least one of the siblings) to cross boundaries (Mitchell 62);¹¹ and the termination of the sibling's relationship as a result of the sister's pregnancy (Weinberg qtd in Meiselman 273).¹² In the rendering of each of these characteristics, however, Grace subtly re-territorialises them in Maori terms, demanding that her readers recognise the manner in which the confluence of the events leading up to the incestuous act in *Dogside Story* problematise the models of desire, agency and victimhood provided in traditional Western incest narratives.

While it is true that Rua and Ani spend a large amount of unsupervised time together as children, this time is spent roaming the beaches and bush surrounding their home marae¹³ — an area the elders in their community deem safe for independent play. Their childhood adventures often involve the excitement of partaking in tabooed activities (from playing in areas considered tapu¹⁴ by their elders, to daring each other to perform increasingly more dangerous feats of athletic prowess), but these transgressions can, in part, be viewed through the lens of stereotypical adolescent behaviour. Grace takes great pains to eloquently remind her readers that 'older kids' often have

something itching, creeping round inside them that was airy and not quite there most of the time, though at other times there was a specific vegetable or animal feel about it. It was like plantlife putting out sticky clamps and climbing one two, one two, through chest and arms and head, or putting down hairy roots in a way which wiggled down through lower torso and legs. It was as if they were about to sprout green. Or it could have been something animal — leggy insects scuttling about and taking up spaces, could even have been legless and wormy making tunnels and funnels, tickling all over and keeping them all the time on the move, all the time gabbing, giggling, hooting and crashing, all the time awake. (Grace 224)

This 'adolescent itch' is manifested in the Pakeha children camping near Dogside's marae in the form of 'lover spotting' (224). In Rua and Ani this itch is manifested in terms of daring each other towards increasingly sexual modes of physical contact.

In this sense, Rua and Ani's incestuous act can be read as the natural culmination of years of physical play coinciding with adolescent hormonal bloom. Their relative isolation leads them to have an unusually intense sibling bond, and the secrets that they share about their tabooed adventures further drive them towards an inner social-circle of two. Freud believed 'the more closely the members of a family are attached to one another, the more often do they tend to cut themselves off from others, and the more difficult it is for them to enter into the wider circle of life' (50). Ani's threat that she will 'kill' Rua if he 'tells' (88) anyone about their activities further widens the gap between the siblings and those that surround them. It also serves to bind Rua to Ani in ways that are

unexplainable to their other family members. When Rua refuses to relocate to Australia with his father after his mother's death, he 'couldn't think at the time why he didn't want to leave, only saying to himself that there was treasure lying at the bottom of the boiling deep' (71). This treasure is one of the tapu objects he and Ani have been searching for in their adventures, and the lure of staying and continuing their dangerous childhood game overrode the fact that 'he'd felt sorry for his father' (71) when he broke up the immediate family unit by choosing to stay behind with his extended family in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

At this point in the narrative, *Dogside Story* appears to have a great deal in common with classic nineteenth-century British incest narratives (albeit one that takes place in the sea and bush instead of in the moors and manor). Traditionally these narratives 'feature various kinds of sibling (or quasi-sibling) relationships, all tending to follow the same narrative trajectory, from a shared childhood to a tragic end...the siblings or quasi-siblings are reared together, become erotically involved, and are separated by death' (Richardson 555). *Dogside Story* incorporates the mainstays of these classic incest narratives, but ultimately undermines the tradition by subversively refusing to engage with the classic 'tragic ending'. In Grace's tale, there is no victim in the incestuous act and both siblings survive — and eventually thrive.¹⁵

This challenge to traditional/Western incest narratives manifests most profoundly in the actions of Ani, an avid reader of classic British/Western 'kissy books' (87) who often 'steals' (55) her word play from the literary fiction she is constantly devouring. Ani's conscious pastiche of costumes, actions, words and phrases appropriated from her heavy diet of romance and adventure novels gives the incest narrative surrounding her a meta-literariness that very specifically sets *Dogside Story* in a post-modern and post-colonial relationship to the British Romance tradition. As readers, we know that Ani knows that she is playing a part scripted for her by a long history of incest narratives — narratives found in books she has literally stolen from the outside Pakeha world of 'schools and shops and libraries' (128) and taken out to her hut in the bush for digestion and reincorporation into her own 'story'. She is able to both utilise and subvert this literary history to script her own drama, one that critically diverts from the traditional incest-narrative trajectory by offering a plenary rejection of the classic 'punishment-by-death-for-transgression' ending (Mitchell 65). Instead of engendering catastrophe, the result of Ani and Rua's incestuous relationship eventually becomes the means by which their community begins to heal itself. Their union results in life, not death, and it is through Kiri, the progeny of this union, that the community is able to confront the secrets that have been pulling the family apart for nearly two generations. In order to get to this place of healing, however, Grace has to allow all of the characters to send their stories up 'to the rafters' (141)¹⁶ so the whanau¹⁷ can choose which histories to keep, and which ones need to 'burn' (298).

