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**He whare mātātuhi Tūhoe:  
A Tūhoe *re-visioning* of English language literary texts**

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

**Master of Arts [Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies]**

at

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by

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

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## Abstract

This thesis urges more Māori to undertake iwi-based readings of English language literary texts. I have chosen to privilege my father's iwi, Ngāi Tūhoe, and to examine what Tūhoetana means to me and how it might thus enrich my reading of texts. In our ancestral tongue, Ngāi Tūhoe have a rich and pronounced history of storytelling, literary composition, analysis and critique. Unfortunately, this richness is woefully underappreciated within the English language literary landscape. Yet, as the ranks of Māori writers swell, along with the diversity of literary forms that Māori create, so too must Māori – and more specifically iwi – literary scholarship flourish, for if we do not critique the texts that are written about, of, and on behalf of us, who will? Throughout this thesis, I use the terms 'iwi literary scholars' and 'iwi literary scholarship' to consciously and repeatedly remind the reader of the rich, literary legacies residing within iwi archives; I also hope to highlight the exciting and endless possibilities for the English language literary landscape to be enriched by readings that are founded within these archives – including the histories, everyday experiences and understandings from our tīpuna.

Structurally, this thesis is divided into three broad strands. Chapters 1-3 focus on whakawhanaunatana and background information to my research. Because this thesis also represents the singular piece of writing that I wish I had read prior to enrolling in the thesis paper for this Master's degree, my academic hīkoi – frustrations and all – is a necessary component and is covered in chapter 2. Chapters 4-6 then examine three different types of literary texts created by wāhine. These texts include the short story "Birth Rights" by Ngāi Tahu science fiction and fantasy writer, J.C. Hart (2010), the Instagram post *Te Kuharere tapes* by Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Tuwharetoa songwriter and storyteller @tekahureremoa (2019) – also known as the performer Ladyfruit – and the young adult novel *Dark Souls* by Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Manuhiri, and Ngāti Whatua writer, Paula Morris (2011). While 21<sup>st</sup> century texts published on platforms such as Instagram may not sit easily within a traditional English literary curriculum, and indeed the novelty of these specific forms may well prove fleeting, the 'everydayness' of online texts yields rewarding analysis

opportunities and is currently amiss within mainstream English literary studies. Each of these analysis chapters contains a focused introduction and conclusion, since chapter 7, the concluding chapter of this thesis, is a letter to future iwi literary scholars.

Woven throughout this rangahau is a call for iwi scholars to consciously: engage with the literary traditions of their own iwi; identify the colonial thoughts and motives that they bring to the reading of literary texts; bring their tīpuna to the reading, but let the text itself breathe life into the critique and; consider the genres and types of texts that they critique. Ultimately, this thesis considers how engaging with the literary legacies of our tīpuna might broaden the English language literary landscape and thus enhance the body of iwi literary scholarship in Oceania and beyond.

## Glossary

*This thesis attempts to give thought and expression to my Ngāi Tūhoe whakapapa. As such, in some places where a 'ng' might otherwise be written, the 'g' has been dropped if it is a term I consciously attempt to use. For instance, Tūhoetanga is recorded as Tūhoetana. Any omissions, inconsistencies and/or misunderstandings may be attributed to this author alone, along with her ongoing research into her Tūhoetana and obligations to learn te reo.*

<b>Ao Māori / te ao Māori</b>	the Māori world
<b>Aotearoa</b>	New Zealand
<b>Atua</b>	tīpuna, divinities
<b>Awa</b>	river
<b>Hapū</b>	act of being pregnant; also kinship group/subtribe
<b>Hīkoi</b>	journey, travels [with a destination in mind]
<b>Hinengaro</b>	mind
<b>Hoa</b>	friend
<b>Hui</b>	meeting
<b>Huia</b>	extinct bird native to Aotearoa
<b>Iwi</b>	tribe
<b>Iwitana / Iwitanga</b>	tribal ways of knowing and being
<b>Kaitiakitana / Kaitiakitanga</b>	actions required to sustain relationships and whakapapa; an essential component to Tūhoe identity
<b>Kairangahau</b>	researchers
<b>Kanohi-ki-kanohi</b>	face to face
<b>Kapa haka</b>	cultural group that practises and celebrates Māori performing arts
<b>Ka pai</b>	good
<b>Karakia</b>	prayer or incantation
<b>Karanga</b>	ancient calling/welcoming ritual performed by wāhine

<b>Kaupapa</b>	main theme, topic, idea, foundation or grounding (from ‘Papa’ tūānuku)
<b>Kirikiroa</b>	Hamilton (city in Waikato)
<b>Koha</b>	a gift
<b>Kōkōwai</b>	red ochre clay
<b>Kōrero</b>	story, speech, talk, address to others
<b>Koro</b>	elderly man, grandfather
<b>Korowai</b>	a distinctive style of kākahu (Māori cloak) decorated with rolled flax dyed black which is attached to the body and neck border of the cloak
<b>Kuia</b>	elderly woman, grandmother
<b>Kūmara</b>	sweet potato
<b>Kupu</b>	word
<b>Mahi</b>	work
<b>Māmā</b>	mother
<b>Mamae</b>	hurt, pain
<b>Mana</b>	influence, status, authority and prestige given by people to a person, place or thing
<b>Māori</b>	generic name for the Indigenous people of Aotearoa
<b>Māoritana / Māoritanga</b>	a term to describe broad similarities between iwi; expressions and understandings of being and living as Māori
<b>Mātātuhi</b>	literature
<b>Mātaurana / Mātauranga</b>	knowledge, understanding and skills; in this thesis mātauranga refers to iwi knowledge and skills
<b>Marae</b>	technically the area in front of the ancestral house on a marae, but often includes all of the buildings
<b>Mātua</b>	parents

<b>Maunga</b>	mountain
<b>Mauri</b>	life force or essence
<b>Mihi</b>	greeting
<b>Mita</b>	dialect, accent
<b>Moko</b>	an abbreviation of mokopuna, or moko kauae
<b>Moko kauae</b>	traditional wāhine chin adornment
<b>Mokopuna</b>	grandchild(ren)
<b>Motu</b>	island
<b>Ngā</b>	the – plural of ‘te’
<b>Ngahere</b>	forest
<b>Ngāi Tahu</b>	a Māori tribe with tribal boundaries within Te Waipounamu
<b>Ngāi Tūhoe / Tūhoe</b>	a Māori tribe on the East Coast of the North Island whose tribal identity rests within Te Urewera
<b>Ngā iwi katoa</b>	all iwi
<b>Pae / paepae</b>	speakers’ bench on a marae
<b>Pakaru</b>	broken
<b>Pākehā</b>	a collective term often used to describe descendants of the European treaty partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi
<b>Pākehātana/Pākehātanga</b>	expressions of Pākeha ways of knowing, being and living as Pākeha
<b>Pāpā</b>	father
<b>Papatūānuku</b>	earth mother
<b>Patu</b>	Abbreviated form referring to a traditional Māori short club; to strike or hit (verb)
<b>Pou</b>	support pillar for a whare
<b>Pou tokomanawa</b>	main support pillar in an iwi ancestral meeting house
<b>Puku</b>	stomach

<b>Rakiura</b>	one of the three main islands of New Zealand; Stewart Island
<b>Rangahau</b>	research
<b>Rangatira</b>	leader, chief
<b>Ranginui</b>	sky father
<b>Reo</b>	language; in this thesis ‘reo’ or ‘te reo’ is used to refer to te reo Māori
<b>Ringatoi</b>	artist
<b>Ringawera</b>	literally, ‘hot hands’; workers on a marae
<b>Ruru</b>	morepork native to Aotearoa
<b>Tāhei</b>	necklace
<b>Taiaha</b>	traditional Māori weapon, similar to a spear, made of hard wood
<b>Taiao / Te taiao</b>	natural world, nature’s physical environment
<b>Taiohi</b>	youth; in this thesis, Māori youth is implied
<b>Tamariki</b>	children
<b>Tangata</b>	person/people
<b>Tangata whenua</b>	Indigenous Māori people/iwi of Aotearoa
<b>Tangi</b>	customary Māori mourning ceremony (noun); to cry (verb)
<b>Taniwha</b>	powerful water beings within te ao Māori who are sometimes dangerous and other times considered guardians
<b>Taonga</b>	treasure
<b>Tarata</b>	native tree - also called lemonwood
<b>Tauīwi</b>	a collective term for people who are not Māori
<b>Te</b>	the
<b>Te ao Māori</b>	the Māori world
<b>Te ao Pākeha</b>	the Pākeha / western world; the basis of dominant ideology, discourse, and ways of living in Aotearoa

<b>Te Ika-a-Māui</b>	Māui’s fish, one of the three main islands of Aotearoa; the North Island
<b>Te mana motuhake</b>	for Ngāi Tūhoe, an expression of maximum autonomy by abandoning dependency and embracing interdependency
<b>Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa</b>	the great ocean of Kiwa; Pacific Ocean
<b>Te Ranginui-e-tū-nei</b>	the great standing heavens of Ranginui
<b>Te reo Māori / te reo</b>	the Māori language
<b>Te taiao</b>	natural world, nature’s physical environment
<b>Te Tairāwhiti</b>	the original name for the wider city and region of Gisborne
<b>Te Tiriti o Waitangi</b>	the Treaty of Waitangi
<b>Te Upoko-o-te-ika-a-Māui</b>	the head of Māui’s fish; Wellington
<b>Te Urewera</b>	tribal homeland of Ngāi Tūhoe; under Te Urewera Act 2014, Te Urewera is its own legal entity that is governed by Te Urewera Board
<b>Te Waipounamu</b>	Māori name for one of the three main islands of New Zealand; the South Island
<b>Tika</b>	right or proper
<b>Tikana / tikanga</b>	customary Māori practices
<b>Tinana</b>	person’s body
<b>Tipuna / tīpuna</b>	ancestor / ancestors
<b>Tohu</b>	sign
<b>Tokotoko</b>	walking stick, often carved with depictions of historical iwi accounts
<b>Tō tātou reo rangatira</b>	the language of our ancestors / our ancestral tongue
<b>Tuhinaroa / Tuhingaroa</b>	thesis
<b>Tūhoe / Ngāi Tūhoe</b>	a Māori tribe on the East Coast of the North Island whose tribal identity rests within Te Urewera
<b>Tūhoetana / Tūhoetanga</b>	expressions of Tūhoe ways of knowing, being and living as Ngāi Tūhoe

<b>Tūpāpaku</b>	deceased person's body
<b>Tūranga-nui-a-Kiwa</b>	original name for the city of Gisborne
<b>Wāhine</b>	in this thesis wāhine refers to female Māori
<b>Wai / wai Māori</b>	water / freshwater, often for drinking
<b>Waiata</b>	song, oral composition
<b>Wairua</b>	spirit or soul of a person; attitude or feeling of a person or place
<b>Waka</b>	Māori canoe; vehicle
<b>Wānanga</b>	gathering to learn
<b>Wero</b>	challenge
<b>Whāi</b>	traditional Māori games using string
<b>Whakaaro</b>	thought, opinion idea (noun); to think, plan, consider or decide (verb)
<b>Whakaheke</b>	descent; used in this thesis to denote ancestry
<b>Whakamā</b>	feelings of embarrassment, shame or shyness
<b>Whakamana</b>	to give authority and prestige to a person, place, or thing
<b>Whakamihi</b>	acknowledgement
<b>Whakapapa</b>	a multi-faceted term that has its roots within the cosmological relationship between Papatūānuku and Ranginui. May be used to describe a person's genealogy, but also wider connections to ngā atua, ideas, things
<b>Whakataukī</b>	often figurative proverbs that contain important aspects of mātauranga
<b>Whakawhanaunatana / Whakawhanaungatanga</b>	process of getting to know others
<b>Whānau</b>	family
<b>Whāngai</b>	customary child-rearing practice where a child is placed with another whānau – often grandparents

<b>Whare</b>	house or building; see chapter 2 for an explanations regarding the use of whare in this thesis title
<b>Whare mate</b>	purpose-built dwelling used on a marae to house tūpāpaku
<b>Whare tīpuna</b>	ancestral dwelling on a marae
<b>Whenua</b>	land; placenta
<b>Wiriwiri</b>	trembling of hands which, some say, represents the steam rising from Papatūānuku as it returns to Ranginui

## He kupu whakaheke

From

the inbetweeness

of earth and sky, Parekohe rises.

Below the shadows of Te Maunga, Ōhinemataroa

weaves and bleeds towards Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, then transforms

into waves that navigate Mātaatua, back, back, back, to the banks of Ngāi

Tūhoe where Hamua tend the ahi kā. Within Ruatoki, at Waikirikiri, the

Akuhata whānau rise and mihi to earth and sky. Swirling past Te Urewera, atop

Maungahaumi, Paoa's mimi flows to the ocean, carrying

t

ō

t

a

r

a

to Horouta,

foreshadowing

the aitanga

of Māhaki.

Within the marshes

of Te Karaka,

Te-whānau-a-Taupara

build Takipu

so the calls of

the Ruru may

be heard across

the plains of

Te Tairāwhiti

and beyond.

## He kupu whakamihi

It may take a village to raise a child, but it has taken several villages and several years to bring this rangahau to fruition (so, much like raising a child then...). I am extremely grateful to the following people and organisations who were instrumental in my hīkoi.

First, I acknowledge Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao – the Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies [FMIS] at the University of Waikato – for their overarching support and guidance. I am especially indebted to my supervisor, Dr Alice Te Punga Somerville, for responding to me by email on Thursday April 18, 2019 at 3:08pm, which led to our meeting for the first time; you kept my waka seaworthy and showed me the level of encouragement and wisdom that I hope all of our tamariki experience as they progress through university and postgraduate study. Many thanks also to Dr Rangi Mataamua for meeting with me when I had questions early on regarding Ngāi Tūhoe texts and writers.

During my first attempt at completing this thesis, I was a recipient of a University of Waikato Research Masters Scholarship as well as a TeachNZ Study Award, and although I had yet to plot the right research path for me at the time, this scholarship and award assisted me to begin this journey and for that, I am grateful.

I also acknowledge the wider Māori and Indigenous networks here in Aotearoa and abroad who have been my awa, letting me coast along their waves of awesomeness and giving me a necessary nudge every now and then. I acknowledge the ongoing support of whānau within Te Toi o Matariki – special thanks to Pita Shelford for this thesis template and support at our writing retreats. Connecting with other Māori literary scholars and writers at the Te Hā Kaituhi Māori / National Māori Writers' Hui is a constant source of inspiration and I am grateful that Toi Māori continue to support spaces that bring together Māori artists, scholars and writers of all ages from around the motu. I am also thankful to @tekahureremoa who generously allowed me to reproduce screenshots of her mahi for this thesis: you rock! To the many Indigenous scholars and allies who inhabit positions within academia and strive to create space for us all (including my social media whānau around the world - most of whom I have yet to meet, but ardently follow), on many occasions you

have filled my bucket to overflowing without knowing: ngā mihi ki a koutou katoa.

Lastly, I acknowledge my immediate whānau. Thanks Jess for always supporting me, even from afar (especially your no-nonsense reminders to ‘mahia te mahi’ and ‘do the mahi, get the treats’!). Ciro and Gian, thanks for making me laugh, annoying me, and generally keeping me company on my journey these past few years. Areta, thank you for speaking so highly about Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao, which led me to send off that tentative, first query about transferring to FMIS. And most importantly, ngā mihi ki a koe, Toni, for the vegan cannelloni with homemade soy ricotta cheese, the freshly-ground soy mocchas every single morning, and for putting up with my hōhā ways! Danke schön. Grazie mille. Thank you, taku tōre.

I wish I could reassure you all that this is the end, but...

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated firstly to ‘Princess’ Reta whose commitment to my education was both inspirational and relentless, and secondly to Mooni and all the other sky-dwellers who have found their place amongst the stars.

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## Chapter 1: Retrospective patterns of my life

In *Te Kauhau: The Windeater*, Ngāi Tahu writer Keri Hulme writes, “What I want to do is lay before you the unusual and irrational bits from my life because they may make a pattern in retrospect and, besides, they are the only bits that make sense to me right now” (1986, p. 211). The retrospective ‘bits’ of background information presented here, and in the following two whakawhanaunatana chapters, are neither unusual nor irrational for many Indigenous people, including myself, and indeed work together to form patterns that reverberate to all corners of this thesis.

### What’s in a name?

Names matter. When my father was born, his name, Te Marama, was typewritten out of existence. Recorded as Tamarama instead, every official document from then on carried this name. And Tamarama may be a beautiful name for someone, somewhere. It just wasn’t his name. My mother, on the other hand, was stripped of her name as an adult. When my mother applied for a birth certificate much later in life, the surname of her father, Tautau, was replaced with Hata – who was my grandmother’s first husband. Although Hata died before my grandmother remarried and my mother was conceived, according to Births, Deaths & Marriages, Hata had miraculously, perplexedly, fathered a child. One click is all it took to erase my grandfather from existence. One click to connect dead links. One click to replace whakapapa.

The re-naming of Indigenous peoples, places and things, along with the associated distortion of whakapapa, has been discussed extensively by Māori academics such as Linda Smith (1999). Similarly, Indigenous researchers like Cherokee scholar Jace Weaver, have linked this renaming to the ‘colonial process’ which “has always depended upon division and the power to bestow names...It was, of course, not only peoples who were renamed and thus changed and recast; it was also the place itself” (2006, p. 6).

Given my personal history with renaming and the attempted distortion of my own whakapapa, it is perhaps unsurprising that whakapapa has commanded my attention over the years. To me, whakapapa includes my whānau and family genealogy, cosmological links to Ranginui and Papatūānuku, as well as my relationships with the people, places, things and ideas around me. Additionally, whakapapa has been the central topic of my creative writing for as long as I can remember. For instance, the first stanza from a poem I wrote at high school illustrates the significance of whakapapa as a taonga tuku iho – a treasure from my maternal grandmother (Akuhata, 1990):

A-ha-ha, my mokopuna!  
Listen to this old wairua  
Nurture the mother of your birth  
Hold to your breast and never forget  
Your pride, your soul, your whakapapa

Twenty years after this, whakapapa was still on my mind, as was my maternal grandmother. In this instance, she emerged in the first piece of class work I wrote during my Master of Arts in creative writing at Victoria University. I wrote about whakapapa in the form of an autobiographical prose note, from the first person perspective of my grandmother. The piece explored my ongoing angsts adjusting to life in Tūranga-nui-a-Kiwa after twelve years living in Germany, but also with my te reo Māori journey and taking myself seriously as a writer:

And if you listen very closely you might hear her recite her whakapapa with a voice – silent for far too long – that trembles to the sky like the wiriwiri of my hand when I last caressed her cheek. (Salsano, 2010, para. 2)

Later, after training to teach high school English, whakapapa spread further into both my education studies and creative writing. That is, when

required to write a position paper on using data and evidence for effective practice, I wrote about using whakapapa as literary analysis within the NCEA English classroom (Salsano, 2016, July). Similarly, for a paper on Indigenous and post-colonial global perspectives in education, I chose to create a zine of blackout poetry for an article about using IndigiZines within the secondary English classroom in Aotearoa (Salsano, 2016, October). A poem within the zine, entitled *Research* (Salsano, 2016, May), commented on the link between research and whakapapa:

Whakapapa spreads  
like oil stains  
across swollen bellies,  
hides within grooves  
of cut green  
    Wisdoms are snatched:  
    traced along veins  
    extracted from spines  
    and catalogued  
    beneath fingernails  
Diaphanous skin  
– faintly etched  
with stories, still –  
a most hazardous  
human project

As evident in the above poem, the dark side of research makes me anxious, especially regarding names. Names can carry ancestral knowledge, articulate tribal expectations, and anticipate hopeful futures. Thus, despite fears that I have regarding research in general (to sully whakapapa, encourage historical erasure, and discourage storytelling so that whānau stories fade into nervous whispers), focusing on names seems an excellent place to begin.

## Chapter 2: Hīkoi around the motu (towards a *re*-search topic)

---

Island journeying did not occur in one sweep, it was a series of systematic journeys back and forth as our ancestors migrated in waves across the Pacific.

- *Naepi et. al., 2019, p. 154*

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### Whakapapa of a thesis title

Chapter 2 highlights the necessity for tangible, appropriate support for Indigenous scholars, lest our lives be impoverished by their absence. This body of work represents my third enrolment in the research component of this Master's degree. The possible pathways that this mahi may have taken are many and varied, and like most hīkoi with much at stake, this journey too has been lengthy and sometimes painful. I begin with a brief introduction to the title of this chapter before moving into the subsection, “Preparing the Waka”, where I outline learnings from several taught Master’s papers. The analysis of my thesis titles then careens through some of the barriers I experienced in the section, “Navigating storms within Western academia”. The hīkoi ends with further reflections on this thesis in the subsection, “Resting within the archipelago of Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao”.

The kupu hīkoi in the title of this chapter connotes the skilful drawing up or raising of fish from the ocean (hī), as well as imagery of a sharp point or peak (koi); it is a beautiful word that conveys much richness with little effort. Hīkoi thus aptly illustrates the skill as well as the physical and mental energy that is required to reach a worthwhile summit. As such, the journey or whakapapa of this thesis deserves further attention, and is presented here via an analysis of the thesis titles that were considered by this author at varying points in time.

The energy to write this chapter comes from the epigraph above, which is a quote from a recent article titled, “The Pakaru ‘Pipeline’: Māori and Pasifika Pathways within the Academy” by Dr Sereana Naepi, Dr Tara G. McAllister, Dr Patrick Thomsen, Dr Marcia Leenen-Young, Dr Leilani A.

Walker, Dr Anna L. McAllister, Dr Reremoana Theodore, Dr Joanna Kidman and Dr Tamasailau Suaalii (2019). In this article, the authors highlight the appalling underrepresentation of Māori and Pasifika within higher education, including alarming figures that illustrate a 1:95 ratio between a Pākeha professor and Pākeha students, but a 1:398 ratio between a Māori professor and Māori students, and a shocking 1:1,829 ratio between a Pasifika professor and Pasifika students. The authors also draw on their own experiences within academia to reinforce the ‘leaking’ of Māori and Pasifika students out of the higher education ‘pipeline’. As an Indigenous Māori high school teacher, this article resonated hugely with me; such ratios might have easily emerged from the secondary education sector.

Naepi et. al. (2019) then provide a more fitting metaphor for Aotearoa; rather than a leaky pipeline, an image of Pacific navigation is proposed. The article subsequently discusses metaphorical storms that can slow the progress of Māori and Pasifika students, waka used to journey through academia, and islands to rest at while transitioning from completed doctoral studies to professorship. In my experience, Māori professors, post-doctoral fellows, lecturers and tutors generally accept engagement with te ao Māori as a given, and this is gold. Indeed, as a Māori postgraduate student who has experienced her fair share of tempestuous academic weather, the importance of seeing Māori in higher academic positions during this time, had little to do with titular equality. In saying this, the navigation of Māori and Pasifika students through academia has many layers. For instance, while outside the scope of this thesis, differences in experience between Māori female and male postgraduate students is a significant aspect worthy of further exploration.

Regardless, overall Māori professorship in tertiary education reflects the diverse realities within Aotearoa and also stabilises Māori and Crown partnership inherent within Te Tiriti o Waitangi. And although the language used to interpret ‘partnership’ differs between the New Zealand Courts and the Waitangi Tribunal (n.d.) – which was set up under the Treaty of Waitangi Act

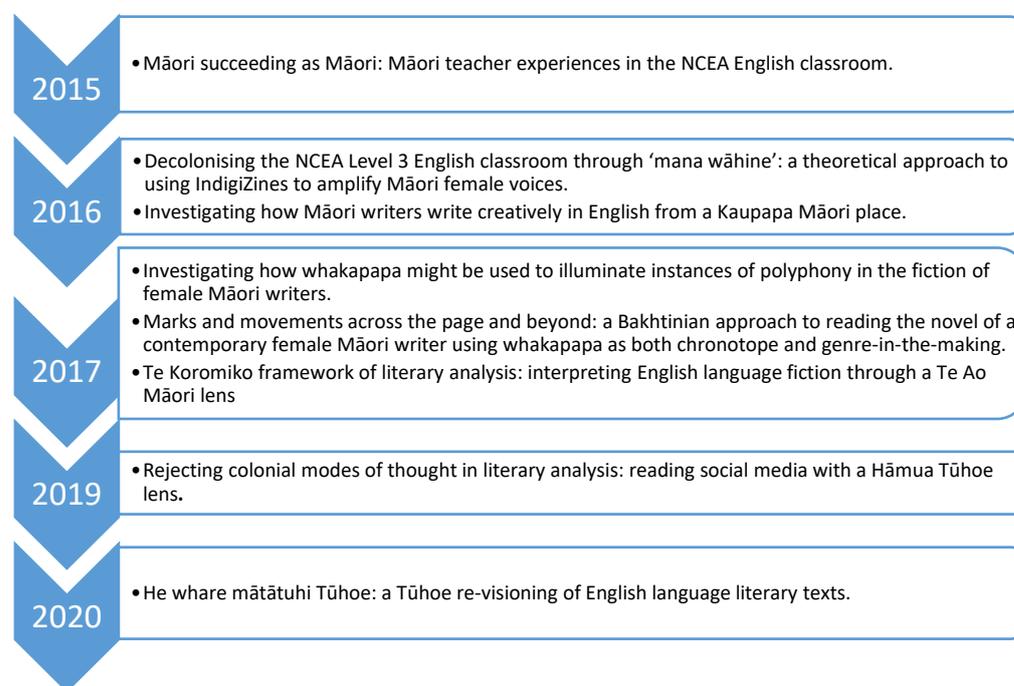
1975 to determine breaches of Te Tiriti by the Crown – the disparity between Māori access to higher positions in academia, versus the more seamless access for Pākehā to the same positions, is nothing short of atrocious. These abysmal realities for Māori and Pasifika postgraduate students strengthened my desire to continue with this research.

