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**Article**

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**Creator:** Kimber, G.

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## **Livia Käthe Wittmann - Annotation**

In this broad-ranging article, Livia Käthe Wittmann explores the notions of di-ethnia and diglossia through the exploration of the work of five female authors writing in New Zealand – Keri Hulme, Sia Figiel, Amelia Batistich, Yvonne du Fresne and Kapka Kassabova. For Wittmann, ‘language is one of the most important symbols of ethnicity’ (p.101), and she explores all aspects of this symbology in various works by the above authors. As a former colony, English was the only language used in commerce, education and the law in New Zealand. It was only as late as 1987 that New Zealand recognised Maori as an official language of the state. In *the bone people*, Wittmann believes the characters signify ‘ethnocultural diversity’ through their bilinguality (p.103). Sia Figiel attempts to push the notions of diglossia and di-ethnia further than Hulme’s with her use of Samoan, so that a ‘full comprehension to monolingual readers is jeopardized’ (p.105). In the fiction of Amelia Batistich, biculturalism is signified through the use of Croatian words and proverbs, with no suggestion of the possible ‘maintenance of diglossia’ (p.108). Yvonne du Fresne’s Danish background is revealed in her fiction, which ‘makes a strong claim for di-ethnia’ (p.110) and an implied diglossia, with ‘recurring references to similarities and commonalities between Maori and Danes’ (p.112-3). Kapka Kassabova, as an immigrant from Bulgaria, writes poetry based on her experiences, incorporating ‘the pain of longing for an ethnoculture left behind in another language, country, continent’ (p.115). This cogent and informative article demonstrates the linguistic and ethnic diversity of women writers in New Zealand today.