THE STORIES SURROUNDING THE INCEST

To fully understand Rua and Ani's story it is necessary to unpack the emotional minefields of their childhood backgrounds. Both children grow up feeling rejected from their mother's love — Ani because her mother, Ramari, gave her away at birth to be raised by her grandmother, and Rua because his mother left him alone when she died. In many ways this means that the bond the siblings share over the years is not sexual, but emotional — a bond forged by grief, not physical passion. The siblings are ultimately bound together by their mourning over the loss of the mother figure, and their incestuous physicality arises out of the siblings' attempts to restore ties of love and security that they feel have been shattered.

This sense of rejection and loneliness manifests in what Rua calls Ani's 'cruelty' (40). Once rejected (at least in her mind) by her mother at birth, the girl spends the rest of her adolescence vengefully rejecting others. When her grandmother dies and Ramari asks Ani to rejoin them in the family house 'out front', Ani mocks her mother, choosing instead to live with a blind Aunty out in the bush. Her rejection of care is a defence mechanism, one signified by the way she defiantly sorts through the bags of clothing her relatives hand down to her, discarding all of the 'red, yellow, green, blue and brown' garments and throwing all of this colour 'into the trees' (40). Left with only white to wear, Ani cloaks her anger in the costume of the ascetic, one who needs no-thing and no-body.

Ani's white garb also allows her to embody the role of Dogside's ghost, a phantom/banshee figure haunting the bush surrounding the family compound. Her presence always seems to carry with it the threat of death, and her childhood games consistently include elements of danger ('falling down dead' (53), 'walking the plank' (55), swimming with taniwha¹⁸ (70)). When Rua returns from their frightening adventures, his elders ask him, '[y]ou seen a ghose, you Rua?' (56), an appropriate question for a boy who might have just narrowly missed a drowning or having his eye put out by one of Ani's handmade swords. In the best of times, Rua takes these games lightly, telling the reader, '[s]he always was bullshit that Ani Wainoa' (39).

Most of Ani and Rua's most transgressive activities, however, take place not during the best of times, but in the moments and hours directly following emotionally traumatic events (the morning after their mother's burial [52], immediately following Rua's father's wedding [69] etc.). For Ani, meeting Rua for their secret play in the wake of emotional tragedies gives her an emotional edge. Juliet Mitchell writes, 'Siblings, like hysterics, love where they hate' (103), and Ani seems to embody this statement in every one of her actions. She hates Rua for being the one who was not given up by their mother, the one who got to grow up in the warmth of the 'family bed'. She also loves him as she loves no other member of her family, leading her to constantly jostle between the conflicting desires to love Rua and to destroy him.

When the children's increasingly sexual play (sword fighting, log rolling, skinny dipping) eventually leads to violating the sexual taboo, this love-hate relationship surfaces. Ani cannot tolerate, at any point in their childhoods, Rua to have the upper hand in their daring games. It is therefore no surprise that when Rua comes to tell Ani that it is he (thereby *not* her) who has discovered the key to finding the treasure they have spent their childhoods searching for (the knowledge of how to use the tides to get to the forbidden Cave Rock), Ani raises the bar on what it means in their relationship to possess transgressive knowledge. As Rua tells his sister about the key to unlocking one taboo, Ani Wainoa begins to slowly strip off her clothes, juxtaposing Rua's story of tapu knowledge by navigating tabooed tides of her own. She dares him into the sexual act, telling him, '[y]ou wouldn't know and you'd be so afraid' but Rua 'knew that she knew he wasn't afraid, had never been afraid of anything they'd ever done together' and so they 'did it, did all of it' (88).