Given the struggles within my own academic journey to date, Naepi et. al.'s (2019) metaphor of Pacific navigation seemed a fitting structure for this chapter in which I attempt to illustrate the effort and length of my research hīkoi. Indeed, as I read about Aotearoa's 'pakaru pipeline', images of my own journey emerged. Figure 1 is a visual depiction of the individual words from the various working titles of this thesis, whereby the size of each word corresponds to the frequency of that word. As such, this word cloud is a wonderful visual summary of my thinking over time. It was also comforting to note that, despite my meanderings, the main focus on 'Māori' (and later 'Tūhoe') as well as 'English' language 'literary' studies has been consistent. Figure 2 subsequently lists the various titles in chronological order from the earliest title down to the current title of this thesis.



## Figure 2

### *List of thesis titles 2015-2020*



## Preparing the waka

My postgraduate journey began with three papers towards a Master of Education. The deeper thinking required at postgraduate level and the freedom to write about issues of significance resonated hugely with me. Postgraduate study was exciting, but also intimidating. Looking back at the following excerpts from an early journal entry, it is fascinating to note patterns that seemed to plot the path of this thesis before I knew the destination myself: nervous anticipation; feelings of desire, guilt, and loss regarding te reo Māori; a love of words and language; and my preoccupation with the complexities of teaching via the English language.

Saturday 10 January 2015

Today I have been thinking long and hard about a possible thesis/research proposal for my MEd. And yes, I do realise this is ages away, but the possibilities seem both daunting and exciting. I am slowly arriving at what I think will surely encompass the result of any research work I undertake into the experiences, practice and work of Māori teachers within the secondary English classroom: I must learn and master te reo.

At the outset this seems so ridiculous (one might think): why, on earth, should an English teacher need to be proficient in te reo in order to teach English? Perhaps I should elaborate.

When I was jotting down ideas for research, it occurred to me that I teach English because I love the English language - and I do love it! I love the way words can be manipulated, stretched, newly imagined and revitalised in order to elaborate on or make clear, or indeed shroud and obscure, ideas. I love the written word! And yet, as a teacher of English - as a Māori teacher of English, the written word also carries with it the guilt and shame associated with a language that was originally used as a hegemonic tool of assimilation. How the hell is this supposed to sit easy with me?

...I don't even think I've ever, until now, considered the teaching of English in mainstream NZ secondary schools in this light. But I am a teacher, a transmitter of the colonising language in this country. The language my grandmother hated with a passion. The language my grandfather told me to embrace; forget Māori, he'd said. And I did. (Salsano, 2015, January 10)

Despite the tragic end to this extract, it is comforting to note that my engagement with both te reo Māori and te ao Māori in general, has since reignited.

At the end of 2015, I entertained writing a thesis entitled Māori succeeding as Māori: Māori teacher experiences in the NCEA English classroom. By then, I had completed one postgraduate paper about using data and evidence as effective practice. I was also a dean at a high school and was contemplating further management roles within my chosen career. Unsurprisingly, this title reflects much of the education related literature that I was reading at the time, including terminology like ‘Māori succeeding as Māori’ from documents like *Tātaiako: cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners* (Ministry of Education, 2011). The title also reflects my interest in the subject of English within New Zealand’s secondary school qualification, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement [NCEA]. At the time, I imagined interviewing teachers who both identified as Māori and taught senior high school English in order to ascertain how best to help Māori students ‘succeed as Māori’. However, the focus of this research felt like yet another tokenistic approach to save Māori students who did, and still do not, need saving. They just deserve better from an education system that continues to avoid checking itself at tertiary level (Naepi et. al., 2019), let alone at secondary level.

In 2016, I undertook a paper about postcolonial global issues in education and wrote an essay, which also became my next thesis title: Decolonising the NCEA Level 3 English classroom through ‘mana wāhine’: a theoretical approach to using IndigiZines to amplify Māori female voices. The title of this paper represents a topic that I believed would be rewarding to pursue in depth as a thesis. It also symbolises new learning from my postgraduate studies, including a variety of challenging readings about educational philosophy, and new (to me) concepts such as mana wāhine. At the time, as a self-labelled feminist who had spent much of her adult life living far from Aotearoa, a Māori response to feminism – mana wāhine – was new to me. As well as this, the academic freedom I experienced in this paper allowed me to weave creative writing into my academic work, and thus self-publish a zine

of erasure poetry which aimed to subvert mainstream romance novels. In particular, my IndigiZine directly challenged Pākeha romance writer Daphne De Jong's assertion that "Every culture has its myths, legends and fairy tales of adventure and love. Aotearoa/New Zealand has the resourceful Hinemoa, defying convention and the disapproval of her whanau to swim across Lake Rotorua and join her forbidden lover, Tutanekai" (2015, p. 5). De Jong then introduces Cinderella to further her argument that "Romance writers tell a universal tale" (p. 5), thus reducing the whakapapa of Te Arawa ancestors, Hinemoa and Tutanekai, to a whitewashed version of a European child's fairy tale.

On the back of that postgraduate paper, I completed a Kaupapa Māori Research [KMR] paper during the second half of 2016, where I wrote a full thesis proposal titled Investigating how Māori writers write creatively in English from a Kaupapa Māori place. Although I thoroughly enjoyed the support, readings and discussions with Kaupapa Māori researchers such as Mere Berryman and Paul Woller, I struggled to understand my apprehension at the prospect of conducting KMR. In hindsight, there were a myriad of overlapping issues. First, while my KMR proposal included a comprehensive ethics application as I intended to interview Māori writers, I was not actually interested in conducting such interviews. Instead, I just wanted to read and analyse Indigenous literature. Secondly, as a Māori teacher working in mainstream secondary education, I saw this KMR proposal as a way to validate Māori voices. However, the armies of Pākehā colleagues and teacher-researchers clattering onto mythical horses, ready to white-splain te ao Māori back to me, while heroically 'saving' Māori students from the trenches of under-achievement, exhausted me no end and I had no desire to conduct any research in a high school setting. Perhaps I would have felt differently if more of my colleagues actively engaged with work by Māori researchers and even some Pākehā researchers such as Alison Jones, who co-edited *Critical conversations in kaupapa Māori* with Te Kawehau Hoskins, and argues that:

...proper engagement with Kaupapa Māori requires Pākehā individuals to become ordinary, at ease in Māori contexts, open to Māori knowledges, and familiar with te reo Māori. And to achieve this is to be oriented to learning, watching, and listening in human relationships of depth and longevity (as well as having a sense of humour, suspended judgment, and humility!) - along with a necessary consciousness of the wider relationships of power in which this engagement takes place. This sense of alert ease takes a long time for those who cannot whakapapa in to te ao Māori, and even for many who can. It takes years of taking part, working with Māori friends and colleagues, and being seen (kanohi kitea) in Māori communities, projects, and events. (Jones, 2017, pp. 188-189)

These are also some of the meaningful considerations that Pākehā fiction writers, such as Daphne de Jong (2015), might consider before regurgitating whakapapa with such flippancy.

The last frustration I experienced at the time had little to do with KMR and more to do with structural expectations of a social sciences thesis. Having decided to move towards a conceptual thesis, I struggled to align the research I was interested in (creative literary analysis) with the narrow methodology and literature review requirements of an education thesis. Regardless, I desperately wanted to succeed and this KMR proposal thus became the starting point for my research the following year, which is when the storm clouds descended.

### **Navigating storms in western academia**

I embraced 2017 with gusto! I had a working title, time and space to devote to my studies, a study award and scholarship, and motivation to complete mahi that I believed would make a difference in education. Instead, I spent two years paddling this thesis through subtropical cyclones.

For me, one of the most deeply affecting moments of 2017 was being told that many of the citations and references I used in my proposal were too

‘lightweight’. This was especially heartbreaking since the Indigenous educators, artists and researchers I chose to reference, regardless of their perceived scholarly ‘weighting’, had had such a profound impact on my thinking. The point was also made that I had yet to prove my worth as a researcher. Unfortunately, I was too inexperienced to recognise how utterly worthless this made me feel. Alice Te Punga Somerville asserts that, “Every day is a manifesto day when you’re an indigenous person in academia: every day involves lines in the sand, things that need defending, purposes and strategies that need to be clearly (re)stated. The stakes feel high; the structural supports feel low” (2017, p. 66). In hindsight, I wish I had recognised the slew of colonial thoughts, both internal and external, that threatened to capsize my waka that year. I wish I had gathered whānau to help me navigate and keep me company on my hīkoi. And I wish I knew then that the difference between ‘profound’ and ‘lightweight’ in western academia, can be an ocean’s worth of lived experiences and understandings.

Later that year, my research settled on the outskirts of philosophy, along with its confusing yet intriguing jargon, concepts and theorists. Bumbling along, the working title of my thesis thus became, Investigating how whakapapa might be used to illuminate instances of polyphony in the fiction of female Māori writers. The original focus of my research was to apply whakapapa aspects of te ao Māori, as suggested in the ancient karakia, Pērā Hoki, that I was introduced to by Dr Ruakere Hond at a Te Reo o Taranaki wānanga. In particular, the connection between Ranginui and Papatūānuku in Pērā Hoki piqued my interest, as did German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s (1962) ‘fourfold’. Furthermore, at the time, I chose to focus on a non-Indigenous text. Although I knew that Indigenous readings of Indigenous texts existed (Allen, 2012), I also believed that very little literary scholarship focused on Māori readings of non-Indigenous texts and I believed that my research could fill this gap.

As such, my prime concern became how to employ a te ao Māori lens while my reo was still very basic. I had yet to understand that the way I see the world and read literature are my strengths, while learning te reo Māori is simply a privilege. Also, as fascinated as I was with Heidegger's (1962) theory of the fourfold (the 'gathering' of earth, sky, divinities and mortals – which I viewed as an interesting link to Papatūānuku, Ranginui, ngā atua and ngā tangata), as a Māori woman, drawing on the work of an anti-Semitic academic never sat right with me. I still find this link fascinating and perhaps I will investigate it more, one day, just not today. In any case, I began to investigate how the unnamed narrator in Fyodor Dostoevsky's 1864 seminal work, *Notes from Underground* (2000), negotiates his whakapapa. This novella has been described as "a work of art" by Mikhail Bakhtin (in Katz, 2000, p.152), but also as "an extremely convoluted piece of mid-nineteenth century Russian prose" by Michael Katz (2000, p. ix), who translated the critical edition I wanted to use. Additionally, since I neither speak Russian, nor have experience with Russian culture or professional translation, many of the language and cultural irregularities arising from Russian into English translations were lost on me. Adding to this, Katz maintains that, "Of all the works of nineteenth-century Russian literature I have translated, without doubt Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* remains the most challenging" (2000, p. xi). Katz goes on to outline some of the cultural and linguistic challenges both he and numerous other translators tackled in translating just the first three lines of the novel into English. Katz concludes by declaring, "For the authentic experience the reader is advised and urged to learn the language" (p. xiv). Although the trajectory of my thesis quickly changed, issues that arise when translating texts, words and phrases from te reo Māori into English or vice versa remain relevant to this thesis.

As I further explored the work of Russian philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin, and various other tauīwi philosophers, my thesis title evolved into, Marks and movements across the page and beyond: A Bakhtinian approach to

reading the novel of a contemporary female Māori writer using whakapapa as both chronotope and genre-in-the-making. I became interested in how tensions are created within the space in which dialogical encounters occur in a novel and what the marks and movements as well as limitations of such encounters might be. To do this I engaged with concepts such as polyphony, which has been described as a “plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses...not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world” (Bakhtin, 1984). Recorded below are some notes and thoughts related to this topic that I wrote at the time:

This thesis will use a dialogical approach (Bakhtin, 1981) to explore subjectivity in the novel *Where the Rēkohu Bone Sings* (Makereti, 2014). This dialogical approach further aims to use whakapapa and draw “from a [conscious] network of history, tradition and power” that “anticipates ideas and judgements of others” (Sullivan, 2012 p. 43). This methodology also allows me to personally dialogue with my research on several levels: as a fiction writer interested in the mechanics of writing; as a reader who read *Where the Rēkohu Bone Sings* for the first time during the preparation of this proposal; as a student researcher who wishes to dialogue with Bakhtin about this new (for me) philosophical and literary research; and as an artist who has already used the canvas to work through frustrations that arose during my initial encounters with Bakhtinian readings – largely due to unfamiliarity of the material and subsequent (and ongoing) misinterpretation on my part.

As I was reading Makereti’s PhD thesis, she acknowledges that it is of “paramount importance to me that the Moriori point of view is central – the poutokomanawa or centre (heart) post that everything else is

connected to. I thought a great deal about the Moriori experience of history, and how I might convey that in a way that told their story, and privilege their point of view” (Makereti Dahlberg, 2013, p.21). This metaphor that embodies the Moriori point of view as the centre pou of a whare tipuna / meeting house, is represented in the novel as Lula circles the pou in the pentagonal whare of Te Kōpinga marae on Rēkohu - a place where “The veil between the seen and unseen was thinner in this place, the sounds echoing beyond her hearing” and where she gains “a new story about herself” (Makereti, 2014, p. 265). This is the last image the reader has of Makereti’s protagonist, Lula, and it encultured my definition of the wider essence of whakapapa – as a fluid entity that is able to connect the past with the present while allowing for many possible futures. Indeed, even as I am in the process of writing these words (even as soon as they are thought) they belong to the past, yet also contemplate a future; in this case, one where whakapapa may be used within literary analysis.

On the other hand, Bakhtin maintains that “In ancient literature it is memory, and not knowledge, that serves as the source and power for the creative impulse. That is how it was, it is impossible to change it: the tradition of the past is sacred. There is as yet no consciousness of the possible relativity of any past” (1981, p.15). And there is a certain staticness or dialectic thought attached to memory, in relation to privileging a whakapapa ideology; specifically genealogical aspects of whakapapa that link a person to e.g. the land and waters of their ancestors or a cosmology that begins with Paptūānuku and Ranginui – indeed even the idea of a beginning. And yet, even a Māori cosmology must link beyond the boundaries of itself – surely?

Regardless of all this, although I am aiming to incorporate whakapapa into my methodology by viewing it as both genre-in-the-making and

chronotope during the analysis of Makereti's novel (2014), this is purely experimental and I have no set idea how this will develop. (Salsano, 2017)

My struggle to find the right academic waka for me seems obvious in hindsight. I was not, and still am not, truly interested in dialogical approaches to texts, nor drawing on the work of Bakhtin – interesting reading though it was – to base my readings of literary texts by wāhine writers. In a later journal entry, when it became debilitating to write to the point of near incapacitation, I would describe my hesitation to engage with the rangahau at hand as a 'strange puku-feeling'. This puku-feeling is perhaps best illustrated in an extract from some undated notes I made titled "The problematics of engaging with Martin Heidegger", where I wrote: "My desire to engage Heidegger in this thesis is complicated. I do not share many of the values he demonstrated in his academic work, political alliances and personal choices. And I highly doubt that he would share more than amusement at an indigenous female writer at the edge of the Pacific choosing to do so [engage with his work]" (Salsano, n.d.).

By the end of November 2017, my thesis topic had evolved once more to, Te Koromiko framework of literary analysis: interpreting English language fiction through a Te Ao Māori lens. Despite subsequently spending the entirety of 2018 trying to force this rigid framework into existence, nothing came of it. Instead, as seen in the following extract from my 2018 journal, my justifications for sticking to this path were awkward, questionable, and are evidence that I had yet to address the pervasiveness of my own colonial thoughts, which viewed it both necessary and normal for Māori and Indigenous scholars to fit within pre-existing Pākehā contexts, as noted here:

Koromiko, a native New Zealand plant, is renowned for its role as rongoā – just as my work is attempting to soothe my wairua and hinengaro. To me, koromiko leaves represent Martin Heidegger's fourfold structure (sky, earth, divinities, mortals) which spiral towards a

flowering centre (whakapapa). Koromiko wood is known for its resilience and elasticity – similar to the ability of our tīpuna to reconcile Māori and Pākehā worldviews - while the intense heat and warmth created from burning koromiko branches reflects the burning desire for Māori voices to be heard. (Salsano, 2018)

Indeed. This extract represents a desperate attempt on my part to prove that my voice was worthy to exist within a western context, and that I too could produce something meaningful. Despite the pretty wording, the ‘Koromiko framework’ was about ego and the denial of whakapapa. This is likely the reason why attempts to write a literature review were paralysing, why methodologies evaded me, and why I viewed the work of Māori writers and artists as pipelines through which I could slink in order to emerge on the other side as worthy to exist within the (white, western) academic world. Rather than holding myself accountable to my literary colleagues, my whānau and my iwi, I instead attempted to bend mātauranga into something static and unyielding, which I now realise was a frantic attempt to view literature through an unchecked and “already-damaged Māori worldview” (Mika & Stewart, 2017, p. 144). I had yet to comprehend that colonisation had done an outstanding job in teaching me to never challenge the status, role and purpose of western academia. In reality, I had not boarded the right waka in the first place and at the end of 2018, I was done. I hated the work I had and had not produced, and was ready to quit. Only after continued encouragement from whānau, did I send a tentative email to inquire about completing my thesis within Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao, the Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies at the University of Waikato.

## Resting within the archipelago of Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao

### *New beginnings*

It was with much trepidation that I began my thesis journey anew in 2019. After meeting my current supervisor within Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao for the first time, I made the following journal entry:

29.04.19 - Hui with Alice

One of the funny things I think I've been struggling with - and this seemed to come out yesterday in the hui - is, for want of a better phrase, my deep-seated insecurities about the work that I want to do. It was so refreshing - and I didn't realise how actually therapeutic it would be - to hear that [it] is fine and normal to want to read texts the way I see them without having to feel the need to 'prove' to others that how I read texts is 'valid'.

For me, 2019 is the year I boarded my waka. This was also the year that I was introduced to Native American literary studies. Having previously stumbled upon Chadwick Allen's work on transindigenous methodologies (2012) and also been captivated by Thomas King's *The Truth about Stories* (2003), my attention turned to other Indigenous scholars such as Jace Weaver, Janice Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe, Craig S. Womack, Chris Andersen, Robert Warrior, Lisa Brooks, Daniel Heath Justice, Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, and Simon Ortiz. Along the way, Pasifika writers and scholars also emerged, for instance, Sereana Naepi, Lani Wendt Young and 'Epli Hau'ofa. And as my anxieties settled, so too did my confidence.

In 2020 I finally decided on the following title for this thesis: He whare mātātuhi Tūhoe: a Tūhoe re-visioning of English language literary texts. The name of this thesis originates, in part, from Tūhoe educator Taiarahia Melbourne's explanations of the word 'whare'. For many people in Aotearoa, the word 'whare' will instantly conjure up an image of a house or building. Yet

‘whare’ is much more complex than this. Writing about traditional Māori education for a contemporary world, Melbourne maintains that historically the word whare “did not imply a physical structure only and could perhaps be a modern misinterpretation” (2009, pp. 11-12). Melbourne then provides a more ancient translation for whare as “longevity of vision”. This translation was given to him by Paraone Tai Tin, himself a student of Hohepa Delamere, whereby “*wha* translates as ‘distance’ of time, while *re* means to ‘watch or ‘observe’” (2009, pp. 12).

Further to this, *mātātuhi* might be translated as written literature (where *mā* is translated as ‘by way of’, *tā* ‘to publish’, and *tuhi* ‘to write’ - or perhaps ‘to adorn’, similar to a work of art). In this respect, the title ‘He whare *mātātuhi* Tūhoe’ may be read as a Ngāi Tūhoe *re*visioning of published works of art, whereby the prefix *re* refers to the *re*positioning of iwi identity as the basis from which to *re* or ‘watch and observe’ literary works over time. *Re* also connotes the *re*vising of what is considered English language literature, or published works of art. This thesis is therefore an observation (*re*) of knowing through iwi eyes. Not a lens, nor a pair of glasses that anyone, anywhere, may wear on a whim, but a way to observe the world that is ingrained within iwi existence. For within the whare or longevity of vision, is whakapapa – immediate, past and future. As such, while I have used *re* as a prefix to English words in this thesis, and the words do carry with them this literal meaning, figuratively, the *re* in this thesis has its roots in te ao Māori and in watching and observing the world. It is thus argued that a *re*visioning of texts, or observations of presented visions (colonial and Indigenous) in texts, is crucial to the longevity of Indigenous literary scholarship and literature by Indigenous peoples.

Ngāi Tūhoe are one such Indigenous people. Located on the East Coast of the North Island of Aotearoa, within the tribal boundaries of Te Urewera, Ngāi Tūhoe are diverse and global and no one person could ever speak to the entirety of Tūhoe lived experiences. Indeed, my experiences as a Tūhoe

woman are particular to me alone, and the title He whare māātūhi Tūhoe is an expression of English language literary analysis based on my personal experiences of Tūhoetana.

### *Towards a Tūhoe reading of a text*

It is interesting to me how scholarly ideas often emerge when academia is the last thing on my mind. Generally, such ideas relate to my identity as a Tūhoe woman who was raised in te ao Pākehā. One such instance occurred at the 2019 Te Hā Kaituhi Māori National Māori Writers' Hui in Porirua. There, I noticed that the following questions seemed to preoccupy several emerging and established Māori writers: Who is a Māori writer? What is Māori writing? What is Māori literature? While such contemplations appear crucial to literary conversations here in Aotearoa, these questions do little to move the field of Indigenous literary scholarship forward, echoing instead colonial preoccupations with Indigenous 'authenticity'. To this end, Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm argues that, "[d]efinitions of who we are affect not only First Nations peoples in North America but Indigenous peoples around the world who have been subjected to "the White Man's burden" of authority and control through the domination and assimilationist tactics of colonising governments" (1993, p. 11). Seeking to define who a Māori writer is, demonstrates the extent to which Indigenous literature in Aotearoa has been scarred by 'assimilationist tactics'. Further to this, Linda Smith asserts that, "[p]roblematizing the indigenous is a Western obsession" (1999, pp. 91-92), whereby Indigenous people who do not meet western 'cultural diversity' standards – like race or skin colour – are labelled 'inauthentic'.

