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Plant Performance: War, Ethnicity, and the Japanese Garden in Patricia Grace's *Chappy*

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Abstract

This essay investigates the representation of the Japanese garden as a site of "plant performance" in New Zealand writer Patricia Grace's *Chappy* (2015). By drawing on critical plant studies publications by Patricia Vieira et al., John Ryan, Alan Read, Brendan Doody et al., and others, I examine both the material and metaphor of the Japanese garden in Grace's novel. Planted in New Zealand by Chappy, the garden represents a human-made and ethnic landscape, bearing a specific politicized aesthetics and coding of Japan and embodying an "ecological poesies"—a performance site that in the words of Vieira et al., is one of "bearing seeds, irrupting in flowers, sprouting rhizomes, uncoiling leaves, attracting pollinators, garnering human attention, and mobilizing transnational networks" (viii). Focusing on the ethnic and botanical "performance" of the Japanese garden in Chappy

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according to the given critical perspectives, I explore the connection between the garden and other content that addresses war, ethnicity, and transvegetal interconnectedness. I argue that the Japanese garden in Grace's novel creates and calls for a "poetics of inclusion" that centers on peace and interconnectedness rather than war and exclusion.

Keywords: Patricia Grace, Chappy, Maori, ethnicity, plant performance, Critical Plant Studies

Plant Performance: War, Ethnicity, and the Japanese Garden in Patricia Grace's *Chappy*

In his study of the motif of "Japanese invasion" in New Zealand literature of the 1980s, Daniel McKay takes notice of the legacy of the "undead tropes of the Pacific War" (129).[1] Recalling the memories of Pearl Harbor, McKay examines the perception of Japanophobia in the context of the Japanese economic expansion of the 1980s:

> The 1980s comprises a suitable decade in which to situate a case study, for it was then the "Japan Panic" reached its zenith in both the national cultures of New Zealand and the United States, "possessing" and tormenting fiction writers with images of a conquest that was always on the brink of taking place. (138)

Examining the reception of Japan in the 1980s, McKay notes that "Japanese nationals became subject to a 'poetics of exclusion'" (129) in the works of such notable New Zealand writers as Keri Hulme, Vivienne Plumb, and Ian Middleton.[2] He comments on the differences among them: "[while] Keri Hulme and Vivienne Plumb portrayed the Japanese as vampires and body-snatchers, Ian Middleton suggested that the Japanese were seeking an escape from modern culture into an "untouched, pre-modern environment" (127). It is, however, interesting to observe that both the Gothic imaginary and the Edenic sanctuary seem to result in the same exclusion of the Japanese Other in New Zealand literature of the 1980s.[3]

Taking the cue from McKay, I examine the representation of Japanese ethnicity in terms of the phytocentric performance of weaving and gardening in the novel *Chappy* by the critically acclaimed Māori writer Patricia Grace. I argue that Grace revises the representation of Japanese ethnicity via phytocentric performances by both human protagonists and vegetal agents. Different from the writers of the 1980s, Grace explores the theme from a rather complex perspective of transoceanic and transvegetal network of interconnectedness. By creating a fictional Japanese "chap" who is first found as a stowaway on an ocean liner and smuggled to New Zealand where he learns Māori and English and eventually marries a Māori woman (Oriwia), Grace orchestrates events spanning

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[1] McKay is a British scholar affiliated with Kent University.

[2] Hulme was born in 1947 and is the author of *The Bone People* (1984). Plumb, born in 1955, is the author of *My Wife Who Spoke Japanese* (1994). Middleton (1928-2007) was known for his works on the "Japanese invasion" especially in the context of the Japanese expansion in the 1980s.

[3] McKay also compares the Aotearoa writers with their US counterparts, such as Michael Crichton, *Rising Sun* (1992); Steven Schlossstein, *Kensei* (1985), *Yakuza: The Japanese Godfather* (1990); and Tom Clancy, *Debt of Honor* (1994).

the time period from the1920s to the 1980s. Intersecting the transpacific island voyages across Japan, Hawai'i, San Francisco (where Chappy never reaches his contacts, but is thrown into the harbor), New Zealand, and Somes Island, Grace maps the multi-layered Māori genealogy, known as *whakapapa*. Lying at the center is, however, this unnamed Japanese chap, who first appears to Aki (Oriwia's best friend in the *whānau*[4] and one of the lead narrators of the novel) as a "ghost"—

> *Every night while I walk the decks of my tub,*
> *I'm seeing a ghose.*
> *No, no. I gotta say that again.*
> *Every night while I walk the decks of my tub*
> *A ghose is seeing me*. (Grace 17)

This "ghostly" figure, while reminding us of the Gothic imagery employed by Hulme or Plumb, turns out to be the narrative engine of the novel. The plot centers on the disclosing of the hidden life stories of this stranger. I argue that by creating a new identity for this unnamed and ghostly figure of alterity, Grace presents Japanese ethnicity through closely-woven imageries of transvegetal interconnectedness. In addition to this narratology, the multilayered narrative threads of the novel are woven like a basket, also an important motif. In other words, Grace could be likened to a narrative basket weaver. Pearl Harbor animosities between the US and Japan are reconciled towards the end of the novel, where the Japanese chap, from "Chapan," becomes a naturalized American citizen in Hawai'i, with a newly legalized (and encoded) Anglicized name, "Chappy Star." On returning to Aotearoa, Chappy makes a Japanese garden in Oriwia's ancestral homeland, and it is the garden that becomes the final focal point of the novel.