INCEST: A PRIORI V. A POSTERIORI KNOWLEDGE

Ani Wainoa and Rua enter into their incestuous act with an *a priori* awareness of their sibling relationship, but because the children are raised in separate households (Ani raised out in the bush by their maternal grandmother and Rua raised near the rest of the family by their mother Ramari) for many readers their sibling relationship is recognised entirely *a posteriori*. Although there are vague intimations as to the true nature of the children's blood relationship early in the narrative (Ramari asks Ani to 'come home to Mummy now' (39) as early as Chapter 5), readers are only fully illuminated as to the truth of Kiri's incestuous parentage when the full family genealogy is delineated in Chapter 16. This carefully chronicled revelation takes place well after Grace has detailed the sexual consummation of Rua and Ani's relationship in Chapter 12.

Grace's methodology here privileges a Maori-centric world-view, and arguably gives priority to the author's indigenous audience. Emile Durkheim emphasised in his study of incest that 'all repression of incest presupposes familial relations recognised and *organised by society*' (qtd in Turner & Maryanski 2). What Grace subversively interrogates in her spiralling revelations about Ani and Rua's parentage is the ubiquitous privileging in most New Zealand fiction of a Pakeha world view. In *Dogside Story*, as in most of Grace's earlier works, 'Maori ways of doing things and of seeing are treated as normal, while Pakeha ways are often confusing, unaccountably complex, and unfriendly (Whaitiri 555).¹⁹ The concept of the Western/Pakeha nuclear family therefore has no place in this story. Familial relations and the familial unit are not organised in this text around the concept of a married couple and their children sharing the same household. Within a Maori familial organisational structure, it is common for children to be raised by members of the extended whanau instead of by their biological parents, and for this reason the indigenous reader is more likely to recognise and identify Ani and Rua's sibling relationship early in the text.

RUA AND THE FAMILY BED

Also important to understanding the nuances of familial relationships in *Dogside Story* is a reading of Rua's Oedipalesque memories of his relationship with his mother. All of Rua's recollections of his maternal relationship are evocatively sensual and richly steeped in vivid descriptions of Ramari's body, her voice, and her smells. His most vivid memories of his mother involve sleeping in bed beside her and waking up 'hot' (41), acutely aware of the comforting sounds of his mother snoring beside him. On cold mornings he would relish his mother returning to bed after getting his father off to work, playfully asking, '[y]ou got me a warm place? Come on give me a warm', before getting 'back into bed with him, sweaty, giggling, her milk running and smelly and her straight, black hair coming out of its band' (41).

In these moments of communal love and intimacy, Rua and his mother share an erotic connection that operates as a reassurance for the boy that he is loved, cared for, and safe. Rua thinks of the bed as 'a cave' (41), a womb-like space where he can relish being a 'good boy' (41) who is literally wrapped in maternal affection. Unfortunately for Rua, however, because these poignant memories of his mother are all associated with this 'early morning bed' (40), the later juxtaposition of these warm, loving recollections of the two of them wrapped in 'smoky blankets' (40) with the memories of his mother lying sick and dying in 'that same bed', make his emotional adjustment to her illness that much more traumatic. It is unbelievable to Rua how it took 'no years at all' (44) for his mother to be transformed by her illness into a

small white, hairless woman whose arms that she held out to him each afternoon when he came home from school had been just hanging flaps of skin, whose hands picking at his face and scratching in his hair were like the twists of newspaper she used to get a flame from the stove element to light her cigarette with. The powder smell had gone and there was a smell and taste of ditches, a voice that said good boy, you been to school, you come home to Mummy. (44–45)

These frightening crone-like images starkly contrast the robust earth-goddess images that abound in Rua's descriptions of his mother pre-illness. Her sickness and subsequent death result in Rua's final ejection from the bed/womb, and eventually lead to the destruction of Rua's feelings of familial security entirely. Shortly after his mother's death, Rua learns that his father has been carrying on an illicit affair that results in the birth of Rua's half-brother Tommy John. Within months of Ramari's death, his father marries this mistress, thereby definitively displacing Rua's mother from the family home/bed forever. Rua therefore spends the rest of his adolescence and early adulthood searching for ways to recreate the sense of maternal love and connection he felt as a child — turning first to his older sister and then to his older lover, Maina, in attempts to reclaim a sense of belonging and security.