If, however, we are to fleetingly entertain the matter of racially based definitions regarding what it could mean to be a Māori writer, we might glean some understanding from Jace Weaver (2001) who argues that a person's 'social and cultural milieu' is far more important than race. Weaver goes on to quote Thomas King who states that, when conversations turn to Native

American literature, “we try to imagine that there is a racial common denominator... We know, of course, that there is not. We know that this is a romantic, mystical, and, in many instances, a self-serving notion...” (in Weaver, 2001, p. 7). Further to this, Simon Ortiz, not only agrees with Weaver, but Ortiz also suggests that the multi-faceted breadth of Indigenous existence simply cannot be reduced to a single element:

Indigenous identity has to do with a way of life that has its own particularities, patterns, uniqueness, structure, and energy. Because Indigenous identity cannot simply be attributed to only one quality, aspect, or function of culture. Because identity has to be relevant and pertinent to other elements and factors having to do with land, culture, and community of Indigenous people. (Ortiz, 2006, p. xi)

Similarly, here in Aotearoa, despite broad similarities regarding te reo Māori me ōna tikanga across the motu, each iwi have their own specific speech patterns, idioms, marae, landmarks, land issues, relationships with the Crown, relationships with other iwi, and so on. While the broad term Māoritana might be used to describe the broad similarities between iwi, it is more meaningful to defer to a person’s iwitana. To homogenise experiences and categorise a writer by a singular racial term, such as Māori, not only fulfils the colonial narrative, but also does little justice to the richness and diversity of Māori lives and experiences. Yet equally, as Chris Andersen (2009) suggests, race and ethnicity not only form an important part of an Indigenous person’s density of experience, but can also encourage a critique of ‘whiteness’, whereby this critique is crucial to Indigenous academic scholarship. On this, Andersen maintains that terms like race and ethnicity, “comprise an important part of the *density* of contemporary Indigeneity. *They are part of what makes us Indigenous...* A sophisticated Indigenous studies discipline must focus on Indigenous communities as a critique of colonial society” (2009, p. 94). Ignoring race and ethnicity thus risks the uncritiqued embedding of limiting

depictions of Indigeneity, which is just as unhelpful as relying on them to orient our thinking in the first place. For iwi literary scholarship to move forward, colonial thoughts related to the reading of literature must be addressed and critiqued. Regarding Native American literature as a whole, Thomas King states:

What we do have is a collection of literary works by individual authors who are of Native ancestry, and our hope, as writers and critics, is that if we wait long enough, the sheer bulk of this collection, when it reaches some sort of critical mass, will present us with a matrix within which a variety of patterns can be discerned". (in Weaver, 2001, p. 11)

Likewise, if more literary texts are created by authors who identify and live as iwi, and more conversations about those texts focus on the patterns that arise from this collection of iwi literature, including critical considerations of iwitana and colonial thinking, surely this is more helpful than continuing conversations about ‘who is a Māori writer’ or ‘what is Māori writing’? It is therefore imperative that more Māori write and critique stories so that we too may discern such patterns and enrich iwi literary studies. The literary landscape here in Aotearoa needs more Māori storytellers and more Māori writers, but also “more Māori researchers, more Māori research questions, and more Māori approaches” (Te Punga-Somerville, 2017, p. 76) that reflect the richness and diversity of iwi lives and stories. And we are fabulous storytellers! In her novel *Pōtiki*, Patricia Grace contemplates the importance of stories as a literature for whānau that includes the beautiful diversity of voices within those stories:

And although the stories all had different voices, and came from different times and places and understandings, though some were shown, enacted or written rather than told, each one was like a puzzle piece which tongue or grooved neatly to another. And this train of stories defined our lives, curving out from points on the spiral in ever-

widening circles from which neither beginnings nor endings could be defined. (Grace, 1986, p. 41)

Interestingly, according to Grace, all stories have a place within the spiral; individual stories exist alongside each other, neatly tongue and grooved, since the dawn of time and into the unending future. And although the effect of colonisation on Indigenous communities has been brutal (Smith, 1999), when storms brew and lightning strikes, stories can be *retold* and *reimagined* and used to *renavigate* and heal whānau. While reflecting on a family gathering after a sudden death, Lisa Brooks remarks that:

We told stories that envisioned better, more hilarious versions of ourselves. A huge gap in the web of our family required mending that only stories can do; those strands reinforce the relations between us, remind us of our shared history, let loose the laughter [that] gives us the reassurance that we can, as a family, endure. This, perhaps, is the essence of a Native nationalist literature, a literature that gathers families together. We turn to stories for sustenance and meaning: they enable our survival, not just as individuals, but in the words of Samson Occom, “as one family,” as a “whole.” (in Weaver, Womack & Warrior, 2006, p. 231)

For Indigenous communities, stories are thus synonymous with whānau. And despite colonisation’s attempt to destroy and replace ‘puzzle pieces’ (Grace, 1986) or whānau, causing ‘gaps in the web’ (Brooks, in Weaver, Womack & Warrior, 2006), stories heal and remind us of our place amongst one another. Furthermore, Thomas King succinctly states that, “[t]he truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (2003, p.2). It is argued that any form of ‘Māori literature’ must encompass stories about whānau and Māori communities and must reflect the diverse and complex lived experiences of Māori – past, present, future or otherwise(!) – because stories are whānau. In addition to this, Craig Womack asserts that, “tribal literatures are not some

branch waiting to be grafted onto the main trunk. Tribal literatures are the tree... We are the canon” (1999, p. 7). So, if Māori writers and Māori writing and Māori literature already exist in an ever-widening spiral of stories that has been ours for millennia, can we just get on with it already?

This, however, is easier said than done. For many Indigenous people, one of the most significant barriers to connection, as a consequence of colonial rule, is shame. Recently, a post on Twitter called for kindness towards whānau, such as myself, who were learning te reo Māori and felt whakamā about speaking. In response, a fluent speaker of te reo stated that they had no time to be apologetic towards Māori who could spend a fortune on a degree and career – ‘instead of learning te reo’ was implied. When I think of this post, I still find the lack of empathy towards another whānau member’s life circumstances which brought them back to their whakapapa, their reo, and their place within their iwi, shattering. Or perhaps it is guilt and shame on my part; about being that person, pleading for understanding, when in fact I was due none.

Yet, for Indigenous people, shame regarding spoken language is an insidious byproduct of colonial rule. In response, Kirsty Dunn reminds us that reclaiming tō tātou reo rangatira, the language of our ancestors, “is to acknowledge the reasons why reclamation is required in the first place: it is to confront our colonisation, our disconnection and our intergenerational whakamā head on, and sometimes in a public forum” (2019, para. 15). Similarly, Anahera Gildea vehemently opposes the view that Māori ever ‘lost’ te reo:

As if walking to school one day, in our negligence, we lost our language. I lost it. I let it slip through the cracks of the sidewalk, I failed to retrieve it when it fell from my pocket. I am at fault. The shame is mine. And if I believe that, if we listen to that story and narrate ourselves that way, we are complicit in our re-colonisation. In our continued undermining of our self”. (May 2018, para 15)

Instead, Gildea argues that, “We didn’t lose it. It was stolen. Not the same. Not equivalent. Not shame.” This thesis emerges against a backdrop of strong Māori women who struggle, as do I, to reknow our past in order to revision our futures. However, I still wonder about the futures my ancestors imagined for me. For us. Did they look to the stars on a clear night at sea and assume that their mokopuna would always find their way home? Did they envisage the storms that would brew over the Pacific? Did they ever predict a world bereft of iwi compositions and critiques and stories? While my tūpuna might not have imagined English language writing thousands of years ago, the current wasteland that is iwi literary scholarship of English language literature can absolutely be turned around. But how to go about doing this?

As I contemplated what a Tūhoe reading and critique of a text might look like, I was reminded of Daniel Justice’s arguments about tribal interpretations. In particular, he discusses the need to consider, “the cultural, historical, political, and intellectual contexts from which indigenous texts emerge” (Justice, 2008, p. 165). Initially, I believed that in Aotearoa the most important ‘cultural, historical, political, and intellectual contexts’ out of which Indigenous texts arise, would surely involve the tenuous relationships between iwi and the Crown. However, the more I engaged with my Tūhoetana, the less I focused on Crown relationships and the more I concentrated on my personal relationship with Ngāi Tūhoe.

### *Exploring the fictional worlds of Indigenous writers*

Although I once contemplated analysing the work of Russian novelist, Fyodor Dostoevsky (and even briefly considered the work of other male tauwiwi ‘classic’ English language fiction writers who often dominate the secondary English classroom, such as William Shakespeare, Wilfred Owen and Ken Kesey), it became increasingly important for me, as a Māori woman, to engage with fictional works by Indigenous writers. In a similar vein, Craig Womack asserts that:

Native perspectives have to do with allowing Indian people to speak for themselves, that is to say, with prioritizing Native voices. Those voices may vary in quality, but they rise out of a historical reality wherein Native people have been excluded from discourse concerning their own cultures...Native viewpoints are important because, to quote Métis scholar and activist Howard Adams, the state, rather than Indians, controls “the mental means of production”. (1999, p. 5)

Womack’s words were instrumental in my decision to prioritise the voices of Tūhoe writers and especially Tūhoe female writers. It was then humbling to realise that while many such writers and artists compose work in te reo Māori, this is not the case for writers who speak and write English as their first language, and were raised outside the traditional borders of Ngāi Tūhoe. Consequently, I chose to focus on literary works by female artists who identified as Māori, regardless of their iwi.

Additionally, over the course of this thesis, I became increasingly interested in reading science fiction / fantasy / speculative fiction, as well as investigating innovative ways that Indigenous authors choose to circumvent traditional publishing channels in order to ‘speak for themselves’. On science fiction, Taranaki and Whakatōhea writer and book reviewer J.C. Sturm, provides historical insight into the importance of the science fiction genre for taiohi. In a 1955 article in *Te Ao Hou* about fiction for teenagers, Sturm argues that, “if man cannot learn to live happily with man on earth he may discover how in the rarified air of another planet” (p. 55). On the same page, Sturm further maintains that, “Utopia was crowded out of the South Seas about the end of last century, but thanks to Science Fiction, appears to have set up house in outer space.” Although science fiction developed as a “predominantly white, male tradition” that excluded women and people of colour (Kurtz, 2014), in the twenty-first century speculative fiction can provide valuable insights into Indigenous experiences as iwi ‘set up house’ in this genre. Moreover, in the introduction to *Black and brown planets: The politics of race in science fiction*

[SF], Isiah Lavender III states that “Reexamining SF’s background has a significant cultural effect for the twenty-first century because it can assist our understanding of the social changes occurring as the Western world ceases to be dominated by the white majority” (2014, p. 6). André M. Carrington further asserts that, “placing Blackness at the centre of discussions about speculative fiction augments our understanding of what the genre might be and what it might do” (2016, pp. 1-2). Similarly, as more Māori writers create works of fantasy, speculative and science fiction, so too do more opportunities exist for fellow Māori scholars to critique such work. Within such critiques, the genres themselves might be *reimagined*, and the changing social structures of the world, including the historical exclusion of Indigenous people from such discourses, might be challenged.

Of course, in the twenty-first century, ‘genre’ is not the only *recourse* available to Indigenous voices. Zines, either published online or via physical copies, have allowed Indigenous creators to circumvent traditional publishing channels and instead speak on their terms. Zines are often described as “noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines” (Duncombe, 2008, p. 18), or ‘less’ commercial, “independent, self-published works created for pleasure” (Buchanan, 2012, p. 71). It is perhaps unsurprising that Indigenous voices are found in such texts, suppressed as they often are within western capitalist agendas (Smith, 1999) in the form of ‘traditional’ publishing channels. Indeed, zines may be viewed as, “a creative outlet for marginalised groups; an opportunity to discard conventional rules, be they in education or via self-publishing one’s own stories; and a subversive response to mainstream Western culture and capitalism” (Salsano, 2016, October, p. 38). So too though, have innovations in technology allowed Indigenous voices to flourish.

In Oceania alone, self publishing has produced important work for Indigenous youth – for instance, Lani Wendt Young’s *Telesā* series. Indeed, on her blog, *Sleepless in Samoa*, Wendt Young provides advice about self publishing and reminds us that “it’s not enough just to write our own stories,

we must also take ownership of HOW those stories are shared and taken to the world, how they are packaged, produced and distributed” (2013, para. 3). Similarly, online applications such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Tiktok, though primarily visual, are generally inexpensive and easily-accessible self-publishing sources, while the advent of memes on various social media sites are a further channel used to amplify Indigenous voices. Memes have been described as “units of cultural production, but they also include broader modes of human knowledge and comprise names, relationship patterns, principles of society” (Denisova, 2019, p. 7). On the power of memes for Indigenous youth, Kristina Jacobsen and Shirley Ann Bowman assert that, “[d]elivered through the lens of humor through social media, memes not only allow multiple frames of interpretation and analysis but also, significantly, create space for dialogue and critical reflection around often raw and sensitive topics” (2019, p. 61). For Māori artists, and especially taiohi, these transient forms of literature will likely continue to evolve with technology, as will the possibility for the rich analysis of such texts. Online or not, self-published texts create space for critical dialogue and reflection, and are regrettably amiss within mainstream English literary studies in Aotearoa.

## Chapter 3: Tūhoetana

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Kaore hoki e te roimata,  
Te pehia kei aku kamo;  
Me he wairutu au ki Te Whangaromanga, e,  
Ko Haumapuhia, e ngunguru i raro ra, i.  
*How heavy are the tears, / Which my eyelids cannot restrain. / They run as the  
water at Te Whangaromanga, / Where Haumapuhia moans below.*  
- *Mihikitekapua, Ngā Mōteatea*

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This chapter contemplates the ways in which my Tūhoetana contributes to how I read texts. I begin by situating my kōrero within the literary archives of Ngāi Tūhoe. I then ponder my place within Ngāi Tūhoe, before spending the last three sections of this chapter discussing aspects of Tūhoetana that I have come to recognise as foundational to my understanding of the world: te mana motuhake, whakapapa, and kaitiakitana.

### **Mihikitekapua: situating my kōrero within the literary archives of Ngāi Tūhoe**

The epigraph that opens this chapter constitutes the third stanza of a waiata by renowned Tūhoe composer, Mihikitekapua, and includes the English translation found in volume 1 of Apirana Ngata and Pei Te Hurinui Jones' book, *Ngā Mōteatea* (1958). I was first introduced to Mihikitekapua in a short hui with Dr. Rangi Mataamua, regarding my interpretation of Tūhoetana for this thesis. During this hui, the names of Tūhoe writers, composers, and scholars who wrote in te reo rolled effortlessly from his tongue, while the names of Tūhoe fiction writers who wrote in English struggled to make themselves known (R. Mataamua, personal communication, December 12, 2019). For the permanency of te reo Māori, the former was a source of great pride and joy. For my personal desire to discuss English language fiction by Tūhoe writers, the latter elicited immediate panic: Would focusing on English language literature make me complicit in the ongoing colonial oppression of Ngāi Tūhoe? Will my research actively discourage Tūhoe writers and readers

who speak English as their first language, from learning te reo? Should I even be advocating for more Tūhoe creative writers and scholars to work in the English language?

And then I took a breath and stepped back, which is when my western education kicked in and I began analysing statistics. According to our tribal website (Ngāi Tūhoe, n.d.), roughly 15% of Tūhoe live inside the boundaries of Te Urewera. Additionally, Statistics New Zealand (2013) report that 37.2% of Tūhoe can carry out an everyday conversation in te reo, which, impressively, is more than double the 18.4 percent level for the total Māori population in Aotearoa. However, the number of Tūhoe members who can hold an everyday conversation in te reo is dwindling: from 40.3% in 2001, to 39% in 2006, to 37.2% in 2013. Therefore, if 85% of all Tūhoe live outside our traditional tribal boundaries, and more than 60% of all Tūhoe are unable to hold an everyday conversation in te reo, then for the increasing majority of Tūhoe whānau, te reo Māori has yet to become the dominant language of everyday communication. And if such whānau are discouraged from using the language they know to tell their stories and to critique the stories that are told about them, who will do this instead? Who will express our successes, our challenges and our mamae, on our terms? What legacy will silencing our voices have on our tamariki and our mokopuna? To date, English language writing about Ngāi Tūhoe experiences has almost exclusively been the domain of non-Māori. Sometimes such writing is accurate and oftentimes it is well intentioned, but is still written from a tauwiwi worldview. It is therefore my ardent position that for the more than 60% of Tūhoe whānau who struggle to converse in te reo Māori, telling their stories, their way, must begin in any language. Indeed, writing in English can be a pathway to writing in te reo. That is, it is hoped that when whānau interact with more Māori storytellers, writers, speakers, artists and scholars, they will be encouraged to complete their journey towards voicing their thoughts in te reo Māori and thus contribute towards the permanency of Ngāi Tūhoe. Yet, as I

unraveled these statistics, I found the western thought process useful and the conclusions comforting, but it was not enough.

So I took another breath, and stepped back even further. Immediately, my thoughts shifted to Mihikitekapua and to the lyrics in the epigraph of this chapter. The title of this waiata, “He Waiata Aroha” has been translated as “A Song of Yearning”. It is, “a song of yearning for her [Mihikitekapua’s] daughter, Te Uruti, on hearing that she was illtreated by her husband” (Ngata & Jones, 1958, p. 61). Although it is unknown, to my knowledge at least, exactly when this waiata was written, the lyrics in *Ngā Mōteatea* were communicated in 1896 by Tūhoe elder, Paitini Wi Tapeka, while words such as puka and pepa, “are the English book and paper” (Ngata & Jones, 1958, p. 63), which therefore indicate that the waiata was composed after settler contact. However, Mihikitekapua’s “He Waiata Aroha” recounts more than ‘aroha’ or ‘longing’. Mihikitekapua writes about pain. Deep, terrible, intergenerational pain and trauma.

Initially, when I read the English translation, “How heavy are the tears, / Which my eyelids cannot restrain”, I immediately noticed the physicality of longing as a parent. From my own experiences as a mother, such longing is certainly more pronounced when the child lives far away and is unwell – or made to be unwell, as implied by Te Uruti’s mistreatment. Thus, Mihikitekapua’s words speak clearly of physical anguish. The speaker’s heartbreak is not only evident in the ‘heaviness’ or weight and volume of the tears that are flowing, but also in the conscious dissociation from the body. That is, the speaker’s eyelids (“aku kamo”) have taken it upon themselves to “pēhi” or “restrain” or suppress the tears, as if the eyelids were manufactured structures like dams, divorced from the natural processes of the whenua, or in this case, the body. Such struggle to allow tears to flow naturally suggests an element of shame. And such shame, and restraint of tears and emotion when dealing with pain, seems highly unusual within te ao Māori. Indeed, during tangi the display of emotion is not only encouraged, but can also span days and

take many forms: “Maori mourning rituals can be enacted over a few hours or a few days. They include the rituals of encounter, lamentation and cathartic mourning, oratory, dirges, the recitation of genealogy, prayer and speeches of farewell” (Nikora et. al., 2012, p. 4). Thus, the decision by Mihikitekapua to detach parts of the speaker’s body and have them function independently in an attempt to curb the flow of tears, seems highly unusual and indeed unnatural within te ao Māori. Turning off all emotion, like the switch of a machine, may be viewed as evidence that the speaker is traumatised, perhaps by the mere thought of atrocities being committed against their loved one.

Additionally, composing this waiata may be viewed as an avenue for Mihikitekapua to ensure her wider whānau are aware of her daughter’s pain. That is, by bringing her son-in-law’s actions to the attention of whānau who would likely hear this waiata (the audience would have surely been sizeable given Mihikitekapua’s prominence as a composer), Te Uruti’s husband is thus called to account in a public space. Traditionally, such calling to account within te ao Māori was normal and expected. In research undertaken for the New Zealand Women’s Refuge Foundation by the International Research Institute for Māori and Indigenous Education [IRI], the researchers maintain that:

Our histories speak of people acting with mana in their responses to violence and abuse - of whānau and hapu moving in to support their women. Our histories speak of the great lengths to which violators would go to restore their mana - mana they diminished through their own actions...The dignity and mana of the person who had been violated and the ever-present support of the collective is important in our cultural framework. (IRI, n.d., p. 8)

In the case of Mihikitekapua’s “He Waiata Aroha”, it is therefore likely that through this waiata the author was seeking the support of her collective whānau.

Indeed, the seriousness of the situation and need for whānau intervention is emphasised in the ensuing two lines: “They [tears] run as the water at Te Whangaromanga, / Where Haumapuhia moans below.” Te Whangaromanga is the name of an underground channel, while Haumapuhia is the name of an ancestor whose story is gut-wrenchingly violent. Haumapuhia lived with her parents, Mahu and Kauariki, at Waikotikoti. Ngata and Jones describe what happened to Haumapuhia:

Mahu sent [Haumapuhia] with a gourd to fetch water from the spring, Te Puna a Taupara. She disobeyed, and Mahu became angry and immersed her in the spring. She thereupon became a taniwha, entering and boring her way and wriggling under the ground; hence the lake Waikaremoana with its many branches, which bear witness to Haumapuhia’s struggles. During her final struggle in an effort to reach the sea she entered Te Whangaromanga. There is the spot where she entered, emerging at Waikaretaheke. When she came forth to the light of day she was turned into stone. There she lies today with head down stream and legs stretched up stream. (1958, p. 63)

Interestingly, Ngata and Jones (1958) chose to describe Haumapuhia’s horrific death as an angry act of ‘immersion’ in water. And while such minimising language may be viewed as a 1950s patriarchal view of Indigenous women as disposable and deserving of violence, the fact remains that Haumapuhia was cruelly murdered by the one man in her life who should have shown her unconditional love and forgiveness for her childish petulance. Distressingly, even after her death, in the frightening space she was cast into, Haumapuhia continued to struggle just to exist. The onomatopoeic growling of the verb “ngunguru” (“moans” in the English translation) in Mihikitekapua’s waiata gives voice to Haumapuhia’s suffering – specifically to the animalistic agony of her confusing, new reality as a taniwha who is suddenly alone and homeless. To further rub salt into the wound, after attempting to escape,

Haumapuhia is turned to stone at the very point she believes her salvation is near. Her final humiliation is being left to lie face down in a ditch with her legs unceremoniously splayed upstream for all eternity. With this dreadful account in mind, it is difficult to read Mihikitekapua's words as anything but an articulation of horrific pain, underscored by a burning fear for the safety of her own daughter. And just as the channel, Te Whangaromanga, was created by Haumapuhia as she wriggled deep underground – frantically searching for an escape route in dark, confined spaces – so too is the depth of torment from which Mihikitekapua's tears originate.

Mihikitekapua's words may thus be read as a deep condemnation of domestic violence inflicted on Tūhoe woman; to hear her sing this waiata must have been haunting indeed. And although we are not told of the actions that Te Uruti and Haumapuhia's violators undertook in order to restore their respective mana, we do know that after Haumapuhia's murder her father left the region (McGarvey, 2005), and that Mihikitekapua's words were shared by a Tūhoe elder, Paitini Wi Tapeka (Ngata & Jones, 1958), indicating that tribal elders were aware of Te Uruti's situation also. Moreover, while Mihikitekapua could not be with her daughter during her pain, just as Kauariki was unable to be with Haumapuhia, Mihikitekapua has ensured that through her waiata, Te Uruti's pain as well as that of her tipuna, Haumapuhia, are immortalised. Tellingly, the erasure of the perpetrators' names in "He Waiata Aroha" (Mahu and Te Uruti's husband) illustrates how deeply undeserving they are to share the same space as these two women. "He Waiata Aroha" is thus an articulation of the mana that Tūhoe women hold in and of themselves and other wāhine.

In a keynote address in te reo Māori at the *He Manawa Whenua* conference, Dr. Rangi Mataamua states, "Heoi, ahakoa nō hea tātau, ko tātau ko te wai, ko te wai ko tātau" (2017, p. 5). My translation of this statement is: 'Wherever we are from, we are water and water is us.' Immediately prior to this statement, Mataamua reminds us of the numerous ways that we are connected to water i.e. via the waterways, channels, lakes, springs and oceans

that make up the islands of Aotearoa. He then presents the duality of the phrase “Ko wai koe?” (2017, p. 5), which is often asked when Māori people meet. Generally translated as ‘Who are you?’ the phrase, as Mataamua points out, can also mean, ‘You are water.’ And indeed, humans are physiologically made of water and we are all connected to water, including the need for water to survive. In this light, through Haumapuhia’s torment and struggles, waterways and channels were created that nourish the lives of her ancestors to this day. We are connected to Haumapuhia and she is now forever situated amongst us within the landscape of Ngāi Tūhoe. As such, violence and domestic abuse are not Haumapuhia’s legacy. Mihikitekapua has reminded us that Haumapuhia’s legacy is to expose trauma and give voice to the traumatised so that future generations will not have this experience. Her message is one of healing and hope, which brings me back to my thesis topic. I refuse to believe that Haumapuhia, Te Uruti and Mihikitekapua yearned for their descendants to feel the suffering and torment that they experienced. I refuse to believe that any of our tīpuna want us to inflict violence upon ourselves by allowing our voices to be silenced, the permanency of our iwitana to be compromised, and our lives to be erased by those who are inclined to cause us harm. Drawing on the archives of my tīpuna, focusing on English language literature thus makes me complicit in the search for healing. As such, this tuhinaroa encourages Tūhoe artists and scholars to heal their past, engage with their Tūhoetana on their terms, and publish in a language that currently gives expression to their thoughts – for if we do not, who will?

### **Ruatoki: finding my place within Ngāi Tūhoe**

I wish I could remember when I first realised I was Tūhoe. A single moment of clarity. A revelation, perhaps. But I don’t. Growing up amongst my mother’s iwi (Te-aitanga-a-Māhaki) in Te Tairāwhiti, the geographical and spiritual korowai of Ngāi Tūhoe was completely foreign to me, as was te reo Māori me ōna tikana. My father was a whāngai and I often wonder whether my koro and

kuia regretted giving him away as a baby, and how different his life, and our lives, might have been were we raised in Ruatoki. Even now, when I return to Ruatoki, or am around my cousins and aunties and uncles from there, it's difficult to not feel like a half-carved tokotoko or a ruru with clipped wings.

The first time I was called on to Waikirikiri marae in Ruatoki was for a tangi. Te reo Māori saturated every person, pou, and frosty blade of grass. Embarrassingly, I do not recall whose tangi it was. I do remember being ushered into the wharemate and being directed to sit amongst other women, around the tūpāpaku. I still recall the warmth of a fluffy, child's blanket being placed gently across my folded knees. I was an adult, yet that blanket seemed fitting because I felt like a child – one who panicked at every movement and needed every instruction painstakingly translated.

