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History, Gender and Tradition in the Māori Nation: Female Leaders in  
Witi Ihimaera's *The Matriarch*, *The Whale Rider* and *The Parihaka  
Woman*

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## Abstract

This research is underpinned by the question of how Witi Ihimaera portrays the survival of Māori nationhood through his female protagonists in *The Matriarch*, *The Whale Rider* and *The Parihaka Woman*. Specifically this thesis aims to investigate how the texts question and reconsider ethnocentric Western notions of history, while exploring a Māori point of view that interrogates and refigures that history through recourse to myth; it also examines how the modes of transmission of Indigenous mythologies in these works intercept both racial politics and the gender protocols framing the interpretation of Indigenous bodies. I shall argue that Ihimaera's historical revisionism seeks to refigure Māoridom's links to tradition and restore a symbolic Māori sovereignty through an idea of history that can encompass both Pākehā and Māori.

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### HE MIHI

Tuia te rangi e tū iho nei

Tuia te papa e takoto ake nei

Tuia te hunga tangata

Ka rongō te pō

Ka rongō te ao

Tuia te muka tangata

I takea mai i Hawaiki nui

I Hawaiki roa, i Hawaiki pāmamao i te hono-i-wairua

Ki te Whai Ao, ki Te Ao Mārama Tihei Mauriora!

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Ko tenei te mihi atu ki a koutou katoa o te ao

Ko tenei te mihi aroha ki a koutou

*For my tamariki*

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## He Kupu Whakataki: Introduction

Witi Ihimaera's first major publication *Pounamu, Pounamu*, a book of short stories, made its mark on the New Zealand literary scene in 1972 at a time when Māori, in opposition to government assimilationist politics, advocated for the differences between Māori and Pākehā to be acknowledged. The focus of Ihimaera's writing, which is to provide a unique Māori perspective of Māori experience and Māori imagination appeared to correspond with Pākehā re-conceptions of Māori during the 1970s. Melissa Kennedy tells us that amidst increasing Māori dissent in politics and social policy, Māori protest erupted into the public domain, with key moments including the "1975 Land March, the Treaty of Waitangi Act, which ratified the Treaty as the nation's founding document, increasingly vocal protests by activist groups such as Nga Tamatoa, and land occupations at Bastion Point and Raglan". These events catalyzed the Māori demand for sovereignty and its concomitant cultural claim for recognition, and became identified with what has become known as the Māori Renaissance (Kennedy 21). For Ihimaera, one of the pre-eminent Māori writers of the 1970s, the emerging politics of Māori sovereignty and the renaissance of cultural expression were inseparable.

In the seventies Ihimaera was writing within a national context of Māori and Pākehā relations that privileged Pākehā discourse, and produced work such as *Tangi, Whanau* and *Pounamu Pounamu*. These works of fiction tended to focus on aesthetic aspects and had no real political engagement with Pākehā or with being Māori in New Zealand. Then, Ihimaera became motivated by the politics of the 1970s and 1980s, which was shifting New Zealand into another paradigm, one in which Māori were seeking a bicultural framework. Out of these times came the

titles like *The New Net Goes Fishing*, *The Matriarch*, *The Whale Rider*, and edited works like *Into the World of Light. The Dream Swimmer*, written in 1997, belonged to another transformation of New Zealand society, in which Māori were then saying that they wished to have Tino Rangatiratanga or Māori sovereignty. Therefore, Ihimaera's productions from the 1990s are informed by a stronger sense of his political preoccupations, and these texts include *The Dream Swimmer*, *The Uncle's Story*, and what Ihimaera considers his strongest work in terms of providing a political platform, and that is the play *Woman Far Walking* (Fresno Calleja 200).

The politics of sovereignty and the renaissance of cultural expression to which Ihimaera subscribes take specific shape through the idea of Māori nationhood, pursued through challenges to Western historicisation, through the recovery of traditional premises, and their innovative application to Māori gender protocols in order to recuperate Māori leadership. Fresno Calleja states that Ihimaera would like to think his work has created “a kind of indigenous origin,” which places Māori literature, like all Indigenous literatures, as having been born “out of conflict, out of confrontation, out of sovereignty, out of the need to create one's own discourse” (Fresno Calleja 202). This research is underpinned by the question of how Witi Ihimaera portrays the survival of Māori nationhood through his female protagonists in *The Matriarch*, *The Whale Rider* and *The Parihaka Woman*. Specifically this paper aims to investigate how the texts question and reconsider the ethnocentric Western notions of history, while exploring a Māori point of view that interrogates and refigures that history through recourse to myth; it also examines how the modes of transmission of indigenous mythologies in these works intercept both racial politics and the gender protocols framing the interpre-

tation of indigenous bodies. I shall argue that Ihimaera's historical revisionism seeks to refigure Māoridom's links to tradition and restore a symbolic Māori sovereignty through an idea of history that can encompass both Pākehā and Māori.

The politics of being a minority race within a predominantly settler-nation is something that Ihimaera refuses to be silent about. He maintains an accusatory position in these days, which are considered to be days of reconciliation, "Whereas I don't care. I'd much rather be a person who is critical even if in practice my life does not seem to be a critique at all of Pakeha life and the Western condition. It is because I believe that if you have a voice like that then you should use it. It is just my condition" (cited in Fresno Calleja 204). Thus, Ihimaera employs the language of Māori protest to describe his ambitions for Māori people and Māori literature. His overarching motivation and ambition are to assure recognition and empowerment for Māori. This echoes the thoughts of Keri Te Aho-Lawson when she says, "The dynamics of cultural identities as fluid phenomena transformed and shaped by histories and political and cultural movements are foundational to healing, motivating and inspiring the struggle for freedom" (185). In the context of this thesis, the "struggle for freedom" alludes to Ihimaera's ideas of sovereignty for Māori as the right of self-determining people to protect, preserve, and develop their cultures, which extends to a "freedom" to decide what becomes of Māori cultural output.

This investigation is thereby concerned, in part, with how Ihimaera deals with the idea of cultural identity in relation to the formulation of a national history and the material from which it may be constructed. As Charles Royal intimates,

the formulation of a positive life practice or whakahaere based on Tikanga Māori, or first principles, are foundational for Māori identities, well-being and continuation (“Why methodology?” 1). Māori writers incorporate creation myths as a means of reclaiming memories from the oral tradition of storytelling. Thus myth is an influential factor in the construction of identity. Therefore Ihimaera’s texts, set as they are in an Indigenous context, convey beliefs and customs which may encourage knowledge and confidence in one’s Māori heritage, sufficient to interrogate Western notions of history that have severed Māori from their roots. It is not just knowledge of heritage but how it impacts upon the interpretation of temporality/history.

The colonisation of a country has its roots embedded deep in historical events and their interpretations, and is considered to be the most influential process that continues to impact Indigenous populations today. This has resulted in devastating and lasting effects that each generation has had to endure as “the legacy of destructive colonial histories rips through kinship” (Lawson-Te Aho 183). This fracture or “wound” from our traumatic history is felt inter-generationally, and with each generation the wound becomes more difficult to recognize, much as Royal intimates, so that for the Māori people, there had arisen a need to decolonise and liberate themselves from these adverse impacts, and assume a position of self-determination across spiritual, social, political and economic spheres.

One such way of decolonising is by enlarging the sense of the past by recourse to cultural memory, and in particular to the myths that the Indigenous people inhabit in the writing of their own histories. While dominant scholarship

might push aside methods such as traditional storytelling as not rigorous enough, “the experiences of those who live out decolonisation are integral to the integrity of the movement, grounding it to the material realities of the people whose lives bear the scars of colonialism and the long histories of resistance and triumph” (Sium and Ritskes III). The logical conclusion from this is that many of the insurgent Indigenous movements around the globe have been sustained by poets, musicians, and artists.

In deciphering our truths for ourselves, we refer to our histories that give us the frame from which to analogize our lives, which include existing as Māori within a settler nation such as Aotearoa New Zealand. When discussing our identity as Māori within our own culture, within our country, and globally, our framework is our corpus of cosmological stories. Colonisation has impacted Māori across many spheres, so that Royal discusses the fragmentation that results in terms of an inability to position oneself within one’s own life due to the lack of a “framework”:

The history of the colonisation of Māori in the 19th and 20th centuries contains numerous examples of what happens when a people and individual members of a community experience a disintegration of a ‘framework’ for living—when older systems of authority are shattered, when the intergenerational transfer of knowledge breaks down, when pathways to fulfillment are obscured. What results are the numerous aspects of dysfunctionality which arise when an individual and their families and communities do not possess a conscious and positive ‘life practice’ or whakahaere. The transition from older certainties to modern

fragmentation leaves a haphazard mixture of experience, half expressions and unexamined assumptions. (“Why methodology?” 1)

The fracture or fragmentation that Māori have experienced has left many of them in a liminal cultural space, defined in relationship to the position of Pākehā.

One of the benefits of revisiting history is to create positive reconstructions of traumatic histories to initiate healing and to further self-determination. According to Halbwachs, cultural memory creates and maintains a structure, even when present reality is destroying it or hollowing it out (206; qtd. in Sium and Ritskes IV). Having evolved organically, a Māori worldview is necessarily holistic in nature, its conception of identity spanning the spirit, the intellect and the corporeal. Consequently, Ihimaera’s depiction of the impact of colonisation as it “destroys” the spirit of the Māori people is interwoven with the stories of violence against their physical persons and land. By spiralling back to the source of the wound, that is, by re-presenting acts of violence against Māori spirit, body and land, in events such as the New Zealand land wars of the nineteenth century, Ihimaera also responds with the recuperation of mythic and historical heroes. He expands this recuperation with the construction of fictive heroines, who are the subject of this investigation, in texts such as *The Matriarch*, *The Whale Rider* and *The Parihaka Woman*.

Iseke explores the institution of eldership in the process of storytelling. In her own words, “Indigenous Elders are the educators, storytellers, historians, language keepers, and healers of our communities” (36; qtd. in Sium & Ritskes V). Ihimaera would also appear to fulfil this role, both in his position as a storyteller and as an academic. He claims to have been inspired to write in order to give a Māori perspective to New Zealand’s national literary imaginary by drawing atten-

tion to a unique, specifically Māori worldview. His kaupapa or purpose was to aid in the identity formation of young Māori:

My first priority is to the young Māori, the ones who have suffered most with the erosion of the Māori map, the ones who are Māori by colour but who have no emotional identity as Māori. (“Why I Write” 118)

In order to remain accessible to Māori who have lost contact with their Indigenous origins, Ihimaera accepts that the vehicle must be the English language. Jane Wilkinson tells us that Ihimaera sees the English language as strong enough, despite being a foreign language, to contain a Māori worldview and to transmit Māori concepts (99; qtd in Kennedy 16).

Indigenous stories as exemplars of oral history also carry Indigenous philosophies, epistemologies, and theories embedded within their narratives. In the face of colonial extermination, the articulation of Indigenous stories, epistemologies, and cultural groundings is inherently resistant and threatening. Somerville (2010) shows how poetry and stories are the continuing fire that keeps Indigenous being alive and dynamic; stories are negotiable and ever being transformed; stories are carried by their tellers and communities, who themselves are bearers and reminders of Indigenous permanence. Graveline extends this, “The story is a living thing, an organic process, a way of life” (66; qtd. in Sium and Ritskes VI). In this way, Indigenous peoples resist colonial erasure and violence, living out the stories of the ancestors in ways that sustain, resist, and create anew.

Ihimaera’s work illustrates and exemplifies the nationalist preoccupations of much Māori fiction. Most notably, his blending of politics and culture, of drawing on one to support the other, are foundational to nation building, in which the

imaginary plays a major role in establishing and consolidating the conception of cultural difference on which the demand for sovereignty or independence is based (Kennedy 25). Māori sovereignty asserts the existence of fundamental, irrefutable cultural differences between Pākehā and Māori New Zealanders, which necessitates different ways of managing Māori and Pākehā interests in politics and society (Kennedy 26-27).

Similar assertions found in decolonisation movements have been made worldwide by other Indigenous peoples during the latter half of the twentieth century. An understanding of the Māori sovereignty and Renaissance movements within a common nationalist and decolonizing urge invites a reading of Ihimaera's early fiction as based on a conception of culture (and story) as a "common text". "Renaissance", in this respect, refers to a continuity with a mythic past and rupture with an undesirable present. This reading of Ihimaera locates his voice among those of many other Indigenous peoples who use the medium of English to communicate, as a means of reaching those younger generations who have suffered from the rupture that colonisation has caused, and which has separated them from their native languages. Ihimaera himself was also dissociated from his Māori language through a Pākehā education through Gisborne High School and the Mormon Church College on the outskirts of Hamilton.

Constructing the national imaginary is always a recuperative gesture, motivated by a desire to reclaim cultural taonga<sup>1</sup> before they are lost to the ravages of time. This dynamic is apparent in many of Ihimaera's stories, including *The Whale Rider*, where Koro Apirana's search for a new male leader takes on

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<sup>1</sup> A "taonga" in Māori culture is a precious thing, whether tangible or intangible.

desperate tones. In these stories, the generation gap becomes symbolic of the very real break with tradition caused by nineteenth and twentieth-century colonisation. Many of Ihimaera's narrators are young males, whose purpose, as it first appears, is to be unbiased, and then necessarily biased and subjective, and to look back and to look forward, and presumably to effect change – in essence the transformational impulse that Ihimaera himself attempts to bring about through his work. As Melissa Kennedy posits, this character epitomizes Ihimaera's conception of the modern Māori hero, as one capable of “striding both worlds”. A strong connection to Te Ao Māori (the Māori world), or Māori roots, combined with success in the Pākehā urban world, give Māori both the necessary cultural foundation and the knowledge to demand Māori sovereignty (Kennedy 43).

As for the female hero, she also must display strong connections to her Māori roots, as well as being endowed with the warrior spirit to overcome barriers within and without Māoridom; she must display love for her people, the capacity for sacrifice, and the ability to effect transformation for future generations. These female characters are based on Ihimaera's family members, mythic and historical leaders, and strong women at the forefront of New Zealand political movements such as Princess Te Puea Herangi, Donna Awatere, Dame Whina Cooper and Eva Rickard. These female heroes are intended to be iconic. In regard to his own works, Ihimaera says that the women in his books don't all fall in love with men, because they are not motivated by love for men, but by love for their iwi (people), and that was the great love affair of their lives, and that it has also been the great love affair of his life – for his iwi (Fresno Calleja 206). Ihimaera explains, “So I would say that most of the women in my work are not real in that sense [...]. This invulnerability is probably a major flaw. It is humanity but from another level,

not at the level of romance but at the level [of] politics and aroha ki te iwi” (Fresno Calleja 207). So while these characters are able to accept individual people sufficiently to bring a sense of humanity into their lives, and to love them at an intimate level, their great love is for the people. This sort of female heroism is important to Ihimaera’s idea of the modernization of the Māori nation. Yet the “modern” for Ihimaera also rests on traditional premises, achieved through the parallels he establishes between female heroes and their mythic and historical counterparts.