According to Kate Soper, '[t]he mother's body as the first ambience experienced by the infant becomes a kind of "archetypal primary landscape"

to which subsequent perceptual configurations of space are related. As such, moreover, it is expressive of a nostalgia for a mother-child unity, this unity itself being a figure of a desired harmony' (142–43). It is therefore not surprising that Rua spends his adult life desiring a fantasy figure that will inhabit the void left by the demise/death of the healthy mother figure. While Rua himself might be unsure 'why he'd opened his mouth to say I know a place' (74) when the character Maina (who, at 43, is nearly twice Rua's age)²⁰ is in need of a refuge from her emotionally abusive husband, it is clear to the reader that he offers his home to her because she strongly resembles (both in terms of physique and personality) the healthy/goddess image of his long-absent mother.

This nostalgia for the maternal 'primary landscape' runs strong (if unconsciously) in Rua's recountings of his early impressions of Maina. Her 'baggy eyes and baggy face' (45) are clearly reminiscent of Rua's 'baggy mother' (40), and Maina's 'muscly arms' (47) and 'big fingers' (75) act as vivid reminders of Ramari's 'round face' and 'strong hard hands' (40). Rua becomes so lost in these nostalgic interweavings of past and present that the first time he leads Maina down the rough bush trail to his house, the sound of her 'breathing hard' behind him startles him enough to wonder if she is '[g]rasping or laughing?' (93) a clear nod to his reconstructed memories of Ramari pre-illness who would 'gasp and huff and laugh and talk to him' (40) as the two walked those same trails in his childhood.

The descriptive parallels between Ramari and Maina continue throughout the remainder of Rua's first-person narrative, with him describing both women as constantly talking, singing, and dancing. After having intercourse with Maina for the first time (an experience that moves him to tears because this time he is 'grown' and there is 'no trouble' (130) with desiring the mother-figure who is not mother) he even goes so far as to draw parallels between the 'dancing dress' his mother used to wear after getting up from the family bed, and Maina's party dress, hanging in his bungalow and 'dancing there like a thin one of her' (128). It is therefore through Maina that Rua is able to construct a healthy re-enactment of the mother-child unity of his childhood (which was temporarily reconstituted in the co-dependent relationship he shared with his sister) as an adult, and it is through this relationship that he is best able to move towards the 'desired harmony' and 'oneness' that he learns comes not from retreating into a devolved 'fish-self'²¹ but by developing into a fully formed man/lover.

THE OUTCOME OF THE INCEST

Rua and Ani's sexual relationship results in the birth of their daughter, Kiri, a parentage that Rua refuses to recognise for years. Within hours of her birth, Ani runs away from Dogside and Rua gives the newborn Kiri to his bitter and sadistic Aunt Ladie Sadie, who in turn gives the baby to her daughters Amira and Babs to raise. 'The Aunties', as Rua calls them, are neglectful (leaving Kiri unattended at night, refusing to take her to a doctor when she burns herself), emotionally abusive

(constantly calling her 'makimaki, nikanika, rat, cat, witch' [103] and telling her she was 'shitted by a seagull' [151]), and verge on being physically abusive in the ways they use Kiri as slave labour to clean for them both at home and at the Post Shop where Amira works. Rua in the meantime lives in self-imposed exile in the bush in the house that was formerly (and quite significantly) inhabited by his 'Nanny Blind'. Here, Rua is able to harbour the secret that he and everyone else in his community has been 'blind' to for years. It is only there in the bush that he can live in conscious recognition of himself as 'the full dog' (104) — the father of his sister's child. The creek that lies between his shelter in the bush and the rest of his family members who live around the marae therefore acts as a chasm in the landscape that lies between 'the secret for life that had to be left with the trees' (102) and the whanau's unconscious denial of Kiri's true parentage.

It is only when Rua accepts an active role in the caretaking of his daughter (which he does at the spurring of the maternal Maina), and when the rest of the whanau is ready to recognise him as Kiri's father that the entire Dogside community is able to come together at a hui [meeting] to discuss how the tribe can learn to take better care of its own. Grace believes 'this hui over the custody of Kiri is crucial because the whole story line leads up to it' (Pistacchi). It is therefore through and around Kiri — the child that is born out of incest — that the Dogside community is able to come together and to realise that they must start 'outing' the secrets of their past if they are going to be successful in solving problems in their future.