Specifically, I investigate the Japanese garden as a site of "plant performance" from the perspective of critical plant studies. By drawing on the phytocentric discourses of Alan Read, Christa Sommerer et al., Brendan Doody et al., and others, I examine the material and metaphor of the Japanese garden as it is both a human-made landscape showing a specific politicized aesthetics and coding of Japan that evoke Vieira et al.'s term, "ecological poiesis"—a site "bearing seeds, irrupting in flowers, sprouting rhizomes, uncoiling leaves, attracting pollinators, garnering human attention, and mobilizing transnational networks" (xviii). By focusing on the botanical "performance" of the Japanese garden, I explore the motifs of war, ethnicity, and transvegetal interconnectedness from the

[4] The Māori word for "community" or "homeland."

perspective of critical plant studies. The groves of introduced bamboo (*Poaceae*) and the native plants of harakeke bushes (*Phormium tenax*) and ponga trees (*Alsophila dealbata*) are the foci of my reading. They embody the sense of vegetal agency that has been widely studied by botanists, urban planners, ecocritics, geographers, and sociologists. Further, the notion of "performance," a term designating both the performer and the audience, is applied here, as it describes and pertains to phyto-agential performance. Most importantly, in Grace's novel, the story of the "Japanese invasion" changes from the "trope of the Pacific War" to the "phyto-performance" of peace as the Japanese garden becomes "described by the people of the town as the 'peace garden'" (Grace 242). I further argue that by "performing" the literary Japanese garden in New Zealand, Grace, as a Māori writer, creates a "poetics of inclusion" that centers on peace and transvegetal interconnectedness rather than war and exclusion. Divided into four parts, this essay is organized as follows. Part one, "The Pacific War," focuses on existing criticism in relation to the trope of war and ethnicity in *Chappy*. In part two, "Weaving the Basket," I lay out the theoretical framework of "performing plants" by drawing on the phytocentric discourses of critical plant studies scholars. In part three, "The Japanese Garden," I turn to a textual reading of the "phyto-performance" of the Japanese garden with a focus on the bamboo, as well as the rocks. Part four functions as the conclusion.

The Pacific War

Born in 1937, Patricia Grace is one of the most representative Māori writers of the English language in New Zealand. To date, she has published eight novels, eight collections of short stories, and five children's books. Her first book, *Waiariki* (1975), was the first collection of short stories by a Māori woman writer of English. Her novel *Potiki* (1986) is the first Aotearoan novel in English that uses Māori language and expressions. Most notably, Grace refused to provide translations or glossaries, thus sparkling the spirit of postcolonial insurgence in contemporary Aotearoan literature in English. Grace has been widely hailed as "a major Māori writer" of the Māori renaissance (Valle vii). She was awarded the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 2008.

Chappy, published in 2015, can be considered as the third novel in her Pacific War Trilogy and follows the previous two publications, *Tu* (2004), which concerns the experience of the Māori 28th Battalion soldiers fighting in Italy during WWII, and *Ned and Katina: A True Love Story in War and Peace* (2009), which is a family memoir about a Māori soldier who meets his future wife, a

woman from Crete, during WWII. *Chappy* centers on a love story between a local Māori woman (Oriwia) and a Japanese outsider (Chappy) and takes place during the years before and after WWII (roughly between the 1920s and the 1980s). In comparison with Aotearoan writers of the 1980s, Grace writes about the "Japanese invasion" from a transoceanic perspective of interconnectedness: how Māori and WWII volunteers are connected with the Italians, the Greeks, the Japanese, and the Hawaiians[5] by the war in the Pacific and beyond.

The motif of the Pacific War penetrates the novel. To start with, Chappy is metaphorically "excluded" by his own country for opposing the war and thus refusing to fight for Japan's expansion across China (Grace 93). As Simone Oettli notes, Chappy is pacifist and war horrifies him and haunts him in his dreams. Grace describes war thus: "Missiles, bullets, sabres. Blood. Moving forward over severed heads and gouting bodies. Screams. Crying. City burning. Himself on fire awaiting death" (118-9). After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Chappy is deported from Somes Island internment camp, New Zealand, and sent to a Japanese prison camp in Marmagao, Goa (at the time a Portuguese colony). When the war is over, he is repatriated to Japan and then barred from re-entry to New Zealand due to immigration complications, for his New Zealand marriage certificate bears a different name. Separated from Oriwia, Chappy seeks migration to New Zealand by way of Hawai'i, where he can apply to be naturalized as an American citizen. He eventually returns to New Zealand and to Oriwia as a man with a different nationality and a different name. Now a "naturalized" American citizen, he is named Chappy Star.[6]

In his review of *Chappy*, Adam Dudding notes that the germ of the novel was a story told by Grace's late husband. At his hometown, Ruatoria, there was a Japanese man who married a Māori woman and was well-received by the *whānau*. The Japanese man however was deported from New Zealand when the Pacific War broke out. Inspired by the story, Grace "transport[ed] reality into fiction" (Dudding). Lawrence Jones notes that Grace "decided to explore the theme of Māori relations with representatives of 'other ethnicities.'"[7] Conjuring up the figure of a Japanese deserter, Grace does not want to "enter the consciousness of [the] Japanese character but to show him through the eyes of

[5] It turns out that Aki will marry a native Hawaiian woman, Ela, and live in Hawai'i for more than ten years. His brother-in-law, Ishy, is Japanese, and is married to Ela's sister, Malia. The novel emphasizes the transoceanic connections between New Zealand and Hawai'i.

[6] As well as becoming a New Zealander, Chappy becomes an Asian American. This novel therefore can be read also in the context of Asian American literature. See Hsiu-chuan Lee's "The Asia-Pacific in Asian American Transmigration: Lydia Minatoya's *The Strangeness of Beauty*."

[7] According to Jones, the germination of the novel is similar to the account given by Dudding.

various members of the *whānau*" (Jones). In the context of the Pacific War, the challenge for her is "how does the *whānau* deal with a Japanese man with no Māori or English thrust upon it during a war with Japan?" (Jones).

