

## **'I Broke the Line Back to the Ancient Ones': Rethinking Intersectional Theory through Wounded Histories in *Once Were Warriors* (1994) and *Whale Rider* (2002).**

**Authors :** Kerry Mackereth

**Abstract :** Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality has become immensely influential in the fields of women's and gender studies. However, intersectionality's widespread use among feminist scholars and activists has been accompanied by critiques of its reliance upon subject categorization. These critiques are of particular import when connected to Wendy Brown's characterization of identity politics as static 'wounded attachments'. Together, these critiques show how the gridlock model proposed by intersectionality's primary metaphor, the traffic accident at the intersection, is useful for identifying discrimination but not for remembering historical injustices or imagining feminist and anti-racist resistance. Through the lens of New Zealand Maori film, focusing upon *Once Were Warriors* (1994) and *Whale Rider* (2002), this article examines how wounded histories need not be passively reproduced by contemporaneously oppressed groups. Instead, the metaphor of the traffic intersection should be complemented by the metaphor of the wound. Against Brown's characterization of wounded attachments as negative, static identities, Gloria Anzaldua's account of the borderland between the United States and Mexico as "una herida abierta", an open wound, offers an alternative reading of the wound. Through Anzaldua's and Hortense Spillers' political thought, the wound is reconceptualized as not only a site of suffering but also as a regenerative space. The coexistence of deterioration and regeneration at the site of the wound underpins the narrative arc of both *Once Were Warriors* and *Whale Rider*. In both films, the respective child protagonists attempt to reconcile the pain of wounded histories with the imagination of cultural regeneration. The metaphor of the wound thus serves as an alternative theoretical resource for mapping experiences of oppression, one that enriches feminist theory by balancing the remembrance of historical grievance with the forging of hopeful political projects.

**Keywords :** gender theory, historical grievance, intersectionality, New Zealand film, postcolonialism

**Conference Title :** ICWS 2018 : International Conference on Women's Studies

**Conference Location :** Paris, France

**Conference Dates :** September 20-21, 2018