Ihimaera’s recuperation of history begins with foundation myths, which include heroic events and heroic ancestors as well as historical ones. Melissa Kennedy explains that in nation building myth and history work together to validate the nation’s right to be there. She informs us that the authority of history’s factualness, and the organic authenticity attributed to national myths, play important parts in fortifying a *shared and common past accepted by all* (44; emphasis added). History and myth are tools to explain the present, to record and validate social precedents, which in turn legitimate and reinforce present claims for independence. She continues that myth and history combine to locate a distant time and place from which the nation can trace its lineage up to the present day. As such, it is involved with uncovering origins which must be unique and original to the nation (Kennedy 44). However, Ihimaera is concerned with the recognition of the Māori nation, which begins from a traditional premise that empowers a concept of Māori-centric thinking. This supports his argument for the distinction between Māori and Pākehā to be acknowledged, while promoting the idea of a “dual cultural heritage,” which is the legacy that he beckons all New Zealanders to embrace, or, at least, acknowledge. Ihimaera does not argue for a “one people

one nation” approach, but he gestures towards a celebration of the two cultures living in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

As an adult student I have read many stories of Patricia Grace, another pre-eminent Māori storyteller; the power of her writing in her description of the disjuncture between Māori and Pākehā beliefs often reduced me to tears. The strength of women and the enslavement of women are powerfully depicted. I was therefore interested, as a comparative exercise, in how Witi Ihimaera, one of our first male Māori writers to be published, portrayed Maori women, and in the intersections he draws among gender, race and tradition. I remembered fondly his collection of short stories *Pounamu Pounamu*, especially the story “A Game of Cards”, from my time at primary school, and expected his treatment of women to be as empowering as Grace’s portrayals.

*The Matriarch* (1986), as Ihimaera’s first response following the self-imposed embargo on his writing, was too alluring to pass up. The complexity of the spiralling timeline and interweaving of multiple voices necessitated many, many readings. The blurring of fiction and fact resists easy mastery, though the final message of the novel points to a recuperation of the past, the repair of relationships between the genders, and spiralling towards a future for the people in the nation of Aotearoa New Zealand, based on a common heritage.

*The Parihaka Woman* (2011) was Ihimaera’s most recent production when I began this investigation in 2012; it gave blood and bone to my scant knowledge of the land wars that culminated in the invasion of Parihaka. Ihimaera’s contribution to the story of Parihaka, a tragedy which has been increasingly spoken, written, and sung about, and which has featured in paintings, rescues the subordinated voice of the women in the aftermath of the invasion, and, importantly,

depicts the travails of the exiled and imprisoned men. It is ultimately a story of survival and resilience, achieved through the heroic acts of the female protagonist, Erenora.

The novella *The Whale Rider* was released in 1987, and was partly written to satisfy Ihimaera's young daughter's request for a story with a female hero. Renewed interest in the novella resulted following the release of director Niki Caro's internationally successful film *Whale Rider* in 2002, for which Ihimaera was an Associate Producer. This investigation claims that, in comparison to the novella, Caro's film drives a wedge between the myth of the whale rider and its sacred function to provide guidance for the Māori people, and its extended intention to empower women, favouring this empowerment at the expense of the sacred function.

Taking an overview of them, all four texts (the three literary works and the film) give credibility to female leaders and their heroism in one way or another. *The Matriarch* and *The Parihaka Woman* are concerned with refiguring history and claiming female inheritance through the harnessing of mythic resources and the rescue of lost perspectives. Tradition and its renewal feature as one of the major themes in *The Matriarch* and *The Whale Rider*, and to a lesser degree in *The Parihaka Woman*. Cultural memory as a remedy against the national "amnesia" about colonial violence is most meticulously explicated in *The Parihaka Woman* through Ihimaera's treatment of history in his rendition of the interpretation of Parihaka and its philosophy of passive resistance.

Ihimaera is interested in how history has been constructed, and for what purpose, and this is a prominent theme of many of his productions. There is an empowering force that accompanies the presentation of one's own history, so

Ihimaera refers to oral sources that include myth (pūrakau), oriori, waiata, haka, moteatea, whakapapa, family records, and other written accounts, to reconstruct history that subverts the main official discourse. The point of mythic reclamation is to cement one's cultural heritage as the centre, and feel the force of continual sustenance and creative power, so that moving within a Pākehā world one can supplement this centre with resources from other cultures, including those from the Pākehā culture.

Female leaders are different from male leaders. They are depicted as embodying an ethic of care, which is protective of the well-being of the collective and towards which they assume a nurturing function. Artemis's personal desires are pushed aside in light of her political purposes, so that her self-sacrifice is a secondary concern to the work she must undertake for the people, a notion also exercised by Kahu and Erenora. Gender-appointed roles are suspended or modified in times of challenge for the people, so that Erenora's display of masculine traits is recognized and appreciated by the male leaders and personally by her husband. In the fictional representations of community, often the emphasis on care for the collective as a gendered function is made more forceful through the contrasting representations of the men who are privileged and therefore not invested enough in the cause to drive change that results in more equitable relationships for women. On the other hand, the "visionary man" who is so often a feature of Ihimaera's texts projects himself beyond polarised gender binaries; he advocates the restoration of complementary roles between men and women. The Māori national ethos he envisions (or the national imaginary he constructs) is one in which female strength is acknowledged and reinstated within the modern his-

torical continuum as one strand of the recuperation of tradition, which occurs through the evocation of the spirits of strong female mythic prototypes.

A realist novel cannot “tell” everything that is culturally necessary that the mythic imagination can. Accordingly, Ihimaera’s fiction represents an intricate amalgam of various modes of storytelling, and this thesis will explore how they contribute towards his cultural and political purposes.

## The Methodology of Telling Our Stories

Looking to the Māori imaginary to describe the fiction in terms of a Māori aesthetic or simply “telling our stories” contributes to the project of decolonisation. Thus, for example, Ihimaera explains that the linear Western story is replaced by a circular, multiple or oral-inflected structure construed as natural to an oral storytelling culture (Wilkinson 106). This emphasis on a unique literary perspective argues that Māori fiction cannot be contained by Western genre categories and stylistic classifications, but is instead something different, internally consistent and fulfilling (Kennedy 3). Sovereignty involves promoting cultural agency on national and international stages according to Māori priorities, but for Ihimaera, his political motivations go hand in hand with his desire to tell “our stories” for “our people”.

The underpinning methodology for this thesis relies on Māori philosophy and principles and local theoretical positioning related to being Māori, most appropriately described as *Kaupapa Māori* by Graham H. Smith. *Kaupapa Māori* also provides a conceptual process and analytical tool by which Māori subject matter is framed and understood. In this investigation, *Kaupapa Māori* supports an analysis of the three novels and the film that takes into account the dynamic inter-

play of histories, cultural identities and traumatic experiences as contributing to an evolution of consciousness. The acquisition of Māori consciousness concerning how specific histories have impacted on contemporary issues facing the tribe brings with it the realisation that their history has been purposively shaped through the conscious decision-making practices of their ancestors (Lawson-Te Aho 183).

Māori methodology is a form of resistance in itself. I have tried to use the beliefs and Māori worldview as the place from which to construct this investigation, so Ihimaera's texts are read alongside the articulations of Māori kaumatua, commentators, academics and theorists, such as Reverend Māori Marsden, Charles Royal, Ranginui Walker and Dr Rose Pere, and more recently Kathie Irwin, Leonie Pihama, Haunani-Kay Trask, Linda Smith, Ani Mikaere and Rachel Buchanan. There is certainly value to supplementing this project with ideas from other theoretical bases. It is our way to look outside our centre at what is going on in the world, and to add on, as accessories to our own agendas, the tools of other races and religions. Cross-cultural interaction and influence with Pākehā, European and other postcolonial cultures and literatures are supplementary to Māori-centric ideas. The point of view remains Māori, the kaupapa or purpose is still Māori centred, but it has always been a Māori worldview to supplement these with tools from other cultures to achieve our own purposes.

Indigenous stories place Indigenous peoples at the center of our research and its consequences. This is something denied by so-called 'objectivity'. In fact Indigenous peoples have come to be suspicious of all claims to objectivity, since, for the indigene, objectivity has always been directed against him. By telling our stories we are at the same time disrupting dominant notions of intellectual rigour

and legitimacy, while also redefining scholarship as a process that begins with the self (Sium and Ritskes IV). It is difficult therefore to not use personal pronouns as a Māori woman writing and sharing things about our culture.

In referring to a Māori aesthetic in regard to Ihimaera's work, his positioning of the diverse temporal epistemologies within *The Matriarch's* narrative framework offers an important supplement to debates surrounding Indigenous historiography. Elizabeth DeLoughrey's reading of Patricia Grace's novel *Potiki* makes observations that may be applied to Ihimaera's work, such as the fact that he also draws upon diverse narratives from great spatio-temporal distances and localizes them in the current cultural space of Aotearoa (DeLoughrey 61). DeLoughrey's reading explicates the significance of spiral time as a concept that touches on both the sacred time of whakapapa and ancestors, and the contemporary linear time of political activism. Spiral time is consistent with ecological interests because it is connected to the time sequences of geology, life cycles, cosmology and ecology, which concern themselves with long-term observations, predictions and calculations. As a locus of nationalist discourses, novels often negotiate the representation of various aspects of historical, narrative, and personal time. They also foreground diversity, as Bakhtin argues, by activating a number of narratives and discourses representing the nation state that are not easily homogenisable, and interrupt dominant linear narratives by presenting multiple story lines while foregrounding the cyclical status of mythical accounts of origin and destiny (cited in Wood 16).

Ihimaera's fiction highlights Māori mythology as a primary source of history. He is also heavily indebted to artistic traditions from other sources such as opera, Anglo-Saxon bardic poetry, English Romantic lyricism and postmodern

pastiche. These influences supplement the mode of Māori storytelling, rhetoric, allegory and metaphor, resulting in differing levels of complexity, intended for a diverse audience from young children to adults. The resistant vein is very natural to Ihimaera's work, but this tension seems to pose problems for critics who refer to standards and canons which simply do not apply to Ihimaera's style of writing.

The themes in Ihimaera's three books and the film are wide-ranging and counter-hegemonic, so post-colonial studies are useful for supporting their analysis. Bill Ashcroft argues that one of the major features of postcolonial discourse has been its ability to analyse a vast array of cultural developments: expressions of anti-colonial nationalism; questions of language and appropriation; transformations of literary genre; the growing mobility of formerly colonised populations. This is an expanding field whose boundaries are ever changing and challenged, where critics are the ones attempting to impose limits to boundaries, although as Ashcroft argues, "the field refuses to be contained" (xvi). The driving energy is concerned with justice and liberation and it is not amenable to boundaries as "it explores [...] the various forms of cultural engagement of colonised peoples with imperial dominance in its modes and manifestations" (Ashcroft xvi).

Post-colonial analysis has always intersected with studies of race, gender, and class, but these intersections have generated an ever increasing range of specific interests, overlapping and cohabiting within the field (Ashcroft xvii). There has always been a range of activities 'living with' each other in post-colonial studies, and it is for this reason that areas like historical scholarship, cultural anthropology, and literary theory have been useful for reading Ihimaera. There has been a rather more focused but argumentative range of approaches to the questions of post-colonial engagement, centering on issues such as resistance and

decolonisation on the one hand, and hybridity and transformation, on the other. D’Cruz and Ross explicate the space occupied by the visionary character, and this discussion is supplemented by a modification of Homi K. Bhabha’s idea of the third space.

In an article that discusses Homi K. Bhabha’s “hybridity” and the “third space” in postcolonial discourse, Paul Meredith attempts to show what these two concepts may mean for a project that seeks to redesign the laws and institutions for a bicultural Aotearoa/New Zealand (1). Bhabha has developed his concept of hybridity to describe the construction of culture and identity within conditions of colonial antagonism and inequity. Papastergiadis says that, for Bhabha, hybridity is the process by which the colonial governing authority undertakes to translate the identity of the colonised (the Other) within a singular universal framework, but then fails in that enterprise, producing instead something familiar but yet also new (cited in Meredith 2). Bhabha contends that a new hybrid identity or subject-position emerges from the interweaving of elements of the coloniser and colonised challenging the validity and authenticity of any essentialist cultural identity. In postcolonial discourse, the notion that any culture or identity is pure or essential is disputable. For Bhabha it is the indeterminate spaces, the in-between subject-positions, that are lauded as the locale for the disruption and displacement of hegemonic colonial narratives of cultural structures and practices. Finally, Bhabha posits hybridity as such as a form of liminal or in-between space, where the “cutting edge of translation and negotiation” discussed in his book *Cultures in Between* occurs, and which he terms the “third space” (Meredith 2).

Thus, the third space is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a productive, and not merely reflective, space that engenders new possibilities. It is an

“interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative” space of new forms of cultural meaning and production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorisations of culture and identity. According to Bhabha, this hybrid third space is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no “primordial unity or fixity” (cited in Meredith 3)

The concept of the third space is useful for analysing Ihimaera’s texts, especially in relation to the “third place of enunciation” that Tamatea occupies in *The Matriarch*, “mobilised under the resurgent power of a Māori matriarchy” (D’Cruz and Ross 314), which enables him to subvert the dualistic categories of colonial binary thinking and oppositional positioning. Despite the exposure of the third space to contradictions and ambiguities, it provides a spatial politics of inclusion rather than exclusion that “initiates new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation” (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 1). Meredith argues that the role of the concepts of “hybridity” and the “third space” have considerable implications for any future reinventing of Aotearoa/New Zealand and any reconstructed sense of nationhood and identity because they offer the possibility of a cultural politics that avoids a “politics of polarity”, which Bhabha discusses in *The Location of Culture*, between Māori and Pākehā (3). While Ihimaera argues for the acknowledgement of difference between Māori and Pākehā, he encircles Pākehā within an idea of Māori nationhood. Pākehā become the “site of competing inscriptions” that are transformed in their mutating relationship with Māori (D’Cruz and Ross 302). As Meredith summarises, the concepts of hybridity and the third space are centred on the adaptation and transformation of culture and identity predicated within a new inclusive postcolonial Aotearoa New Zealand community that seeks to reconcile and overcome the embeddedness of

past antagonisms (3). Thus, D’Cruz and Ross point to Ihimaera’s article “Why I Write” to show through his texts, especially in *The Matriarch*, how “Ihimaera positions the ‘dual cultural heritage’ derived from both Pākehā and Māori as the potential legacy for ‘all New Zealanders’” (117; qtd. in D’Cruz and Ross 302).