Different from Hulme, Plumb, or Middleton, Grace depicts Japanese ethnicity in a far more complicated historical, transpacific, and transvegetal context of interconnectedness. Leonie John, in her study of the "Oceanic memory in contemporary Anglophone Māori literature," argues that Grace does so by way of a multilayered narrative performed by Aki and Oriwia:

> Grace's novel draws Pacific connections to Japan and Hawai'i through love stories. The book's main part consists of the two Māori storytellers, Aki and Oriwia, narrating stories in turns from their past. This core is framed by Oriwia's grandson Daniel, who comes to Aotearoa [from Switzerland] to find out about his deceased Japanese grandfather Chappy and is thus the one who initiates the telling of layered stories by Aki and Oriwia. (144)

The narrative structure thus critically ties to the figure of the multicultural, multiracial[8] grandson Daniel, who visits Oriwia and Aki and tape-records their stories. Aki actually tells the stories in Māori, which Oriwia translates into English for Daniel. This special arrangement is meant to highlight the Māori oral traditions of storytelling. Simone Oettli observes that although "Grace's main themes are disappearance and loss," it is important to understand that she pays no less attention to "the craft of storytelling." Oettli further notes how Grace "weaves" the narrative fragments: "Chronology is discarded, and events are mentioned when characters feel the need to talk about them. Yet everything is linked and there is a point of understanding, which leads to a new story." In other words, Oettli highlights the narrative art of Māori oral traditions and the interweaving of multiple layers of stories as told by Aki and Oriwia.

Most importantly, as Leonie John notes, there are three things which draw our attention to the Māori memory as a means of transoceanic interconnectedness: "[F]irstly, the Māori notion of whakapapa and its potential for Oceanic connectivity; secondly, different mechanisms of memory transmission; and thirdly, the representation of special objects (taongas) embodying or aiding memories" (148). Specifically, she comments on the importance of the Oceanic *whakapapa*:

> Perhaps one of the most common and important themes in Māori fiction is that of *whakapapa*. It is important to underline how *whakapapa* is more than simply genealogy; rather, it is a complex and variable system which can function as a tool of memory, identity formation and connection. The structure of *whakapapa* is usually

[8] See Foreword, and Maria Root's "Bill of Rights for People of Mixed Heritage" (1993).

> described as being layered. (46)[9]

Likewise, I argue that this multilayered genealogy of *whakapapa* resonates with the braiding of the two major narrative threads—the narrations by Aki and Oriwia. Resulting from these multilayered story lines, complex "networks of relationships, or interconnections" (qtd. in John 46), emerge in the story-scape of the novel. And one of the most important connections in the novel is that between New Zealand and Hawai'i. As Paula Morris aptly comments, "home is an expanded Pacific circle—New Zealand, Japan, Hawai'i. The cultural resonances with Hawai'i are of particular concern to the novel." This explains why, when Aki marries a Hawaiian woman (Ela), he is doubly excited at this moment in his life, when his heart is "bumping against its walls," for he recognizes that the Hawaiian *whakapapa* recited at the wedding "was [his] own genealogy" (Grace 185). Aki works "his heart into the kalo[10] field" in Hawai'i for he knows "the old stories of Hawai'i were similar to [those] of [his] own country" (201). Aki's marriage to Ela and later his son's marriage to Oriwia's daughter[11] extends and interweaves family relationships and discloses and re-connects the primordial transoceanic eco-cultural relationships between New Zealand and Hawai'i.

Moreover, it is also at the wedding when Aki realizes the power of *whakapapa* as a particular form of oral performance. Leonie John notes that "*whakapapa* is especially performed during important cultural events and is a decidedly oral form of remembering that includes connections to the past and to particular people" (150). As a whole, "the performance has the power to question predominant regimes of representations of the past" (148). Of particular concern to my discussion is that in the description of Aki and the interconnected and multilayered *whakapapa* performed by Paa at the wedding Grace enlists a vegetal image:

> Though Paa had been the ear-holder when I was a child, this was the first time I had ever heard him doing the recitations himself, ranging far and wide, down, out and along the *many branches*, to connect our home family to my Hawaiian family. (italics added) (Grace 185)

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[9] It is of interest to mention the work by Jospeh Te Rito: "The whakapapa paradigm [. . .] exists as a genealogical narrative, a story told layer upon layer, ancestor upon ancestor up to the present day. There are parallel lineages of characters which run vertically side by side, era by era, and incident by incident" (qtd. in John 46).

[10] The Hawaiian word for "taro."

[11] Aki's son, Lani, falls in love with Oriwia's second daughter, Binnie, and they settle in Hawai'i. This way, Aotearoa is (re)connected with Hawai'i. On the other hand, Oriwia's elder daughter, Daphne, is married to a Danish banker and gets settled in Switzerland and this is the reason why Daniel grows up in Europe.

The "many branches" of the *whakapapa* performance, weaving the present and the past, connecting Aotearoa and Hawai'i, and out-branching into many arborescent directions, imaginatively tie to the traditional Māori handcraft of basket weaving, a subject to which I turn in the next section.

Weaving the Basket

The Green Thread: Dialogues with the Vegetal World, edited by Patricia Vieira, John C. Ryan, and Monica Gagliano represents the newly emerging field of critical plant studies and its investigations of "different modes of relationality between plants and humans" (x). The editors are primarily concerned with the "shift from plants-as-lifeless-objects to plants-as-living-agents" (xxi). Interested in "diverse approaches to vegetal beings" (x), they represent a group of interdisciplinary scholars who venture into the vegetal intersectionalities across sciences, philosophy, and the arts. Specifically, these scholars explore the dialogues between critical plant studies and performance studies. By "plant performance," they mean "the understanding [of] the performativity of plants [that goes] beyond human-focused conceptualizations of performance and [the] appreciating [of] the specific comportment of the vegetal" (xviii). They argue that "performance studies could expand further, becoming even more encompassing vis-à-vis nonhumans, through a careful analysis of vegetal being" (xviii). Overall, they want to extend the "notion of performance as an evolving, transgressive, and contested practice by attending closely to the performing-plant" (xx). For the "interstices between plants and performance" (xviii), they are interested in two things:

> On the one hand, the intrinsic performativity of plants is their ecological *poiesis*: bearing seeds, irrupting in flowers, sprouting rhizomes, uncoiling leaves, attracting pollinators, garnering human attention, and mobilizing transnational networks. On the other hand, living plants are also made to perform: in (and as) topiaries, gardens, parks, reserves, varieties, cultivars, hybrids, genetically modified crops, and even works of art. (xviii)

So, it is easy to see that phytocentric critics are interested in both the intrinsic *poiesis* of vegetation and the extrinsic manifestations of vegetal "performativity"—understood as the botanical "creative engagements with culture, humanity, and other species" (xix). In both instances, phytocentric critics accent "the bodily presence of vegetal being—its materialities, sensorialities, and physical exchanges with other species—which is central to any consideration of the performing plant" (xix).

Understandably, phytocritics are most concerned with the material agency of plants, which they exemplify by way of the performative capacity of plants. Four studies in relation to "performing plants" are highlighted here. First, film critic Craig Uhlin, in his essay "Plant-Thinking with Film: Reed, Branch, Flower," revisits cinematic ecocriticism and argues for "an engagement with plants in film . . . to reveal unacknowledged parallels between plant-life and cinema" (201-02). Interested in the "complicity between the vegetal and the cinematic" (202), Uhlin recovers the forgotten role of plants in the early evolution of cinema. By doing so, he "establishes an interconnection between 'the body of the plant and the body of the film, [each being defined] by their receptivity to light and apparent motion linked to photosynthesis'" (202). Defining the intersectionality between plants and cinema as "vegetal filmmaking," Uhlin aims to "[incorporate] the perspectives of plant-thinking as a structural mechanism in the production of images" and to "subject anthropocentric perception to a decentering and marginalization" (215). Citing Michael Marder, Uhlin emphasizes that the vegetal soul's "subterranean history relates it to the exact opposite: the fullness and exuberance of life, vigor, and brimming energy" (qtd. in Uhlin 204). Further, critical plant studies scholars' findings (and the findings of other botanical scholars) that plants are capable of mobility is particularly significant in my reading of the figures of the "running bamboos" in Grace's novel, a reading that comprises the final section of this paper.

While some critical plant studies scholars focus on the materiality and movement of plants, others look to media studies in their investigations of the "mediation of plant being" (Vieira et al., xix). Thus, as Vieira et al., summarize the work of one of those scholars, Pansy Duncan—in an essay entitled "Shrubs and the City: Urban Nature in *Rear Window*"—focuses on the zinnias, seemingly unimportant flowers, in film director Alfred Hitchcock's classic thriller *Rear Window* (1954). Duncan aims to "reclaim the performative agency of potted, urban plant life" (Vieira et al., xix) as it is portrayed in the film, for she argues that zinnias, in—"a recurring scene that represents the critical role of plants in the film 'from inconspicuous background to all-too-obvious foreground'"—not only track down the murderer of Mrs. Thorwald but also "subordinate human drama to urban plant life" (Duncan 226).[12] The change of zinnias from background to foreground, from "setting" to "plot," also helps with my reading of the bamboo as a plant that plays and performs a key role in Grace's novel.

[12] The pot of zinnias is key to the murder of Mrs. Thorwald who is later discovered buried beneath the flower bed.

French and Austrian media artists Christa Sommerer, Laurent Mignonneau, and Florian Weil, in their essay "The Art of Human to Plant Interaction," discuss the issue and concept of the human-plant interface and their application of this concept in their media installation art works. Such application (and recognition) is impacting the field of cybernetics and its traditional focus on the concept of the human-computer interaction. Since the 1990s, Sommerer and Mignonneau have been pioneering human-plant interface installations. Their most representative work, *Interactive Plant Growing* (1992), allows viewers to "approach and touch real plants and see this human-to-plant interaction translated into images of computer-generated plants on a large projection screen" (Sommerer et al., 233). By doing so, they want to "create a link between humans and plants and thereby challenge our relationship to the vegetal world through an artistic and engaging experience" (233). Similar to the work of Sommerer and Mignonneau, who create and invite exploration of visual "human-plant interfaces," my reading of the figures of Chappy and the Japanese garden in Grace's novel is purposed towards inviting exploration of these figures as they compromise a "human-plant interface."

Alan Read, a British theatre scholar, is interested in the common practice of gardening as a "phyto-performance" and so in critically understanding plants from the joint perspectives of theatre and environmental studies. In his essay, "The English Garden Effect: Phyto-Performance, Abandoned Practices, and Endangered Uses," Read elaborates on "the idea of the English garden effect as a trigger point for discussing contemporary site-specific performance projects that engage plants in more ethical, responsive, and open-ended ways" (255). Applying Marder's notion of "plant-thinking," Read defines gardening as a form of phyto-performances—as "'practices of co-presentation alongside and within plant processes to offer affective insights to the deep ecology of these rearrangements" (255). According to Read, the documentary theater work, *Lost Gardens* (2013), exemplifies "phyto-performance and the resilience of plant life" (260).

By drawing on the work of such scholars as Uhlin, Sommerer et al., and Read, I examine the notion of "plant performance" in relation to the handcraft of basket weaving in *Chappy*. I also am interested in plant performance—in particular as plant performance ties to issues of vegetal autopoiesis and material agency—as it relates to the theme of war in the novel. Plant performance is inseparably "woven" with the Pacific war. Chappy is enlisted into the Japanese army although he is against the war and proclaims himself "unable to hate" (Grace 93). He becomes a deserter, and survives by living on "any fruit or plant that he could eat" (93). His grandmother, one of the many women to intervene in Chappy's story, changes his name, and puts him in contact with an elderly bas-

ket-maker who arranges passages for those needing to escape Japan (94). Chappy learns the handcraft of bamboo-weaving from the basket-maker's daughter while in hiding at the port city of Hinode.

