



# **Come On Shore and We Will Kill and Eat You All: A New Zealand Story**

*Christina Thompson*

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**Come On Shore and We Will Kill and Eat You All: A New Zealand Story** Christina Thompson  
An extraordinary love story between a Maori man and an American woman, that inspires a graceful, revelatory search for understanding about the centuries-old collision of two wildly different cultures.

*Come on Shore and We Will Kill and Eat You All* is the story of the cultural collision between Westerners and the Maoris of New Zealand, told partly as a history of the complex and bloody period of contact between Europeans and the Maoris in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and partly as the story of Christina Thompson's marriage to a Maori man. As an American graduate student studying literature in Australia, Thompson traveled on vacation to New Zealand, where she met a Maori known as "Seven." Their relationship was one of opposites: he was a tradesman, she an intellectual; he came from a background of rural poverty, she from one of middle-class privilege; he was a "native," she descended directly from "colonizers." Nevertheless, they shared a similar sense of adventure and a willingness to depart from the customs of their families and forge a life together on their own.

In this extraordinary book, which grows out of decades of research, Thompson explores the meaning of cross-cultural contact and the fascinating history of Europeans in the South Pacific, beginning with Abel Tasman's discovery of New Zealand in 1642 and James Cook's famous circumnavigations of 1769-79. Transporting us back and forth in time and around the world, from Australia to Hawaii to tribal New Zealand and finally to a house in New England that has ghosts of its own, *Come on Shore and We Will Kill and Eat You All* brings to life a lush variety of characters and settings. Yet at its core, it is the story of two people who, in making a life and a family together, bridge the gap between two worlds.

## Come On Shore and We Will Kill and Eat You All: A New Zealand Story Details

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Author : Christina Thompson

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## **From Reader Review *Come On Shore and We Will Kill and Eat You All: A New Zealand Story* for online ebook**

### **Meaghan says**

This is a book that doesn't seem to know what it wants to be. Christina Thompson has a PhD in Pacific Literature and the book definitely has a literary style, but the topic is more historical/anthropological. Certainly it's part memoir also, but I think the majority of page space is taken up by her history of the Maori people. Then at the end she throws in a history of her own white American relatives and the white settlers' obliteration of the Native American tribes. I understand we're meant to draw a parallel between that and the Maori history of colonial exploitation, but it really didn't belong.

The memoir parts of the book seemed quite insubstantial to me. I couldn't get a sense of how she was feeling at different parts of the story, and her husband had no personality at all. She seemed to drift into cohabitation and marriage with him much the same way she drifted randomly into the bar where they met. Obviously she loves the guy -- they've been married twenty years, moved back and forth across the equator innumerable times, have three kids, yada yada -- but I don't get any sense of their love. She seems to focus much more on how little she and her husband have in common, in terms of appearance, family background, cultural heritage, education, interests...

Possibly I am being overcritical. I don't think this was a bad book. In fact I really enjoyed reading it and learning about a people I previously knew little of. I just think it needed a lot more focus, mainly.

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### **Mollie says**

I received [Come on Shore and We Will Kill and Eat You All](#) as part of the Goodreads giveaway program and was pleasantly surprised. What I expected to be a rather fluffy love story (and I enjoy a prince charming as much as the next person) in a great setting was instead a very readable overview of New Zealand history embedded in one woman's story. The writing exceeded my expectations, the research was substantive (supported by her professional academic work on the topic) and the story was reflectively honest.

As several other reviewers mention, the last chapter of her family history seemed a bit awkward or at least awkwardly placed. However, I do see the value for Thompson to reflect on her own family history, home culture and colonial heritage. It is what strengthens the reflective process. It provides added awareness and depth to the cultural lens she uses.

I would recommend it to people interested in learning a little bit about New Zealand and its cultural history as well people who enjoy travel memoirs. I continue to debate whether I wish I had read it before I went to New Zealand or am grateful to have been to the country before I this perspective on cultural/political history. Either way would shape the lens through which one views a new country and culture. I don't think, however, that it makes a substantive difference.

I will definitely be passing this book along...