At the time, it felt shameful to cry. I never knew this person in life, so what right did I have to grieve their death? In an attempt to avoid tears, I desperately tried to focus on the blurry edges of a photograph, the jagged curves of a leaf, and the sounds, any sound, beyond the confines of the wharemate. My colonial instinct was to flee towards the familiar spaces of te ao Pākehā and never return. I had yet to realise that my tears were deeper than the physical loss of the person who lay at my feet. My tears encompassed the gut-wrenching abyss of intergenerational pain. Of severed connections. Of ruptured whakapapa and exclusion from the lands on which I sat. As saddened as both my father and I were by this exile, I am very much aware that colonisation stole the legacy of te reo Māori from iwi (Gildea, 2018), not my grandparents, and that ongoing efforts to *reclaim* te reo allows me to confront the collective colonisation and “intergenerational whakamā” felt within my whānau (Dunn, 2019, para. 15).

In a similar vein, for iwi scholars who critique English language literature, it is difficult to view the colonising tsunami of whitewashed literature within English classrooms and not feel both disheartened at the sheer vastness of mahi yet to be undertaken, and also whakamā at our seeming

support of te reo Pākehā. Indeed, nearly 200 years after the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, both the English classroom as well as the act of reading English language literature are still very colonising activities and spaces (Smith, 1999). English has been described by Indigenous writers as a “knotty problem” (Ortiz, 2006, p. xiii) that has been woven into the “colonial project of the 19th century” (Te Punga Somerville, 2011, p. 62). For Indigenous people, English activities and spaces can thus appear as grotesque relics of the brutal relationship between the English language via colonisation, and Indigenous communities (Foucault, 1977; Smith, 1999). To this end, some Indigenous writers such as Kenyan author and academic, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, have consequently rejected writing in the language of their colonisers. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o maintains that colonisation’s “most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonized” (1986, p. 16). He further insists that writing in one’s own language – in his case, Gĩkũyũ – is fundamental to the anti-imperialist struggle. However, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s stance is not the only response available to Indigenous writers. In the foreword to *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, Simon Ortiz writes that Indigenous people can make use of English:

While English – and other colonial languages – may be the “enemy’s language,” it can be helpful and useful to us just like any other languages we have the opportunity to learn.

There is no reason for us not to speak-write in languages other than our own. My late mother and father were both fluent in speaking English; my father also spoke some Spanish, and my brother Petuuche presently does fluently. I never for a second thought my parents were less Aacqumeh hanoh for being able to speak fluently in English. Yet too often I find Indigenous people, including Acomas, holding and expressing a view that constantly speaking English threatens and jeopardizes our cultural identity as Indigenous people. We have to be careful and watchful not to

get into that internalized colonized mode of thought or else we'll be limited by that kind of thinking. (2006, p. xiv)

For many Indigenous people who speak, read and write predominantly in a colonising language, such as myself, Ortiz' words resound like a waiata aroha. Like an unburdening of fear and sweeping relief as we recognise that the person staring back at us in the water is but our own reflection. Reading, discussing, researching and writing about Indigenous works in the English language has helped me to understand the origins of my own 'internalised colonised mode of thought' at belonging to the vast majority of Ngāi Tūhoe members who have yet to converse fluently in te reo Māori. Instead, I now celebrate the fact that I am alive to write this specific thesis. Despite the devastating effects of colonisation, I bear witness to the irony of using the English language to recognise colonised thinking in myself, but also in its many forms across universities, schools and communities in Aotearoa.

Alongside the usefulness of the English language for Indigenous researchers, writing and reading in English matters to minority writers. Regarding African-American experiences, Pulitzer and Nobel prize-winner Toni Morrison reinforces Simon Ortiz' (2006) usefulness of the English language as well as his concerns when she says, "Both [reading and writing] require being mindful of the places where imagination sabotages itself, locks its own gates, pollutes its vision. Writing and reading mean being aware of the writer's notions of risk and safety, the serene achievement of, or sweaty fight for, meaning and response-ability" (Morrison, 1992, p. xi). Morrison's words caution Indigenous literary scholars to be mindful of colonising modes of thought, both contained within the text and within the scholar themselves. Such thoughts include 'safe' traditional modes of thinking that might sabotage a reading, lock understandings in or out, and thus pollute the possibilities for Māori literary scholarship to "spiral in ever-widening circles from which neither beginnings nor endings could be defined" (Grace, 1986, p. 41).

Like Ortiz (2006), Morrison suggests a connection to community. That is, Morrison uses the term “response-ability” (1992, p. xi) to infer that both the reader and writer are ‘able’ to respond to what is being written and read, but are also held accountable to their respective communities for that response. Métis scholar, Chris Andersen (2009), similarly agrees that relationships with community are vital to the future of Indigenous studies. He further argues that while terms such as race and class are laughably reductive for any peoples, analysing their existence can remove ‘the power of whiteness’. Andersen further maintains that mainstream academia and its tools – such as archives research, telephone data collection, and analysing census statistics – can be extremely helpful to Indigenous communities. Likewise, analysing the power of whiteness from the vantage point of our maunga is hugely beneficial to iwi literary scholarship.

Through such usefulness, it is argued that the foundation for recovery from the brutal, intergenerational effects of colonisation (Smith, 1999; Foucault, 1977; Dunn, 2019) can be built. According to Jace Weaver, writing “prepares the ground for recovery, and even recreation, of Indian identity and culture. Native writers speak to that part of us the colonial power and the dominant culture cannot reach, cannot touch. They help Indians imagine themselves as Indians” (2001, p. 51). Perhaps this ‘recovery’ is what shimmers behind an almost visceral need to write. To this end, many authors and scholars – such as Brooks (in Weaver, Womack & Warrior, 2006, p. 235) who was paraphrasing Scott Momaday, who was quoting William Gass – refer to a giving birth, of sorts, to stories that were always meant to be in the world. Similarly, in the prologue of her novel *Pōtiki*, Patricia Grace writes:

There was once a carver who spent a lifetime with wood, seeking out and exposing the figures that were hidden there. These eccentric or brave, dour, whimsical, crafty, beguiling, tormenting, tormented or loving figures developed first in the forests, in the tree wombs, but

depended on the master with his karakia and his tools, his mind and his heart, his breath and his strangeness to bring them to other birth.

The tree, after a lifetime of fruiting, has, after its first death, a further fruiting at the hands of a master.

This does not mean that the man is master of the tree. Nor is he master of what eventually comes from his hands. He is master only of the skills that bring forward what was already waiting in the womb that is a tree... (1986, pp. 7-8)

This passage may be viewed as an analogy for iwi literary scholarship. That is, with the phrase “the figures”, Grace gestures towards ancient knowledge and understandings that were previously unexposed or “hidden there” – perhaps due to ‘colonised modes of thought’ that ignored such knowledge (Ortiz, 2006). The description of figures as, “eccentric or brave, dour, whimsical, crafty, beguiling, tormenting, tormented or loving” (Grace, 1986, p. 7) suggests the diversity of Indigenous knowledge. Grace’s passage then turns to the ‘master’ or scholar, “with his karakia and his tools, his mind and his heart, his breath and his strangeness to bring to other birth”. This image evokes the usefulness of Indigenous ways of knowing such as “karakia” alongside mainstream “tools”, such as archives research or statistics analysis (Andersen, 2009), both of which are available to Indigenous scholars. However, Grace also states that the scholar or “master” is “master only of the skills that bring forward what was already waiting in the womb that is a tree”. In this instance, “only” might imply that humans are mere conduits for Indigenous knowledge, and that such knowledge stands in the shadows, waiting to be uncovered. In this manner, Indigenous knowledge is portrayed as static, unchanging, and unchangeable. And yet, if a scholar is removed from the meaning-making, innovation, and new-creation of knowledge, by implication they will also avoid critiquing that knowledge, which becomes problematic. Carl Mika, writes, “The sustained gaze of certainty is born of

colonisation by Western academic or rational desires” (2017, p. 119). In other words, the reification rather than interrogation of Indigenous knowledge fixes the world, when in reality we exist in an evolving state of flux. Such reification further serves to reinforce colonial thinking that would see mātauranga fit neatly into western academia.

However, this is not the case within te ao Māori and indeed Grace’s (1986) words might be interpreted differently. That is, if iwi literary scholarship is indeed as never-ending as the stories within the communities from whence the scholars came, then surely a scholar can only ever be the master of their own understanding at any one point in time. Even then, such ‘mastery’ may be called into question – by the scholar themselves, their community or other Indigenous scholars. In a recent interview, Lisa Brooks reflects on the ‘incredible network of Indigenous studies’ where scholars not only validate each other’s work but also the various approaches “that are not just interdisciplinary but discipline-challenging”, while further maintaining that not many scholars “necessarily set out to challenge these particular disciplines. It’s just that doing things differently, sometimes even perceiving things differently, you’re going to challenge, to have integrity about saying, “No, I’m not going to change that in order to fit a certain box”” (Cohen, 2019, p. 162). For me, this is one of the most exciting aspects of Indigenous studies in literature: the open possibilities to make, create, collaborate on, and critique understandings of our world. In an article about Kaupapa Māori Research and the intersection of the sacred and the secular, Garrick Cooper concludes that Māori and western thought are not only compatible, but have always been compatible. He further suggests that a Kaupapa Māori approach which “finds this complexity too hard...[may] unwittingly be the very forms of thought we seek to critique” (Cooper, 2017, p. 156). Indigenous knowledge cannot be viewed as static and indeed the opportunities for inter-tribal connections, conversations, and collaboration are as exhilarating as they are infinite.

Similarly, in *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, Craig Womack challenges the western lens that is used to read Native American [and Indigenous] literature. Womack argues for “what can be innovated and initiated by Native people in analyzing their own cultures rather than deconstructing Native viewpoints and arguing for their European underpinnings or even concentrating on white atrocities and Indian victims” (1999, p. 12). Womack’s words are a call to deconstruct ‘colonial modes of thought’ used to shape a scholar’s worldviews, and thus focus on a future that avoids victimising Indigenous communities. Womack’s words push for a hopeful future where western and Indigenous worldviews can be compatible and thus useful to our understanding of contemporary Indigeneity. So where might all this lead an iwi literary canon? On the best possible hīkoi, one might answer! In contemplating where an ethical Native literary criticism might lie, Daniel Justice asserts:

For me, at this time, the best approach is about relationships, about attending to the cultural, historical, political, and intellectual contexts from which indigenous texts emerge. This engagement provides a rich range of interpretive possibility, and it sensitizes us to the multiple relationships and contexts that make such study morally meaningful. It reflects many of the complicated realities influencing our lives, not just theoretical considerations. (2008, p. 165)

Justice’s focus on relationships, networking, and engagement with communities as the way forward, reinforces the exciting opportunities available to bring Indigenous stories into conversation with each other. Indeed, Indigenous literary whānau from around the world (Ortiz, 1992; Womack 1999; Weaver, 2001; King, 2003; Warrior, 2005; Weaver, Womack & Warrior, 2006; Womack 2009; Allen, 2012; Justice, 2018), and here in Aotearoa (Mihikitekapua, in Ngata & Jones, 1958; Sturm, 1955; Wendt, 2009; Te Punga Somerville, 2011; Te Punga Somerville, 2017) have completed much

groundwork for an iwi literary canon – and the ranks are swelling (Dunn, 2015; Gildea, 2018; Wendt Young, 2019).

### **Navigating Tūhoetana: te mana motuhake**

Ngāi Tūhoe’s (n.d., para. 4) expression of being Tūhoe is as follows:

Every Tūhoe is born representative of their whānau, marae, hapū and iwi. You are bound by its customs and values, its protocols, and you learn to behave in a certain manner. You have a unique reo, and tikangā being the grassroots of your Tūhoetanga. Tūhoetanga is the people, the land, the assets; these things give form to longevity and force – ihi, mauri and mana to whānau, hapū, Iwi. It is the language, the culture, the identity that Tūhoe reaffirms through wānanga, hui, reunions, whaikōrero, kapa haka and the Tūhoe Ahurei.

As a member of Ngāi Tūhoe, therefore, one has responsibilities to nurture ties to the land and people. This includes learning about our culture, speaking te reo Māori, and participating in the permanency of Ngāi Tūhoe. This overall sentiment closely echoes Rangi Mataamua’s (2017) earlier statement about water - that wherever we are from, we are water and water is us. Wai may be viewed as a metaphoric statement of iwi belonging: individuals make up an iwi, yet within oneself the source of iwi may also be found i.e. the will and desire to nurture those iwi ties. And within these waters of belonging and connection, resides te mana motuhake.

Before the 1860s, Ngāi Tūhoe had maximum autonomy and full control over their lands and the governing of the tribe, while the Crown had no significant presence in Te Urewera. In contrast, post 1860s, the first sentence of the apology section of the Tūhoe Claims Settlement Act 2014 (s. 10(3)) states that, “The relationship between Tūhoe and the Crown, which should have been defined by honour and respect, was instead disgraced by many injustices, including indiscriminate raupatu, wrongful killings, and years of

scorched earth warfare.” Section 10(6) of this important piece of legislation for Ngāi Tūhoe further states that, “Despite the hardship Tūhoe and Tūhoetanga endure, your culture, your language, and identity that is Te Urewera are inextinguishable. The Crown acknowledges you and te mana motuhake o Tūhoe.” The Tūhoe Claims Settlement Act 2014 details atrocities committed against Ngāi Tūhoe, and emphasises the oppressive, Crown-led economic restrictions, which resulted in the vast majority of tribal members leaving Te Urewera in order to scrape together a livelihood elsewhere – since doing so on traditional lands had become untenable. Furthermore, the Act highlights the important link between Te Urewera, te reo and Tūhoe culture, and reinforces the importance for Ngāi Tūhoe to work towards restoring te mana motuhake o Tūhoe to pre-1860s levels of autonomy and wealth.

Te mana motuhake is often spoken about using words such as self-determination, responsibility, and autonomy. However, Tūhoe leader Tāmāti Kruger’s explanation of te mana motuhake, delivered in the 2017 Bruce Jesson Memorial Lecture at the University of Auckland goes deeper. Kruger asserts that:

Tūhoe understand mana motuhake to be, one: the abandonment of dependency, and, two: embracing interdependence. We can’t get there unless we appreciate and experience independence. That is how we leave behind dependency and we embrace interdependence. Mana motuhake is our need for maximum autonomy. We need maximum autonomy in order to call ourselves rangatira, in order for us to take full responsibility and obligations for the land, for our past and present and our future. (2017, p. 71-72).

Kruger’s words are crucial. They detail the course that Ngāi Tūhoe leadership are charting in order to navigate future generations closer to the level of self-government that Tūhoe experienced prior to Crown intervention. And while it may be difficult for some to see the rangahau I have chosen to pursue as an

expression of te mana motuhake, I believe it is just that. Although this rangahau positions my individual understanding and close readings of English language literary texts to the fore, this journey has everything to do with me, yet conversely is not about me. This tuhinaroa is about remembering and honouring the past struggles of my tīpuna, and amplifying the voices of present and future whānau. Like Mihikitekapua who was concerned about the fate of two young women, it is my desire to highlight the voices of wāhine and taiohi in particular, to encourage ngā iwi katoa to draw strength from our iwi literary archives, and to read and write ourselves into the worlds we inhabit.

Ngāi Tūhoe view mana motuhake as the achievement of maximum autonomy through the abandonment of dependency, while embracing iwi kinship ties (Kruger, 2017). As we have seen during the Covid-19 pandemic, such interdependency need not necessarily be practised via traditional avenues. Here in Aotearoa, Māori academic communities have embraced modern applications such as Zoom to undertake zui (Zoom-hui) and zānanga (Zoom-wānanga) to retain human kanohi-ki-kanohi connectedness and support. Like te ao Māori in general, the achievement of mana motuhake does not occur in a vacuum, but is as fluid as life itself. Indeed, Māori writing their stories and lives and experiences into the world is an act of mana motuhake, as is the conscious choice to engage with these texts as an iwi literary scholar.

The presence of te mana motuhake will be considered in each analysis chapter according to explanations given by Ngāi Tūhoe leaders, literature, and legislation. However, this thesis will not provide a checklist of questions to put to each literary text, thus limiting reader engagement. Instead, just as Patricia Grace's carver attempts to "bring forward what was already waiting in the womb that is a tree" (1986, p. 8), so too will I draw on my understandings of Tūhoetana to allow te mana motuhake to emerge. And yet, if iwi literary scholarship is as never-ending as the stories within our communities, while te mana motuhake will be one aspect of Tūhoetana at the forefront of this reader's mind when reading, the concept may, or may not, be addressed in the ensuing

literary analyses. Instead, I will bring my understandings of Tūhoetana to the readings, but allow the mana of the texts themselves to breathe life into each critique.

### **Navigating Tūhoetana: whakapapa**

It is almost impossible to divorce terms such as whakapapa, te mana motuhake and kaitiakitana from each other; they are closely intertwined within the notion of Tūhoetana, or indeed Iwitana in general. An oft-touted and simplistic interpretation of whakapapa is ‘genealogy’. But whakapapa is more than tracing ancestral descent lines. Whakapapa concerns itself with the layering of relationships and connections (Barlow, 1996; Paipa, 2010), while the scrutiny of these layers and interconnections of human existence, both tangible and intangible (Te Rire, 2012), can reveal theoretical and practical understandings of the world we live in (Barlow, 1996; Marsden, 2003). Further to this, Māori historian Dr Nepia Mahuika (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Maniapoto) maintains that before European settlement of Aotearoa, Māori people:

...maintained genealogies that traced all things to living beings in complex interwoven connections. Whakapapa first and foremost explained the world and served as a framework upon which Māori could hang all of the concepts and narratives - pivotal to their identity, culture, politics, language and religions. (2019, p. 4)

Mahuika continues by reminding us that:

From the beginning, whakapapa was the whole world, an explanatory framework for life and our place in it. In all the various ways it has been addressed by non-Māori and our own people across time, this foundational aspect of whakapapa has persevered: that whakapapa is everything, and everything has a whakapapa. (2019, pp. 10-11)

Further to this, Dr Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal provides a succinct definition of whakapapa: “Whakapapa is knowledge about the world” (n.d., para. 6). Buried within Royal’s statement is a complex layering of meanings. For instance, the suffix ‘papa’ links to Papa or Papatūānuku, who is the primordial “mother earth figure who gives birth to all things, including people” (para. 1). Papatūānuku, along with Ranginui – straightforwardly translated as sky father – are considered the ‘source of whakapapa’ (Te Rire, 2012), whereby the causative prefix ‘whaka’, when attached to a noun is transformed to “indicate the causing of the assumption of the form, condition or state indicated by the simple base” (Biggs, 1998, p. 103) – the base of which, in this instance, is Papatūānuku. As such, whakapapa may be interpreted as a noun which describes a person’s genealogical descent from Papatūānuku and Ranginui, including the layering descent of inanimate objects such as the whakapapa of a computer (Salsano, 2016, July). Interestingly, in the Māori language dictionary, *He Pātaka kupu: te kai a te rangatira*, compiled by Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Māori / the Māori Language Commission (2008), four meanings of whakapapa are provided. The first two definitions refer to the use of whakapapa as verbs, nouns or adjectives, and only the third definition refers to human descent lines, while the fourth refers to the layering links and descent of inanimate objects and animals.

As a verb, whakapapa references active engagement with Papatūānuku. It is the conscious action of grounding oneself to theoretical and physical underpinnings within the world around us. Indeed, whakapapa must be lived as a ‘conscious activity’ (Mika, 2011). Moreover, Roberts et al. make it clear that within the natural world, it is vital to understand both the physical form of things as well as the stories, i.e. theory, that underpin such forms: “To understand the meaning of plant and animal whakapapa requires knowledge of not only plant and animal names but also their accompanying narratives” (2004, p. 1). Such narratives – for instance, regarding the whakapapa of the kūmara – do not mean that humans are irrelevant. On the contrary, Dr Mere

Roberts clearly maintains that, “in all non-human whakapapa humankind is present but ‘off stage’ in the wings, interacting with their kinsfolk as and when appropriate” (2013, p.94). The term whakapapa thus represents the dynamic and ever-changing lives of iwi who, as mokopuna of Papatūānuku, in kinship with all things animate and inanimate, constantly and consciously seek to understand the world we live in. Whakapapa is about honouring our tīpuna.

For the Tūhoe nation, honouring our tīpuna is paramount to our collective permanency as an iwi. Indeed, “[e]very Tūhoe is born representative of their whānau, marae, hapū and iwi” (Ngāi Tūhoe, n.d., para. 4), and such representation necessarily includes kinship links to all physical offspring of Papatūānuku, but also to the layers of narratives that form the existence of such offspring. Indeed, even the art and literature displayed in Te Whare Puri – the Tūhoe research and archive centre in the township of Tāneatua – is carefully curated to ensure that it too, “celebrates, expresses and promotes Tūhoetana to creatively showcase our history, and to ensure the message of permanency carries on for future generations” (Te Uru Taumatua, 2018, p. 22). As such, whakapapa is indeed the world, the world is whakapapa, and Tūhoe narratives enrich the world. Furthermore, regarding English literary studies, “the concept of whakapapa has huge relevance within the NCEA English classroom; its usefulness to foster critical and perceptive connections within, and beyond, texts is enormous” (Salsano, 2016, July, p. 37). Indeed, understanding, reading and writing Tūhoe whakapapa into the world further cements the permanency of Tūhoetana for future generations. Excitingly, as readers and literary scholars, the ways in which whakapapa may present itself to us in any given literary text are endless.

### **Navigating Tūhoetana: kaitiakitana**

One need only conduct a cursory online search to observe several themes related to ‘kaitiakitanga’. Phrases like ‘land management’ and ‘environmental impacts’ emerge, as do words such as guardianship, protection, preservation,

stewardship and trusteeship, which are terms mainly used in definitions of kaitiakitana relating to business, education or government work. Such understandings likely emerge from the verb ‘tiaki’ meaning ‘to guard’, while the ‘kai’ prefix generally transforms the ensuing word into a noun related to a role undertaken by a person. A kaitiaki might thus be interpreted as a guardian, protector or steward, whereby the suffix ‘tanga’ at the end of kaitiaki generally references the collective mahi of such guardians, protectors or stewards.

However, western interpretations will always fall short of Indigenous thought and intent. A discerning scholar might thus seek iwi definitions for kaitiakitana. For instance, on the topic of Ngāti Porou kaitiakitana, the iwi assert on their tribal website that, “[o]ur identity is tied to our whenua and to our environment. We have many expressions that assert this connection.” (Ngāti Porou, n.d., para 1). Ngāti Porou then continue their explanation of kaitiakitana by reciting links to Hikurangi maunga and Waiapu awa. Such recitations of identity related to the physical environment are at the fore of all initial interactions between iwi in Aotearoa; inquiries about a person’s maunga and awa are just as important as a person’s iwi. In contrast, the keyword ‘identity’ is almost unilaterally absent in generic western definitions of kaitiakitana/kaitiakitanga.

In the report, *Nga Taonga o Te Urewera*, which argues that the traditional Tūhoe landmark of Te Urewera and the people of Ngāi Tūhoe are one and the same, scholars Dr Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and Dr Linda Nikora maintain that, “People make places just as much as places make people. People and places derive their identities from each other to a significant extent. It is the betweenness that is important – the relationship that is created and sustained” (2003, p. 11). This ‘betweenness’ clearly references the scrutiny of relationships between people and places - which is fundamental to understanding the interconnecting layers of whakapapa. The actions required to ‘sustain’ such relationships and whakapapa, may thus be viewed as kaitiakitana.

Further to this, during the first reading of the Te Urewera-Tūhoe Bill, the Minister of Māori Affairs at the time, Dr Pita Sharples (2013), recited the Tūhoe whakataukī: Tūhoe mōumou kai, Tūhoe mōumou taonga, Tūhoe mōumou tangata ki te pō. As a whakataukī that is integral to Tūhoe identity, a western interpretation might focus on literal elements and offer substandard interpretations that view Tūhoe as wasteful (mōumou) of food (kai), wasteful of treasures (taonga) and wasteful of people (tangata). Sharples, however, chose to translate this whakataukī according to the deeply figurative context from which it originated:

Tūhoe mōumou kai—Tūhoe, renowned for generosity. Tūhoe mōumou taonga—generosity that has seen the lands and people of Tūhoe become living bastions of culture and language for all Māori people. Tūhoe mōumou tangata ki te pō—Tūhoe, renowned for steadfast determination, resilience, fearlessness.” (2013, para. 3)

Importantly, Sharples references the intertwining identity of people and place, and the navigation of the ‘betweenness’ of this relationship that sees iwi become ‘living bastions of culture and language’. A further example of this intertwining of people and place is found at the beginning of *He Korona Whakataena* where Te Uru Taumatua – the post-settlement governing body of Ngāi Tūhoe – which asserts that, “The seasons and moons give us a sense of true time, life in sync with nature” (2018, p. 3). Rather than rely on western concepts of time (whether chronological, in reference to the Gregorian calendar, the theory of relativity, or otherwise), Tūhoe staunchly assert that ‘true’ time can only occur when life is lived in harmony with nature. Te Uru Taumatua further state:

We know that our connections to the whenua and each other hold the key to our wellbeing. A well-being [sic] that is measured in aroha, generosity, and sharing...Material assets that serve us are not placed above the whenua, tāona and people we serve. Our connections to the

whenua, taiao and to each other have been the pillars of our Tūhoetana and the fuel for our ahi kā roa. (2018, p. 13)

In the literary texts to be analysed in this thesis, it is expected that the relationships between people and place, the “connections to the whenua, taiao and each other” (2018, p. 9), will present themselves in varying ways. And just as Ngāi Tūhoe make it clear that these connections must be consciously nurtured, so too will any references of kaitiakitana within each text be recognised as both specific to the worlds created by contemporary wāhine writers and storytellers.