Chappy's handcraft skill is revealed to Daniel (his grandson) when he visits Oriwia in New Zealand. Oriwia shows him three bamboo baskets made by Chappy, which she has saved over the years:

> One was a simple carrying basket, wide and shallow, suitable for shopping. Another, tall and elegantly shaped, was meant for the displays for flowers. A third, which I could see had been well used, was a baby's cradle. I imagined the "long hands" which had threaded and tied, shaped and bound these. . . . I thought of how objects can call to us from across time. (Grace 91)

The bamboo baskets, made from vegetal material, have become a "taonga," a treasured item that connects the present with the past. They represent one of the three mechanisms that Leonie John discusses in explaining traditional Māori memory transmission. The "taonga" is a vegetal material manifestation of the craft and presence of the mysterious Japanese grandfather whom Daniel never sees. The "taonga" thus becomes a "human-plant interface" that connects the grandfather and the grandson across time and space.

Moreover, it is important to note that basket-making becomes a site of "human-plant performance." Chappy is later introduced to the ancient Māori handcraft of harakeke-weaving performed by Māori women:

> Grandmother Nunu and Ma Girlie were sitting to one side of the gardens making loosely woven baskets suitable for carrying vegetables. . . . Chappy stopped what he was doing to watch the women weaving using strands of leaves cut from the harakeke bushes. He didn't know the word "harakeke" then. Though he had seen the criss-crossing hands of Nunu . . . he had not witnessed the whole basket-making process before.
>
> He watched the women divide the leaves into strips and flick the green from the ends with mussel shells, leaving just the strands of fibre. He watched them plait these ends to form a base from which they began to weave upwards to make large airy baskets. After observing for some time he went off to the bamboo grove, returning with a load of trimmed canes.
>
> The grandmothers stopped what they were doing to watch a miracle occur—to witness the long hands[13] lay the bamboo stalks down, to see the threading, the tying, the shaping, the binding, the trimming, the finishing, and finally the placing of this *new thing* on the pile with the other baskets. (italics added) (Grace 87-8)

The importance of the *bamboo* basket-making scene in the midst of Māori har-

[13] Aki observes that Chappy has "long, pale fingers" (23), thus marking ethnic difference.

akeke weavers is threefold. First, the harakeke (flax) plant is a vegetal symbol of the *whanau* (extended family). In the introduction provided by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, the curators state that "[t]he harakeke (flax) plant represents the *whānau* (family) in Māori thought. The rito (shoot) is the child. It is protectively surrounded by the awhi rito (parents). The outside leaves represent the tūpuna (grandparents and ancestors)."[14] The harakeke then is a vegetal symbol and material reminder of Māori family inheritance and ancestral bonding across generations. Derek Lardelli, a master traditional Māori harakeke weaver, writes in his poem "Welcome O Daughter:"

> Welcome O Daughter
> To the sacred basket of knowledge
> Here delicately woven before you
> The first thread is the assembly of scraped harakeke leaves
> A human bond that connects us from the homeland.
> (*The Eternal Thread* 20)

Mobilizing the craft and metaphor of weaving, the narrator above (a parental figure), instructs his daughter about the ancestral tradition of weaving. The harakeke basket thus becomes a vegetal bond that interweaves offspring and ancestors. Miriama Evans and Ranui Ngarimu, in *The Eternal Thread: The Art of Māori Weaving*, note that "The first Māori voyagers arriving in Aotearoa found the climate much cooler than the tropical homeland they had left behind. The new, spacious land promised abundant food from the sea, estuaries and forests, as well as a wealth of natural resources" (20). Evans and Ngarimu further explain that "the readily available harakeke with its long, leafy blades became the most commonly used weaving and plaiting resource. . . . The discovery that muka (fiber) could be produced from harakeke lead to the production of textile using whatu (weaving) for a range of purposes from common, quickly fashioned garments to the finest cloaks" (25). The harakeke plant is thus something that is practically intimate and spiritually potent for Māori people.

Second, as a commonplace household object, the harakeke basket (or bag) also signifies the bond between humans and nonhumans. It is the "human-plant interface" that Sommerer and Mignonneau highlight in their works. The presence of the harakeke basket is ubiquitous in the novel, from the moment when Aki is about to disembark and sorts through his belongings for his "woven hat," which he puts into his "grass bag" (Grace 28), to the moment when Chappy sees for the first time Aki's grandmother (Nunu),"sitting cross-legged weav-

[14] See eara.govt.nz. Accessed 2 October 2020.

ing green strands" (37). And there's the "flax basket woven by Grandmother Nunu" (held by Mo, Aki's fellow seafarer) (61), as well as the group of Māori women who weave harakeke baskets with Nunu (87-88). Harakeke weaving is commonly practiced by the Māoris and reflects engagements with plants that "restore bonds of kinship with nonhumans and deliver a remedy to our collective alienation from the rest of nature" (Vieira et al., xxi). The harakeke basket thus signifies a close connection with the plant world in Aotearoa; it creates an interspecies bonding between humans and nonhumans.