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## rex says

if this was a dark satire on the racism white people can bring to interracial relationships then it would be brutal and incredible, but. uh. it's somehow not?

white upper class american woman faffs around during her english degree, goes to new zealand, sees "a maori" at a bar (not "a maori man" "a maori woman" "a maori author"-- this continues through the book) for the first time, and inserts herself into their history as a scribe despite no request to do so

half the book is retelling the history of white contact with maori, entirely from the perspective of the white side, no interviews with maori historians or anything, and the other half is the story of her life with her shiny new ~exotic~ husband, and woo fuckin boy is that half a DOOZY

highlights include:

-their physicality being the only thing described-- men are fearsome, hulking, muscular; her mother in law is a "famished-looking creature" (the exception is when she describes their fickle cunning; then they can be shrewd and "lie like the devil"-- a change from their otherwise "naturally innocent" natures)

-uses the term "half-caste". just drops that out there and continues.

-describes the first maori house she visits as a flophouse and goes on about how unsafe she feels (despite later mentioning that it's a perfectly normal clean and tidy suburban home)

-someone there mentions that he's looking for a lost earring; she gives him one of hers right out of her ear to replace it, then rhapsodises for paragraphs about how the first settlers must have felt making this sort of first contact

-she never once mentions being in love with her husband. not once sentence about affection, or dating, or desire, or love. i'm not kidding-- not a single fucking one. every description of him is from a removed distance, like he's a test subject or pet, as she describes his oversized giant hulking form wandering around american streets and copping racism (people moving away from him in the street, gossiping about him in their small town, turning him away from job openings-- and for that one she attempts to crusade against the company's racism, despite her husband not wanting her to)

-gets her hands on a photo of severed maori heads, and delights in showing them to her new family members. when her sister in law is disgusted and says it's because the heads are ancestors stolen by white people and put on show as trophies, the author wonders what sil's "really" upset about, because it happened so long ago that sil couldn't possibly have known the people in the photo (????????????????)

-"there were moments-- days when i would come home from the university to find seven and kura stretched out on the floor watching monster trucks on tv-- when i would look at them and think *you people*. then i'd do a double take and think *what, do i want them to be just like me?* of course i didn't."

-"the place i really struggled with ["improving" her in-laws] was with seven's sister, who was almost ten years younger than i and whom, i felt, i was in a position to influence. on the one hand, it was perfectly clear to me that if she didn't get an education, she was doomed-- at the very least to a lifetime of poverty, but also, in my mind, to something more serious. without a foundation of skills and knowledge, she would have no chance of discovering what she was good at or experiencing the satisfaction of making choices for herself."  
hhhhhhhHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

-(this ~tragique~ lack of an education? is not doing the optional high school years 11+12. plenty of people here don't do them. i didn't do them! but i guess we should all listen to the english phd who got her parents to pay her bills into her 40s, she'll definitely have a good understanding of the labour market)

-enrolling her sons into an aussie school then making a weeping bleating fuss about how lonely it was even while describing the other mothers trying to make friends with her and involve her in the community-- then mentioning that there were other places nearby where she "might have felt more at home-- where the mothers might have been more like me", but, the kicker: "but we couldn't afford to live in any of them". oh no the fuckin cruel deprivations of having to live around lower class people instead of her own kind, she just couldn't relate to them, what a crisis :((((

-eventually she has enough of life in australia and decides that her kids need to be bought up around family and a support network-- so she moves back to america. there's never any discussion about the large family they have in nz.

-it's a small thing, but there's a bit where she mentions that her husband "had gotten a job, but not much of one"-- a sneery little line-- then later mentioning that she's bringing in herself a grand total of \$15k a year. stones/glasshouses dumbass

-the last bit of the book goes into a bizarre tangent about her family's history in america, including the fact that an ancestor committed the largest mass execution of native americans-- but "none of us [in the family] could say with complete honest that we wished it had been any other way", because her family got a lot of land out of it

-she writes a letter for her sons to read in the case of her eventual death (she's not sick or anything-- i guess the drama tank must have been getting low that week), the bulk of which goes on not about how much they're loved, but instead about hybrid vigour and cross-breeding, because that is definitely a healthy respectful and not racist at all way to think about your children

-and it ends with:

"i confessed to one of his brothers that i was concocting a plan.

'you know what i'm going to do?' i said to him.

'what's that, sis?'

'i'm going to write your family story.'