## Chapter 4: “Birth Rights” by J. C. Hart

This is the first of three chapters in which I examine three very different types of texts created by female Māori writers. The purpose of these chapters is not to provide the reader with a predetermined checklist of literary “Tūhoeness”. Instead, I aim to explore how I might personally engage with literary texts as a Tūhoe woman. In particular, having previously explored the literary archives of Ngāi Tūhoe, what nuances might I now notice that might have otherwise remained unseen? What strands might unravel after critical reflections of my Tūhoetana? Like Patricia Grace’s carved figures in *Potiki*, what “brave, dour, whimsical, crafty, beguiling, tormenting, tormented or loving figures” (1986, p. 7) might emerge through engagement with a variety of text genres? And what might happen when these genres and archives are brought into conversation with each other?

“Birth Rights” (2010) by Ngāi Tahu science fiction and fantasy writer, J. C. Hart, is a short story from the anthology, *A foreign country: New Zealand speculative fiction*. In “Birth Rights”, Hart is upfront with the reader about the story’s subject matter; rights related to birth. Less clear though, is whose rights to give birth or be birthed are meant, or even what is meant by the kupu ‘rights’. “Birth Rights” (2010) is set in an unnamed future society where pregnant women undertake an examination that supposedly evaluates the feasibility of the mother carrying her child to full term. Such examinations are “government mandated, and what the government want” (p. 85). Under general anaesthesia, the women are connected to a machine without their knowledge or consent and future scenarios are viewed on a screen to calculate whether the mother is likely to act negligently as a mother. Based on such scenarios, the woman’s future fitness to parent is calculated by the doctor. If the doctor judges the future mother to be ‘unfit’, the woman is injected with a serum – also without her knowledge or consent – that causes an eventual miscarriage. Though situated within an anthology of speculative fiction, which insinuates that the settings within the story do not yet exist, Hart’s narrative is eerily close

to home. In 2018, Nickita Longman – a Saultaux writer from George Gordon First Nation – wrote an article in the Washington Post titled “End forced sterilizations of Indigenous women in Canada” (Longman, 2018). Indeed, compulsory sterilisation occurred throughout colonial America and Britain, particularly of the poor and then of African American women in the 1960s (Luker, 1996), while here in Aotearoa experiences by intellectually disabled people still include forced sterilisation (Hamilton, 2012). It is therefore hardly surprising that issues related to sterilisation can be found within creative works by Indigenous women – for instance, in the short story “Birth Rights” but also the speculative play “and what remains” by Miria George (2007).

In “Birth Rights” (2010), all three named characters are women: Dr Vivienne Richards, who conducts the testing; Jessica Montgomery, the pregnant patient; and Natasha, Dr Richard’s medical assistant. Outside of Dr Richard’s examination room, in which the story is set, little information is provided regarding the characters’ lives, ethnicities, or indeed the country in which the story takes place. While the character names suggest a setting somewhere in the English-speaking world, their names are neither evidence of a specific country nor of certain ethnicities. However, we can infer much about the characters’ wider living conditions from the basic premise of the story. That is, given the state-sanctioned invasion into areas of life that are most precious to women (maternity, birth and autonomy over one’s own body), and in one of the most private and vulnerable situations a woman might find herself (visiting a medical doctor for advice on their health and the health of their unborn child), it is highly likely that the control of similar ‘rights’ i.e. to privacy and autonomy over one’s body, has extended to other personal spaces in “Birth Rights”. This might include a citizen’s choice to name the people and things around them. And while we have no evidence that this is indeed the case, what does emerge is the existence of a more insidious presence that lurks within the fabric of Hart’s dystopian society: colonisation.

## **Colonisation and whiteness**

Colonisation has been described as “an attack on our wairua” (McBreen, 2012, p. 55), whereby wairua is a cornerstone to Māori wellbeing (Durie, 1985) and has been described as a person’s spirit or soul, but can also relate to an attitude, mood, feeling or atmosphere of a person or place (maoridictionary.co.nz, n.d.) There are numerous hints of colonisation in “Birth Rights” (2010) and the negative connotations attached to these instances might easily lead an iwi reader to surmise that attacks on wairua, rather than broader ‘birth rights’, are at the heart of this piece.

One of the most obvious indications of colonisation is the repeated imagery of whiteness in the text. The first example occurs at the beginning of the story after the reader is introduced to Vivienne, who waits for her next appointment. Hart describes the room: “The clean white walls and soft lighting of her examination room seem deceitful to her, but they certainly give off the right appearance to others” (2010, p. 85). Examination rooms and medical facilities often bring to mind “clean white walls and soft lighting”, which fittingly suggest both the absence of dirt (“clean white”) as well as a sense of calmness (“soft lighting”). However, the reader quickly suspects that something is amiss in this medical setting. That is, while the room exudes the illusion of a safe space (“the right appearance to others”), Vivienne perceives her own examination room as “deceitful”, which seems odd given that she is within her personal work space. The ‘deceitful’ room in which Vivienne works may thus be construed as a metaphysically unsafe environment, and consequently an attack on her wairua. The cleanliness and peacefulness of Vivienne’s surgery room is thus an illusion created for “others”, who we assume are patients rather than workers at the clinic. In the second sentence of “Birth Rights”, Hart thus creates a clear image of colonial “white walls” closing in on the protagonist and threatening to subsume her into its diaphanous landscape of sterility and hostility.

The uneasy association with whiteness is reinforced later in the story when the patient, Jessica, arrives. Upon changing into a medical gown for her examination, Jessica is described as, “dressed in a white robe that rustles beneath her as she climbs, the swell of her belly subtly visible beneath the thin, crisp fabric” (p. 86). Oblivious to the true nature of the testing that will be conducted while she is sedated, Jessica willingly succumbs to the examination and wears the medical garb without further thought. However, similar to the “white walls” (p. 85) and “soft lighting” (p. 85) of the examination room, the “white robe” (p. 86) too is a seemingly inconsequential detail with invisible yet deadly hooks. Jessica’s “white robe” is made of “thin, crisp fabric” (p.86) which hardly implies hostility and danger, yet therein lies the rub. Colonisation does not always use brute physical force. It can normalise a hidden curriculum that, over time, erodes Indigenous knowledge and existence (Smith, 1999). Jessica’s choice to wear the “white robe” is as illusory as the safety of her present situation. And yet, similar to Vivienne’s critical remark about her own room seeming “deceitful” (Hart, 2010, p. 85), the robe too contains a secret for those who seek the truth: it, like colonisation, is a fragile mechanism that requires complicity to function. In other words, just as it is possible for every colonised person in the world to recognise and de-colonise their own thoughts – thus tearing at the colonial fabric around them – so too is the fragility of Jessica’s “white robe” an illusion; the robe’s “thin, crisp fabric” can be easily ripped to shreds. Although the flimsiness of the paper-thin gown appears to mirror the fragility of Jessica’s pregnancy, this is not the case. Indeed, as if sensing impending death, Jessica’s child rises like a hill from the whenua, like the pou tokomanawa in a whare tīpuna, “the swell of her belly subtly visible beneath”. Yet, just as Jessica neither questions the wearing of her “white robe”, nor the procedure she undertakes, so too does she ignore the warning from her unborn child. Jessica is disconnected from iwi kinship ties that might otherwise help her to recognise and see beyond the whiteness that pervades her life.

Later in the story, after Jessica wakes and is told that there are “chromosomal abnormalities” that may not guarantee she will be able to carry her baby to term, Jessica says, “I can’t lose this one too, I can’t do this again” (p. 90). Jessica’s desperate cry of loss is reminiscent of Anahera Gildea’s (2018) emphatic assertion that Māori did not ‘lose’ their language. Indeed, Jessica will not ‘lose’ her baby any more than she would forget it at the shops or leave it behind at the park. Her healthy and desperately wanted unborn baby is murdered in a health clinic by medical professionals who are entrusted with her wellbeing. Given that this is Jessica’s fourth and “last chance at having a child” (Hart, 2010, p. 90), Dr Vivienne Richards thus emerges a state-sanctioned killer, a ruinous agent of colonisation, whose actions result in the genocide of Jessica’s whakapapa. Children in “Birth Rights” are not perceived as “the greatest legacy the world community has” (Pere, 1991, in Pihama, 2011, p. 6), but as dehumanised and disposable waste.

As a symbol of colonisation, whiteness has invaded all corners of “Birth Rights” (Hart, 2010) with destructive and lethal consequences that are the antithesis of *iwitana*. Rather than focus on *kaitiakitana* and relationships with the natural world, a sterile and ‘deceitful’ environment is presented. Rather than value whakapapa and treasure *tamariki* as the greatest legacy the world has to offer, the unborn child in “Birth Rights” is killed. Rather than assert *mana motuhake* and maximum autonomy through interdependence, both the distraught patient and the murderous doctor act as singular agents of colonisation, oblivious to the roles that they play in each other’s lives.

### **Complicity with the colonial agenda**

All three women in “Birth Rights” are complicit in furthering the colonial agenda through a western view of history that seeks to dominate Indigenous lives, then require their complicity with that view (Smith, 1999). Jessica is the oblivious and distraught participant in colonisation’s ongoing and invisible narrative. Unfortunately, by the end of the story she is also none the wiser and

her future seems inevitable: for a woman who has ‘miscarried’ four times, Jessica’s tubes will likely be tied, “For her own good; for the good of the nation” (Hart, 2010, p. 86).

On the other hand, Vivienne’s medical assistant, Natasha, is acutely aware of what occurs in the examination room, yet remains unperturbed by this. Natasha is a keen worker, who offers to induce Jessica’s miscarriage herself, and is “good at her job, and seems to have no qualms about what they do” (p. 85). Indeed, as soon as Jessica is sedated, Natasha pulls out the testing machine hidden beneath the bed and “deftly applies” (p. 87) the pads to Jessica’s head. And yet, despite Natasha’s perceived professionalism at the beginning of the story (she is quick and efficient in organising patients and recounting relevant information to Vivienne), Natasha is also dispassionate and judgemental in her assessment of patients, and disrespectful towards Vivienne. For instance, after viewing only one scenario while Jessica lies sedated, Natasha says, “She’s a goner” (p. 87), and later remarks, “Some people just aren’t meant to have kids, right?” (p. 89). In addition to this, when directed by Vivienne to pull up another scenario, Natasha does so begrudgingly and says, “You are the boss after all” while tilting her head “in mock subservience” (pp. 87-88). And although Natasha’s indifference worries Vivienne who thinks, “these are just patients to Natasha, not women” (p. 88), Vivienne also relegates Natasha’s inability to empathise with patients, or indeed think before she speaks, to the follies of youth: “Hell, she’s [Natasha] so young that she probably hasn’t stopped to think that one day she might get pregnant and be here for testing just like Jessica” (p. 88). Indeed, Natasha is dismissive of the people she encounters and shows deference solely to the job at hand. As such, she epitomises the colonising researcher who views people as subjects to be researched on and about, according to the wider colonial agenda, which, in “Birth Rights”, includes uninformed and nonconsensual abortion “for the good of the nation” (p. 86). Regarding such researchers, Linda Smith writes, “No matter how appalling their behaviours, how insensitive and offensive their

personal actions may be, their acts and intentions are always justified as being for the ‘good of mankind’” (1999, p. 24). Natasha is this researcher.

Unlike Jessica and Natasha, the character of Dr Vivienne Richards evolves throughout the story. Her role shifts dramatically from colonisation’s symbolic long arm of the law, to that of a conscientised objector. Vivienne’s misgivings about her role as a doctor are peppered throughout the story, beginning with the perception of her examination room as “deceitful” (Hart, 2010, p. 85). Later, during the examination, Vivienne realises how grateful she is that “she got pregnant before these tests became compulsory” (p. 88), and after observing Jessica’s third scenario on screen where Jessica slaps her son, Vivienne wonders of herself, “How many times has she raised her own voice? She was sure she had not often raised a hand, But still...” (p. 88). And it is this hypocrisy that weighs on Vivienne’s mind: Vivienne must judge other women’s ability to parent, knowing that she herself would not pass the same examination. Vivienne’s contemplations also reinforce her first-hand knowledge that parenting is hard and that, as evidenced in Jessica’s scenarios, sometimes constant crying does frustrate new parents, sometimes that frustration does turn to anger, and sometimes an inattentive moment can result in a toddler hurting themselves. Whether negligence or everyday parenting, Vivienne’s musings show her emerging skepticism of the extended powers and expectations that are made of her as a doctor. She is judge (of appropriate parenting skills), invader (of women’s bodies without their knowledge or consent) and executioner (causing the death of wanted babies). Indeed, Vivienne admits that her job is “pushing at the boundaries of her morals” (p. 85) and her sympathy for Jessica’s situation is clear as she sheds tears during the examination, yet she then ensures that “no traces of mascara scar her cheeks” as if empathy itself will harm and “scar” her. Vivienne also imagines “how Jessica would feel if she knew that the miscarriages were induced” (p. 90), and comes to the uneasy conclusion that she is likely “no better than Jessica” (p. 91), who accepts the world around her without question.

By the end of “Birth Rights”, Vivienne’s introspection ends as she says to Natasha, “You know what? Cancel my appointments. Call one of the other doctors in, whatever. I can’t do this anymore” (p. 91). The cumulative weight attached to Vivienne’s role as an agent of colonisation, has finally taken its toll on her. The concluding sentence in “Birth Rights” contains the last reference to whiteness. Vivienne “slips her arms from her white coat and throws it over the back of her chair, stopping only to collect her bag on the way out” (p. 91). The whiteness of Vivienne’s coat not only represents the status attached to her position as a doctor, but is also a symbol of colonisation’s unchallenged authority. For her participation and unquestioning faith in this system, Vivienne is rewarded financially and via career advancement: “the pay packet is good...she won’t have to work this line for too long before she can afford to upgrade her skills and move into another field” (p.85). As such, Vivienne’s “white coat” is simultaneously the foundation of her authority but also the cornerstone of her subjugation to the colonial agenda. However, once Vivienne resolves to end her servitude to colonisation and remove her “white coat”, it “slips” with ease from her arms and is casually thrown aside. The symbolic act of discarding her coat is Vivienne’s ultimate act of defiance and further reinforces how deceptively thin the fabric of colonisation is – as thin as Jessica’s “white robe” (p. 86). By the end, Vivienne seems to accept responsibility for causing harm and refuses to continue living as one of her ‘master’s tools’ (Lorde, 1984). And yet, by refusing to continue with her complicity in the colonial agenda, Vivienne has likely forged an uncertain and harrowing future for herself, her child, and her career.

### **The invisible reach of patriarchal power**

To an iwi reader, the absence of male figures in “Birth Rights” (Hart, 2010) is deeply confusing since tamariki are considered tāonga and the physical manifestation of our tīpuna: “...the child is not just an individual, but they are the physical manifestation of aeons and aeons of ancestors, and embody the

achievements of those who have gone before them” (Herewini, 2018, p. 8). As well as this, whakapapa demands that iwi males are active in raising children. That is, embedded within whakapapa, whānau, hapū and iwi are “notions of relationship, responsibilities, and obligations which enable all adults to take a ‘parenting’ role for Māori children” (Pihama, 2011, p. 4). It is therefore puzzling that in “Birth Rights” (Hart, 2010), even though every named character is a woman, the voices of fathers and other adult males are otherwise absent. Because Jessica’s child is described in all of the scenarios as, “the boy” and/or using pronouns such as “him” and “he” (pp. 88, 89), one might speculate that perhaps male babies are targeted for induced miscarriages, and therefore that “Birth Rights” is set in a matriarchal society where men are pariahs. However, after Jessica’s first scenario prediction on screen, Natasha not only remarks that Jessica is “a goner” but also says, “can tell already, she lost it too easily” (p. 87). Since Natasha is presented as an efficient albeit dispassionate worker who speaks her mind, it is highly unlikely that her character would focus on Jessica’s reaction to the baby in the scenario, when the target criterion was in fact the baby’s gender. So, if “Birth Rights” is about women and children and birth, and is not set in a society administered by women who shun men, again, where are the fathers? Where are all the men in this narrative?

The absence of men in “Birth Rights” (2010) suggests that men are absolved from all child-rearing and birth related responsibilities, but also that their physical presence is unnecessary for society to function as it always has, “for the good of the nation” (p. 86). Yet the ‘good’ in Hart’s fictional nation includes disturbing controls that only affect women. Only a woman’s ‘fitness’ to parent is evaluated. Only a woman’s mind and body are invaded without her consent and knowledge. Only a woman’s wairua is attacked as she is left to feel guilt and shame at her inability to carry a child to full term – never learning that the choice to do so was stolen from her, along with the continuation of her whakapapa. In the paternal setting of “Birth Rights”,

mothers are mistrusted and dismissed as imbeciles who cannot make decisions for their own good, let alone that of the nation. Men, it is assumed, are thus the silent beneficiaries in Hart's patriarchal world. In western culture, patriarchy has its origins within Judeo-Christian beliefs that:

...entrenched notions of God as singular, God as male, God as ruling, God as natural, God as white. These beliefs create a state that then functions to maintain the dominance of men as godlike and the subordination of women. The subordination of women is presented to us as a part of a divine and "natural" order. Those beliefs have also led to moves to "clean us up", to stop us having control over things like our relationships, our sexuality, our rituals...To change the "natural" order of things is to undermine the fabric of society. (Pihama, 2012, p. 53)

The eerie silence of male voices in "Birth Rights" (Hart, 2010) may thus be viewed as a symbol of patriarchy's 'naturally' divine rule. Men are omniscient gods whose DNA is so deeply ingrained into the patriarchal fabric of society that a male presence is neither required, nor is his absence ever questioned by the characters themselves. And yet, all three women in "Birth Rights" are complicit in patriarchy's agenda, which, for Indigenous women in particular, is closely aligned to colonial rule. On this subject, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku maintains that, "the setting up of woman against woman remains a vital patriarchal strategy" (1991, p. 63), while Mereana Pitman informs us that "[t]he coloniser made us turn on one other...We turned away from each other and we separated from each other" (2012, p. 46). Although Pitman refers here to the colonisation of Māori, in a similar fashion, under patriarchy's gaze the women in "Birth Rights" (Hart, 2010) have long turned away from each other.

As the youngest character, and thus the person who is likely to be influenced the most by the society she was born into, Natasha is perhaps the best indicator of the morals and extent to which patriarchy is present in "Birth Rights" (Hart, 2010). Vivienne assesses Natasha to be, "so young" (p. 88) and

to have never contemplated having children. In comparison, Vivienne already has a child and “got pregnant before these tests became compulsory” (p. 88), while Jessica is “35 years old, no other children” (p. 85) and is pregnant with her fourth baby. In the story, Natasha parrots patriarchal discourse without fully understanding the effect her words might have on others – which is what one might expect from a person who is closer to infancy than retirement and has yet to evaluate the weight of her words against many years of lived experiences. For instance, after Vivienne administers “the thin needle containing the drug which will cause Jessica to miscarry” (p. 89), Natasha remarks, “She’s [Jessica] a better person for not having one, and well, we’ve saved her baby from a lot of trauma” (p. 89). Natasha does not hear the judgement and hypocrisy of her statements; that as medical professionals they are ‘saving’ the baby from trauma by killing it, while simultaneously ignoring the trauma of the mother and insisting that the government-sanctioned miscarriage will make Jessica “a better person”. This dialogue suggests that Natasha has yet to hone the social, critical and personal reflection skills one might expect from an educated adult working in a doctor’s surgery. Indeed, Natasha’s statement says volumes about the general rhetoric regarding women and consent in “Birth Rights”. Informed consent regarding medical procedures (psychological or physiological) is not required when the patient is a woman. Additionally, as Vivienne begins “injecting the clear liquid into Jessica’s vein” (p. 89), an ominous image of whiteness emerges. In this instance, the “clear” serum that penetrates Jessica’s veins is yet another reminder of the invisible phallic power that controls her body. Without Jessica’s knowledge or consent, liquid patriarchy is injected into her like semen, and is yet another reminder that the physical presence of men is not necessary for rape culture to flourish in her world, since women are conditioned to act as willing proxies. Along with the physical absence of men and the uninformed relationship women have with pregnancy and birth, this image of semen in “Birth Rights” further highlights a perverted view of procreation. That is, rather than sperm fertilising a woman’s

egg and resulting in life and love (in an ideal world), the metaphoric sperm in “Birth Rights” is instead a misogynistic tool that causes death and despair.

Yet educated women like Vivienne – who have more life experience than Natasha and are likely more aware than “others” (p. 85) of the true intent behind the “government mandated” testing (p. 85) – are still prepared to follow orders despite the consequences of doing so “fraying her around the edges” (p. 85). And although Vivienne’s character makes a stand against society at the end of the story, until then she tries her hardest to justify the decisions she makes. For instance, Vivienne tells herself that the testing is “what the government wants” (p. 85) and after watching Jessica’s final scenario on screen, she reasons that, “[t]his is not the worst she has seen, but there are all kinds of bad in this world” – thus diminishing her role in the state-sanctioned genocide of “aeons and aeons of ancestors” (Herewini, 2018, p. 8). Vivienne further states that the final scenario “was painful to watch” (Hart, 2010, p. 89), before checking in a mirror, “making sure that no traces of mascara scar her cheeks” (p. 90). She even sheds tears for Jessica: “Struggles not to cry again...She can imagine how empty life would be without her own [child]” (p. 90). Ultimately though, Vivienne focuses on herself. Foremost on Vivienne’s mind are her own attempts not to cry, her desire to fix her makeup and look professional, and her feelings of relief and schadenfreude knowing that this test will not affect her anymore because she already has a child. As such, it is difficult to read Vivienne’s ‘frayed edges’ and uncertain ‘moral boundaries’ as anything but egocentric. On the other hand, Vivienne’s name lends her a modicum of sympathy from the reader. Vivienne derives from the Latin ‘vivus’ which means to be alive, and in “Birth Rights”, the character Vivienne has done more than stay alive under patriarchal rule. Thus far, she has survived. The snippets of empathy that Vivienne displays may thus be read as a reminder that her wairua too has been attacked. Vivienne is patriarchy’s pawn and ‘a vital patriarchal strategy’ (Te Awekotuku, 1991) where women are set up to work against each other. Vivienne’s situation illustrates the uneasy terrain of

oppression where a survivor simultaneously inhabits the same space as both victim and perpetrator.

Along these lines, within the wider political agenda of “Birth Rights” (Hart, 2010), women are subordinated to act as tools of their own oppression. This manifests in different ways for each woman in the story. Vivienne’s oppression reveals itself through the complicity of her actions and private thoughts, while Natasha’s oppression emanates through her unbridled words. Jessica’s oppression, however, occurs through the harm administered to her physical self, which she then mirrors back to the world via her body in an act of perfect puppetry. That is, after Jessica wakes and is told the lie that she may not be able to carry to term, “Jessica chews her lower lip, worry devouring the beauty of her face” and then “sobs as she rises from the bed, allowing herself to be led from the room” (p. 90). The descriptions of Jessica ‘chewing’ her lip with a face ‘devoured’ of beauty as she “sobs” and is “led” away like a child, present her as a broken, pathetic creature with neither language nor control over the mechanics of her body. Indeed, Jessica’s shuffling, broken body and loss of words mirrors that of Māori women under colonisation. According to Ngāhuia Murphy, “After almost two centuries of colonial contact, many Māori women shuffle around language about their reproductive bodies, in complete contrast to our ancestresses who celebrated their sexuality” (2012, p. 42). Similarly, Ani Mikaere maintains that Māori women were recast as puppet-like figures who became “passive and subservient to the male figures” (Mikaere, 2011, p. 199). In “Birth Rights” (Hart, 2010) women are similarly passive and subservient to their invisible masters, and sexuality is the last thing on a woman’s mind. Indeed, how on earth is a woman to focus on sexual pleasure when she is not even trusted to make decisions about her own body? Patriarchy, like colonisation, “is an invasion of the mind, of the body, of the soul and the spirit, and it spreads itself across generations” (Pitman, 2012, p. 45). In J.C. Hart’s “Birth Rights” (2010), the destructive and cruel reality of

patriarchal rule has invaded all aspects of a woman's existence: her actions, thoughts, words, body language, wairua and her whakapapa.