Gender has long been an important aspect of post-colonial studies. Women, like other colonised subjects, have been relegated to the position of “Other”, as well as “colonised” by various forms of patriarchal domination. Women are thus doubly colonised. Mana wahine and post-colonial discourses both seek to reinstate and empower the marginalized, and both have undergone similar trajectories, moving away from strategies of simple reversal to those of transformation. Some issues remain prominent and the problems of women’s marginalisation go deep into the culture of many post-colonial societies (Ashcroft xxviii). Accordingly, this thesis explores how Ihimaera’s novels subvert the production of strict gender boundaries, and how they recuperate traditional complementary roles for the genders through the portrayal of female heroes with fluid identities. In contrast to many approaches to Ihimaera, which see his novels as encompassing a simple struggle against patriarchy, this discussion argues that Ihimaera looks to disrupt gender binaries, through offering combinations of gendered attributes. In this respect, this thesis is heavily indebted to many of the ideas, including the concepts of a cross-gendered inheritance and the transcendence of the binary order that pits Māori against Pākehā, from the chapter entitled “Cultural Deracination and Isolation: Witi Ihimaera, Keri Hulme, and Alan Duff” in Doreen D’Cruz and John C. Ross’s book *The Lonely and the Alone: The Poetics of Isolation in New Zealand Fiction*.

Mana wahine, which is distinct from Western feminism, cannot help but reiterate the complementary nature of men and women in traditional Māori society, which suffered at the hands of colonisation. Subsequently, the biases of Western patriarchy have been internalized by Māori Christian males. Huia Tomlins Jahnke writes of mana wahine as a movement restoring a balanced view of gender in Māori life. Custom "did not perceive relations between men and women in terms of gendered hierarchies of power that privileged men over women" (27; qtd. in Wood 109). Cosmology, genealogy, myths, language usage, customary sayings, practices and comparative Indigenous perspectives are all referenced to support the argument that Māori culture, at least in theory, advocated complementary and interdependent roles for men and women (Wood 109).

Time and gender are most frequently linked to nation building and come into play in retellings of mythological narratives or pūrakau, foregrounding Māori ways of inhabiting time. Though Ihimaera's novels do mention European modes of measurement, such as Roman and Christian calendars for example, in reciting the dates in historical novels such as *The Matriarch* and *The Parihaka Woman*, he also makes use of time, place, and their connection as referenced through Māori signifiers of season, cosmology, geography and bodily cycles. The sections of the novella *The Whale Rider* are named after the four seasons, in an attempt to rejoin nature with the human story. Such a view of the practical value of geographical and cosmological knowledge is compatible with beliefs in Māori gods, demigods and goddesses associated with local practices whose rites may be observed. The novels can be understood as a location of encounter, read as a site of numerous time frames, where European theories like Kristeva's about modernity, eternity and women's time meet Māori concepts of time, place, gender, and identity.

Without reducing these various sets of ideas to direct parallels, some connections can be understood (Wood 116).

*The Matriarch* begins with a Prologue evoking Te Kore, the source of all things, and a place of unlimited potential for being. Te Kore, like other Māori time/space concepts, such as Matariki (the Māori New Year) and wheiao (a transitional or liminal state), precede any European contact and can never be contained by Western theory. Briar Wood incorporates ideas from Toril Moi when she argues that given the significance of spiral time in Mātauranga Māori as indicative of both past and future, these concepts touch on but exceed Kristeva's concepts of connections between the repetitions of cyclical time and the eternity of monumental time. In Māori ways of signifying, these Māori temporal concepts may be represented in geographical features and landmarks and include the physical manifestation of stars and planets, as particularly significant in representations of female subjectivity (187; qtd. in Wood 117-118).

As he does through the structure of *The Matriarch*, Ihimaera engages with temporal aspects within *The Whale Rider* as well. Ihimaera quotes this whakatauki in the Introduction to Volume 5 of the *Te Ao Marama* series: “Te torino haere whakamua, whakamuri. At the same time as the spiral is going forward, it is returning” (16). Elsewhere, Ihimaera has referred to the double spiral which allows you “to go back into history and then come out again. Back from personal into political [. . . and] out again” (16). The spiral is a trope founded on Māori ways of perceiving the world and our place in it. One of the distinctive aspects of the spiral formation is the seamless transition it achieves between past and present, and between temporal and spatial. In *The Whale Rider*, this movement between the two narratives, the human dimension and the cetacean episodes,

heightens this sense of travelling between two worlds. The bull whale also transitions seamlessly from present time to past memories in his nostalgic musings about his master. Koro Apirana also refers to the past for the answers to teaching the present generation in preparation for the future. In this manner, constructing the Māori past and present is characterized by use of the Māori language and the marae as setting so that “the pito that is established will always be a means of bringing Maori back to their roots” (Ihimaera et al., *Te Ao Mārama* 16-17).

## The Voyage In: Binding the Spiritual and the Intellectual

This thesis, concerned as it is with the interlocking representations of history, gender and tradition in the Māori nation in selected novels by Ihimaera, will consider how he refigures and deploys each of these concepts. Through recourse to the role of myth in history-making, he repositions Māori within the history of Aotearoa as the first people of the land, and thus diminishes the 150 years of official history to a modest band within a continuum stretching from mythic time. But received history also undergoes revision through the female historical legacies left by protagonists such as Artemis and Erenora to their descendants, and by the role of the imagination in Ihimaera’s historicisation of that legacy. This thesis will also argue that Ihimaera makes an effort to reconstruct and dignify Māori cultural memory as an epistemological resource for the cultural recognition of the Māori Indigenous world and as a vital part of the legacy of Māori.

Suffering from a crisis of identity as a Māori man living in a settler-dominated society, Tamatea, the narrator of *The Matriarch*, finds his identity in relation to his ancestors’ tradition, which gives him historical, mythical and even

divine authority to proceed with Māori protest. His grandmother, the matriarch of the title, and her reconstitution of the wananga tradition, provide modes of parallel alternative knowledge to Western epistemic dominance. Tamatea inherits the history his grandmother bestows on him, which includes the construction of a hero in the figure of Te Kooti, and ostensibly continues this tradition through his writing of the novel itself, and through his taking his place within genealogical succession as his grandmother's heir. He thus destabilises a purely patrilineal line of lineage. The modification of history involves the positioning of Pākehā within a bicultural heritage, which also extends to the idea of positioning the Pākehā tradition of debate within the Māori legacy of the kōrero tradition. However, the literate world of the Pākehā leaves its imprint on *The Matriarch* through the transformations from orality to literacy, that are embodied through the novel (D'Cruz and Ross 322).

This investigation will also show that Tamatea transcends the polarisation of the protocols of inheritance by moving beyond opposition to his patriarchal legacy and achieving a synthesis of genealogies in himself, made possible through the symbolic refiguration of his grandfather Ihaka's genealogy as itself braided by legacies from both genders (D'Cruz and Ross 321). I will argue that the synthesis that braids together and makes possible the dual-gendered inheritance in *The Matriarch* is reiterated subsequently in *The Whale Rider* through the figure of Kahu. She reclaims her female inheritance through Nanny Flowers from Muriwai and Mihi Kotukutuku, as well as the inheritance from her male ancestor Paikea through Koro Apirana (4).

*The Whale Rider* links the problematic relationship of gender and tradition to a broader context that involves post-colonial and eco-critical investigation.

Chapter 2 asserts that through the two narrative threads – one cetacean and mythic and the other human and modern – the novel attempts to repair the separation between human and animal, between land and sea, and between modern and mythic perspectives. The question of sovereignty is explored through the restitching of Pacific bonds in the narrator Rawiri’s visits to Sydney and Papua New Guinea.

The role of historical revisionism is explored through *The Parihaka Woman* in Chapter 3, in order to enlarge the perspectives from which history may be accessed. Ihimaera rescues the doubly “Other-ed” voice of Māori women in history-making. Through the trans-generational memory transmitted by their stories, the survival and continuance of Indigenous epistemic traditions are assured. For communities under siege by three-fold threats of colonialism, patriarchy and capitalist modernity, storytelling becomes a site and tool for survival. Ihimaera resurrects a female eye-witness in the character of Erenora because it is only the women who were left behind who can tell this particular story of Parihaka after its devastation. The archival material is not only ostensibly written by a female ancestor who provides an eye-witness history that is filtered through her male descendant, the narrator, but it contains also the ancestor’s own story of resistance, privation, quest and resurrection, which offers a compelling account of Māori resilience and survival.

At its core, much of this investigation is about storytelling in some form, but that word “story” is far too simple. Stories, in Indigenous epistemologies, are disruptive, sustaining, knowledge-producing, and theory-in-action. Stories are decolonisation theory in its most natural form (Sium and Ritskes I). In summary, this thesis is a testament to what it means to value the personal as political and to

value Indigenous communities as the loci of decolonisation theory. In this way stories succeed in disrupting Western constructions of ‘theory’ through the intervention of the record of Indigenous ways of knowing and interacting. Ihimaera’s contributions thereby bring shadowy notions of decolonisation back to the immediate, relational, and spiritual underpinnings of Indigenous thought. Decolonisation demands this specificity, demands this personal and relational understanding, and demands the richness and creative vitality that storytelling brings.

## Chapter 1: Refiguring History in *The Matriarch*

Cultural politics in Aotearoa New Zealand have followed an assimilationist and then integrationist agenda rooted in historical colonial relations. The primary project of these agendas has been the acculturation of Māori into Western social practices and structures (Walker, “Ka Whawhai” 243; Meredith 1). After the Second World War, and during the 1950s and 1960s, a major migration of Māori into the cities, known as the “urban migration” began to take place. The government response was to intensify efforts to turn Māori into British New Zealanders through the suppression of the Māori language in schools and workplaces, and through housing policy that encouraged “pepper potting” – dispersing the Māori population to prevent residential concentrations. The Hunn Report released in 1960 recommended that New Zealand move beyond “assimilation” to “integration”, whereby New Zealanders would become one people through mixing the two cultures. The reality was that the belief in Pākehā superiority meant that, as a minority, Māori and their beliefs paled into invisibility.

The resurgence of Māori nationalism, including the Māori Renaissance<sup>2</sup> of the 1970s, saw a revival of cultural values and practices. This period also witnessed the resurgence of political will so that the collective voice of Māori

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<sup>2</sup> The renaissance happened across a number of spheres, including the revival of te reo Māori with the founding of the first kōhanga reo in 1982 and the passing of the Māori Language Act in 1987; the land-focused Māori protest movement, with the Bastion Point occupation in 1977-1978; the Springbok tour which led to international connection between Indigenous peoples; and the landmark Te Maori art exhibition in which Māori exhibited Māori art internationally for the first time. The culmination has arguably been the Treaty of Waitangi claims and settlements starting in 1992, which have addressed the erosion of the Māori economic base (Royal, “Maori”).

demanding the return of political sovereignty was mirrored in the efforts of young Māori writers.

What therefore emerged was a cultural politics in Aotearoa New Zealand concentrated upon contestations between Māori (the colonised) and Pākehā (the coloniser). These dichotomous categories found increased currency resulting in adversarial polarities premised on exclusion and essentialised identities (Meredith 1). The continued use of this bifurcated structure offered little to a conceptualisation of Māori/Pākehā relationships in which there were multiple subject-positions and aspirations.

It was against this dichotomy that Ihimaera turned his eye towards Māori-Pākehā relations and the difficulties that existed. He conceded that his writing of the early 1970s presented “tender, unabashedly lyrical evocations of a world that once was” in a manner that was essentially depoliticized. His novel of 1986, *The Matriarch*, was a response to the political environment based on binaries and advocated a rethinking about culture and identity from a them-us dualism to a more inclusionary body politic, which acknowledged and negotiated not only difference but also affinity (“Māori Life and Literature” 45). In fact, Ihimaera explains:

My job is to reinforce the structures of power and meaning for the Māori body politic. But this is not an either or situation in New Zealand. It doesn't lock us into monocultural structures, one for Māori and one for Pākehā. So at the same time that Māori are promoting sovereignty, they are also negotiating space within Pākehā structures of power. I consider myself to be a Māori seeking sovereignty of both person and nation.

Oppression is a historical condition from which Māori have now managed

to emerge, although, of course, the primary structures of power are still Pākehā. (“This Magnificent Accident” 363-64)

Two important points are raised. What does sovereignty mean for Māori? For some, this would mean that New Zealanders could exist in one nation but as two peoples. Māori could speak their own language, pursue their own traditions, have their own educational institutions such as *kōhanga reo* (preschool language nests), *kura kaupapa Māori* (schools using Māori language) and *wānanga* (universities), provide their own social services, and control their own businesses. The financial settlements which flowed from the Waitangi Tribunal recommendations began to make this possible (Te Ara 12). The second point is how does Ihimaera contribute to sovereignty to show that Māori have indeed emerged from oppression? This liberation manifests itself by reclaiming and validating Māori knowledge.

Despite the prevailing notion that Māori have emerged from oppression, Māori as the Indigenous people are still a minority in this multi-cultural country. Māori resistance therefore finds expression in political involvement, in courts, or in government. Māori writers also see literature as a site of resistance that draws attention to Māori issues in both a creative and real sense (Majid 1). As a result, the question of identity in its acculturation and construction, and subsequently, preservation comes to the fore in other domains as well as in fiction.

Poia Rewi talks about the importance of being “rooted” in one’s culture, “People without identity are like a tree with no roots to establish it-self firmly. It is constantly at the disposal of the elements” (qtd. in Somerville 57). Foundational to the healing discourse in these narratives is the implication of the importance of restoring cultural identities, values and worldviews. The mechanism for this occurs “in the development of consciousness in current generations about what it

means to be Māori, the obligations of kinship and how knowledge and consciousness about kinship and legacies become meaningful” (Lawson-Te Aho 185). Nadia Majid claims that the question of identity is a necessary construct evolving from the interaction of past, present and expectations for the future (2). She further observes, “The state of the search for a national identity suggests the importance of a literary quest for Māori identity in particular and New Zealand identity in general” (2). Many Māori writers incorporate creation myths, reconstructing and recreating memories from the oral tradition of storytelling. Thus myth is an influential factor in the construction of identity.