'write your own first,' he said without missing a beat."

but then she does it anyway because of course. of course she does.

there's more but it all blurs together into one big racist zoetrope. i don't usually write reviews but this book gave me the creeps BIGTIME, it was a horror played completely straight, each memoir segment the direct descendant of each colonialist segment, themes and tropes of colonialism replayed right down the barrel, but with the author seemingly having no fucking idea at all that she was doing so

i don't even know who'd want to read this. if you want books that look at modern maori life or colonial history then you can find many out there by maori authors; if you want to read a cavalcade of incoherent white saviour wasp garbage then i recommend not doing that and maybe just patting a dog instead

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## Pamela says

I love this book. I love the mix of history intertwined with a story of love and family. This is a memoir of the

quest of discovering who we are and who our love is. How love spans the test of time through history...past, present and future. That love is not confined to boundaries like culture and societal expectations. Beautifully written and well-researched....a wonderful peek at the world and how we all fit in it.

**FURTHER PROCESSING:**

It has been about a month since I finished this book and I am still thinking about it. I love that it has had that effect on me. Not only have I gotten out my movie of Whale Rider but I have watched it with my 4 year-old daughters and now they are asking for it every day. LOL!!!

What I find myself reflecting on the most is how parallel my life is with the author's life and story but in a completely different way...if that makes any sense. I am appreciating MY STORY that much more. I am also feeling validated at my efforts to share my ancestry with my children...as well as my husband's ancestry. I have unconsciously been doing this since they have been born. I no longer feel like an intruder in this process...I feel as if I belong and have a right to be introducing my family to their ancestry though I personally did not grow up in their culture. Being Native American but raised in a German home and culture far from the reservation, my only experience about ME and my PEOPLE was in school and that was limited and only a brushing of truth. Now as a mom, I take my children to a Pow-Wow every summer and tell them this is a part of US. Living in Mexico now is a big part of our family learning about our roots. I think we are learning how to fit in our "skins" and be proud of the people we are...the people we were born to be. Mexican-Native American on my side and Mexican-Peruvian on my husband's.

I see "Come on Shore...." now, not only as a love story between the author and her husband, but also as a love story for her children. What a beautiful journey she is taking them on as they live in the world. Truly, it is our children who will be better people for it.

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### **Alohatiki says**

I was really into this book about an American woman who marries a Maori. And then she spent the last few chapters covering her families American history, snooze. I guess she just ran out of stuff to talk about. I like the history of Polynesian Islands since i read all that stuff normally. So really 4 stars until the American history part.

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### **Rebecca Huston says**

I both liked and detested this book. A narrative that mixes the author's meeting her Maori husband and the life they built together in Boston and Australia, with too-brief snippets about the Maori encounters with Europeans. Parts of this book did work, but by the end, I was left with very mixed feelings. Only three stars and only somewhat recommended.

For the longer review, please go here:  
[http://www.epinions.com/review/Book\\_C...](http://www.epinions.com/review/Book_C...)

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### **Caroline Woodward says**

The thing that struck me most about this book, with the wonderful title, subtitled: A New Zealand Story, is that the author, an academic, wears her credentials lightly and writes beautifully. Her synthesis of South Seas

colonial history and her personal journey to fulfill a PhD, marrying and raising a family with a Maori man, and finally, with a perfectly paced whammo, her own ancestor's pivotal role in the US West is so skillfully done that the book reads like a historical novel in two parts.

Which is not to say that it is melodramatic, not in the least. It is impeccably researched, as the selected bibliography indicates, and it is that rare thing, the work of a renegade academic who is not a raving ego on the rampage! Early in her career as a grad student, there are attempts to curtail her curiosity, her urge to include more; more of real life, in her own life and in her studies, rather than sticking to a narrow thesis. For this unerring search for the truth of things and the complications of life, then and now, we should all be grateful readers. Wonderful book!