### **Technology as a colonising tool**

One of the most tragic occurrences in the short story, "Birth Rights" (2010), is the severing of Jessica's whakapapa. Jessica's unborn child is "the physical manifestation of aeons and aeons of ancestors" (Herewini, 2018, p. 8) and with his death, so too is the physical bridge between her past and her future destroyed. Before Jessica is sedated, Vivienne conducts what seems like an ultrasound where Jessica is shown pictures of her unborn baby. Jessica's voice "wavers with emotion" as she remarks, "So beautiful" and then struggles "to pull her eyes away from the screen" (Hart, 2010, p. 86). Vivienne then examines the baby and says to Jessica, "Everything looks good. You can see the foetus, and the placenta is developing well, blood flow looks good, and baby is the perfect size for your dates" (p. 86). Although we are not told exactly how far along Jessica is in her pregnancy, she is visibly pregnant, "the swell of her belly" (p. 86) and the child is healthy "everything is good" (p. 86). These circumstances make the later induced miscarriage without Jessica's knowledge or consent all the more heart-breaking and cruel. Near the end of the story, Vivienne too seems to have arrived at this conclusion as she "struggles not to cry again, knowing that she has taken this woman's last chance at having a child" (p. 90), which begs the question: why invent such invasive and vicious technology? And yet, it is not the technology that is cruel, nor the inventors and makers of the technology, but rather those who orchestrated this specific machine's purpose, process and parameters for use. Colonisation often employed technology to subjugate Indigenous people through trade, war, religion or research (Smith, 1999). Indeed, "[t]he instruments of technologies of research were also instruments of knowledge and instruments for legitimating various colonial practices" (Smith, 1999, p. 60). In "Birth Rights", technology is used to reveal the innermost thoughts of

women in order to identify ‘unfit’ mothers and legitimise the ‘eradication’ of parenting “offences” (Hart, 2010, p. 89).

Absurdly, within the world that Hart has created for the women in “Birth Rights”, character dialogue indicates that the machinery used by Vivienne and Natasha to fulfil the government mandated testing might not even work. That is, after watching the final scenario, Vivienne reflects on how painful it was to watch, “even though it wasn’t real” (p. 89). This reference to deception is supported later on when Vivienne, “knows she must complete the lie” and subsequently tells Natasha, “The chances of you surviving a fifth miscarriage resulting from this kind of abnormality are extremely low” (p. 90). And yet, it is uncertain whether Vivienne meant that the scenario wasn’t real because it had yet to happen, or perhaps that the machine simply regurgitated a set of pre-calculated scenarios in order to justify the induced miscarriages. We are certain though, that parameters exist regarding this test. For instance, when Natasha recounts the ratios in an exchange with Vivienne, she says, “Another one down, huh?...Oh come on, it’s not that bad...Only, what, one in five?” However, yet again we are uncertain what these ratios actually mean. That they must kill one in five babies? That one in five babies survive? That one in five mothers die? Further to this, Vivienne answers Natasha's query of ‘one in five?’, with a single evasive word, “Roughly”. Because of this, we wonder whether Vivienne knows more about the testing and is purposefully keeping this from her assistant. After all, Vivienne is a doctor who has been loyal in her job for a while, and is thus likely to have more information than Natasha.

Regardless, the medical machinery in “Birth Rights” may be viewed as an extension of previous instances of patriarchy and colonisation in the story, similar to the injected serum/semen. However, the more interesting contemplations of technology are present in the ambiguity and subsequent uncertainty that arises from the existence of the medical machinery, which suggests the illusion of free will. That is, the test is presented to the public as a

way to determine whether babies have “chromosomal abnormalities” (p. 90). We also know that the test involves moving a “transducer” (p. 86) over a woman’s abdomen – presumably similar to an ultrasound - and that the test was previously quite costly, because now, “[w]omen are coming in droves, eager to get a glimpse of their babies now that this test is free to all” (p. 85). However, the reader knows that aside from the ultrasound, the ‘free’ testing is the basis of a nation-wide lie. But why give the illusion of free will? Why not use brute force? Is the machinery a tool for population control? A form of eugenics? A cost-cutting exercise? Although we do not know the answer to these questions, given what we do know about Hart’s society, there may well be some truth contained in all of these questions.

### **Whose rights?**

As we near the end of this chapter, it is appropriate to return briefly to the very beginning of this text where we encounter one final uncertainty and question: whose rights are suggested by the title “Birth Rights”? In the short story, it seems as though wider society has yet to comprehend that life is circular and that the actions we take in the present can have devastating ramifications on our whakapapa. Indeed, in “Birth Rights”, giving birth is not a mother’s right. Nor is the choice to give birth a right. Nor is safe antenatal care a right. So whose birth rights are we reading about in this story?

As a reader who is sickened by the purposeful killing of mokopuna, I choose to end this analysis with a mihi to Jessica’s unborn child. In the patriarchal society in which Jessica has conceived her child, all unborn children experience the deadly consequences of patriarchal rule. In “Birth Rights”, Hart (2010) presents us with a boy whose name we do not know but whose possible, future antics we are privy to: as a baby he sometimes cries in a “constant desperate wail” (p. 87); his toddler legs escape from his bedroom where he is later found tangled in a fence “the wire cutting deeper into his flesh with each movement” (p. 88); he draws “dark slashes of crayon” on cream coloured

wallpaper; and refuses point-blank to eat his vegetables. The imagery of the boy is chronological and animated and his brief life flashes before us, as it does on screen for Vivienne and Natasha. Like a voyeuristic movie audience, removed from the reality of the action, we access intimate moments of the boy's life that his own mother will never know or see. But he is not an actor and his fate is very real for Jessica. Within a week or so, the boy will leave his mother's womb and return to Papatūānuku, having never gasped for air at birth, having never cried, nor bled, nor scribbled on walls, nor sat in sulky defiance at the kitchen table. In the dystopian setting of "Birth Rights" by J.C. Hart (2010), the unnamed boy's right to be birthed and loved by his whānau is as inconsequential as iwi rights to whakapapa. Yet, just as Jessica's world will be all the poorer for this boy's absence, so too will the kinship links in her society be forever impoverished.

### **Theoretical reflections on Māori female bodies**

Originally, these theoretical reflections formed part of the introduction to this chapter – which was tentatively titled, "Māori maternity and birth practices". This first title thematically embodies the first observations I made after reading "Birth Rights" (Hart, 2010). However, upon evaluation of the chapter as a whole, including discussions with my supervisor, structuring the chapter in this manner detracted from the short story, and thus diminished the mana of Hart's work. Although I contemplated discarding these reflections altogether, after recentring "Birth Rights" to the core of this chapter, I instead chose to retain them here for the following reasons. First, they grounded my thinking within te ao Māori while I explored my initial reactions to the text. Second, these notes are evidence of my thinking and writing process and may thus prove useful to another iwi scholar contemplating similar mahi. As such, while these theoretical reflections are supplementary to the analysis contained within this chapter, they are essential to the overall kaupapa of this thesis – to reveal how an iwi scholar might whakamana the richness of iwi literary

traditions and centre their reading within te ao Māori. Indeed, these theoretical reflections not only represent early considerations I brought to the reading of “Birth Rights”, but they also bring the preceding analysis into conversation with Māori experiences; an act that might otherwise be sidelined in a mainstream close reading.

To begin, after reading “Birth Rights” my immediate thoughts turned to whakapapa. In particular, how iwi are connected to each other and to the whenua through whakapapa - the origins of which derive from the union between Ranginui and Papatūānuku (Te Rire, 2012). Indeed, Māori are a “whakapapa based society that is grounded upon the cultural systems and structures of whānau, hapū, and iwi” (Pihama, 2011, p. 3). Wāhine have a particularly close connection to the whenua through Papatūānuku, since the first wāhine, Hineahuone, was fashioned from the menstrual blood of Papatūānuku (Pere, 1982). Further to this, Ngāhuia Murphy states that menstrual blood may be viewed as “an ancient matrilineal river connecting Māori women to our ancestress Hineahuone and, through her, to Papatūānuku, the mother of the gods” (Murphy, 2012, p. 38). Adding to this, Wikitoria August further asserts that, “Knowledge of the power that was passed down through whakapapa from Papatūānuku and other Atua wahine, allows Māori women to stand tall, to be respected and to respect others and ourselves” (2005, p. 122). Given the depth inherent within Māori kupu, it is therefore fitting that: the phrase ‘tangata whenua’ refers to both the womb as well as to the Indigenous people of the land; the word ‘hapū’ is used to describe both the act of being pregnant as well as a kinship group or subtribe; and that the word ‘whenua’ can mean both land as well as placenta. Indeed, after child birth, customary iwi practices often see the placenta buried on ancestral lands and thus returned to Papatūānuku in a ceremony that is “representative of a cyclical worldview that seeks to preserve an ongoing link from the past to the present. Within te ao Māori there remains a fundamental belief that we are born of the land and we return to the land” (Pihama, 2011, p. 5). Moreover, the kupu

‘whānau, hapū, iwi’ magnify the importance of being hapū to iwi existence i.e. “of being pregnant and giving birth to the next generation” (Pihama, 2011, p. 3). Regrettably, colonisation led to the erosion of tikanga related to traditional Māori maternity practices (Stevenson, Filoche, Cram, & Lawton, 2016) and stole from wāhine the “whakapapa of the maternal body and of birth” (Simmonds, 2012, p. 66), whereby such whakapapa is necessary to protect wāhine identities (August, 2005).

The previous epigraph to the first draft of this chapter, stated that “colonisation has, for the most part, stolen from wāhine and from whānau the ceremonies and celebrations; the reo and the tikanga; and the whakapapa of the maternal body and of birth” (Simmonds, 2012, p. 66). In this quote, Naomi Simmonds (2012) summarises the catastrophic ramifications of colonisation on female bodies, as well as the attempt to expunge iwi birthing practices and thus eradicate whakapapa and mana motuhake from Aotearoa. Such attempts are closely linked to wider colonial stories about Māori female bodies. For instance, regarding menstrual practices, Ngāhuia Murphy states that, “Victorian, patriarchal and Christian lens of many of the colonial ethnographers had distorted their interpretations of the menstrual practices that they observed, and that those misinterpretations had acquired the status of authority” (2012, p. 36-37). Removing the fog of Victorian, patriarchal and Christian lenses regarding Indigenous birth and menstrual practices, thus allows wāhine to retain their whakapapa, reassert their bond with Papatūānuku, and reduce the damage caused by tauwi worldviews. Doing so also allows wāhine to reignite whakapapa through iwi kinship ties, which is not only crucial to the expression of Tūhoetana and thus to this author, but one must only hope that such ties become increasingly normalised within the gynaecological surgeries of “Birth Rights”, and indeed the world we live in.

This chapter explored a short story from a New Zealand anthology of speculative fiction by a female Māori writer. As a Tūhoe woman, I drew parallels between the absence of male perpetrators in Mihikitekapua’s “He

Waiata Aroha” (Ngata & Jones, 1958) to the absence of males in “Birth Rights”; this specific thread would likely have gone unnoticed without prior, conscious engagement with Mihikitekapua’s work. Earlier in this thesis, I also drew from the work of Taranaki and Whakatōhea writer and book reviewer, J.C. Sturm, who said that, “Utopia was crowded out of the South Seas about the end of last century, but thanks to Science Fiction, appears to have set up house in outer space” (1955, p. 55). Similarly, in “Birth Rights”, Hart (2010), has set up house in a utopian space where free medical maternity care seems to be on offer to women, yet behind this façade lies the eerily familiar space where women have little rights over their own bodies. As a Māori woman, both critical reflection and personal experience allowed strands of Māori maternity and birth practices – the sinew of Māori existence – to weave its way to the foreground. And indeed, this genre of text has allowed Hart to comment on the lives of simultaneously tormented and loving women who struggle to exist – both in the story and in reality.

## Chapter 5: *Te Kuharere Tapes* by @tekahureremoa

In this second analysis chapter, I examine the Instagram post *Te Kuharere tapes* by Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Tuwharetoa songwriter and storyteller @tekahureremoa (2019) – also known as the performer Ladyfruit. Instagram is one of many 21<sup>st</sup> century visual and writing forms that are often underrepresented within traditional English literary classrooms. Yet, the richness available to readers of such texts is immense. Due to the fleeting nature of social media texts, I am particularly interested in any nuances within this genre of text that I might notice, how it might link, or not, to J.C. Hart’s short story (2010), and indeed what readings of this text type are now possible having critically engaged with my place within Ngāi Tūhoe.

In the Instagram post, *Te Kuharere Tapes* (2019), @tekahureremoa (2019) provides the reader with an extraordinarily creative, entertaining and thought-provoking reaction to attempts by Pākeha to rename te ao Māori. Names matter! Māori names can carry with them the histories of iwi ancestors, natural and metaphysical places, and important events (Smith, 1999; Henare, 2001). Everything is in a name. European explorers routinely renamed te ao Māori and even street names can act as enduring reminders to iwi of colonial oppressors (Belshaw, 2005), yet within te ao Māori the “layers of meaning and context” of a name, lies the world (Henare, 2001, p. 199). *Te Kuharere Tapes* (@tekahureremoa, 2019) comprises one main video or ‘tape’, an accompanying outtakes video or a second ‘tape’, and a written entry. In the text portion of the Instagram post, @tekahureremoa, also known as the performer Ladyfruit, brings to life a fictional character who she describes on Ladyfruit’s Facebook page as, “Brooklyn’s finest, baddest most unskilled yet aesthetically ready wrestler Te Kuharere Taumata” (2019, para. 1). To elaborate on the creation of ‘Te Kuharere Taumata’, @tekahureremoa writes on her Instagram post:

I swear I meet a new alter ego from inside my soul every bloody year. Here's the latest crazy bitch inside me Brooklyn's baddest wrestler TE KUHARERE (inspired by the misspelling of my name in the Levin newspaper). Te Kuharere means 'The flying thigh(s)'. (2019, para 1)

The misspelling of Te Kahureremoa's name in the Horowhenua Chronicle occurred three and a half weeks prior to the Instagram post, *Te Kuharere tapes*. Despite the correct spelling of Te Kahureremoa's name elsewhere in the news article, writer and editor Janine Baalbergen left in the following: "On Wednesday 170 preschoolers came to sing songs and hear stories and enjoy the antics of Te Kuharere Taumata who told a story about what heppend [*sic*] if you take a tree from the forest without asking permission" (2019, para. 8). And although a full discussion of the Horowhenua Chronicle article is beyond the scope of this thesis, given the negative connotations attached to the description of @tekahureremoa's performance as "antics" (suggesting infantile or foolish behaviour), as well as an inattention to spelling in general, it is reasonable to surmise that, from the outset, Baalbergen had little inclination to edit meticulously. Interestingly, @tekahureremoa (2019) chose to neither name the specific newspaper nor the writer in her Instagram post. Perhaps, just as Mihikitekapua chose not to give oxygen to the male perpetrators of violence against her kin in "He Waiata Aroha" (Ngata & Jones, 1958), @tekahureremoa too chose not to focus on the perpetrators of her renaming. Instead, by ignoring Baalbergen's (2019) negligent 'antics', @tekahureremoa has made room for Pacific people 'inside her soul' to breathe. Consequently, from @tekahureremoa emerge people who possess their own mannerisms, diction, life experiences, and who generally, "sound cool af [as fuck]" (@tekahureremoa, 2019, para. 2). @tekahureremoa further explains that, "Everytime my name gets misspelled it's like they invent a whole new person. E.g. Te Kahurewarewa, Tekahureremoana, Taumata Tekahumata, Te Kahurerettoa, Kahuteremoa...which I don't mind coz these people sound cool af" (2019, para. 2). Having dealt with similar disrespect regarding the

pronunciation or complete renaming of my own name (mirror-my, marry-mah, ma-raahma, miriam, margaret) and knowing that such exhausting disrespect is hardly new to Māori who bear ancestral names, what is extraordinary is @tekahureremoa's whole-bodied response.

### **Indigenous bodies**

In an article about Indigenous existentialism, Brendan Hokowhitu states, "Everyday culture and traditional culture must form a composite of an Indigenous sense of self if a healthy Indigenous epistemology is to take hold. For Indigenous people (as with all people) there is nothing more immediate and everyday than the body" (2009, pp. 107-108). Hokowhitu further considers the extent to which people view the Indigenous body and wonders:

Do we romanticise the Indigenous body as part of the pure-pre-colonial past, scarred and traumatised by the rupture of colonial invasion? Are Indigenous bodies anxiety ridden in the present, lost between the pure past and the impure present, racked by tears over the actions of others upon us? Do we feel cheated of the future? Does the birth of our children lack responsibility; that is, will we pass on to them as part of our bodily 'traditions', the tears of self-pity? (2009, p. 116).

@tekahureremoa's (2019) Instagram post is evidence that not all Indigenous bodies are interested in remaining scarred and traumatised by colonial invasion, including systemic renaming. Nor are they anxiety ridden and lost, nor wallowing in 'tears of self-pity'. Further to Hokowhitu's (2009) musings, when writing about the 'post-colonial body', Albert Wendt maintains that, "...it is a body coming out of the Pacific. Not a body being imposed on the Pacific. It is a blend, a new development, which I consider to be in heart, spirit, and muscle, Pacific" (2009, p. 98). In *Te Kuharere Tapes*, @tekahureremoa (2019) uses her body (though physically situated in Te Upoko-o-te-ika-a-Māui) to construct an online body who, in heart, spirit, and muscle, is a Pacific body. In

the everydayness of @tekahureremoa’s world, Indigenous bodies are given oxygen and freedom to exist; they are “cool af” and emerge from the soul of the Pacific like never-before-imagined pou.

### **Cyberspace is an island in Oceania**

Birthng Pacific bodies in cyberspace is a thing; a never-before-imagined thing that has the power to breathe life into Indigenous bodies and to disrupt colonial publishing structures. Today, yesterday and tomorrow, “Indigenous people want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes.” (Smith, 1999, p. 28). By publishing online, Indigenous artists and composers such as @tekahureremoa (2019) can circumvent mainstream publishing channels and write histories that reflect everyday experiences; “the mundane, habituated, and taken-for-granted daily routines that compose most of Native experience” (Biolosi, 2019, p. 77). Cyberspace is not a new-age genre of writing, but instead an island in Oceania for Indigenous creatives: a dynamic place where whānau can connect, gain nourishment, and channel their realities into the wider networks of te ao. In an interview, Tongan writer ‘Eveli Hau’ofa commented on the static nature we sometimes imagine of our ancestors: “We’ve often put our traditions in cages, and so we try to do what we think our elders, the people in the past, did. And we trap our traditions there. We freeze them” (Ellis & Hau’ofa, 2001, p. 23). However, Hau’ofa then asserts that, “people in the past really lived very much like people in the present. There were always cultures mixing. Things were fluid, they were not frozen” (Ellis & Hau’ofa, 2001, p. 23). Similarly, @tekahureremoa, like many Māori artists, composers and critics of our world, refuses to accept a view of te ao Māori as frozen in the paleolithic past. @tekahureremoa symbolises modern Māori bodies who acknowledge the fluidity of the world we inhabit, pay close attention to the meaning and practices of our lives, and are fearless and relentless in their drive to publish their realities online. Immediacy too is sprinkled throughout *Te Kuharere Tapes* (2019). Indeed, @tekahureremoa

herself divulges, “I had a spare hour - i legit skipped lunch to film this” (2019, para 2).

Conversely, the purposeful deviancy from mainstream publishing processes to online publishing seems shocking to literati’s ‘white castle’ membership (Wendt Young, 2019). Writing about her participation in the design of an online writing course in Philadelphia, Lani Wendt Young proposed that students were offered guidelines to publish their work online. The response, she says, was like ushering in “the zombie apocalypse”:

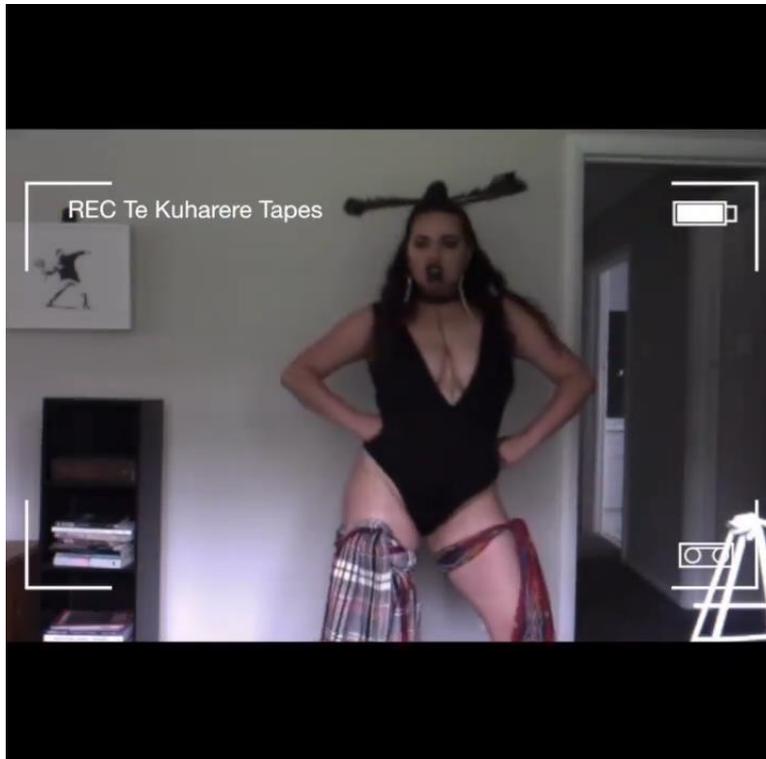
There was a consensus, among the English professors, editors and traditionally published authors (in other words, everyone but me) that by the end of the course, a person would know the basics of writing stories and have completed a portfolio of pieces to continue refining. But publish any of it? No. (Wendt Young, 2019, p. 11)

Despite such ardent gatekeeping, @tekahureremoa (2019) seems uninterested in participating in an industry that is intent on curating Katherine Mansfield-esque slice-of-life stories of ‘refined’ Kiwiana whiteness. Instead, @tekahureremoa produces a vibrant account of everyday life in Oceania, and like many Indigenous artists and writers who engage with the world online, she too publishes her work online if, when, and how she chooses. Publishing work online allows Indigenous people to tell their versions of stories their way and for their own purposes (Smith, 1999).

In the first video of *Te Kuharere Tapes*, @tekahureremoa’s (2019) everyday world is on display from the outset. Indeed, we first meet the wrestler, Te Kuharere, standing in what appears to be @tekahureremoa’s living room - see figure 3. Additionally, in the second video of *Te Kuharere Tapes* (2019), after several outtake-type shots, @tekahureremoa confesses, “Umm, sidenote: the neighbour came to the door while I was dressed up as Te Kuharere filii-filiming-filiming my videos. And it was, you know, it was what it was”. Much laughter ensues, as does the viewer’s understanding that they have

### Figure 3

*Opening shot of Te Kuharere Tapes (2019)*



witnessed a largely unplanned and very intimate slice of Pacific life. About the production of the videos, in the written component to her Instagram post, @tekahureremoa states:

I was already wearing the moko coz I had spent the morning [with] my SWIS [South Wellington Intermediate School] Army. I played guitar 4 their performance at the Intermediate Kapa Haka festival out in Porirua. I could not stop thinking of this the whole drive home to do my next thing. I didn't even listen to music. I just thought about Te Kuharere all the way to Brooklyn. (2019, para 3)

@tekahureremoa's Instagram post is a spontaneous venture. That is, the videos appear to be last-minute "I had a spare hour" (para. 2), with little prior planning involved, "I was already wearing the moko" (para. 3). Moreover, the fact that

@tekahureremoa chose to create this video rather than eat “i legit skipped lunch to film this” (para. 2) and could think of little else while driving home immediately prior to production, “I didn’t even listen to music. I just thought about Te Kuharere all the way to Brooklyn” (para. 3), creates a sense of urgency. @tekahureremoa’s singular focus is how to bring Te Kuharere to life. And it is this immediacy and urgency to create and publish – as opposed to perpetual ‘refinement’ and confinement in a waka beset with rot – that the white castle of literature (Wendt Young, 2019) cannot comprehend.