Third, the bamboo functions as a vegetal coding manifesting Chappy's Japanese ethnicity. In "Sustainable Management of Satoyama Bamboo Landscapes in Japan," Shigeo Suzuki and Nobukazu Nakagoshi state,

> Bamboo is one of the most commonly used plants in Japan. With the exception of Northern Japan, where the climate is too cold, bamboo groves are a fundamental component of the satoyama landscape. Historically, people used bamboo culms for building materials and other commodities, and the edible shoots were used as seasonal ingredients in Japanese cuisine.[15] (211)

By weaving bamboo baskets, Chappy, the "ghost man" (Grace 87), engages in a craft that manifests who he is in vegetal terms. That is to say, bamboo weaving symbolizes a kind of transvegetal inter-connectedness between Japan and Aotearoa. (Similar to Chappy, bamboo is not "native' to New Zealand, but several taxa of the subfamily *Bambusoideae* in New Zealand are now naturalized.) The time when Chappy is watching Nanu weave her basket is the time in New Zealand when bamboo is still a newcomer (and not yet commonly regarded as being a so-called invasive species). Thus, the women's surprise at Chappy's construction of a bamboo basket probably has as much to do with seeing the new bamboo plant—first recorded in New Zealand in 1935 (Sykes 153)—as with witnessing its usefulness in the weaving baskets. As much as weaving is a handcraft tradition that is common in both Japan and Aotearoa, the use of bamboo makes Chappy's craft a "new thing": "this new object would not be used as a spud bag. It was a treasure and mustn't be sold" (88). By performing bamboo-weaving, a traditional Japanese handcraft that is similar to Māori traditions of harakeke weaving, Chappy is bridging two cultures across time and place. Similarly, the *whakapapa* (oral tradition) bridges two cultures across time and place. As Aki recognizes, the *whakapapa* in Hawai'i "was [his] own geneal-

[15] "Satoyama" (里山) means the contact zone between the village (sato), where humans reside, and the mountain (yama), where non-human habitats are found. It is the borderland that connects nature and culture in the Japanese landscape. Suzuki and Nakagoshi also comment on the quick expansion of the bamboo groves (212), which makes the "sustainable management" necessary and which I will discuss in relation to the incident that happens to Noddy in the last section of the paper.

ogy" (185). An important scene of transvegetal "plant performance," the scene of basket weaving by both Māori weavers and Chappy emphasizes their shared background as Pacific islanders. As Oriwia notes, his "bamboo" basket is taken as "a treasure" and always presented as part of "gift-giving" (88). A fast-growing plant species that thrives in New Zealand, bamboo now is considered to be an invasive or undesirable species, but in the time in which Grace sets her novel, it is not burdened with this reputation. Chappy, Oriwia, Aki, Noddy's brother and sister, and community members gather to extract the roots of the old bamboo, burning off the new shoots when came up. The new bamboo also is kept "under control of goats" (237).

In addition to the tropes of bamboo and basket weaving, Chappy's Japanese garden represents what in critical plant studies terms is known as the "plant-human interface." It is this subject—the Japanese garden that Chappy cultivates when he returns to New Zealand many years after the war—to which I turn in the next section.

The Japanese Garden

Like the two kinds of weaving plants used for basket-making in *Chappy*, there are also two types of gardens. The first is the Māori vegetable garden, which is ubiquitous in the *whānau* without being conspicuous. Oriwia mentions that Aotearoa is a place "where most people had their own gardens" (Grace 81). The other is the Japanese garden described at the end of the novel. To Oriwia, "a garden means food" (237). But the Japanese garden is foreign: "Rock you cannot eat. But my eyes eventually open up to Chappy's garden" (238). However, if the two gardens are different in origin, purpose, and appearance, then they both are "phyto-performances" in the sense that they are vegetal practices that "offer affective insights to the deep ecology of these rearrangements" (Read 255). Vegetable gardens are everyday practices in the *whānau*, and the Japanese garden (as the name suggests) registers a special practice that concerns Chappy's ethnicity.

Undoubtedly, gardening is an important component of cultures around the world. One of the most remarkable fictional accounts of gardening is *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999) by Native American writer Leslie Marmon Silko. Written as a *bildungsroman*, the novel narrates the journey of a young Indigenous girl, Indigo, who is uprooted from her Sand Lizard tribe in southwest America and embarks on a journey led by her adopted white foster parents, Hattie and Edward, across Europe, Brazil, and finally back to the old tribal gardens in the

dunes. It is a journey of initiation into Anglo-European cultures, as well as one of making connections across Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. Critics have noted the importance of the themes of hybridity and adaptation in the novel. Chi-szu Chen notes in his essay, "Gardening Ideas across Borders: Mobilities and Sustainability in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*," that "different kinds of gardens (kitchen, fruit, botanical, and landscape gardens) are based on diverse gardening ideals and practices, reflecting a diversity of cultures and mobilities" (66). Likewise, Neveen Samir Mohamed, in "Dialogism and Native American Literature in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*," argues that Silko's work "explores the differences and similarities between Native and non-Native ways of being in the world, [and] enters a dialogue between cultures, in which cultural exchange as well as resistance against cultural hegemony are equally appreciated."

While there are numerous vegetable gardens mentioned in the novel, Grace does not elaborate on them. Māori gardens are presented as part of the everyday world of vegetation in which the *whānau* is situated. They are integral to the scenes where children climb up a native manuka tree (*leptospermum scoparium*) (Grace 38), Chappy's fever is relieved by native kawakawa leaves (*piper excelsum*) (37), Aki whacks tangled roots with a manuka pole (51), the family "finish[es] work in the gardens" (95), Oriwia and Chappy plant fruit trees behind the garden (105), Oriwia sells a cartload of vegetables from her garden (depicted in a photograph) (106), and, in Hawai'i, Ela's mother makes a healing salve from a bundle of leaves for Aki after the bombing of Pearl Harbour (115). It is taken for granted that gardens are part of the *whānau*. When Chappy is deported during the war, Oriwia's dream for reunion is that eventually her husband "would come home . . . to a new house, gardens and good businesses" (144). In her reading of Silko's novel, Joni Adamson observes the traditional gardening that Indigo and her sister practice. They are "[t]rained by their grandmother to hunt for wild seeds and fruits in the desert and to grow the corn, beans, squash and amaranth in their garden, the sisters carefully store their food in earthen jars and grow their seeds in rain-irrigated gardens" (1). Chen also comments that the "means of gardening of plants and of ideas demonstrate how sustainable ideas help maintain sustainable communities endangered by colonial and capitalist exploitation" (66). In other words, vegetable gardens are part of the native practice of sustainable small-scale farming that helps maintain the Indigenous natural environment. These small-scale practices form a vital world of biodiversity able to sustain the vegetal environments in both the traditional dune gardens of the Sand Lizard family, and Māori *whānau*.