Therefore, myth incorporated within Māori literature is one way of contributing to native culture by bringing some of its key elements to the readership. Texts set in an Indigenous context convey beliefs and customs which may encourage knowledge and confidence in one’s heritage (Majid 4). The symbol of brokenness permeates many Māori who struggle in a non-space between cultures. Māori writers seize this third space, and make it their own, and find within it a unique identity. It is in this third space that a new culture develops, its roots in the Māori world with branches in the Pākehā world, but which grows into something unique. Indigenous knowledges, therefore, subvert and re-create what the Western academy puts forward as valid ways of knowing. In this way, stories as Indigenous knowledge work to not only regenerate Indigenous traditions and knowledge production, but also work against the colonial epistemic frame to subvert and recreate possibilities and spaces for resistance.

These spaces and the melange of voices that rise from them challenge the colonial epistemic frame, which is propped up by Eurocentric claims to ‘objectivity’, or, as Sium and Ritskes say, “the emptying of our bodies and experiences

from our scholarship” (III). In the colonial order of things, Indigenous stories are always threatening. They’re threatening because they position the teller outside the realm of ‘objective’ commentary, and inside one of subjective action. Tuck and Yang continue that Indigenous stories affirm that the subjectivity of Indigenous peoples is both politically and intellectually valid. Indigenous peoples who tell their creation stories disrupt the settler mythology and their arrival stories of *terra nullius* (cited in Sium and Ritskes IV).

Tamatea occupies such a space as the putative author of *The Matriarch* in the writing of a metafictional historiography that advocates an approach that avoids the perpetuation of antagonistic binaries, and develops inclusionary patterns of cultural exchange. In this way Ihimaera displays his philosophies and ideologies pertaining to the cultural politics of Māori and Pākehā relations. The preoccupations of the narrator Tamatea can be regarded as extensions of the preoccupations of the author himself, establishing Tamatea as Ihimaera’s alter ego.

In the analysis of this text, this interpretation considers the framework or proto-text for the novel as the Māori cosmogony stories. The tropes of continuous creativity, the journey to knowledge and the restoration of balance are all crucial themes that come out of the creation stories and are prevalent in *The Matriarch*, and to varying degrees in *The Whale Rider* and *The Parihaka Woman*. Ihimaera implicitly contends that any action for the future must be premised on Māoritanga and tradition.

Particularly evident in the idea that knowledge production is personal is the fact that storytelling is agentic and participatory. Here, the role of the storyteller is central to the exercise of agency and renewal. Sium and Ritskes discuss

the role of Indigenous elders in the transmission of knowledge. In Indigenous traditions around the world, storytellers are sacred knowledge keepers, they are the elders and medicine people, and they shape communities through the spoken and written word. Stories are not only agentic and individual but they are communal sharings that bind members of communities together spiritually and relationally (V). The word ‘agentic’ may be interpreted as conveying a perspective that views people as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting and self-regulating, rather than as reactive organisms shaped by environmental forces. Ihimaera’s texts, when viewed as “agentic and participatory” in their strategy to achieve disruption (since there is a strand of resistance) and fuel action (in the form of protest and reconciliation for the younger generation), make a space for those caught betwixt cultures, in a bicultural Aotearoa New Zealand.

Ihimaera’s vision for the Māori nation is in the synthesis of opposites, illustrated by Tamatea’s synthesis of the Māori oral tradition and the literate tradition of Pākehā contained within the pages of the book. The narrator spirals out to the Void (Te Kore), beyond time and space, to a rebirth which involves the reawakening of his Māori consciousness. This entails a return to Aotearoa from Italy, to his Uncle, to discover why the matriarch had made him into a likeness of her. Thus begins his identity quest, not just through a reconstruction of his time with his grandmother, but further back through an understanding of the contributions of their common ancestors, Te Kooti and Wi Pere, and beyond that to the creation of the primal parents. In this recuperation Tamatea attempts to gain a better understanding of himself and his destiny. It also informs his thoughts for the future of his people. Through the imaginative reconstruction of his time with the matriarch, documented records, and the reclamation of his mythic past, he is

able to foresee a future for his people, which avoids various binaries that prevent resolution or reconciliation. In this alternative space, the visionary Tamatea foresees an inclusionary future for the Māori nation that embraces Pākehā.

The idea that there are real and equally important alternatives is unfamiliar to many Pākehā, more used as they are to an ethics in which good must drive out evil rather than to a set of values which allows for the co-existence of polar opposites. If we were to venture into the metaphysics that accompanies Māori values, we would find that such pairs of equal and opposite forces are prominent: light and dark, life and death, male and female, tapu and noa. When things go wrong the trouble is often attributed to a lack of balance between one or more of these pairs of forces. Thus the remedy is always a matter of restoring balance. So it is a common Māori belief that synthesis may result from “thesis” and “antithesis”. It is natural for Ihimaera to see oppositional forces, and to understand the presence of both, and from there to seek balance. This is played out in the gender conflict illustrated by the 1949 hui in Wellington, and in the intersections between the oral kōrero tradition with the literate legacy of Pākehā.

This investigation will argue that the creation narratives are the philosophical framework for *The Matriarch*. The genealogy depicted in the Prologue symbolises the passage from ignorance (Te Pō) to knowledge (Te Ao Marama). There is a distinct pathway to follow in order to receive knowledge and understanding, which leads to the final stage that is distinguished by a dramatic, often traumatic, event. In the cosmogony myths this stage is marked by the separation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku. In the novel, Tamatea’s “dramatic and traumatic” event is his dream vision of a near death at the hands of the Venetians, *saved* by the intervention of his ancestress, Hine Te Ariki, and the pleadings of his mother,

Tiana. Tamatea's rebirth through his journey to Te Pō during the Venice dream at the end of the book (452) heralds at the same time a return to Te Ao Marama, the metaphorical symbol of the inward experience of understanding (Royal, "Mōtea-tea and the Transmission of History" 59). Tamatea is set on his path of resolution through the symbolism of the dream, where the burgeoning understanding of the restoration of balance between the genders and the two cultures is allowed to begin its growth. In these circlings, from the end of the novel in the Venice dream in 1973 to its beginning in windswept Wellington, New Zealand around 1974, the story spirals forwards and backwards in its constant retelling of the stories within stories that parallel the constant creative force that is prevalent in the world of Māori. Thus the rebirth of Tamatea is fueled by his visionary status which allows him to travel to and from Te Kore, not anchored by linear time.

The visionary nature of Tamatea's role as leader of his people is critical to the location of the third space that will act as a contribution to the wider on-going project of a counter-hegemonic cultural politics. Such politics seek to redefine the relationship between Māori and Pākehā in postcolonial Aotearoa New Zealand. Tamatea's journey to knowledge, to the world of light, is thus a cultural return that is not coterminous with a sentimental valorisation of the past, but rather "a spiralling towards a future that refigures the past" (D'Cruz and Ross 357). The successes and failures of his ancestors at once highlight the effects of cultural fragmentation, and trigger his own action towards a future that avoids the colonial and gender hierarchies, and reaches towards cultural synthesis.

*The Matriarch* is Ihimaera's attempt to work through the feelings of identity crisis assailing someone who straddles the world of two cultures that are pitted in a hierarchical relationship. I will argue that there are two things at the

heart of this novel – the identity quest of Tamatea and as its corollary the elevation of Artemis to mythic status. The identity quest of Tamatea involves him in the recuperation of Māori history through various reconciliatory measures, such as the working through and suspension of the history-myth binary, the reconciliation of gender polarities (through the mythologisation of Artemis), and the conjuncture of past, present and future through the innovation of tradition.

*The Matriarch* may well have been the product of Ihimaera's ten-year absence from writing, so that the ideas had time to develop and mature in response to the calls from Māori nationalists for sovereignty. The literary culmination of this gestation is an amalgam of genres and a multiplicity of voices that, like the "saprophytic vines" of the first page, resist mastery through their evolving and twisting transformations. This work of metafictional historiography is intensely self-reflexive, while also incorporating in its scope historical personages and events. Ihimaera's novel mythologises historical events to promote a Māori view of history and an Indigenous form of historiography. Ihimaera's project in *The Matriarch* for the Māori reclamation of history includes a reconceptualization of the difference that has previously placed Māori within the subaltern position within Pākehā hegemony. This is achieved through the dissolution of the binary between history and myth. The repossessing of history by Māori is essential to being able to envision a future for the Māori nation.

The historical accounts function as guides for the present that give the characters a sense of their heritage and provide the tools for their actions. The novel consists of a number of stories told by Tamatea Mahana and his grandmother Artemis, the matriarch of the Mahana family, that lead to stories within stories, some of which are expanded by eyewitness accounts, speeches and other reflec-

tions. A large part of the novel is dedicated to the matriarch teaching young Tamatea about his history. These sections consist of memories that describe his education, ancestors, and his privileged status in the tribe as her successor. While these memories form one storyline, there are others that take place in the present of the novel and depict the struggles within the family that make it necessary for Tamatea to prove his status as the rightful heir.

The novel is comprised of five “Acts”, and these include operatic epigraphs which underscore its performative venture. Each Act contributes to the author’s strategic goals, which include the reclamation of history, healing the present through the gender reconciliation enacted in the text, and envisioning the future for the Māori nation through reconciliatory means. Act One is called “Wai-tuhi”, and in his traversing of his beloved land through the remembrance of tribal boundaries, the narrator accesses the memories of his whānau (family and extended family) and tribe (iwi). Act Two, “The Song of Te Kooti,” is the author’s narrative evocation of the charismatic leader, ancestor and Ringatū founder, Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki. Ihimaera interrogates the Pākehā accounts of Te Kooti’s reprisal at Matawhero through positioning his account with the contrasting evocation of liberator-myths as told by the matriarch. This Act is equalised with Act Four, “The Statesman,” whose attention is on another ancestral figure, Wi Pere Halbert, who was a Member of Parliament for Eastern Māori, and who also crusaded for the return of land and sovereignty for Māori. Act Three, “The Time of the Spider,” is pivotal to the novel’s gender reconciliation, which

culminates in Act Five, “Succession,” with the privileging of the cross gendered genealogy that is affirmed through Tamatea (D’Cruz and Ross 313).<sup>3</sup>

## Binding Myth and History

We say that the past is not something that is behind us. The past is before us, a long unbroken line of ancestors, to whom we are accountable. We say that it is like walking backwards into the future (Ihimaera, “And Then There’s Us: A Māori Perspective” 200)

Dealing with the present and trying to create a future requires an evaluation of the past. Thus, by walking backwards into the future, Māori step into the future with their eyes on the past, keeping their ancestors in sight and honouring their achievements. The kaupapa of the philosophy of looking back is not to reject western influences, but to keep alive the cultural memory, although severely eroded by linear time, and this remains a central concern to the idea of Māori identity.

Doreen D’Cruz and John C. Ross discuss the colonial discourse that constructs the Māori indigene as proceeding from the idea of hegemonic power, advanced by Edward Said in his book, *Orientalism*. Here “Orientalism” is a collective notion that identifies and positions all races who are non-Europeans as subordinate. Said argues that what gave European culture its hegemonic drive was the belief in its comparative superiority (qtd. in D’Cruz and Ross 298). The

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<sup>3</sup> For an avant-garde investigation into the use of the trope of “isolation” and cultural deracination in regards to Ihimaera’s *The Matriarch*, refer to Doreen D’Cruz and John C. Ross’s book *The Lonely and the Alone: The Poetics of Isolation in New Zealand Fiction*. I am indebted to D’Cruz and Ross’s Chapter 6, in particular, for the innovative views expressed in relation to *The Matriarch*, on which my own work is based.

idea of superiority resulted in a “sovereign Western consciousness” (Said 134) that was supported by a “system of knowledge about the Orient” (Said 133), which was galvanized from Eurocentric premises. As D’Cruz and Ross continue, “Orientalism was an appropriative venture, the epistemological accompaniment to European territorial invasion” (299). A similar awareness of Western epistemic dominance is present in the New Zealand context in Witi Ihimaera’s questioning of the production of history as knowledge, when he asks “What is history and who owns it?” (“A Māori Perspective” 53).

In answering his own question, Ihimaera removes the bifurcation between myth and history, and he reclaims history in his writing of a historiographic novel. In this act of re-writing, Ihimaera reaffirms the storytelling ethos of oral history as a dynamic endeavour, and unsettles the exclusive ownership of history exercised by Pākehā as the subject-producers. In relation to *The Matriarch* Ihimaera points out,

At various stages of the novel I have engaged in a dialogue with the ‘received’ historical facts and perceptions [...]. I have exercised my rights to reflect and put on the table the views of the Māori involved in events.

Thus Te Kooti Arikirangi is presented from the point of view of the Ringatu people whom he led to freedom: as a leader rather than as a killer who massacred innocents in a non-existent church at Matawhero. Thus, also I deal with oral history, whakapapa and family records and folklore as well as with written history to subvert the main historic discourse. (“A Māori Perspective” 53)

Not only does Ihimaera allude to his use of the tradition of kōrero, the oral tradition as an equal and valid form of history as empirical history, but he also makes

the point that his own ideologies inform his recapitulation of history. The idea of ideology is also investigated within this chapter in relation to official accounts of history. Ihimaera's alternative to the epistemological dominance exercised by Pākehā is the alternative transmission of knowledge from the matriarch to the young Tamatea under the aegis of the wananga<sup>4</sup> tradition.

Thus the novel rewrites over 150 years of official history since the arrival of the Pākehā and illustrates an alternative to conventional historiography. The mythologisation of the matriarch, and of other figures such as Te Kooti, is a means for reclaiming Māori identity and a Māori-centred notion of history and nationhood. Despite the rational explanations given for the strange events in the novel, the spiritual and mythic explanations remain equally valid. By removing the bifurcation between myth and history, Ihimaera presents a Māori-based view of what constitutes history and displaces the hegemonic status of what counts as official history. The equal status of myth and history further supports Ihimaera's philosophy of a nation in which multiple subject-positions exist, by embracing elements of other cultures that have shaped Aotearoa New Zealand. This equal status Ihimaera affirms also questions what counts as knowledge for Pākehā.