This effort by Dogside community members to openly and honestly communicate about Ani and Rua's relationship is a step that would likely be celebrated by social worker and Maori family activist Te Rauhina Te Hau who says, 'I advocate the reunification of the whanau and if the whanau can be sort of built up again through something as appalling as this [incest], then whanau must all come together without judgment to awhi each other' (qtd in White 4). Te Hau believes that with troubling issues like incest, 'The problem is while it's not being discussed it's not an issue, if we don't discuss anything then it's not an issue, if we can get everyone acknowledging that it happens then perhaps we can turn around and alleviate the problem' (qtd in White 4). This belief that it is only through communication, and in the case of *Dogside Story* specifically intra-rather than inter-cultural communication (Drichel 4), that Grace feels solutions can be found to the problems facing contemporary Maoridom. She says, 'I do not think of Dogside as a "broken community" because it has the means, the people, the spiritual fortitude, to solve its problems' (Pistacchi). By reframing the incest in *Dogside Story* as something that brings a community together, instead of something that drives it apart, Grace offers a challenge to traditional/Western incest narratives. When Juliet Mitchell writes, '[d]oes death then feature in all sibling incest? I believe so' (65) she is not taking into account incest as it appears in a narrative like *Dogside Story* — a tale told from a specifically indigenous

perspective and which imagines a community that ‘is not ailing’ but one that has found ‘culturally appropriate ways of dealing with its ingrained problems’ (Pistacchi). This is the reason that the Dogside community awards the right to sing the closing song of the hui (and the novel) to Atawhai, the family doctor/healer, because only he ‘is old enough to understand the extent of bruising, experienced enough to read the faces and know the right moment and the right song’ (300) that will lead Dogside into a healthier future.

NOTES

- ¹ In *Mutuwhenua*, Ripeka’s aunt ‘married a second cousin and didn’t even know they were related’ (92). Ripeka’s mother blames this on the old people and says of the process of finding a husband or wife, ‘They don’t understand these old ones ... Unless you knew all the old things, then there was no way for you to know...until the old people got their tongues going and told you everything. And sometimes it was too late by then and they blamed you’ (92).
- ² In *Cousins*, after Polly’s husband Rere dies in combat, his family makes it clear they expect her to marry her young brother-in-law Aperehama, a boy who tells Polly he thinks of her as his ‘big sister’ (114). Upon learning of the family’s designs on her future, Polly says, ‘Aperehama was like a brother to me. I couldn’t stay there now that Keita’s intentions were known’ (102).
- ³ Shane and Te Paania realise long after courting, falling in love and becoming engaged that they are related by blood. Te Paania says of the situation, ‘[i]t wasn’t until our wedding day that we found out we both came from the same family, that Shane and I had the same great-grandparents. Gran Kura and my laughing grandfather were first cousins’ (21). While not incest in a legal sense, Te Paania realises that ‘if the old people had found out sooner about our close connections they may not have approved the marriage’ (21).
- ⁴ In *Baby No-Eyes*, Kura tells the grim tale of her great-uncle Rorikohatu impregnating his niece Roena, and the subsequent punishments that he suffers for his actions. When the family finds out about Rorikohatu’s relationship with Roena, ‘some of the men went looking for Rorikohatu to kill him. They found him, they didn’t quite kill him, but he was always a dead man after that’ (183). From that point on, Rorikohatu lives on the edge of the family property, never to be properly recognised, even in death, by his whanau ever again. He becomes to the family the ‘man-who-was-a-ghost’ (13), the man who no one would ‘see’, and thereby becomes a no-thing in their community.
- ⁵ It is interesting to note that in his book, *Niuc-fekai (or Savage) Island and its People*, S. Percy Smith states that in Polynesian Niue, ‘Tiki is the term for incest, of which the people had great horror. They deduce this word from their story of Mâui, of whom there were three—some say five—Mâui-matua, Mâui-tama and Mâui-tamâ-tifine. The two latter, who were brother and sister, married, and the child of this union was named Tikitiki, hence the word for incest’ (36). Smith goes on to point out the similarities between the stories involving Niue’s legendary Tikitiki and the Maori’s mythological stories about their first man, Tiki.
- ⁶ This also proves true in Maori mythology. While the pragmatic and seemingly necessary incestuous relationships between the children of Hine-ahu-one and Tiki remain free from judgment, the story of Tane’s sexual liaison with his daughter Hine-titama is steeped in moral condemnation in nearly every re-telling of the story, including Patricia Grace’s rendition of the myth in *Wahine Toa: Women of Maori Myth and Legend*.