But the garden Grace centers on is not the vegetal environments of the

dune gardens or the *whanau* garden. Grace centers on the Japanese garden and her approach is subtle. The image of the Japanese garden is first introduced to Aki, when he finally meets up with Chappy in Tokyo thirteen years after the war: "We arrived at a public garden, a restful place of soft color by a large lake where pathways went in many directions. After the noise of traffic and the bustle of people there was the quiet stillness of rock" (Grace 139).

It is the "quiet stillness of rock" that characterizes the Japanese rock garden, or what is known as *karesansui*. In a now classic essay, *Reading Zen in the Rocks*, by the French art historian Francois Berthier, Berthier discusses the fifteen rocks in the classical *karesansui* at Ryoan-ji in Kyoto, a "five-centuries-old" garden symbolizing the "stillness and eternity of rocks measuring themselves against the immensity of the void" (6). "Rocks, or ishi, are foundational components of Japanese gardens. They typically represent mountains, but they may also symbolize the figure of Buddha, or a gesture of strength and power as in "the *yang* of the landscape, the male strength opposed to the female *yin* of placid water" (Balston 16). It is the strangeness of the rock in Chappy's garden that draws Aki's attention:

> What I could see . . . was a few doctored trees, collections of flat-topped stones, that had been taken from the river mouth, and large rocks that had been delivered from the quarry out on the coast. The stones were selected . . . to form stepping stones . . . embedded in soil so that only the flat tops showed . . . (Grace 238)

By drawing attention to the stone arrangement, it is clear that Chappy is making a *karesansui*, an enigmatic Japanese garden aesthetics that is related to Zen Buddhism (Berthier 26).

Moreover, this cultural and spiritual quality of "quiet stillness of rock" turns out to be fundamental in the novel. It is important to note that Ela's sister (Malia) is married to a Japanese man whose name is "Ishy" (rock). Ishy not only symbolizes the heritage and presence of the Japanese immigrant community in Hawai'i but also embodies the rock-like "foundational" bonds between Ishy and Chappy, who are both Japanese. Critically, it is Ishy who helps Chappy with the immigration paperwork, thus facilitating his return to New Zealand as a naturalized American citizen. Years later, when Chappy and Oriwia finally meet again in Hawai'i, it is notable that "Chappy stood unmoving" like a rock "apart from his non-stop tears" (Grace 152).

The powerful "quiet stillness of rock" markedly contrasts with the "stoney" geo-stratas of Europe, as those lithic formations are observed by Daniel. Born in Switzerland, Daniel begins his Prologue with a feeling of alienation from his birth country: "And what sort of a country was Switzerland anyway, I thought. So neutral. So cuckoo. So heavy with banks and the world's money, it's a wonder

the ground didn't crack open beneath it all. Stones." (Grace 9). Similarly, Daniel is not interested in the "old, prestigious, focused, disciplined" European university where his Danish father has sent him for study. Resentfully, he says, "stone it was, the university and the university town" (12). His restlessness leads him to see himself as "a stone . . . I am clay. Or I am dust blowing anywhere or nowhere" (10). Grace, as master weaver of the narrative, softens, loosens, and transforms the "stoniness" of the Old World into the "quiet stillness of rock" in the Japanese garden by transplanting Daniel to Aotearoa, where he will connect with the mother tongue of his grandmother (249), and the history of his Japanese grandfather.

The Japanese garden finally comes into focus when Daniel and Oriwia get together for another round of storytelling. Seated in the Aotearoa Japanese garden, Daniel describes what he sees:

> From where we sat, we had a fine view of the forward portion of my grandfather's garden: the stone patio at the front of the house, stepping stones which emerged from there, mounds and banks where shrubs had been trimmed into boulder shapes. Some of these "boulders" remained a glossy green, others were tight with red, white or pink flowers. In other places, flowers spiked up, blue, purple, yellow, but even so the impression was of muted color. (Grace 240)

Different from a classic *karesansui*, Chappy has availed himself of an assortment of shrubs and flowers "to enhance or surprise but not to overtake" (240). In the apparent muteness of the garden color scheme, Daniel notices something "strange":

> There was a harakeke bush . . . it was the plant the old ones had used for their basket-weaving, watched by Grandfather Chappy that long time ago, inspiring him to make and add his bamboo containers to their collection . . . . The [harakeke bush] kept its strong, green blades throughout the seasons. . . .
>
> There was a cluster of three ponga trees, all kept at different heights. Easy to grow, my grandmother explained; a matter of cutting sections of black trunk to the required lengths and placing them in the ground. With plenty of water, the trunks take root at the base and ferns spread outward from their tops to form wide umbrellas. (241)

The ponga tree, "the most famous among tree ferns, also is the national symbol of New Zealand" (Flagler 20). The presence of the native ponga trees and the harakeke bushes in the Japanese rock garden illustrates the theme of "transvegetal interconnectedness" in *Chappy*. Plants know no boundaries: they move across and cross-fertilize. The combination of the rock arrangements, bamboo groves, harakeke bushes, and ponga trees thus makes the Japanese garden a "hybrid production" offering a "horticultural dialogue" between Japan and New Zealand.

Most importantly, "though it was man-made and structured, you could have the feeling of peace" (Grace 242). The Japanese rock garden, or the *karesansui*, represents a "human-plant interface." It represents not only an anthropocentric landscape aesthetics that is specific to Japan but also a phyto-performance of vegetal *poiesis* that showcases a sense of Indigeneity endemic to the botanical environment of New Zealand. Different species of vegetation adapt well and appear to co-inhabit in a most peaceful and mutually nurturing environment. Chappy's garden is regarded as "'an oasis of peace in our busy town" as this is reported in the local newspaper, and later simply as the "peace garden" (242).