In his discussion of the Māori relationship to history, Ihimaera confirms these ideas when he states that:

From a Māori perspective the two questions most at issue are: What is history and who owns it? On the first question, the Māori definition of history would be one that included myth. On the second, the Māori view

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<sup>4</sup> "Whare wananga" in simple terms means "house of learning", but in traditional times, this referred to higher and sacred learning, which included esoteric learning.

would be that nobody owns history or should be able to copyright it. (“A Māori Perspective” 53)

His strategy is to present history that is more aligned with traditional Māori values that will, firstly, aid in the positive identity formation for the younger Māori generation, and, secondly, remind Pākehā of their dual heritage. In his expansion of historical consciousness, Ihimaera takes the reader far back beyond the time of Cook’s landing, far beyond this foundational myth for New Zealand. This cannot be a foundational myth for Māori because it is a carrier of violence to Māori passed down through documented history. Ihimaera displaces the dominance of the western idea of empirical history through his recuperation of a mythic past that allows what D’Cruz and Ross identify as the re-birth of a historical consciousness rooted in Māori tikanga, customs and traditions (300). Not only that, but Ihimaera also positions Pākehā in New Zealand along the Māori historical continuum. Ihimaera’s ability to reclaim New Zealand history for Māori from a subjective point of view, which incorporates the presence of Pākehā, has the effect of expanding the space of what constitutes history as well as confirming the status of history as communal property (300).

In *The Matriarch* Māori identity can be seen in the many references to myths, in the importance of genealogy, and in the application of a Māori worldview. Given that Māori culture had been primarily oral, the loss of cultural memory by the rupture caused by colonisation has hampered the continuation of the Māori belief system in present-day Aotearoa. The role and importance of memory, therefore, in continuing an oral culture cannot be underestimated. The operation of memory in Ihimaera’s fiction is twofold: firstly, the stories of the past are mythic in nature, recounting events that are already known; and second-

ly, in accordance with Hayden White's argument, "[t]he events are made into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of [the story elements] and the highlighting of others..." (1539), thereby shaping memory by writing to a kaupapa or purpose. Thus identities are created deriving from a particular collage of memories that may have to be reinterpreted to suit a purpose (Majid 6). Historiography, Ihimaera suggests, is not devoid of a purpose or ideology.

In addition, the idea of history bereft of a mythical element is somewhat naive. This goes to the heart of the boundaries of traditional history. Ihimaera's argument that seeks to extinguish the divide between myth and history is given further credibility by Hayden White's discussion in his essay "The Historical Text as Literary Artefact". In White's view, there is always a degree of fictiveness in every historical discourse, including the use of point of view, "in short, all the techniques of a novel or play" (1539). In Ihimaera's re-presentation of history, he also brings attention to the colonial myths that have made it into the 'official' history books. In *Tropics of Discourse*, White regards "historiography as a form of fiction-making" (122), and continues that, "[h]istory does not [...] stand over against myth as its cognitive antithesis [...]" (127). Thus in expanding the boundaries of history to include myth, the novelist displaces the epistemological dominance of empirical history through the reclamation of a "consciousness of a Māori past, intimated through orally transmitted mythology, to feature also as history" (D'Cruz and Ross 300). Further, a Māori consciousness may be resurrected by narrating stories and histories in new and more constructive ways:

You turn the established narrative on its head, seeing through,  
resisting, and subverting its assumptions. Again, it's not enough to

denounce the culture's old account—you must provide new narratives embodying alternative potentials [...]. (Anzaldúa 561–62)

This supports Ihimaera's reconciliatory notion that combines myth and history into a new synthesis. Within *The Matriarch* these take the form of new narratives of the past told by the narrator from both orally transmitted stories and written records. In this way Ihimaera treats Māori cosmogony as a valid form of knowledge in his construction of new, more empowering, narratives.

But first the narrator Tamatea must overcome his own identity crisis arising from the metaphorical enslavement of Māori predicated on the basis of cultural difference. In the Prologue to the novel, the matriarch's words are given agency, and she herself is given stature, through the reporting of her by her grandson as scribe. Likewise, in placing the child Tamatea genealogically within his racial and tribal history through the recitation of the creation stories, the matriarch's words have the “generative power of a rebirthing” (D'Cruz and Ross 314). Her words amount to his election to a destiny in which he must “carry to a new figuration of Aotearoa the symbolic and cultural wealth of his own *waka* within the Māori nation” (D'Cruz and Ross 315; emphasis in original). His writing, the purpose of his return from Venice, does not need validation from the colonisers. Instead he gets his authority from the claim that “Indigenous epistemologies and truths rest on Indigenous peoples and lands as carriers and sustainers of knowledge production and do not need legitimation from colonial states” (Sium and Ritskes II). Tamatea, like Tamatea ariki nui, “must assemble, and carry in a vessel of his own devising, all the cultural capital upon which his authority depends” (D'Cruz and Ross 317).

Indigenous authority is manifested in Act 2, “The Song of Te Kooti”, where there are two people telling history: the matriarch and Tamatea tell the story of Te Kooti, using oral and written modes, respectively. Tamatea is commenting and interpreting from documentary records, thereby confronting and contesting Pākehā history. The matriarch is presenting the story of Te Kooti in a different way; her performance shows how the historical can be mythologised. Thus Ihimaera gives two modes of history making. Tamatea includes the dates and times, and records a very violent account in minute narrative detail, which gives supposed support to empirical history. On the other hand, the matriarch’s story of Te Kooti is put within a traditional mythic framework positioning him as the liberator of the people. Unlike Tamatea’s mode of history making, the matriarch does not use precise dates so that her role is that of a transmitter of the greatness of the man and of his heroism. The Biblical parallels cast Te Kooti along a divinely sanctioned mission like Moses. Thus the story of the prophet is subsumed under liberator mythologies.

The matriarch’s mythologisation of Te Kooti becomes part of the new historiography with its use of Māori elements. By conflating the myth of Te Kooti with that of Moses, the Māori characters are “granted a new status that exceeds that of fiction or history – he or she attains mythic status” (qtd. in Majid 181). Te Kooti had been a legendary figure in his own right, before his inclusion in Ihimaera’s story, so that the mythical stories surrounding Te Kooti are part of the history that feed into the novel (Majid 181). Ihimaera uses fiction in this way to keep the myth alive.

Ihimaera uses Tamatea in this instance as his alter-ego to “reflect and put on the table the [Māori] views” in particular that the deaths at Matawhero were

justified as a reasonable response to the Māori deaths at Ngatapa. The narrator's point of view is that this was a war, not an unprovoked massacre by Te Kooti. Thus Tamatea's renaming of key events, such as calling the "Matawhero Massacre" the "Matawhero Retaliation", illustrates another disjunction that separates Māori and Pākehā versions of history, arising from the discrepant value placed on Pākehā and Māori lives:

When [John Lawrence] refers to the 'Matawhero massacre' what he is really referring to is Te Kooti Rikirangi's retaliation against a whole history of Pākehā abuse of Māori people, custom and land. He is referring to an attack made by Te Kooti Rikirangi in return for his false arrest and imprisonment on the Chatham Islands – Wharekauri. He is referring to an act of utu [...]. The Matawhero incident is surely no more horrifying than the atrocities committed on the Māori people in the name of civilisation. Of course, the difference is that *white* people were killed at Matawhero. The blood of a white man, woman or child, spilt by natives, is called an atrocity. The blood of a native man, woman or child, spilt by a white man, is called an act of self-defence. (71; emphasis in original)

Thus the ideologies of the historian permeate the story told. What makes it into the "history books" depends on the interests of those in power and the agenda of the day. Those in power thereby determine what counts as knowledge.

The matriarch is a transmitter of myth, but she also has the aura of a mythological character. The matriarch's own life is an amalgam of fact and fiction that resembles Te Kooti's legendary status. The stories told about the matriarch are often contradictory, adding to the mythic dimension that surrounds her life. The unfathomable events that frame her are attributable to the feminine

power she wields, which comes from her status as a Wahine Ariki, deemed to have been bestowed by the atua (gods), or also may be explained away rationally, depending on which witness is recounting the story. As a descendant of Te Kooti, she incorporates the legendary, mythic status he has, whereas her inheritance from another ancestor, Wi Pere, represents the rational side of her character.

And in revealing to the boy his inheritance, the matriarch reveals the diamond of Te Kooti, which Julia Calvert asserts is the symbol of land, knowledge and solidarity among Māori (24), and which adds to *The Matriarch's* collection of mythic references, while at the same time incorporating Artemis and Tamatea in the on-going myth of Te Kooti. The matriarch “uncovered the diamond of Te Kooti” (293) during Tamatea’s tutelage. In sealing the boy to the purpose to fight for the land, the matriarch shows him not only the physical dimensions of the land, but behind this she lifts the portcullis to a timelessness where there is no separation between the present and the past. The matriarch speaks again, and the child is able to see into the cellular structure of the physical landscape that surrounds him, which mirrors the gleaming cellular structure of his own body. The matriarch’s final push of the child out into the universe allows him to see past the final barrier into the faces of the gods and “[he] was not blinded” (294; emphasis in original). As a symbol of the Māori relationship with the land, the inclusion of the diamond in the novel secures Tamatea’s purpose in regard to the reclamation and preservation of the land, in order to protect the Māori way of life. Tamatea’s inheritance of the diamond likewise places on him the political obligation to do so, which has marked both the lives of Wi Pere and Te Kooti, as has the burden of the birth signs. Like his tupuna, Tamatea will also fight for the land, situating himself in the long political protest against land sei-

zure. He does this through his production of *The Matriarch* as the putative author, through the various oral and written enactments that the novel encases.

As Majid contends, Tamatea finds his identity in relation to his ancestors' tradition, which gives him historical, mythical and even divine authority to proceed with Māori protest. Such authority challenges Western hegemonic supremacy and historiography. Mythologisation, therefore, becomes a valid means by which Māori history is told and remembered. At the same time, myth is empowering and drives Māori action by encouraging people to look into the past for justification of their deeds in the present. While the early novels such as *Tangi*, *Whanau* and *Pounamu Pounamu* encourage looking to the past as a return to Māori roots, the protagonist in *The Matriarch* utilises the knowledge of the past in order to be active in political protest. The novel confronts the Pākehā with his past transgressions, and in doing so, the novel is a form of protest. Despite the violent accounts within the text the novel purports to be one of the "works of peace and not of war", which is why the matriarch teaches Tamatea "how to hate and then how to forgive" (171). Hating is a response to the wrongs committed against Māori, but Tamatea eludes the oppositional modalities by acknowledging the trauma of colonisation, and re-positioning both Māori and Pākehā in his narrative. Resistance does not need to result in bloodshed, except on the page, as Ihimaera proposes.

It can mean a reassertion of one's roots. In Ramaroa Pa, using the tradition of wananga to transmit knowledge, the matriarch tells the child, Tamatea, of the creation of the universe from Te Kore (the Void), and of the twelve changes of the night, Te Po, culminating in Te Ao Marama, the World of Light. She tells him about the Māori gods, including the primal parents Papatūānuku and Ranginui and

the setting apart of the roles of male and female (3). She recounts the story of Hine nui te Po, the Goddess of Death, and of the mythical hero Maui, who represents change and risk. And importantly the matriarch tells of how Māori were the first people to arrive in Aotearoa when Kupe made his discovery around 700 AD. Tribal histories speak about the arrival of seven canoes from Hawaiki with people who would settle the land in Aotearoa. In reciting the child's whakapapa (genealogy) to him, the matriarch is placing him within his racial and tribal history. She is showing his descent lines from the gods, before detailing the inheritance he receives through her. The matriarch tells him of his own canoe, the sacred Takitimu, which brought the cargo of gods from Hawaiki and from which his people, Te Aitanga A Mahaki and Rongowhakaata, are descended. And arguably the most important part is when the matriarch tells the child of his connection to the land:

E mokopuna, we ruled here for over a thousand years. This was your land. This was our life. It is your life and land now. It has been yours even before you took your first breath. It came to you beyond the time of men and gods to the very beginning of Night and the Void. A thousand years and further back, mokopuna. We had eternity in us.

Then came the Pākehā. (6)

Tamatea recognises that they had eternity in them because of their relationship to the land as descendants of Papatūānuku. With the coming of the Pākehā, land was turned from a locale with a spiritual and genealogical connection for Māori to an economic resource to be stolen, confiscated and sold, contributing to part of the fracture or wound. The matriarch's quotation above is essentially a literary re-drafting of one of Ihimaera's reasons for writing:

Ask who discovered New Zealand and you will be told Abel Tasman. But the answer, as given by Māori history, is Kupe. And that, quite simply, is why I began to write. To make New Zealanders aware of their ‘other’ Māori heritage. (“Why I Write” 117).

In this way Ihimaera is positioning Pākehā within a history that is written from a Māori perspective, which includes going back to Māori cosmogony, and insisting upon the value of oral history.

Thus the matriarch’s mythologisation and her reconstitution of the wananga provide a parallel alternative knowledge to Western epistemic dominance and contribute to the formation of Tamatea both as the matriarch’s heir and as Ihimaera’s alter-ego. What the matriarch performs in her resistance to the government, and to patriarchy within some sections of Māoridom, Tamatea performs and enacts on the verbal plane. Through her oral re-telling, the lessons the grandmother imparts to her grandchild place him within his whakapapa (genealogical) heritage, though the narrator focuses on two stellar historical ancestors in particular. The narrator-author chooses them to contrast the two ways Māori have tried to resist the Pākehā and the polarity in their approaches to dealing with injustice. While Te Kooti responds to violence with more violence, Wi Pere operates within the structures of power in Parliament using peaceful, albeit dogged, means to try to regain Māori land. As the chapter “The Statesman” progresses, Wi Pere’s speeches become more urgent and fevered, but he does not succeed in his endeavours for the people. This knowledge has helped form the identity of the matriarch, and forms part of the inheritance Tamatea receives from her, so that she urges him to fight against the Pākehā as her ancestors had done. In the warrior vein, the matriarch urges him to use every resource available to

him, whether rational or supernatural, to fend off any threats to his mana. However, while showing fidelity to the matriarch may have been his intention, Tamatea's aim becomes one of inclusion and reconciliation instead of more war, as the matriarch proposes.

While the historical personages such as Te Kooti, Wi Pere, and even his beloved grandmother, show Tamatea the way forward through their successes, their failures are also an important source for his identity formation. Just as importantly, through Tamatea's harnessing of his mythic ancestry, he has recourse to the examples of mythic heroes and gods whose deeds also inform his present and future actions. In this way the role of history for Māori is to inform the present and the future, so that the history we are told holds currency in contemporary times.

## Restoring the Gender Balance

The matriarch's reclamation of the wananga in vestigial form provides a parallel alternative knowledge to Western hegemony, thereby rescuing the doubly 'othered' voice of Māori and women in history-making. In general, through the trans-generational memory transmitted by their stories, Elders or Kaumatua, ensure the survival and continuance of Indigenous epistemic traditions. Iseke explores the institution of eldership in the process of storytelling. In her own words, "Indigenous Elders are the educators, storytellers, historians, language keepers, and healers of our communities" (36).