- ⁷ Chapter One of *Dogside Story* tells the tale of 'two sisters, Ngarua and Maraenohono, who quarrelled over a canoe' (7) that was once owned by their deceased older brother — an older brother the two sisters obsessively loved. The quarrel over the canoe eventually led the two sisters to split, with Ngarua and her followers moving to the south side (called 'Dogside') of the inlet the community lived on, and Maraenohono and her followers remaining on the north side (called 'Godside').
- ⁸ Ani and Rua spend a great deal of unsupervised time together, in part because their parents are not physically present during their adolescent years. Their mother died when both children were very young, and both of their fathers left the whanau's ancestral land to find work in distant cities. Rua was left to be raised by his Aunt Wai, and Ani was left to be raised by her blind great-aunt, Nanny Blind. Many years later, when the truth about Kiri's parentage comes to light, Rua's uncle laments this lack of supervision admitting, '[w]e didn't watch out, didn't look after you good' (172).
- ⁹ Ani and Rua's dysfunctional family history is outlined in Chapter 16, pp. 113–16. This background illuminates why Ruahine (Ani's grandmother) took Ani at birth to 'bring her up as her own' (116), and gives some psychological explanation as to why Ladi Sadie (Ani and Rua's great-aunt) 'hurt', 'beat' and 'slaved' (287) her children.
- ¹⁰ Ani is raised deep in the bush first by her grandmother, and then by her blind great-aunt. The family worries deeply about the child's isolation because they 'didn't want Ani Wainoa growing up in the trees, weird' (65). Rua is Ani's only true companion growing up (he visits her regularly both with his mother as a child and then alone as an adolescent). Ani calls Rua, 'my true sibling, my utmost companion and friend deep in my heart' (202).
- ¹¹ Throughout their childhoods, Ani Wainoa consistently demonstrates a rebellious streak and it was she, and not Rua, who continuously made plans for a wide range of adventures that 'weren't allowed' (70) by their elders.
- ¹² Ani hides from Rua and the rest of the family during her pregnancy. Immediately after giving birth to Kiri, she abandons the baby with Rua and then flees (first to Auckland and then to Norway).
- ¹³ A marae is the meeting area of a community or a village which includes a courtyard and its surrounding buildings.
- ¹⁴ Something that is 'tapu' is sacred and usually forbidden or taboo.
- ¹⁵ By the end of the novel Ani is happily married to a Norwegian man and living in Scandinavia and Rua has taken custody of their daughter, Kiri, and is in a healthy relationship with Maina. As adults, both siblings seem at peace with one another (201).
- ¹⁶ The whareniui (meeting house) in a Maori community is 'the repository of talk, and rafters are its storage place' (*Dogside Story* 141). The stories of Dogside are therefore kept in the piece of tahuhu, or ancestral backbone, that supports the ceiling of their whareniui.
- ¹⁷ The Maori word 'whanau' translates in English to 'extended family'.
- ¹⁸ 'Taniwha' is most typically translated as 'water spirit' or 'monster'.
- ¹⁹ The most prevalent example of the 'confusing, unaccountably complex, and unfriendly' nature of the Pakeha world in *Dogside Story* is found in Grace's depiction of the New Zealand court system as Rua fights Amira and Babs for custody of Kiri. It is incomprehensible to the family why the issue cannot be sorted out in a hui (a family meeting held in the whareniui, where everyone is allowed to speak for themselves) without lawyers, affidavits and court-appointed strangers mediating the debate.

- ²⁰ Maina is clearly self-conscious of the age difference between herself and Rua, reminding him at various points in the text that she has ‘a son about [his] age’ (84) and he should find ‘someone young, someone without... baggage... someone who’ll want to have children’ (167).
- ²¹ After fathering Ani’s child and then later losing his leg in a drunk-driving accident, Rua becomes deeply depressed, renouncing his fully-developed human self and reverting to what he refers to as a primal ‘fish-self’. Referring to the ‘ghost’ section of his amputated leg as a ‘fish-shaped gap’ (255), Rua retreats from the communal living area surrounding the marae to live in a solitary shelter in the bush. There he finds power in evoking his ancestral epistemology, calling himself a ‘fish among other fish’ (52), a title with metonymic echoes of his ancestress Ngarua, from whom Rua’s name is derived.

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