Conclusion

By focusing on the notion of "plant performance," I have argued that the novel tells an alternative story of the Japanese invasion. I will end by further discussing the notion of "phyto-performance" in relation to Noddy and the accident in the bamboo thicket.[16] Noddy is Aki's cousin. He suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and is hostile to Chappy. As Aki explains, an "ex-prisoner of Japan, [Noddy] had lost his mind because of the treatment he'd received" (Grace 151). His hostility escalates when, at the wedding of Aki's son and Oriwia's daughter, Noddy "put his hands round Chappy's neck, throttling him," thus confirming to Chappy that "Japan is not loved" (187). Aki adds, "Two or three years later, Noddy went missing . . . and was not found" (189). Toward the end of the novel, when Chappy is cutting canes in the bamboo grove, and making preparations for the Japanese garden, he stumbles across the body of Noddy and hurriedly fetches Aki to the site:

> [Chappy's] ghost feet led me to the mid-section of the bamboo thicket where he'd been cutting. There were tied bundles on the trailer, loose sticks on the ground. I pressed my way in behind him while he held back a section of canes for me, and in there, deep, was Noddy—bones, old cloth, gumboots—still standing because of the tightness of vegetation which now grew through and about, binding him. (235)

The scene of bamboo binding the body of Noddy provides another, though disturbing, instance of "plant performance." The bamboo thicket, being unattended, is in this way performing a vegetal vigor beyond human control.

[16] As Jones points out, "a recurrent cross-cultural theme is the contrast between those who accept cultural difference such as Aki and (in his quiet way) Chappy and those who are intolerant of other cultures, such as Noddy, who hates Chappy for the terrible things the Japanese army did to him in the war" (Jones.).

Suzuki and Nakagoshi have mentioned in their study that "bamboo groves . . . are expanding quickly" (218); it is an innate quality of this species. And, as Suzuki and Nakagoshi have argued, that is why a sustainable management of bamboo groves is needed. Otherwise, it will result in the deterioration of biodiversity and soil nutrition (220). As Aki recalls:

> The bamboo grove . . . had taken up and thickened to a wide belt in an unused paddock. Other unwanted plants—scrub, thistle and blackberry—struggled against it as it broke fences, jumped ditches, clogged waterways. (Grace 236)

As the "unwanted" bamboo grove "broke fences, jumped ditches, clogged waterways" moving onto arable land, it signals its (unwanted) vital mobility. Being fast growing, these plants are regarded by scientists as the "running bamboos" (Xu et al., 1). I argue that the material mobility of the bamboo groves suggests a vegetal agency that transcends the anthropocentric control and "performs" a will of its own. And yet that "anthropocentric control" is essential if, as Balston states, Japanese landscape creations were designed 'to reflect natural life forces, rather than to celebrate the achievements of mankind" (14). Within the peace garden, the placement of the bamboo (creative, wild, invasive, a plant that "overruns" (Grace 240)) acts also as a reminder of the inequitable life forces existing in human and transvegetal worlds that have driven the narrative.

Patricia Grace delivers a Māori oral tradition of whakapapa (genealogy) in *Chappy*, in which multiple layers of Japanese ethnicity are interwoven with the plant agencies of bamboo groves, harakeke bushes, ponga trees, and the Japanese *karesansui* garden. By doing so, she tells a different story of the "Japanese invasion." Placing the ghostly Japanese deserter in the center of the *whanau*, she fleshes out the "quiet stillness" of a rock figure, standing seemingly unmoving. Knowing how much "Japan is not loved" in the context of WWII, Grace works unobtrusively to soften the deep-seated hostility against Japan, by reminding us, through Chappy, that an individual is not necessarily the embodiment of her or his nation's politics. As a Māori writer, Grace sets her eye on the rocks and represents a hybridized Japanese rock garden that includes bamboo groves, harakeke bushes, and ponga trees in the midst of an assortment of muted-color flowers, an arched bridge, and pebbles running like water. Read through critical plant studies perspectives, the Japanese garden in *Chappy* is a metaphor for and material site of transvegetal interconnectiveness. It performs and calls for a "poetics of inclusion," resisting acts of war and related acts of exclusion.

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植物表演：葛瑞絲《日本鬼子》中的二戰、族裔與日本花園

摘要

本論文探討紐西蘭毛利族女作家派翠西亞・葛瑞絲小說《日本鬼子》(2015)中日本枯山水花園的再現作爲植物表演的場域。本文重點有三：其一在紐西蘭英語小說中，葛瑞絲的《日本鬼子》有其重要之處，因爲這是紐西蘭原住民作家以日本士兵爲主題的二戰小說，相對於紐西蘭主流媒體對日本的負面報導，葛瑞絲從紐西蘭原住民的角度展現「日本鬼子」的人性光輝。其二本文引用批判植物研究學者諸如派翠西亞・薇伊拉、約翰・瑞恩、亞倫・瑞德、布蘭登・杜迪等人相關論述，闡述小說中日本枯山水花園作爲物質與隱喻的雙重面向。一方面它象徵日本文化的庭園景觀，另一方面它內涵一個植物表演的生態介面—「從育種、開花、爬芽、展葉、傳播花粉，引起人類注意，帶動國際網路互動等」（薇伊拉等，xviii）。其三本文從上述角度說明小說中日本枯山水花園如何在二戰情境中，藉由植物表演召喚一個強調和平與連結的包容詩學，接納族裔他者，發掘跨太平洋的跨植物連結，進而串連日本、美國、紐西蘭、夏威夷等亞太地區，從而省思戰爭之惡與排除日本之失。

關鍵字： 派翠西亞・葛瑞絲、《日本鬼子》、毛利人、族裔他者、植物表演、批判植物研究