The Māori creation stories are played out symbolically most significantly in the gender conflict that is sparked by the presence of the matriarch at the 1949

Wellington meeting between the chiefs and the government, in the Act “The Time of the Spider”. Through an earlier episode, Tamatea, through the voice of the matriarch, relays the creation stories, which position women as noa (profane) and men as tapu (sacred). The matriarch and her people are attending the Wellington hui to challenge the government about land issues but the encounter becomes less about this and more about the binary discourse generated by gender difference and female genealogical representation. The narrator makes it clear that Māori cannot be treated as a homogenous group, and that tikanga or practices differ between the various iwi (tribes). Thus Tamatea emphasises that though the matriarch is a chieftainess and had spoken on marae in her own lands, the Wellington marae was “outside her tribal boundaries and therefore could give her no genealogical and spiritual protection” (111). The privilege of speaking, the art of whaikōrero, is the province of the male in “most tribes”.

The matriarch is a woman and “therefore not tapu”<sup>5</sup> (111), so that her act of standing to speak, is “an act of assertion” that would be regarded as a “violation of the tapu of the marae and the tapu of the male” (111). Not only is the matriarch in direct conflict with the people of the marae but with the spiritual forces of the past, “perhaps even more tapu than the matriarch’s own sacredness” (111), so that she feels psychically, spiritually and physically attacked. These creatures of light and darkness are not malevolent, but they do expect the matriarch to demonstrate that her authority to speak is impeccable. As D’Cruz and Ross explain, the matriarch is caught in a “symbolic struggle for the inauguration of a new order of speech that would recognize her entitlements” (317). In prose of dramatic intensi-

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<sup>5</sup> The word “tapu” may refer to the inherent tapu of a person, place or objects. It is also used in the operation of social controls. It can be loosely referred to as “sacredness, though its operation is usually with the idea of “noa”, and can be quite complex.

ty, the matriarch asks the child for help – are their combined mana, and his tapu, the equal of the forces around them?<sup>6</sup> Here, the operation of tapu is the impetus for the conciliatory course that the adult Tamatea chooses to interpret as the culmination of this dramatic confrontation between the matriarch and other chiefs.

While Ihimaera chooses women to be the protagonists of the three novels that are the subject of this investigation, he has also attracted the wrath of many Māori women who feel he has misrepresented the traditional, and complementary, roles between men and women.<sup>7</sup> His respect for women is evident, however, and functions as a counterweight to the replication of Biblical language employed by early ethnographers to position women as inferior to men. In the Prologue to *The Matriarch* the narrator claims that men are sacred (tapu) and women are profane (noa):

The Earth and Sky are your parents, mokopuna. The sky is high, sacred and male while the earth is low but fruitful, profane and female. Thus was the first setting apart of the roles of male and female. (3)

In her chapter titled “Cultural Invasion,” Ani Mikaere discusses how the female figures in the creation stories were relegated to passive roles, their power rendered invisible by Pākehā ethnographers (221).<sup>8</sup> She quotes Rose Pere, who describes the relationship between Papatūānuku and Ranginui as being one of balance:

The union of the primeval parents as one deity was one of both a spiritual and physical nature. The primeval parents embraced and clung together as

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<sup>6</sup> For a comprehensive and innovative discussion of the inauguration of a new order of speech, see D’Cruz and Ross, who examine how the new order is given birth through the agency of the tapu of the grandson (318).

<sup>7</sup> For a scathing reception of *The Matriarch*, see Atareta Poananga’s article in *Broad-sheet*.

<sup>8</sup> For a robust discussion of the operation of tapu and noa in relation to women, as well as the hijacking of such notions by early ethnographers in Aotearoa New Zealand, see Ani Mikaere’s *Colonising Myths – Māori Realities He Rukuruku Whakaaro* (2011).

one deity for aeons of time producing many children. Papa and Rangi found great fulfilment in their union as one, for them it was a natural beautiful relationship. (8)

In contrast, ethnographer, Elsdon Best's version of the union between Papatūānuku and Ranginui tells how Rangi looked down on Papa as she lay facing him, passive, and he responded with his active action of sexual desire to descend and mate with her. Percy Smith's representation of the union paints a similar picture:

The Rangi-nui [great sky], which stands above, felt a desire towards Papatua-nuku [the earth], whose belly was turned up [towards him]; he desired her as a wife. So Rangi came down to Papa. (qtd. in Mikaere 117)

This account, in which the male acts upon his sexual desire for the passive female who lies below, is vastly different from Pere's description of their coming together as one deity, in a way that balanced the spiritual and physical. However, in his recounting of the creation of humankind, Ihimaera gives a brief, but violent, account of the mythological story, which corresponds to the version advanced by the Pākehā ethnographers, Smith and Best. Ihimaera continues by labelling the union between Tane and Hine titama (the first human, his daughter and then his wife) as the first incest. On hearing that her husband was her father, Hine titama fled in shame to take a position at the doorway through which all her earthly descendants would eventually pass:

This was woman as Death, whom the demi-god, Maui, tried to conquer by entering her vagina. She crushed him with her thighs and thus death and destruction were brought permanently into the world. The female

reproductive organs were termed 'whare o aitua or whare o mate', the house of misfortune and disaster.

Woman was therefore non-sacred and destructive. Many of woman's activities, both prescribed and proscribed, emerged from this belief. (23)

This mirrors Best who depicts women's sexual parts in the most negative fashion:

[The] 'house' of misfortune, of ominous inferiority, is represented by this world, by the earth, by the female sex, and by the female organ of generation, which holds death, powers of destruction and pollution. (121)

In answer to the question, "Does 'matriarchal' really mean that women are considered to be equally as important as men in Māori society?" Ihimaera replies that there will always be debate on just how matriarchal traditional Māori culture was and is (Ihimaera, "This Magnificent Accident" 359). Those who have transcended cultural prohibitions will answer the question more positively, and he cites as example the Member of Parliament, Georgina Te HeuHeu (360). His own view is different:

[M]y perspective is that while Maori women may have cultural power, Maori women did not have political power. Certainly there are exceptions to the rule, like Te Puea Herangi or my own grandmother, Teria Pere, but even so, and no matter their triumphs, their whole lives were engaged in negotiations within a primarily patriarchal cultural and political framework. That is still the situation today. (Ihimaera, "This Magnificent Accident" 360)

Therefore the redefinition of female roles by Pākehā ethnographers altered the meaning of "tapu" and "noa" so drastically that they were almost unrecognisable.

Ethnographers perceived these principles as a dichotomy of opposites, mutually exclusive of one another, and hierarchical with “tapu” being privileged over “noa” (Mikaere 224). They translated the concepts to fit within their worldview. Within their reasoning, it therefore followed that the genders would also be subject to a hierarchical relationship where men were regarded as “tapu” and women subordinate and “noa”. It is no small wonder that Ihimaera received criticism from within Māoridom for his perceived continuation of colonial myths that are predicated on a hierarchy of the sexes.

Further, instead of the nurturing and loving mother who welcomes all her descendants into her embrace following Death (not the cause of death), Hine nui te Po has been depicted by Ihimaera as a destructive force that causes the death of all men. The kūia (elder woman) who gave Maui crucial knowledge to complete amazing feats for the advancement of humanity are passed over so quickly, or omitted in Ihimaera’s account, so as not to register in the mind of the reader at all (253).

For those young Māori who he writes for, like his own daughters, “who have suffered most with the erosion of the Maori map”, the ones who are Māori by colour but who have no emotional identity as Māori (Ihimaera, “Why I Write” 117-18), the danger of a representative voice is that Ihimaera misrepresents the practices and values of Māori, thereby continuing to perpetrate the beliefs that the coloniser has instilled in Māori and Pākehā, which relegate Māori women, and Māori in general, to subaltern positions. This poses a perplexing question: Does Ihimaera believe that women are inherently lacking in tapu, and therefore subordinate to men? The answer, in line with his perpetuation of the hierarchy of genders in the Prologue, ashamedly, appears to be ‘yes’. This is supported in

Ihimaera's treatment of tapu in relation to the child and the matriarch. The latter apparently lacks it.

The child, Tamatea, comes to the matriarch's aid when he traces their common descent from the gods. As Majid claims, "Referring back to this first and central myth connects the Māori characters to the very origin of the world, and grants an authority that can only be established by being able to draw one's lineage back to the very first parents" (115). As Tamatea breaks into song, retelling the passage from Te Kore through the twelve changes of the Night (Te Po) to the origins of life through Ranginui, the Sky Father, and Papatūānuku, the Earth mother, leading into the story of Takitimu, "he also enacts a reborn symbolic order for Māori for which he is the incarnate vehicle" (D'Cruz and Ross 320). Thus this moment of near oblivion for the matriarch, as her status and mana are challenged, is overcome by the tapu of her grandson, thereby equalizing their combined mana, and his tapu, with the mana and tapu of those on the marae (D'Cruz and Ross 319). The alternative legacy thus provided by the matriarch, inaugurates an order of speech, which is progressed through the song of Tamatea and culminates in his literary achievement as the notional author of *The Matriarch* (D'Cruz and Ross 320).

The elders on the marae had eventually no choice but to welcome the matriarch and child as an equal. Unfortunately this acceptance of the matriarch's status as equal allows her to advance to the paepae, where she must again undergo another test before she can proceed. A battle between one of the elders, Timoti, who represents male patriarchy, and the matriarch ensues, which reiterates the binary order generated by gender difference. They both assume positions from the creation story. Timoti claims his power from the premise that Tane breathed

life into Hine Ahuone, thus giving life to the first woman. But Artemis retorts that the one guarantee is that all men would return to the embrace of the goddess of death, thereby appealing to the final strength and inevitability of women. The scene turns to abject horror when Artemis merges with Hine Nui Te Po and unleashes her powers, in the form of a giant black spider, seemingly sucking the life from Timoti. It is only when the child intervenes that the spider hesitates.

What the child Tamatea sees in this scene is worth closer inspection. Within the multifaceted eyes of the horrendous spider, the child sees the matriarch imprisoned, suggesting that she has lost control of the power she has unleashed. The spider relinquishes the elder, casts his mother Tiana aside with one blow, and is about to devour the child. Deftly Tamatea steps to the side, reaches up and shatters the dark crystals of the spider's eyes, which "fell like mirror shards around him" (266). The reflective nature of the eyes suggests two things: it not only illuminates the matriarch trapped within the eyes but could also suggest that the narrator sees himself. The action of shattering the eyes to retrieve the matriarch could be read literally as saving her from the power she has unleashed. Symbolically it could be read as Tamatea's meta-fictional self-awareness that matriarchy is not the specific answer to patriarchy. The application of Lacan's "mirror stage" is also useful in exploring this idea further.

Lacan proposes that human infants pass through a stage in which an external image of the body produces a psychic response that gives rise to the mental representation of an "I". In this instance the image is reflected in the mirror and represented to the child through the matriarch-spider's eyes. Lacan continues that the infant identifies with the image, but because the image of a unified body does not correspond with the underdeveloped infant's physical vulnerability and weak-

ness, this imago is established as an Ideal-I toward which the subject will perpetually strive throughout his life. For Lacan, the mirror stage establishes the ego as fundamentally dependent upon external objects, on an other. As the so-called "individual" matures and enters into social relations through language, this "other" will be elaborated within social and linguistic frameworks that will give each subject's personality (and his or her neuroses and other psychic disturbances) as well as particular characteristics (University of Hawai'i). In seeing himself within the spider's eyes, Tamatea conflates his own identity with that of the matriarch. As the matriarch's chosen leader, Tamatea is obligated to reach the same high standards set down by the feats of his ancestors, in this case the attainment of the feats of the Ideal-I, as embodied through the matriarch.

As the grandson who bears the image of his grandmother, Tamatea's desire to assert his exclusive lineage from her disrupts patriarchal descent. In the final act entitled "Succession", and following the death of Artemis, Tamatea is drawn into a battle for his birthright against grandfather Ihaka, who has named as his successor a man called Toroa. Grandfather claims Toroa as the eldest son of Te Ariki, making him Tamatea's older brother. Toroa thereby represents the challenge, as grandfather's champion, while Tamatea bears the imprint of female power as the descendant from the matriarch. Toroa's defeat in the battle against Tamatea is insinuated through Tamatea's replication of an earlier event with the matriarch. When both men were still children, Ihaka had tried to persuade the matriarch about Toroa's claim to be the eldest grandchild, and it was only after the matriarch makes strangling motions in the air that brings the child, Toroa, to his knees, that Ihaka retreats. After her death, grandfather Ihaka once more tries to displace Tamatea from his inheritance. Consistent with his legacy from the

matriarch, Tamatea replicates the motions in the air made by the matriarch and strangles Toroa until he concedes. While Tamatea's victory parallels the matriarch's earlier victory over Ihaka, it necessarily entails a regression to the binary order that had been superseded by Tamatea's speaking position established by the matriarch and the child at the Wellington hui so long ago.

In his fidelity to his grandmother, Tamatea's relationships with others have suffered. He cannot contemplate forgiveness for grandfather for many things including attempting to set up Toroa as the eldest son of Te Ariki, and thus directly challenging his mana. It is at grandfather Ihaka's funeral that Tamatea begins to wonder if he had been wrong, and his family attempt to persuade him towards peace and reconciliation (417). However, fidelity to his grandmother's memory prevents him from forgiving grandfather. As they close his grandfather away from the light for the last time, he sees not only grandfather, but Toroa, his father Te Ariki, and finally himself being closed away into the casket. The conflation of all these characters suggest the death of the Other, which is intrinsic to binary orders so that staying on an oppositional pathway in his fidelity to his grandmother is presented as having only one outcome. Paradoxically, his unflappable fidelity to his grandmother's image locks him into the oppositional positioning, which prevents him from engendering new possibilities. Transcendence from the dichotomous categories can only happen through reconciliation.

Tamatea eludes the binary order based on gender difference by claiming the idea of a dual-gendered genealogy, and in the process he places grandfather Ihaka himself as heir to a dual-gendered genealogy (D'Cruz and Ross 328). This act reiterates the cross-gendered lineage of Te Whanau A Kai as represented in

the painting of Kahungunu and his daughter Tauhei, as well as, that of Wi Pere, with his mother Riria Mauaranui “perched on his shoulders” (192). This is repeated in the legacy from his grandniece, Artemis to her grandson, Tamatea. So Tamatea moves beyond dissent to a synthesis of genealogies in himself, made possible through the symbolic refiguration of grandfather Ihaka’s genealogy (D’Cruz and Ross 328).