On this, Wendt Young criticises the opinions of “some” who do not wish to see their worlds flooded with “kazillions of people publishing their 13 crappy books online, books that haven’t been edited” (2019, pp. 12-13). It is likely that “some” would also ravage the ‘unedited’ nature of @tekahureremoa’s Instagram post (2019) and indeed social media platforms in general. For instance, in her written post, @tekahureremoa uses emojis, shorthand slang that is typical of social media users “coz..legit...cool af...4” (para. 2-3) and attention to punctuation and grammar seems optional. But this is also the point of such a posting – to post in the moment, with urgency and immediacy. On a complementary note, while contemplating the dilution of tikanga, Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Porou constitutional lawyer Moana Jackson maintains that, “our jewelled fantasies are real... tikanga will always have strong and resilient roots giving shade to us, and to this hurt and troubled world” (2012, p. 93). As long as @tekahureremoa is thus steadfast to her iwitanga, tikanga, it seems, will protect her “jewelled fantasies”. Indeed, literati ‘shade’ thrown by the white castle (Wendt Young, 2019) will not eclipse the taonga she creates online. Indeed, Lani Wendt Young further points to the perpetual privileging of literature by a select few, but also to the gradual erosion of the castle walls:

Finally, the digital era is challenging the status quo for what ‘quality’ literature is and who gets to define it. For so long it has been white cis het males’ and then white females’ standards of quality control. They

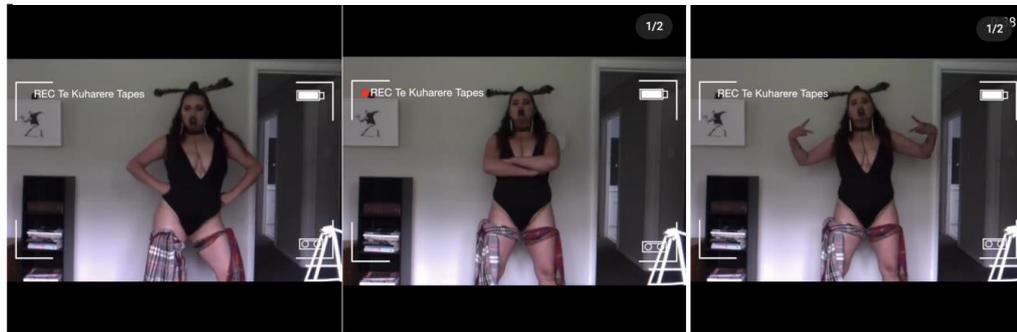
decide who gets admitted to the castle and who is rejected. That paradigm is now threatened because anyone can publish. It terrifies those who, for so long, have been used to defining what GOOD means. Today the real gatekeepers are readers. And for many, their standards of quality are a bit different from those in the castle. (2019, p. 27).

Wendt Young (2019) highlights the terror of literary gatekeepers who are suddenly confronted by their own irrelevance in cyberspace. In saying this, it is important to note that the ‘standards of quality’ by online readers are not so much “different” as Wendt Young states, but distinctive. The kupu “different” suggests that a Garden of Eden standard exists from which every other standard is judged as “different” and must thus prove its worthiness. Instead, it is argued that any standards of quality are merely ‘distinctive’ to the world from whence they come. So, while the white castle standards of quality will likely view @tekahureremoa’s Instagram post as diametrically opposed to their own, in reality, the standards of quality within *Te Kuharere tapes* (2019) reflect the unique world and values of social media. The paradigm shift Wendt Young (2019) alludes to when one reads online texts, is a shift to read beyond the only way that English language literature has been presented to readers for hundreds of years. For instance, despite the deceptively spontaneous nature of *Te Kuharere tapes* (2019), in just the first few seconds of the main video, @tekahureremoa presents the viewer with an intricately developed world in which Te Kuharere Taumata reigns supreme.

Figure 4 is a series of screenshots from the first 11 seconds of the video that depicts Te Kuharere’s first three poses and first three pieces of dialogue. In the video, Te Kuharere is dressed in what appears to be a black, low-cut swimsuit. Red, tartan scarves or material are tied around the top of each thigh. She wears long, thin, white earrings that resemble bone. Two feathers are inserted into a single topknot on the crown of her head, leaving the rest of her dark hair to cascade over her shoulders. A black necklace is wrapped around her neck, and the moko on her chin remains from @tekahureremoa’s previous

**Figure 4:**

*Three opening stances and dialogue from Te Kuharere Tapes (2019)*



“Is there a problem here?”

“Tēnā kōoutou. Ko Te Kuharere Taumata ahau.”

“Your local wrestler.”

engagement. In the medium long shots throughout the video, Te Kuharere stands in the middle of the frame, facing the viewer, with lighting that obscures much of her face and torso. Fittingly, Te Kuharere’s ‘flying thighs’ are highlighted by what seems to be natural daylight from a window(s). These three beginning poses and respective dialogue represent the diverse public, personal, and professional personas of the fictional character, Te Kuharere Taumata.

Te Kuharere comes into frame at the beginning of the video with an almighty stomp of one foot that positions her in the first screenshot of figure 4. Her hands are balled into fists on her hips. The slightly low-angled shot, along with her erect stature and stern facial expression suggest confidence and authority. This disposition continues as Te Kuharere stares directly at the viewer and asks brusquely, “Is there a problem here?” (@tekahureremoa, 2019). To a Māori viewer, this confrontational opening is somewhat puzzling; where’s the mihi we ask? On the other hand, given that the question is posed in English (in contrast to the frequent use of te reo Māori elsewhere in the video), one might reasonably assume that this rhetorical question is posed to a member of the wider, predominantly Pākeha, public. Te Kuharere’s stance further supports this; one hip is positioned higher than the other, almost taunting or

provoking a reaction from the viewer. The line is thus drawn: if you have a problem with this first impression of Te Kuharere, scroll on by. If, however, you do not have a problem, ka pai, stay tuned. Indeed, there are no passive, voyeuristic observers in this corner of Oceania, only active and willing participants. Te Kuharere's rhetorical question is thus consistent with te ao Māori community expectations of iwi participation. Additionally, the dialogue might also be read as a wero to viewers, and indeed creators of literary texts in general, to discard their colonial thoughts and participate in decisions about their own future.

Similarly, Te Kuharere's clothing is not only suggestive of both the hostile impact that te ao Pākeha has had on Māori, but also the demand for autonomy in all areas of a person's public and personal life and endeavours. For instance, Te Kuharere's necklace is neither associated with traditional tāhei, nor does it seem an appropriate ornament for a wrestler (it is after all a choker), yet it is a fitting symbol for Te Kuharere's public persona. That is, while the black choker might very well choke the life from Te Kuharere at some point, she wears it anyway. Both the consequences of wearing the choker and the choice to wear it in the first place, are hers alone. Thus, just as @tekahureremoa's post might symbolise publishing autonomy, Te Kuharere too demands autonomy in her life, and she is willing to accept the consequences of her expression of mana motuhake, dire as they may eventually be.

If the first screenshot in figure 4 represents Te Kuharere's public persona and demands for mana motuhake, the second screenshot represents Te Kuharere's personal persona and her grounding within te ao Māori. Te Kuharere's arms are folded in a manner that is often suggestive of defensiveness. Yet, this stance means much more. Te Kuharere has come directly from the Pākehafied public sphere of her life. As such, she is wary and her stance is that of a person who is safeguarding someone or something, in this case it is her Māoritana. The dialogue Te Kuharere delivers in this pose is

confident and measured: “Tēnā kōutou. Ko Te Kuharere Taumata ahau.” Delivered entirely in te reo Māori, this dialogue is a clear statement of whakapapa and connection to the viewer. Moreover, Te Kuharere wears traditional Māori adornments such as feathers in her hair, a topknot, bone earrings and moko kauae (indeed, later in the video Te Kuharere also strikes several kapa haka poses with a carved patu – actions that are set to, what sounds like, the waiata *Raupatu* by te reo Māori metal band, Alien Weaponry). In this second screenshot (in figure 4), despite the frustrations and exhaustion from living in te ao Pākeha, Te Kuharere has enveloped her body with Māoritana, including tō tātou reo rangatira. Even in the “jewelled fantasies” (Jackson, 2012, p. 93) of cyberspace, whakapapa endures. The feathers that Te Kuharere wears similarly suggest such endurance, or rather they are a warning of the tragic consequences when we neglect our responsibilities to each other. That is, the feathers Te Kuharere wears are reminiscent of huia feathers worn by rangatira, while the apparent extinction of huia today reminds us of the fragility of our world and how closely the past, present and future overlap and repeat. The feathers are also a practical reminder of what can happen when we disrespect Papatūānuku: huia voices will be silenced in our forests. Te Kuharere’s feathers are thus a reminder of how important it is to nurture te tai ao, lest more of Papatūānuku’s tamariki are lost to us for good. In a similar fashion, @tekahureremoa uses Te Kuharere to point her fellow creatives to a more sustainable existence in cyberspace. That is, rather than relying on the “white castle of literature” for answers, Indigenous creatives should look instead to the digital world for choice, autonomy, power, participation in literary conversations, and to critique the white castle, as indicated by Lani Wendt Young:

The digital era means more choice. More power and control in our hands to write whatever we want to, breaking any or all of the literary rules, if that’s what our story requires. It means the power to publish and distribute those stories, to have an impact on the conversation. To

critique the structures that systematically smother us”. (2019, pp. 35-36)

With the final pose in figure 4, Te Kuharere completes the trinity of her existence. Alongside her public and personal persona sits her professional persona as a wrestler. Predictably, as “Brooklyn’s finest, baddest most unskilled yet aesthetically ready wrestler” (Ladyfruit, 2019), Te Kuharere’s professional stance and mannerisms are menacing and aggressive. Although Te Kuharere’s body stands in the same position as her public and personal personas, her professional persona has raised arms while her fingers create two V symbols on both sides of her shoulders. In this manner, her limbs emulate serpents and Te Kuharere Taumata thus transforms into Oceania’s Medusa of the wrestling circuit. Adding to this, Te Kuharere’s dialogue in this pose is, “Your local wrestler” (@tekahureremoa, 2019). She places a slight emphasis on the ‘s’ consonant and this sibilant sound evokes serpentine imagery, thus supporting her Medusa-like portrayal. Indeed, Te Kuharere’s clothing furthers this theme. That is, the scarves tied around Te Kuharere’s thighs not only draw attention to her ‘flying thighs’ and thus her name, but the red, white, black and yellow tartan colouring of the scarves also conjure up images of reddish, festered gashes and pain. The scarves are thus visual deterrents for Te Kuharere’s would-be opponents and a reminder to the viewer that in the wrestling arena, Te Kahurere is a force to be reckoned with.

Adding to this, Ladyfruit’s (2019) image of Te Kuharere in figure 5 could well be a publicity shot for Te Kuharere, the wrestler. The photo is well lit and is indeed, “aesthetically ready” for promotional purposes. Furthermore, @tekahureremoa has presented a character whose theatrics and tropes are likely recognisable to World Wrestling Entertainment [WWE] followers – many of whom are Māori, as evidenced by Māori Television’s 2018 decision to present WWE Raw in both English and te reo Māori because “Māori audiences like wrestling (we simply do, not sorry ‘bout it)” (Taipua, 2018). Wrestling tropes that @tekahureremoa incorporates include thematic costuming as

## Figure 5

*Ladyfruit's (2019) Facebook post of Te Kuharere*



“Brooklyn’s finest, baddest most unskilled yet aesthetically ready [wāhine] wrestler”, posturing such as a stomping foot and balled fists, and dialogue “Is there a problem here?”

Ironically, in Ladyfruit’s (2019) photo, Te Kuharere’s kneeling position on the ground indicates both vulnerability, but also strength. That is, Te Kuharere expertly grips a taiaha, sits upright with one hand on her hip, and her legs are spread, martial-arts style. And although Te Kuharere’s seated stance with spread legs might nudge at western notions of decorum, she will not entertain such ideas. Instead, Te Kuharere ignores the camera and looks to the side, thus demonstrating her disinterest in the western gaze while simultaneously exuding confidence in her ability to protect herself. Te Kuharere Taumata is fighting fit with weapon at hand, and will neither be shamed nor will she be messed with. Even the self-deprecating assertion that Te Kuharere is “most unskilled”, seems to be a ploy to distract from her actual

position as Brooklyn’s “finest” wrestler (Ladyfruit, 2019). Indeed, @tekahureremoa (2019) has little desire to engage with those who choose not to engage with her work. In a similar vein, Lani Wendt Young wonders:

Why should I mourn the supposed decline of an industry that didn’t make room for me anyway? A structure that either erases my existence or is directly hostile towards people like me and other marginalised people is not one I want to prop up. (2019, p. 22)

Wendt Young further asserts that “a monocultural literature is a problem” (2019, p. 19), but so too is a monocultural, overarching genre that favours the written word over any other form, especially when forms such as *Te Kuharere Tapes* (@tekahureremoa, 2019) are as evocative as they are fleeting, and favour Indigenous and minority creatives. For Pacific peoples, cyberspace is an island in Oceania that does not need castle moats; our world is the ocean and the ocean is us. So, let the castle tremble within its physical walls of same-same-sameness and let digital publishing in cyberspace cast Aotearoa’s fleet of storytelling waka into Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa and beyond. This is the real legacy of Te Kuharere’s ‘flying thighs’.

### **Theoretical reflections on the everydayness of brown girls**

In light of previous contemplations regarding the placing and purpose of these theoretical reflections, for this chapter, I attempted to integrate them more into the analysis, while maintaining @tekahureremoa’s text as the heart of this analysis. While there is a fine line that will need to be navigated by each individual iwi scholar regarding the weighting of theory vs analysis, the approach in this chapter seeks to whakamana te ao Māori in English language literary discourse in a manner that is akin to the hīkoi at the start of this thesis. Allowing these conversations to flow organically has meant that, at times, conversations lingered a little longer than I intended. However, the overall process and final outcome reflect how irrational ‘bits’ (Hulme, 1986) of our

lives can come together like puzzle pieces (Grace, 1986) and create patterns that illuminate our understandings of the world and of iwi literary analysis.

On that note, this chapter ends with a cup of tea, or more specifically, with an extract from one of my favorite poems, “He Kaputī” by Hinemoana Baker. Originally, I intended for Baker’s poem to be the epigraph to this chapter:

well if we can’t wear it  
who can  
pass the lighter please cuz  
by we i mean māori women  
who’s gunna wear it if not for us

robbie williams  
we all say

yeh true  
he’ll get his chin done next  
fuckin egg  
(Baker, 2001, p. 14)

I first heard Hinemoana recite this poem near the end of the 2000s at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa in Tūranga-nui-a-Kiwa. Hinemoana performed and spoke about her creative mahi as part of the ‘Te Hā Māori Writers On the Bus’ tour. It now seems strange to end a chapter that concerns itself with online texts, with a poem that I first experienced kanohi-ki-kanohi and then in print form, but “He Kaputī” conveys many of the sentiments that first attracted me to social media text forms that I wished to present in this chapter. “He Kaputī” recounts a conversation with whānau around a kitchen table and although English is spoken, there are references to te ao Māori interspersed throughout. Conversations ebb and flow between speakers, and everyday topics such as smoking, pop culture, and aspects of te ao Māori such as moko kauae, are

interwoven like whāi. The language in “He Kaputī” reflects a sense of intimacy, both within the poem itself, and between the poem and the reader; it is informal and includes colloquialisms, profanity, and the conscious absence of most ‘standardised’ punctuation. “He Kaputī” also references pop culture, current events, and assumes that the reader has some grounding in te ao Māori. Aside from this, Baker’s poem is funny as hell. And not just the intensifier ‘as Hell’ either, but also a lower-cased, hell-on-earth where literature about the ‘everyday’ lives of Māori creatives is often dismissed by readers who have little lived experience of whānau life. In an interview with Serum Digital Magazine, poet Tayi Tibble spoke about her own writing and said:

It’s fresh, and it’s prioritising and giving value to an urban, brown existence and experience. For example it references, Kim Kardashian, The Pussycat Dolls, Aaliyah, Rihanna, where one might, I dunno Pākehā writers like Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen right? The thing that I have noticed is that the brown girls who read it get it, so they don’t have to pry or ask too much about it – they’re happy to have it exist and they can relate to it, how it is on the page. Pākehā people on the other hand are really really curious. I’m glad they’re interested and want to know about it and can see it’s value, but I also get the feeling that it’s possibly their first time coming into contact with Māori literature, or these kinds of Māori stories. (Tibble, 2018, para .11)

According to Tibble, brown girls ‘get’ brown-girl-writing and are “happy to have it exist”, no questions needed, whereas Pākehā readers often appear “curious” and “interested” in Tibble’s work after their possibly first contact with Māori writing. However, Tibble’s frustration and exhaustion simmer beneath the prying into her work regarding mundane issues that seem so obvious to “brown girls who read it [and] get it” (Tibble, 2018, para. 11). Indeed, such questioning and prying into microscopic details of brown lives is reminiscent of first-contact “research”, which is still “inextricably linked to

European imperialism and colonialism” and “probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (Smith, 1999, p.1). Tibble’s (2018) ‘brown girl’ musings gesture towards Lani Wendt Young’s assertion that “Being a voracious brown reader before the digital era meant you were often hungry, always searching, and even when you did get books, you were fed an insufficient diet of whiteness only” (2019, p. 16). Unlike their Pākeha peers who are seemingly used to seeing their reflection in every piece of writing around them (hence the ‘curiosity’ and implied exoticism of Tibble’s work), brown readers ‘get it’. Within Tibble’s writing ‘brown readers’ can finally replace their stale diet of white carbs with an overabundance of vibrant kai from Papatūānuku’s garden. And even if the moment is fleeting – a singular poem, or meme, or Instagram post – for ‘brown girls’ these moments are rich and relateable. Writers like Tayi Tibble prioritise and give value to their own everyday experiences.

In the same manner, Indigenous scholars too must prioritise critiquing such texts in their academic work. Thomas Biolosi urges scholars to pursue the ‘everyday’ lives of people (2019, p. 77) and Chris Andersen too argues that by analysing the everyday, our understanding of wider systemic interferences on Indigenous lives, such as colonialism, will be deepened as we consider our ‘density’ of experience (Andersen, 2009). Similarly, here in Aotearoa, Brendan Hokowhitu calls for Indigenous studies to pay attention to the meaning and practices of the everyday lives of people, or to “the immediacy of the here and now” (2009, p. 103), rather than merely react to the past and the future.

Given that Tayi Tibble’s first book of poetry *Poūkahangatus* (2019), as well as Hinemoana Baker’s first book *Mātuhi* (2001), were both largely written within an academic creative writing programme in a western university, one might wonder whether such work does indeed attend to ‘the everyday’ experiences of Māori women. However, such arguments do little more than mirror ignorant accusations of authenticity regarding an author’s race and ethnicity, and are thus unhelpful and baseless. Indeed, even if these books were

created and nurtured within the white castle of literature and have thus “gained #goldenticket admission to the castle” (Wendt Young, 2019, p. 37), they are literary works or art by Māori women who write about Māori experiences and create worlds that are as vibrant as the Indigenous bodies in cyberspace. ‘White castle gate-keepers’ might exclude Indigenous writers, but as Indigenous readers, writers and scholars we too must “be mindful of the ways that we can gate-keep each other, of how we can internalise white-castle thinking and become complicit in our own silencing” (Wendt Young, 2019, p. 36). Instead, Indigenous scholars can prioritise analysing texts by Indigenous artists and so enrich our understandings of Indigenous lives. Texts such as *Poūkahangatus* (Tibble, 2019), *Mātuhi* (Baker, 2001) and *Te Kuharere Tapes* (@tekahureremoa, 2019) deserve our scholarly attention and critique. As iwi literary scholars, we can choose to exert mana motuhake and choose to critique from the vantage point of our respective maunga. In this manner, we become complicit in contributing to a collection of stories that continually spiral from, around, and through our shores in Oceania.

This chapter explored an Instagram post by a female Māori performer, songwriter and storyteller: @tekahureremoa. Due to my own associations with unwanted renaming and distortion of whakapapa by colonial institutions (as outlined in the opening of this thesis), it was both surprising and inspiring to see a fresh approach to the renaming of Indigenous bodies. As a Tūhoe woman, it was also interesting to see how Mihikitekapua’s choice to not name the male perpetrators in “He Waiata Aroha” (Ngata & Jones, 1958) was mirrored by @tekahureremoa’s decision to not name the person who called her Te Kuharere. Noteworthy also, is the lack of correlation between the genre and length of a text, and the possibilities for rich interpretation. Indeed, at this point in my thesis, only four lines of a waiata, a short story, and 11 seconds of a video have been examined, yet the richness within each of these texts could easily form the basis for a much longer analysis. That said, just as this thesis urges Māori writers and storytellers to contribute to a growing body of

Indigenous literature here in Aotearoa – including writing in genres such as science fiction and fantasy, and publishing in ‘traditional’ as well as 21<sup>st</sup> century forms – so too are iwi scholars urged to contemplate the forms and genres of texts that they critique.

## Chapter 6: *Dark Souls* by Paula Morris

In this final analysis chapter, I examine aspects of the young adult [YA] novel *Dark Souls* by Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Manuhiri, and Ngāti Whatua writer, Paula Morris (2011). However, unlike the previous two chapters, this chapter does not attempt to conduct a close analysis of the entire novel. Instead, after engaging with the work of Mihikitekapua, I became interested in the unseen spaces of Paula Morris' *Dark Souls* (2011) – in ‘boring and wriggling’, just as Haumapuhia once did (Ngata & Jones, 1958), into the tight spaces below a YA novel's surface.

The reader of this thesis has likely surmised that the long shadows of whiteness invaded my thoughts well before the writing of this chapter. Lesser known is that *Dark Souls* by Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Manuhiri, Ngāti Whatua writer Paula Morris (2011) was to be the first text that I would analyse in this thesis. Indeed, after my supervisor loaned me the novel, I devoured it in one sitting and subsequently engaged in a whirl of activity: theorising, brainstorming, quote-collecting and colour-coded note taking. Despite this, when it came to collating my thoughts on *Dark Souls* into a coherent piece, I froze, and instead analysed the short story “Birth Rights” (Hart, 2010) and then the Instagram post *Te Kuharere tapes* (@tekahureremoa, 2019). It eventually dawned on me that studying *Dark Souls* has allowed me to reflect on the colonial shadows, such as those thrown by western academia or white-castle literature (Wendt Young, 2019), that continue to permeate my writing and reading. By thinking deeply about the presence of such shadows in *Dark Souls* (Morris, 2011), I found myself consciously seeking to align my thoughts to the legacies of my tīpuna. As such, this chapter discontinues the theoretical reflections found at the end of the previous two chapters and instead attempts to chart both theory and analysis as a single journey.

## **The clear skies of Te Ranginui-e-tū-nei**

This chapter no longer carries the name, “The long shadows of whiteness”. This previous title alludes to the name often used to reference New Zealand: Aotearoa – commonly translated as ‘the land of the long white cloud’. For many who call New Zealand home, the use of ‘Aotearoa’ often accompanies a boastful satisfaction that we live in a harmonious and settled society of cultural acceptance and equality. The reality for many tangata whenua is quite the opposite. Aotearoa remains a settler rather than a settled country where colonisation, and its closely associated side-kick, racism, still cast long shadows across the whenua of Te Ika-a-Māui, Te Waipounamu and Rakiura. Knowing this required a shift in thinking. The current title of this chapter exemplifies this shift and focuses instead on the expansive possibilities of Ranginui to define this chapter’s intent: to bring light to colonisation’s shadows. The irony embedded within the name of the tool used to achieve this intention, the novel *Dark Souls*, is not lost on this author. If anything, it reinforces the important role that *Dark Souls* plays in this conversation. Indeed, the name ‘Dark Souls’ symbolises the colonial shadows that shroud those still cowering in darkness, too afraid to emerge from under the weighty clouds of whiteness. And yet, just as Jessica’s thin ‘white gown’ could be easily torn and Vivienne’s ‘white coat’ could slip effortlessly from her arms in “Birth Rights” (Hart, 2010), so too can the ‘long white cloud’ of colonial Aotearoa dissipate under the great standing heavens of Te Ranginui-e-tū-nei.

Aside from the short prologue, *Dark souls* (Morris, 2011) takes place over one week during winter in the contemporary city of York, England. It follows the life of American sixteen year old Miranda Tennant, who begins to see ghosts after a horrific car crash in which her best friend Jenna is killed. Miranda’s parents subsequently take her and her older brother, Rob, on a working holiday to England where more ghostly encounters ensue. The dust jacket blurb of the hardcover version of *Dark Souls* includes a review extract that describes the novel as “straddl[ing] the line between ghost story and

realistic fiction”. Indeed, *Dark Souls* has been variously described as a haunted city novel, supernatural fiction, a ghost story, young adult fiction, fantasy fiction and even genre writing. But never, to this author’s knowledge, as an Indigenous text. Indeed, there are no discernible Māori characters in the novel, nor Māori names, nor New Zealand slang, nor any specific reference to Aotearoa. Yet, *Dark Souls* is an Indigenous story that aches for Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa and longs for colonial clouds to disperse.