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### **Laura says**

This book resonated with me on so many levels: I come from a mixed racial & cultural background; grew up in a household of academics; lived in many places as a child (including Hawaii & Australia) and have parents from different socio-economic backgrounds. Rarely have I found a book so intelligently and perceptively written that tackles the many ways in which our personal and national histories, cultural conditioning, and class expectations create unexpected challenges as we go out into the world and form relationships with others, particularly romantic ones. The historical details about the Maori are as fascinating as the personal narrative of her life. Thompson is also extraordinarily sensitive about telling her own story without intruding on the privacy of her in-laws. She conveys much of importance about their lives without betraying their confidences (something that has made me uncomfortable while reading other memoirs). This is the perfect book for anyone interested in anthropology, Third Culture Kids, current issues affecting indigenous populations, and cross-cultural relationships.

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### **Katie says**

Kelly, thank you for loaning me this book, you knew I'd love it!! How do you not love a story that starts with a hatpin through Boston to the other side of the globe, includes a love story that begins with a bar fight between a Maori and a Pakeha, and ultimately is an entertaining and quirky commentary on the long-term effects of colonization (or "civilizing" uncharted land as our adventurous European ancestors liked to think of it).

One of my favorite lines in this book is on p. 87 and starts: "But shift the lens ever so slightly..." What I really loved is that the author is clearly very knowledgeable, and presents factual information about the Maori people and their history, but she looks at the story from both sides. Thompson blends her own American upbringing and European ancestral point-of-view with that of her Maori husband's (and now her children's'). As a side note, I found the chapter about returning to America and finding out she's pregnant (with no health insurance) was one of my favorite parts and was so *current*. When she talks about how Seven doesn't realize the seriousness of the situation because he'd grown up with Nationalized healthcare, I got goose bumps. Pretty relevant to today's current events...

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### **Kathleen Dixon says**

Usually I make a record of how I heard about each book I list, but I made no note for this one. It hasn't been listed by any of my Goodreads friends, it isn't sold by the bookshop I work in (which is a **children's** bookshop, I don't remember having a conversation with anyone about it (in which case I would almost

certainly have jotted down who it was because I like to put them in the Who Recommended it to me box). ... Now that I'm thinking about it, I think I may have seen it on the library website when I was looking for a completely different book. The title is intriguing, and it's about my country. So I gave it a chance.

I loved this book. The author has written in a style that makes it very easy to read. Even the academic and historical details are written in an "I'm just telling you about this because it's fascinating and I know you'll be interested" style, while still clearly based on thorough research. The flow from history to the author's personal life (and back) is seamless. Her own 'first contact' with the Maori people of Aotearoa / New Zealand turns into love and marriage and trekking back and forth across the Pacific for different jobs. European 'first contact' with the Maori turns into the often tragic history of the Maori (the indigenous people), who survived better than a great many indigenes in other colonised countries but are still marginalised (when you look at statistics). The other places the author and her family lived in also share a little of their history - again, dovetailing with their personal lives.

I see she has another book being published in the not-too-distant future. I shall mark that to read.

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## **Bruce says**

Christina Thompson teaches writing at Harvard and is the editor of the *Harvard Review*. Her book *Come On Shore...* is a work that explores aspects of New Zealand and the indigenous Maori people, and it defies being categorized within one particular genre. Married to a Maori man, Thompson uses their relationship as a lens through which to view her topic.

In part the book is history. Not detailed history by any means, but Thompson does review in broad outlines the interactions between the Maori and Europeans from before Captain Cook and onwards, up to the present day. Sometimes such relationships are problematic, often the result of incorrect assumptions and stereotyping. Usually the perspective presented is from the Maori side.

In part it is travelogue. Tracing her own journey from New England to Australia for graduate school to New Zealand, then to Hawaii and back to New England, Thompson presents convincing pictures of geography and culture that illuminate the differing settings that themselves often profoundly influence life and values.

In part it is cultural anthropology. Most of Thompson's insights come directly from her own experiences with her husband's family and their history. In a non-judgmental and perceptive way, she is able to compare and contrast histories and cultures so that one derives an appreciation of both and learns from both.

I found this book to be interesting, a quick and easy read that was able to fix helpful impressions in my mind, impressions that will remain with me.

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## **Jenny (Reading Envy) says**

I read this as part of my New Zealand November 2015 project, only, um, I read it in December. I hadn't gotten to it in November and after trying the first 50 pages decided it was worthwhile to go ahead and finish it.