In the final Act “Succession” Tamatea’s realisation that grandfather also had female mythological ancestry is an important balancing act. The polarisation into masculine and feminine is shown to be a falsification because we all have dual ancestry from our mothers and fathers, as does grandfather from his female ancestor, named after Hine Te Ariki, “Hine Te Ariki, she who was descended after the mermen and mermaids of the dark swirling waters of Turanga” (419). It is through this acknowledgement that Tamatea is able to heal the hurt of his turbulent life with grandfather Ihaka, and bid him well on his final journey back to the original place, Hawaiki and The Joining Place of Spirits (421). This act of healing, following grandfather’s attempt to usurp his position as the eldest grandchild, and the reconciliation (in the acknowledgement of his inheritance from grandfather) frees Tamatea from entrapment in a sole filiation to the matriarch. This liberation follows upon his Venetian dream, when through the pleading of his mother, Tiana, and his mythic ancestress, Hine Te Ariki, Tamatea eludes entrapment within a relationship with the matriarch that isolates him from other familial relationships (D’Cruz and Ross 328). Specifically, it is the intervention of Hine Te Ariki, Grandfather Ihaka’s ancestress, who creates the space that allows Tamatea to embrace other important familial relationships.

Tamatea thus goes beyond the constant negotiations the matriarch has had to undertake to advance from the marae atea outside, to within the meeting house where she faces a graphic illustration of the threat of reabsorption into the binary order generated by gender difference. The newly birthed refiguration of the symbolic order of speech for Māori thereby requires a constant and continual appeal to creative forces to make it sustainable. In his symbolic journey to and from the Void, Tamatea articulates a space where difference generated by gender can be mediated within a dynamic of exchange and inclusion. While the matriarch has been caught in adversarial positions in her pursuit of equity between the sexes and the right to speak as a female chief, the space opened by Tamatea's investigation encodes within him a counter-hegemonic agency that works through the creative source of the power repositied in the Void to articulate new grounds of synthesis.

The new symbolic order that is articulated through Tamatea comes from his journey to the Void; and his constant returns to this place throughout the novel provides him with the continual creativity from the extreme potential that the Void harbours, to sustain a vision for the Māori nation. Though considerably weakened in the collective memory, the narrator's pinpointing of this source of renewal from mythic times and tradition serves to provide the sustaining element for a future based on Māori terms.

## Re-envisioning the Māori Nation: Renewing Tradition

From a Māori perspective it is through the process of physical, spiritual and mental engagement with the world that knowledge can transform into wisdom. Royal and McLean quote Reverend Māori Marsden who explains that “[k]nowledge is a thing of the head, an accumulation of facts. Wisdom is a thing of the heart” (“Native Traditions” 59). Thus Tamatea’s journey through the lives of his ancestors parallels the process of attaining wisdom through an affirmation of a Māori worldview in the construction of his own identity. Marsden asserts that wisdom occurs when knowledge is integrated in the centre of one’s being:

The swallowing of Rehutai is symbolic of how this state [of wisdom] may be achieved. Hukatai (sea foam) and Rehutai (sea spray) are metaphors taken from a canoe en passage on the sea. The sea foam or wake generated by the canoe in motion symbolises the pursuit of knowledge as an accumulation of facts picked up along the way. [...] As the sea foam is thrown up by the bow, the rays of the sun piercing the foam create a rainbow effect as you peer through it. By meditation in the heart, the centre of one’s being, illumination comes suddenly in a moment of time, and the unorganised sets of ideas suddenly gel together to form an integrated whole in which tensions and contradictions are resolved.

Knowledge is transformed into wisdom. (59)

The centre is where he must create for himself an orderly system of ideas about himself and the world. Essentially this is a spiritual experience so that illumination is from above, and “comes suddenly in a moment of time” to “form an integrated whole in which tensions and contradictions are resolved”. This moment of illumination is likened to the inspired culmination of a journey taken to acquire

knowledge. Tamatea Mahana reaches such a culmination in the creative synthesis he achieves in his fiction and which could be seen as the parallel of the culmination Tamatea ariki nui reaches in settling the new land.

While the literal migration of the various canoes from Hawaiki to Aotearoa is depicted through the story of Tamatea ariki nui, the metaphorical journey of the narrator Tamatea is charged with bringing enlightenment through the release of intellectual and spiritual resources for the new Māori nation. His visionary status derives from his refusal of the various binaries imposed by Pākehā hegemony as well as from the mana, lineage and tapu that surrounds him as leader. His ability to replicate the matriarch's powers, for example, in the near strangulation of Toroa, confirms the contract he holds with the gods. The importance of his tapu, suggested by the matriarch's protection of its desecration by the elder, Timoti, is paralleled by the extensive description of tapu that surrounded the activities of Tamatea ariki nui in the preparation of the sacred canoe Takitimu, and its voyage to Aotearoa. Tamatea reconstructs the story of Tamatea ariki nui's journey from Hawaiki to Aotearoa, which serves as a proto-journey that seeds the Māori nation. The second journey to knowledge culminates in the writing of the novel itself. As descendant of Tamatea ariki nui, and through his return to the Void (Te Kore) in his various dreams or visions, Tamatea Mahana reclaims his heritage transmitted through his grandmother, and thereby discovers in himself a unique identity, an identity based on resistance, adversarial politics and, finally, reconciliation.

The successes and failures of his ancestors serve to influence Tamatea's identity-formation, as do the shared birth signs, the visits to the Void, the visions he thinks are dreams, and the recognition of his dual-gendered inheritance.

Through the figure of Hine Te Ariki, Tamatea spirals out to include other members of his family which allows him to space himself out of the limited and narcissistic circle that contained his relationship with the matriarch. His constant return to the place of latent and elemental energy which has sparked all creation amounts to a self-sustaining rebirth of a symbolic order, which has implications for an inclusive Māori nation that includes Pākehā. From uncertain identity, through his journey to knowledge – the pages of his writing – Tamatea secures an identity which does not recreate the binaries of the past. The visionary and unique position of a leader that is a person apart from others is related in the following proverbs or whakatauki:

Waiho rā kia tū takitahi ana ngā whetū o te rangi

*Let it be one alone that stands among the other stars in the night*

Heoi anō te whetū e tū nei, kotahi

*There is only one star standing there, and one alone*

(Brougham and Reed 85)

This is so with the matriarch, who is imbued with spiritual authority, lineage, mana and the endorsement of the tribe she represents. Love for the people should precede love for oneself so that this person is expected to put aside personal desires and let the people's needs come first. Aroha ki te iwi, love for the people, is more important, so an epic leader of the same ilk as Artemis and Tamatea often find himself or herself in a position apart.

Arguably the most important reconciliation that the novel performs is in its synthesis of the oral tradition of Māori with the literate legacy of Pākehā. Within *The Matriarch* there are two modes of discourse as D'Cruz and Ross argue. As

depicted in the notion of history making, there are the oral recollections alongside the written documents, which are derived from Pākehā traditions. Ihimaera's positioning of Pākehā within a bicultural heritage also extends to the idea of positioning the Pākehā tradition of debate within the Māori legacy of the kōrero tradition, as illustrated by the placement of the documented texts of Māori-Pākehā debate in the novel (D'Cruz and Ross 323). The novel is thus a performative in which Tamatea makes his cultural contribution through the synthesis of opposites. However, the literate world of the Pākehā leaves its imprint on *The Matriarch* through the transformation from orality to literacy that occurs, in the physical embodiment of the novel itself (D'Cruz and Ross 322).

Tamatea's creative synthesis also involves his self-positioning along a line of fierce champions of Māoridom. His fiction-making turns the matriarch's life into myth so as to demonstrate the mana and power that she has used to fight on behalf of her people. She is a woman of action and pursues her goals from the knowledge she gains from her heritage, as Tamatea also does as the matriarch's heir. Te Kooti, Wi Pere, Artemis and Tamatea are part of that fearless taniwha line who find empowerment in their culture. While *The Matriarch* draws a significant part of the characters' cultural identity from the past, it also encourages change and development to help give Māori the power and respect they have been denied. However, Te Kooti and Wi Pere represent two forms of Māori resistance defined through the power structures that were weighted in favour of the coloniser. Te Kooti was wrongfully arrested and imprisoned for his supposed association with the Hauhau people. Wi Pere was suspected of siding with Te Kooti, but as the narrative tells us, "there were forces at work within the Pākehā world which forever cast Te Kooti on the outside; in Wi Pere's case, these same

forces compelled him to confront the Pākehā from within” (312). Despite Te Kooti’s insistent requests for a trial, and Wi Pere’s repetitive parliamentary speeches, all fall on deaf ears, thereby highlighting the inefficacy of their speech within the binary terms enlisted for advancing the colonizing mission of Pākehā.

The signs that attended the births of Wi Pere, Artemis, and Tamatea manifest themselves in the matriarch’s case in her struggle against the forces from the past, so that she was already at war with herself. The midwife saw, at her birth, not only her eye swimming in blood, but also saw that Artemis had her hands at her own throat as if attempting to strangle herself. As D’Cruz and Ross argue, the eye swimming in blood suggests a loss of sight, or an obscuring of vision (324). The birth sign of “the Māori with his own hands around his neck” (301) is also attributed to Wi Pere, perhaps in allusion to the speech acts he performs in his efforts at resistance, in particular his parliamentary speeches contained in the Parliamentary Hansards and his letter to *The Gisborne Times*, 16 February 1916. His efforts fail to arrest the consolidation of settler interests and are perhaps cancelled by the very means he deploys. “The futility of his eloquence in the Pākehā parliament, which is overwhelmingly aligned with the consolidation of Pākehā interests” (D’Cruz and Ross 325), is evident in the government actions and legislation that result in further losses of land and power for Māori.

In renaming the “Matawhero Retaliation”, Tamatea impersonates the historian and depicts Te Kooti’s mission as resulting from a war between two sides, both with blood on their hands. He implicates himself in this war by exacting in the narrative what Te Kooti exacted in his seeking of retribution. The performativity aspects range from the narrator’s explicit commentary on the story to his style of narration in his addresses to the reader. In his direct address, “You,

Pākehā,” and those statements made to Major Biggs, the author-narrator acknowledges the limits of the efficacy of his speech as determined by the birth-sign he has been born to (D’Cruz and Ross 325).

While the matriarch was made in the crucible of Te Kooti and Wi Pere, so that she exhibits light and dark characteristics, the balance is still not achieved. Tamatea is the embodiment of balance with his philosophy of inclusion rather than exclusion, turning his attention to notions of solidarity for Aotearoa New Zealand rather than the replication of the dualistic categories of colonised and coloniser. While this outward projection through Tamatea has ramifications for all of Aotearoa, Ihimaera’s writings here and elsewhere also include the concerns of Aotearoa with that of the post-colonial global village, without compromising the author’s rootedness in Aotearoa.

Moving on from the binary enacted through war, he relives Tamatea ariki nui’s journey. Tamatea Mahana’s speaking voice tells the story of the journey of the eponymous ancestor, Tamatea ariki nui, for whom the narrator is named, from the original homeland Hawaiki to Aotearoa. Tamatea ariki nui brought with him the cargo of gods and mauri to take spiritual residence in the new homeland in order to maintain the spiritual wellbeing of his people. In essence he has brought the traditional elements integral to the wellbeing and future of the Māori nation. The story of the voyage of Tamatea ariki nui and the canoe Takitimu is a mode for displacing Pākehā conceptions of ownership based on colonisation because Tamatea, as Ihimaera’s alter-ego, writes an encompassing history that includes mythic time, which is aligned with a Māori worldview. Tamatea ariki nui brought all that was traditional and precious. Now it is Tamatea Mahana’s turn to bring his gifts to the Māori nation. This Tamatea undertakes an intellectual and fictional journey

across the great divide, a divide which is fraught with the conflict in Pākehā and Māori relations. Thus, “Tamatea’s narrative intervention stages the process by which oratory, in particular that of the matriarch, recollected and repositied in written form, makes its shift into pure literacy” (D’Cruz and Ross 323). Critics, including Mark Williams, have noted that the wharenuī Rongopai as described in the novel may be read as the visual equivalent to the novel’s self-contained space with its continual creativity that arches out and returns in spiral fashion (125).

Rongopai, the meeting house of the Whanau A Kai people, was originally built as a tribute to Te Kooti’s struggle against Pākehā domination. The interior of Rongopai, the place of Rongomatane and peace, is depicted as “in itself complete and self-sustaining, its own world without end, its own time-lock” (190). The fantasies of the young painters had been applied with “little reference to tradition, an obvious break with the past” (190). However, the narrator continues that just as Te Kooti had blended the Christian faith with Māori culture to speak for people in the new world, the young people had attempted to show the blending of the old ways with the new and the world of the Māori in the lands of Pharaoh (190). The narrator continues to recount the graphic beauty of the new paintings and carvings, which “conformed to the outlines of tradition” though “the filling in [...] was different” (191). In this continuum from “a traditional premise” (190), through the reverence of the past, through the influence of the young painters, and to the healing powers of the house, to the dream of a brave new world, Tamatea’s vision, perhaps the vision of Ihimaera himself, shapes an ultimate statement which includes the Pākehā.

The “moko of the Pākehā” is literacy, which informs the tattoo etched into the body of *The Matriarch*, though the body itself remains Māori. “Hence, the

sovereignty invoked by *The Matriarch* subsumes the Pākehā under the world of Māori, proposing in the process cultural inclusivity as the preemptive strategy for displacing the war of binary opposites” (D’Cruz and Ross 322). The narrator prays “that the strength to recreate the Māori nation has come again” (195), so that “the power for goodness was laid upon their heads [i.e. those who worked on Rongopai] and that the very real and black holes of their souls were healed of anger and confirmed with forgiveness” (194). The loss felt by the ancestors as a result of colonisation is felt inter-generationally by the young. Because the binaries have become so entrenched reconciliation may only follow resistance. Therefore, by decolonising through acts such as texts of resistance, and by speaking of the hurt or trauma, healing may follow.

The journeys of Tamatea ariki nui and Tamatea are not merely metaphors for the passage from tradition (regarded as outmoded) to modernity, which has contemporary currency for Māori. Rather the journeys and Rongopai are also symbolic of the renewal of tradition, and of the Māori nation being receptive to this renewal. The novel achieves this through its representation of a “dual-gendered inheritance”. Rather than a male-to-male inheritance based on primogeniture, which patriarchy favours and which is represented by grandfather Ihaka’s wish for Toroa’s rights to succession, Tamatea’s actions and vision reinstate a Māori tradition that allows for the inclusion of male and female inheritance. It is not just Pākehā politics but patriarchal politics that have disrupted this traditional dual-gendered premise. The continual creative impulse, also contained in Rongopai, implies a self-sustaining world that is capable of authorizing its own utterances (D’Cruz and Ross 312). In broadening the scope of history to include myth, the contest of Māori-Pākehā relations has been reduced to a

rewriting of a period of some 150 years of official history and placing it within the continuum of Māori history and myth.