### **Aching for Oceania**

In the prologue of *Dark Souls*, Paula Morris (2011) recounts the motor vehicle accident that leaves Rob, the driver, with post-traumatic stress disorder and claustrophobia. The crash also kills Jenna, who subsequently becomes the first ghost that Miranda encounters. The beginning two sentences of the prologue read: “At night, cornfields looked like the ocean. When clouds covered the moon, the vast darkness on either side of the road could be glassy bodies of water stretching into the distance” (p. 1). Miranda’s yearning for the ocean is established in the first two sentences as she, Jenna and Rob head home after a “party in the farmhouse” (p. 1). Yet Miranda’s yearning for the ocean is puzzling. That is, the Tennant family live in the landlocked state of Iowa – they had to “drag [Rob] to the airport back in Iowa” (p. 6) – whereby Iowa produces the most corn in the United States of America, which itself is the world’s leading producer of corn (iowacorn.org, n.d.). As such, the references to cornfields in *Dark Souls* (Morris, 2011) are indeed suggestive of Miranda and Rob’s physical environment. Less obvious is the reason behind an intense focus on water in the prologue. Indeed, five of the novel’s first eight sentences reference water. For instance, Miranda imagines:

...that the country road was really following a rocky shoreline, that if they stopped the car and opened the windows, they’d hear nothing but lapping waves. They’d be in a different state - one that gazed out onto the Pacific or the Atlantic... (Morris, 2011, p. 1)

Miranda then wonders whether Rob still enjoys her childhood game of imagining roads as shorelines, “Maybe that night [of the crash] he’d forgotten that the darkness surrounding them wasn’t the black water of a quiet bay” (p. 1). And while these water references might be read as the everyday musings of a teenager who is several hundred kilometres away from frolicking on ocean beaches, the bleakness of the water imagery suggests otherwise. That is, although it is dark, Miranda’s imagination does not conjure up utopian images of clear blue seas, sunny skies, and long stretches of hot sand. Instead, the water Miranda imagines is only discernible when “clouds cover the moon” thus surrounding them with dark “glassy bodies of water” and ominous “lapping waves” that can be heard but not seen (p. 1). Further to this, in her mind, one cannot see into the “black” watery depths of the deathly “quiet” bay, and even the shoreline Miranda imagines is “rocky” rather than sandy (p. 1). A teenager harbouring such bleak images on the way home from a party is surprising. That said, in the same way that cornfields are relevant to the physical environment of Miranda’s Iowa, so too is the water imagery in the prologue of *Dark Souls* (multiple bodies of murky water, rugged shorelines, waves that cannot be seen, and specific reference to the Pacific or Atlantic oceans), suggestive of the rugged physical terrain of the islands that make up Aotearoa. Moreover, the circumstances that lead to Miranda’s first vision of a ghost are interwoven with tragedy, and the bleakness of the water imagery fittingly reflects this.

On the other hand, a further interpretation of the water imagery might point to Miranda’s subconscious desire to nurture the realm of Ranginui i.e. her wairua. On this, a short explanation is perhaps appropriate. In te ao Māori, all bodies of water are connected:

Tangaroa-whakamau-tai is the name of the atua of the oceans and seas who reigns control over the water’s tides...All these bodies inherently having a connectedness with the phases and movement of the moon whether big or small. Tangaroa has whakapapa to connect the waters that rain down on our mountains and down through our valleys, fresh

waters that run through our land, water that nourishes our soil, to the waters that we consume and comprise 80% of our human body. (Hanara & Jackson, 2019, p. 5)

Further to this, Te Waaka Melbourne discusses the intimate relationship between, “Ranginui, the spiritual, tapu (sacred)” and “Papatuanuku, the physical, noa (common) and human” (2011, p. 99). Both Ranginui and Papatūānuku thus personify the hauora of ngā tangata, whereby Papatūānuku symbolises the wellbeing of a person’s tinana and Ranginui personifies a person’s wairua. As the source of all whakapapa, the link between Ranginui and Papatūānuku is integral to human existence, as is water and thus Tangaroa. Although there is no indication in *Dark Souls* (Morris, 2011) that Miranda is aware of the existence of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, nor Tangaroa and the moon’s influence over water, Miranda has indeed made some connection between the latter since the “glassy bodies of water” are only vaguely visible when “clouds covered the moon” (p.1). Paradoxically, at the beginning of the novel, the negative connotations attached to Miranda’s perception of the spirit world, suggest that Miranda perceives the realm of Ranginui and ngā wai Māori as the root of her darkness, when in fact her extra-sensory perception and connection to te ao Māori is what can heal her.

In contrast, at the end of *Dark Souls*, the first sentence of the epilogue, states, “At night, cornfields looked like the ocean, but during the day, at the height of a baking-hot summer, they were a swishing forest of green, stretching toward the sun” (p. 290). Having pieced together the past and made peace with the spirits she has encountered along the way, Miranda’s wairua is more balanced. That is, although Miranda still sees the ocean in the cornfields at night, during the day she imagines the same cornfields to be forests and now accepts the balanced role of ngā atua in our world. In her imagination, cornfields still surround her in Iowa, as does Tangaroa’s “ocean” at night, but Miranda now notices the presence of Papatūānuku in the cornfields “swishing forest of green”. She also seems to accept the presence of Ranginui, as she

observes Papatūānuku reaching to embrace him in the heavens, “stretching toward the sun”. Miranda’s more balanced view of the physical and spiritual world now allow her to smile at ghosts “not confused or afraid this time” (p. 289). Unfortunately though, even by the end of the novel the realm of Ranginui is still viewed with suspicion. That is, the last two sentences of before the epilogue read, “Like Lord Poole, she might lose the power to connect with the dark currents of the spirit world. One day, maybe very soon, she would only see happiness” (p. 289). In Miranda’s world, a complete paradigm shift is necessary to move her beyond the western assumption that the spirit world is “dark” and devoid of “happiness”. The close of *Dark Souls* seems to indicate that Miranda, like many iwi living far from Oceania, is still negotiating her iwitana and finding her way back to her maunga.

Unfortunately, Miranda’s negotiation of self is hindered from the outset by colonial thinking that is embedded in the very title of the novel. According to the epigraph of *Dark Souls*, the title originates from an allegorical story promoting chastity called, *Comus (A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634) [Comus]* by John Milton (n.d./1634). In *Comus*, after meeting the unnamed character, ‘The Lady’, Comus captures and immobilises her, involves her in necromancy and attempts to persuade her to give in to sexual pleasures. The Lady refuses and is subsequently freed by her two brothers, a spirit and a water nymph. Comparatively, Miranda is afforded a name in *Dark Souls* (Morris, 2011) and is spared sexual assault. However, *Dark Souls* contains disturbing similarities regarding gender expectations to *Comus* (n.d./1634). That is, Miranda’s father and brother both give her dehumanising “pet” names: “Verandah” (Morris, 2011, pp. 32, 63) and “Dormouse” (pp. 18, 19, 25). Furthermore, Miranda’s father often questions her basic life skills, “You’re sure you know how to get to the restaurant [the White Boar] yourself?” while her brother, Rob’s, ability to navigate a new city is an expected norm “Rob was already over at the White Boar” (Morris, 2011, p. 176). Similarly, Rob doubts Miranda’s ability to think and act for herself around other men, “He’s not

showing you anywhere, okay? ...You don't know anything about anything" (p. 117). And even the ghost of Richard Martin, whose "smile was seductive, alluring" (p. 269), is nothing but a "handsome, arrogant bully" (p. 269) who not only physically assaults Miranda "swept his arm through the air, and Miranda toppled over" (p. 271), but also attempts to sexually assault her, "The ghost of Richard Martin was leaning toward her. He closed his eyes and she realized that he was about to kiss her" (pp. 276-277). Despite the action of *Dark Souls* being set in contemporary England, and Miranda's character being portrayed as an independent woman who "imagined herself scampering along lofty battlements, dodging the raining arrows of marauders" (2011, p. 9) rather than spouting chastity monologues like The Lady in *Comus* (Milton, n.d./1634), the disturbing tendrils of Milton's 'classic' work has descended like mist over *Dark Souls* (Morris, 2011). Indeed, *Dark Souls* concerns itself wholly with English history and English versions of history. That is, Miranda's father, "was a history professor" (p. 7) and although Rob "wasn't interested in history the way Miranda was" (p. 26), Miranda mostly liked history and the past because "The past had its darkness, its nasty secrets...it was the sinister parts of the past that made it interesting" (p. 9). And yet, as Linda Smith states:

History is about power...It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others. It is because of this relationship with power that we have been excluded, marginalized and 'Othered'." (1999, p. 34)

Linda Smith's words give rise to several questions: How can we breathe mana into our own creative works if we continue to privilege the stories of the historically powerful? Would it have made a difference if the epigraph for *Dark Souls* (Morris, 2011) had its roots within the *kōkōwai* of Papatūānuku rather than chastity's Garden of Eden? Maybe. Maybe not.

It may seem hypocritical to now end this section with a Miley Cyrus song, but it is currently playing on my Spotify and it occurs to me that whenever I hear the chorus to “Slide Away” – “So won’t you slide away / back to the ocean / I’ll go back to my city lights” (Cyrus et. al., 2019) – all I’ve ever heard is, “So watch me slide away / back to the ocean / you go back to the city lights”. With only four words, a contrasting worldview and a return to Oceania is achieved. And while I have no idea what was on Morris’ mind as she wrote *Dark Souls* (Morris, 2011), having spent many years living overseas, for me this novel is an intense reminder of the pull that many iwi migrants feel towards Oceania’s archipelago of atua, iwi, whānau and stories.

### **Searching the skies**

Having already established that Miranda’s spiritual claustrophobia causes her much fear and confusion and reflects a western view of the spirit world as terrifying and abnormal, this deserves further attention. The publisher’s decision to consciously select the following quote from a review of *Dark Souls* and place it on the back of the hardcover version of the novel, is an important indication of this western view of the spirit world: “Entertaining and unique...has broad appeal because it straddles the line between ghost story and realistic fiction” (Morris, 2011). In this quote, the publisher has chosen to endorse the whakaaro that the ‘realistic’ everyday worlds that we live in, and the world of spirits, can never overlap – for indeed ghost stories are mere entertainment and it takes a presumably cursed character such as Miranda to ‘straddle’ these two worlds. Worse though, is the link in this quote is the link to stories about the overlap of the spirit and ‘realistic’ world being “unique”. Assertions like these completely silence entire groups of Indigenous people where life, death and time are fluid, as shown in an anecdote by Anahera Gildea who says:

When my son was born, I gave him the name of one of my ancestors.

An important person in the history of our family. When you do that it’s

like you call on the spirit of that past loved one to reappear in some subtle way through the life of the new carrier of their moniker...Often, in the years following his death, after I had visited his grave, my grandmother would ask me if I'd seen him. She would say 'How is he?' – as if he was still alive and I'd just had a cup of tea with him out on the front porch. I was never sure if she meant my son, or the ancestor who had long since passed. Time had no meaning in that conversation; everything was just a state." (2018, para. 5)

Gildea's words further remind us that for Māori who physically and/or metaphorically stand on our maunga, the veil between life and death is as thin as the air we breath; it is an invisible yet very real aspect to our daily existence.

Like many ideas raised in *Dark Souls*, the dichotomy between iwi and western understandings of life and death is puzzling. The art of karanga, for instance, is an ancient ritual performed by wāhine because they call "the dead to unite with the living" due to their "female reproductive organs...[which] are culturally constructed as a doorway between the worlds" (Murphy, 2013, p. 35). Further to this, like most things in te ao Māori, the answer seems to lie with whakapapa, in other words to the articulation of Māori experience from the beginning of time, to the now-time to the unforeseen future, including cosmological links to the primordial beings, Papatūānuku and Ranginui.

In *Dark Souls* (Morris, 2011), however, the dead are never described in such an everyday manner. Instead, the dead are frighteningly wounded: "a farmer with an ugly wound spread across his chest" (p. 16); "All she wore was a loose, off-white sack of a garment...It was torn across the chest, streaked with dark stains" (p. 31); "His shirt was open so the bloodied slash across the base of his throat was clearly visible" (p. 268). Or they appear forlorn and helpless: "Her hair was a soft brown, dank and dirty and plastered against her head. Her eyes were wide and scared" (p. 45). Or traumatised: "Their hands stretched toward her, shooting cold beams into her body. All the faces looked stricken" (p. 59). Is it therefore no wonder that Miranda wants no part of this world? Of

course, the white-washed genre of angsty teen supernatural fiction probably contributes to this also. That is, before the first page is even opened, the publisher of *Dark Souls* already presents a ruptured view of the spirit world whereby ‘ghost stories’ are divorced from everyday ‘realistic fiction’. Indigenous whakaaro regarding life and death are thus silenced, and taiohi, who make up the target audience of such teen fiction, are taught that Indigenous norms are somehow harmful and miserable. On the issue of silencing, Lani Wendt Young laments:

...we are surrounded every day by stories where entire groups of people are missing. Or are misrepresented. Or included only as a token stereotype. It’s not just about making sure that brown kids get to see themselves on the page. No. It’s about making sure that everybody else gets to see us too. If we are missing from the stories in the classroom, the library, the TV, the movie screen – then do we even exist? (2019, p. 21)

In *Dark Souls* (Morris, 2011), Miranda is only ever exposed to a single, terrifying story of death, and such single stories are dangerous (Adichie, 2009). If a people is shown as “one thing as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become” (Adichie, 2009, para. 22). Likewise, if death is only ever presented to Indigenous youth as dark, horrifying and miserable, then this is what death becomes. Would it have made a difference if the ghosts in *Dark Souls* were spoken about by their descendants with love and included in everyday conversations and rituals? Maybe. Maybe not. That is, after establishing Miranda’s yearning for the ocean in the first two sentences of the prologue, the third sentence immediately warns her against giving in to her desires and straying from the path set for her – much like ‘The Lady’ in *Comus* (Milton, n.d./1634): “All they could see, driving home that night from the party in the farmhouse, was the road ahead, narrow and straight” (Morris 2011, p.1). Miranda is reminded that straying from the western path will only lead to death

and suffering. However, staying on the preordained path or “road ahead” which is “[a]ll they could see” is also claustrophobic and limited “narrow and straight”. Single, colonial stories of death erode Indigenous knowledge and relegate them to society’s frayed edges, and as seen in *Dark Souls*, any attempt to weave such tattered strands back into a strong rope is not only discouraged, but also deadly. As readers, we desperately want to remind Miranda that if she has the courage to venture from the beaten track, then her path, like the ocean, will branch out into infinite possibilities and stories and connections.

This chapter explored a YA novel by a female Māori writer. As a Tūhoe reader whose rich literary legacies are almost wholly wrapped in te reo Māori, and have thus remained invisible to me for most of my life, I gravitated towards the unseen and oft disregarded spaces in Paula Morris’ *Dark Souls* (2011). It is highly unlikely that I would have noticed links to water in the epilogue and prologue had I not first contemplated the story of Haumapuhia in Mihikitekapua’s “He Waiata Aroha” (Ngata & Jones, 1958). Nor is it likely that I would have brought the notion of kaitiakitana to the reading of this novel and thus contemplated the extent to which, “People make places just as much as places make people” (Te Awekotuku & Nikora 2003, p. 11), particularly how the physical environment seemed to affect Miranda, and vice versa. *Dark Souls* is an Indigenous story because my analysis reads it as an Indigenous story, and Indigenous stories gather families together as a community – which is an important aspect to Indigenous identity, along with “other elements and factors having to do with land, culture, and community of Indigenous people” (Ortiz, 2006, p. xi). Māori writers who are engaged with their iwi often create “stories for sustenance and meaning...[that] enable our survival, not just as individuals, but in the words of Samson Occom, “as one family,” as a “whole” (Brooks, in Weaver, Womack & Warrior, 2006, p. 231). Aotearoa does not need brown fortresses that gate-keep Māori writers, but it does require more iwi literary scholars to come forth and consider the gaps in analysis within the current landscape of English language literature. And just as it is possible to

undertake rewarding readings of 21<sup>st</sup> century texts such as *Te Kuharere* (@tekahureremoa, 2019), so too is it possible to approach the analysis of literature created by Māori authors in a variety of ways. In the end, it does not matter that the characters in Paula Morris' *Dark Souls* (2011) do not carry ancestral names, nor that the story is set in Iowa and then in York, nor even that Morris often writes characters without clear links to te ao Māori. Morris' novel does not ask the reader, 'Am I Māori enough for you?' and nor does it have to; the epilogue, prologue, epigraph and book cover contain as much pain and heartache as Mihikitekapua's "He Waiata Aroha". In summary, *Dark Souls* is the story of many Indigenous women today, including myself, who are working through what it means to be Indigenous, who desperately yearn for connections with(in) Oceania, and who feel the weight of Aotearoa's long white clouds yet simultaneously, hopefully, imagine standing as pou for our mokopuna under the clear skies of Te Ranginui-e-tū-nei.

## Chapter 7: He kupu taurangi

Marama Salsano

Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao

Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Kirikiroa

Hōngongoi 2020

Tēnei te koha ko aku kupu taurangi ki ngā kairangahau mātātuhi o anamata,

I am writing this letter to you, future iwi literary scholars and colleagues, as a personal koha from me to you. Thank you for pulling up a chair and listening to my story. This thesis has been a manifesto in the making, of sorts, although I would have unlikely called it that at the beginning of my hīkoi. It is though, the singular piece of writing that I wish I had read prior to enrolling in the thesis component of my Master's degree. I hope that you have found this record, frustrations and all, to be somewhat useful as you embark on your own literary hīkoi. If I were to offer some guidance, it would be threefold: Get on the right waka; Love your thesis; Tell your story, your way.

### **Get on the right waka**

The vantage point from where you stand on your maunga is also your advantage point. It makes how you read literature special and unique; do not let anyone tell you otherwise! If they do, reexamine the waka you are travelling on, the people on your waka, and where in the Pacific you are heading.

For the title of this thesis, my initial thinking was to use a Māori 'lens' to read English language literature and this then shifted to using Tūhoetana to read texts. The key words here are 'lens' and 'using'. Neither Tūhoetana nor Iwitana can be worn and discarded at a whim like a pair of glasses, nor do they exist to be 'used' (colonisation has already had a field day of this), and I wish I

had realised this earlier. Eventually, I learned that it is more important to understand what it means to live as a member of my iwi, and to continue working out what this might look like in all areas of my life. There is no end that I can see to this journey, just a series of points that branch into others and so on, and so on, and so on. As literary scholars, we can learn much about life's joy, dignity, heartaches and pain from our tīpuna and we can carry these stories with us into the literature that we read.

The whānau, friends and scholars who keep you company on your waka should challenge, nourish and laugh with you, a lot. If your supervisor engages with you in frequent kanohi ki kanohi conversations about your mahi (and everything else under the sun), whether online or in person, rest assured that this is how it should be. Be prepared to answer the question, 'What is your thesis about?' at nearly every hui to help you sort out your thinking. It helps. Also be prepared for them to introduce you to Indigenous scholars from around the world, especially via extensive reading lists. Learn from them all and remember that your networks, study groups, wider circle, and bibliography should be:

...thick and fat with the names of Māori and other Indigenous scholars, and if they do not currently brim in this way then it is our job to go out and hunt this work down and bring it into view" (Te Punga Somerville, 2007, p. 31).

Your bibliography should radiate a path for future Indigenous literary scholars and if your supervisor's research suggests otherwise, ask them why that is.

For some of you, the path you have charted for your thesis will be clear from the start, and this is great. For others, like me, your waka may change course, several times, and this is okay too. In hindsight, I wish I had reminded myself more often that sometimes "the best road trips happen when you throw away the map and head out on the highway, as the song would have it, looking for adventure" (Womack, 2009, p. 316). Remember to rest on an island every

once in a while, or a highway hotel if that is your preferred metaphor. Either way, relaxing occasionally will allow you to weather out storms and discern fresh nuances in your mahi, waka and path.

### **Love your thesis**

If you are reading this, you are likely engaged in the broad area of Māori and Indigenous literary studies or a closely related field. Please stay. Experiment, push boundaries, and be generous with your thoughts. Craig Womack reminds us that, “As a critic shaped by my own attempts at fiction and a predisposition toward close readings of others’ creative work, I hope for lively stories, wherever they might appear - in fiction, criticism, the class room, and elsewhere” (2009, p. 75). Write lively critiques! And when you have finished, birth a piece of writing into the world that means something – to you, your whānau, and the future of your chosen field.

While the decisions that I have made during the writing of this thesis are neither ground-breaking nor particularly experimental, some decisions may seem questionable. Ensure that your reasoning aligns with your iwi and own your decisions. When asked about my decision to place a glossary at the beginning rather than the end of my thesis, I pointed to Te Rita Bernadette Papesch’s (2015) glossary in her doctoral thesis on modern Māori identity through Kapa Haka. I also chose to use the phrase ‘English language’ literature throughout this thesis, rather than ‘Anglophone’ literature – which, I believe, carries universalising connotations attached to imperial rule. For similar reasons I chose not to capitalise the word ‘western’. In doing so, I attempt to open up space for Indigenous languages and worldviews to breathe within English language literary texts. On a more personal note, when I questioned whether I should use literature such as Instagram videos in my thesis, my supervisor responded with, “Who decides? Whose thesis is this?” And when I worried about stretching my analysis of @tekahureremoa’s (2019) Instagram post too far, I was reminded in a Google Hangouts chat forum that these

evocative forms of literature are more akin to reading poetry, and it is oftentimes best to evaluate the patterns that have emerged on completion of the chapter (A. Te Punga Somerville, personal communication, May 12, 2020). In other words, if you love it, write it.

Yet, everyone has a different writing process and mine is often to write myself into what I need to say, as evidenced in the theoretical reflections in part two. And while I enjoy new challenges and trialling new ways to write, I have yet to find a singular process that works for me consistently. This too, is normal. However, as long as I am passionate about English language literature, it is likely that I will continue learning from others, working towards writing ‘lively’ critiques (Womack, 2009) and sending the odd cannonball through the white-castle walls of literature (Wendt Young, 2019).

### **Tell your story, your way**

You will have likely realised that the community of Māori literary scholars is tiny, yet the opportunities for future iwi literary scholarship are endless. At the close of this mahi, I continue to think about the ways in which a close analysis of the literary legacies within Te-aitanga-a-Māhaki might have altered how I read the texts in this thesis. Or how an analysis of whānau or hapū stories might be used to inform such a reading. Or the ways in which my understanding will be enriched with continued study of te reo Māori.

With this thesis, it is hoped that more iwi storytellers will tell their stories, more iwi literary scholars will use their iwitana as the basis for their critiques, and more Māori who feel disenfranchised from their tribal communities will use the medium of te reo Pākeha to find their way back to their whakapapa, reo and iwi. The world needs more iwi writers to write our stories, our way. For if we do not, who will? Likewise, as more iwi creative writers emerge, so too does the need for iwi literary scholars who will analyse and critique the stories that are written about, with, around, and oftentimes on behalf of us. Again, if we do not do this, who will?

Remember too that within the English language literary landscape, many Māori scholars occupy multiple spaces, which might include creative writer, māmā, pāpā, teacher, hoa, ringatoi, ringawera and so on. This is normal. You are normal. And your normal will enhance the interpretations you make, and the texts you select for analysis.

At present, the iwi literary landscape in Aotearoa appears to be dominated by wāhine. Indeed, in this thesis alone you may have already begun tracing the chronological whakapapa of wāhine who provide powerful critiques of our world: from the historical recounts of Mihikitekapua in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the book reviews of J.C. Sturm in the 1950s, the ongoing critical contributions by Dr Alice Te Punga Somerville, and the literary theses of emerging scholars such as Kirsty Dunn (2015). However, there is room at the kitchen table for many, many more stories. Circling back to the beginning of this thesis, I end with my favourite quote about the value and importance of stories from the novel *Potiki* by Patricia Grace:

And although the stories all had different voices, and came from different times and places and understandings, though some were shown, enacted or written rather than told, each one was like a puzzle piece which tongued or grooved neatly to another. And this train of stories defined our lives, curving out from points on the spiral in ever-widening circles from which neither beginnings nor endings could be defined. (1986, p. 41)

In the context of literary studies, there is much we can learn from Patricia Grace's words. At our literary table, there are many voices who have yet to share their stories, and there are many ways in which literary scholarship might tongue and groove into the spaces next to our tīpuna, and indeed into the spaces we create for each other. There are no beginnings and no endings, but the more we write and critique, and the more circling points on the spiral we

make, the richer our iwi literary traditions will be for ngā iwi katoa. As such, this conclusion is not an ending but a satisfying point on the spiral.

Nō reira, kua mutu taku kōrero i kōnei. E ngā maunga, e ngā awa, e ngā waka, huri noa ki ngā kokonga o te whare, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

Marama

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