This is part memoir, part history. The author writes of her graduate school years when she took a break from

her dissertation writing and graduate school in Australia and visited New Zealand for the first time. While at a bar she met her future husband, a Maori man who happened to be next to her when they witnessed a brawl. Christina Thompson uses the "clash" of cultures as a jumping off point to discuss the clash between Europeans "discovering" and "settling" New Zealand and the native populations.

I'm not sure if the author just wasn't completely honest about her self and her experience or if she truly is the go-with-the-flow, happy-go-lucky she portrays herself as in the book. Because of the title and the parallels with the history, I was expecting her story to be quite a bit more interesting. Her greatest conflict seems to be with her dissertation advisor who didn't believe her own experiences with literature (and the places it was written) should figure into her graduate work. She and her husband seem to do just fine despite different personalities, very different backgrounds, financial challenges, frequent moves, and coming from opposite sides of the globe. Basically her own story was just not that interesting. I wanted it to be!

I did appreciate her overview of New Zealand's history with tastes of ethnography thrown in, and that part of the book would probably give a good overview to someone new to reading about the country.

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### **Leslie says**

Come on Shore and We Will Kill and Eat You All is two books mixed in one, with possibly the word's most unfortunate choice for a title. It's partly the history of the Maoris of New Zealand in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and partly

of the author's marriage to a Maori man she met in a bar while vacationing in New Zealand.

I found the history of the Europeans' first contact with the Maori to be interesting and the troubled relations between the two vastly different cultures even more so. The author's personal accounts of her family life were only barely relevant. After realizing I could skip those bits and read only the well researched and very well written

historical bits, I enjoyed the book very much.

I received this book for free to review.

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### **Mindy McAdams says**

I feel two ways about this book. On the one side, it offers up a very satisfying history of the Maori people in New Zealand for a layman to read — episodic rather than chronological, emphasizing key events but not pedantically enumerating them, almost conversational in style. On the other, it's got a first-person thread running all the way through it that frequently made me feel uncomfortable. Even my uncomfortableness made me uncomfortable, because I wondered if I was just having an overly politically correct reaction to my own conflicted feelings about this American Ph.D. candidate popping into New Zealand and hooking up with a Maori guy whom she ends up marrying.

Part of my problem was I felt like the book wanted to be two things at once, and I wanted it to either have much *more* of the author's personal life or much *less*, but not the amount it has. I think that's just me being nosy. If you're going to imply that you've had a rich, fulfilling marriage for 20 years with a man whom you continually describe as super different from you, I want more details to make me believe it. If you're just going to drop him and your differences in as a little highlight now and then to some point you're making about Maori culture, then that seems unfair to the reader.

Overall I liked the writing, the pacing, and the history parts. I liked seeing glimpses of the author's husband, but I certainly don't feel like I understand him or his family as individuals. I also suspect that if this were the very first thing having to do with the Maori that I had ever read, I would have been frustrated by all the gaps and assumptions. In other words, I liked it fairly well for how it added to and enhanced some knowledge I already had, but I think I'd have liked it less if I'd read it two years ago, before I visited New Zealand and read a few books by New Zealand authors.

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## Michelle says

The fact that it took me forever to read this book should in no way be regarded as criticism of it. Life got away from me for a while. It's an excellent book.

The blurb explaining how it's a memoir of a cross cultural marriage can not even begin to contain all that's in this book. The author is an American woman with a PhD married to a working class Maori New Zealander. While it does explore what it means to have a marriage between people of such divergent backgrounds it's so much more than that.

Thompson shares a great deal of historical and cultural background as she chronicles the development of her relationship with her husband. She examines the various influences that shaped each culture and how their respective cultures shape her and her husband in ways few people ever have to consider.

She admits to having begun with a fairly romantic view of Maori culture during her early experiences and shares how reality eventually brought her to a more honest assessment of things without ever losing a sense of respect. In a way, her love affair with the culture very much paralleled the way a courtship would progress, hopefully into a mature affection based on respect, into an enduring marriage.

In the end she is challenged by an in-law to dig into her own history as much as she has dug into theirs. What she finds as the descendant of a colonizer is shocking and gives even more texture to her understanding of living as and being married to one who has suffered due to colonization.

It's a wonderfully rich exploration of all the history two people can carry into a relationship presented in an even, rational manner. At times the historical background she lays down can bog a bit but ultimately it is all useful in understanding her insights and observations.

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