In this manner, Ihimaera's invitation into the painted meeting house, Rongopai, is not only a physical invitation, but a spiritual and intellectual invitation into a symbolic house or locus, which has national ramifications of solidarity for all New Zealanders (D'Cruz and Ross, 302). The symbol of the painted house, which differs from the traditional carved house, is one that deviates from tradition but yet also paradoxically reaffirms tradition through its foundational premises. The physical *whare whakairo* and *marae ātea* are the outward symbols of a process whose goal is resolution and whose reality is inward (Royal, "Mōtea-tea and the Transmission of History" 64). It follows then that the gender conflict between the matriarch and the chiefs took place on the outside of the Wellington meeting house, while the reconciliation proposed by Tamatea takes place on the inside of another meeting house, Rongopai, as a symbolic substitute for the meeting house in Wellington.

## Conclusion of Chapter One

The devastating effects of colonisation have caused cultural fragmentation, whose repercussions include the lack of an adequate symbolic position for Māori, the degradation of Māori tradition, and an undermining of the traditional complementary relationships of gender identities. Ihimaera's response is, therefore, influenced by a politics of inclusion for a refigured Aotearoa, which initiates new signs of identity and sites of resistance or contestation. He does this within a "third" or an alternative space, which serves as a mode of articulation that engenders new possibilities for his vision of the Māori nation. Both matriarchal agency

and spiritual agency are the third terms that subvert the dualistic categories of colonial binary thinking and gender opposition (D’Cruz and Ross 318).

The matriarch’s reclamation of the wananga form in her tutelage of the young Tamatea enables him to reclaim a Māori consciousness that is enabled through the return to mythic origins. These stories are resurgent moments, which reclaim epistemic ground that was erased by colonialism and, in the process, these stories also lay a framework and foundation for the resurgence of Indigenous sovereignty. In Tamatea’s rebirth through the harnessing of these mythic beginnings and the constant return to the creative source of the Void, he gains the space and the self-sustaining ability that is required to avoid his reabsorption into the mutating binary orders. Finally, in acknowledging and aligning himself to his ancestry from Grandfather Ihaka, he dispels the imbalance of opposites from his own familial environment. Tamatea’s ultimate mission is to carry to a vision of a new Aotearoa all the cultural wealth from his own journey. Tamatea ariki nui’s waka had been the Takitimu, with its cargo of priests and gods, but Tamatea Mahana’s waka, which contains the cultural wealth for the Māori nation, is *The Matriarch*, the literary work he crafts (D’Cruz and Ross 314). Thus, Tamatea ariki nui’s journey is the template for the crafting of the novel, *The Matriarch*, which encompasses various oratorical and literary performatives, thereby placing the entire work within the legacy of the kōrero tradition of Māori (D’Cruz and Ross 323).

All these meanings originate in the cultural deracination of Māori under colonisation and in the accompanying breakdown of the Māori symbolic order. Furthermore the binary operations of colonial contact and of gender politics require that the refiguration of tradition will not be enslaved by similar binary

orders. Therefore the visionary status of Tamatea is crucial to the identification of alternative spaces that will not replicate the failures of his forebears, or be subsumed into damaging binary thinking. To this end, spiralling towards a future that reconstructs and reframes the past, allows the necessary space for reclamation, resistance and reconciliation in various forms of cultural synthesis.



## Chapter 2: Gender and Inheritance in *The Whale Rider*

Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* attracted little attention on its publication in 1987, not long after the release of *The Matriarch* in 1986, and was quickly passed over by the argument surrounding *Dear Miss Mansfield* two years later. It was not until the release of the film, *Whale Rider*, written and directed by a Pākehā New Zealander, Niki Caro, in 2002, that interest in the earlier book was renewed. *Whale Rider* was an overnight success in New Zealand and overseas. The film received critical acclaim and the performance by the actress who played Pai (Keisha Castle-Hughes) won rave reviews, garnering awards at home and overseas including at the Toronto, Sundance and Rotterdam Film Festivals. The local and international success of *Whale Rider* has invited strong academic and critical interest in reading Ihimaera's novella on which it is based, alongside Caro's film.

Reading Caro's film with reference to Ihimaera's novella is less a comparative exercise than an interpretative extension: Ihimaera's 1987 novella uses the whale rider myth to raise an exemplar of a female leader for the people, and Caro reinvents the myth to show the empowerment of females for an international audience. In effect, the change of medium elicits adaptation of the protagonist's non-conventional role in the original novel. Kennedy highlights that while many film adaptations of novels are regarded as being only loosely based on the work that inspired them, several major points of crossover and omission between Ihimaera and Caro support reading *The Whale Rider* and its film version together (206). Therefore, I will argue that the theme of gender and inheritance is central-

ised in the film,<sup>9</sup> whereas it is part of a more extended investigation of cultural transformation in the novella.

Ihimaera played a key role in *Whale Rider*, as the film's associate producer and also as the link that made possible Caro's entering into the Ngati Konohi sub-tribe of Whāngārā, to which Ihimaera claims whakapapa connections. Although both the book and film plots are fictional, the story's setting and history are not, and so the Māori community, its marae and beach, and the founding myth of the whale rider, Kahutia Te Rangi, also named Paikea, remain crucially non-fictional in both works. The centrality of the real village of Whāngārā to the story, and its community's active participation in the film, maintain this connection and uphold a blurred boundary between the real and the imagined. Ihimaera's revision of his original novel for release as an "international" edition, followed upon the film's success, has created a unique situation in which adaptation goes in both directions, or, as Patrick Evans puts it more cynically, makes the international

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<sup>9</sup> Brendan Hokowhitu has written a comprehensive article entitled "Understanding Whangara: *Whale Rider* as Simulacrum", in which he states that "*Whale Rider*'s alignment with these myths of primitive society privileges a certain brand of knowledge by misrepresenting Māori culture as patriarchal, sexist, and based on encumbering traditions. In so doing, it serves to reinforce the myth that colonisation was an 'enlightenment' project" (27). By positioning the people of Whāngārā as a "pre-modern culture", Caro guides the audience to view life for Māori as insular, which means that any shortcomings, in this case involving the rule of patriarchy, are seen as the result of Māori tradition. A traditional Māori nation is reinvented and enlightened through a neo-colonial gaze, which serves to create a simulacrum that justifies continued suppression (Hokowhitu, "Understanding Whangara" 24). Whangara as a locale, then, takes the shape of an authentic indigenous site, complete with a rigid culture and, in particular, a suppressive patriarchy (25). This approach is aided by the omission in the film of important aspects of the novella, specifically the post-colonial process and its effect on "traditional" social structures confronted in the Papua New Guinea episodes.

edition “the book of the film of the book” (12). This investigation, however, relies on the original Heinemann version.

Though it may appear that *Whale Rider* follows the novella very closely, with the few changes and additions only slightly modifying the storyline, I will argue that the changes between the novella and the film drastically change the sacred function of the originating myth that appears in the book. The following features distinguish the novella from the film: the whale story is interspersed in the novella with the human narrative by Rawiri; Rawiri’s narration includes a series of post-colonial episodes; the novella foregrounds the role of the myths of the whale rider and bull whale, as well as the myths surrounding Mihi Kotukutuku and Muriwai; there is an omniscient narrator who follows the journey of the whale herd.

In contrast, the predominantly realist film is limited in its ability to recreate the high modernism of Ihimaera’s lyrical and sublimely anthropomorphic narration by the bull whale, which describes the mystic and mythic connection between the whales and the Ngati Konohi tribe. In the absence of Ihimaera’s trademark high lyricism, the film is predominantly realist: instead of anthropomorphic whales, Caro’s whales are clips from nature documentaries or synthetic models. In a further change, the nostalgic link of continuity with the past that the whales provide in the novella is to a certain extent replaced by the introduction of a waka (canoe) to the film, which stands in for the mythic journey of the original whale-rider ancestor. The narrator in the film is the child, Paikea, which indicates that Caro gives the female voice agency in the ability to tell her own story.

While the texts in both media interrogate the place of female leadership in Māori society, the novella’s themes include issues of postcoloniality and

inheritance, while the film explores the place of maternal agency and the formation of female identity. One of the main foci in the novella is the postcolonial issue played out in Rawiri's travels to Australia and Papua New Guinea. The film touches on post-colonialism ever so briefly in the figures of the disenfranchised youth of Whāngāra and in the tension between tradition and modernity. The value of comparing Caro's film adaptation with Ihimaera's novella lies in the author's continued association with the film as the Associate Producer, so that the film may be viewed partly as a vehicle for Ihimaera's ideas to reach a global audience.

While *The Matriarch* highlights textually some of the binary positions between Māori and Pākehā that defined the turbulent era up to and including the mid-1970s, articulating in the process the formation of a postcolonial agency through Tamatea, by contrast, *The Whale Rider* (1987) provides a much more positive model of Māori culture's redemptive potential and gender inclusivity. I will argue that the synthesis that weaves together, and makes possible a dual-gendered inheritance in *The Matriarch*, is recapitulated through the figure of Kahu, the heroine, in *The Whale Rider*. Kahu is referred to as Paikea in the film, and she reclaims her female inheritance through Nanny Flowers from Muriwai and Mihi Kotukutuku as well as from her ancestor Paikea through Koro Apirana. Set in the 1980s, the novella describes modern life centred on the marae and beach but lived largely in accordance with tribal traditions, which are informed by legendary ancestors and the old ways of learning. The external obstacles are signalled in the arduous task undertaken by the leader, Koro Apirana, to find an heir worthy of inheriting his tribal knowledge and capable of leading the tribe into the future.

As featured in *The Matriarch*, the reclamation of a robust sacred mythology that has political and social consequences with regard to the issues of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination remains a preoccupation for the author in *The Whale Rider*. I will argue that in his re-harnessing of mythic resources, Ihimaera dissolves the boundaries between primordial ancestors and contemporary characters to produce a worldview in which specifically located spiritual and cosmological beliefs are visibly enacted.

While there is much to appreciate in Niki Caro's film of female empowerment in *Whale Rider*, it suffers significant losses from the book in the weakening of the sense of divine and ancestral providence over Māori history. A wedge is placed between the theme of the restoration of a people to its originating call and that of the (universal) empowerment of women, allowing the distinctiveness of Māori lived experience to become a simple variable plugged into the general story of any adolescent girl's groundbreaking liberation from patriarchal structures. So the extension of the myth to women certainly works, but only at the expense of its original function. It drives a wedge between the myth's original sacred function of affirming the interconnectedness and whakapapa links between man, land, sea, and all living beings, and its extended intention to empower women, favouring the latter at the former's expense.

## *The Whale Rider* – Retrieving Heroines and Relinking Whānau

“Oh *Paka*, can’t you hear then? I’ve been listening to them for ages now.

Oh *Paka*, and the whales are still singing,” she said.

Haumi e, hui e, *taiki e*. (122)

The novel opens with the foundational myth of Whāngārā, a village on the east coast of the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand, told by an anonymous storyteller in the third person. According to the legend, the ancestor of the tribe did not arrive in a canoe from the ancestral homeland, Hawaiiki, but Kahutia Te Rangi came riding on a whale. Later taking the name of Paikea, the whale rider shot spears of life-essence into the dormant land and sea. From here, the novel oscillates between two narrative strands set in the present; which tell of the “interlocking” connection between the human and cetacean worlds.

The first is printed in italics and comes as a third-person omniscient animal tale; it follows a herd of whales and their ancient leader, who, it soon transpires, is no other than the mythical bull whale whom Paikea rode to the shores of Whāngārā. On their way from Patagonia to the Arctic Sea, it becomes evident that the old bull is no longer capable of securely guiding his herd through the perils of the twentieth century (such as mass whale hunting or nuclear testing), and instead nostalgically craves for the friendship he had with Paikea in his youth (Eckstein 99).

The second and much larger narrative strand is told in the first-person mode. It tells the story of the girl Kahutia Te Rangi (Kahu for short), and the people who live in Whāngārā. It is narrated by the girl’s uncle Rawiri, a young man in his twenties. Kahu’s great-grandfather, Koro (grandfather) Apirana, is the

old patriarchal chief of the village, who desperately searches for a legitimate successor in Kahu's generation. Firmly believing in the tradition of male lineage, he treats Kahu with utter contempt from the day of her birth, even though Kahu, as the reader soon finds out, is the true destined heir of the ancestor, Kahutia Te Rangi (Paikea). Lars Eckstein claims that Kahu is linked to the ancestor through her name and because her afterbirth was buried right where a spear of life-essence hit the ground. She is able to converse with whales and dolphins, is relentlessly faithful in her love for her dismissive great-grandfather, and carries the unwavering belief in her destiny to be chief (99). The naming of the child after important ancestors is a Māori tradition, one that is not taken lightly because it bestows on the named child certain expectations to emulate the famous ancestor and their deeds. The mauri (life-essence) was planted by Kahutia Te Rangi in his wisdom, and can be read as a foretelling of Kahu's coming. It is not because Kahu's whenua (afterbirth) was planted in the same place where the spear landed that she becomes the leader of the people, as Eckstein claims. Rather, the burying of her whenua affirms the vision the original Kahutia Te Rangi had in placing the spear, reinforcing the connection the prophesied leader would have with that land.

The two narrative strands finally converge when, after a school of stranded whales had died painfully at a nearby beach, the old mythic bull whale takes his herd to the coast of Whāngārā, and beaches himself. The attempt to save the whale becomes a symbolic fight for the survival of the community and its traditions, and it is eight-year-old Kahu who, in a tremendously sacrificial act, swims out into the surf, climbs the ancient whale, and leads the herd into open water again. In the end, Kahu survives, Koro Apirana's eyes are unveiled so that he recognises the destined leader within Kahu, and the reader is left to imagine a

positive future for the people of Whāngārā, which presumably includes the restoration of gender balance for the people.

The novel links the question of gender and tradition in a broader context that involves post-colonial and eco-critical investigation. Reclaiming “oneness” or harmony between forces does not relate merely to the removal of a hierarchical order between the genders. This chapter will argue that Ihimaera links the question of gender and tradition in an expanded context, and that through the two narrative threads – one cetacean and mythic and the other human and modern – the novel attempts to repair the separation between human and animal, between land and sea, and between modern and mythic perspectives. The question of sovereignty is explored through the restitching of Pacific bonds in Rawiri’s visits to Sydney and Papua New Guinea. Accordingly, the first section of this chapter that discusses the novella is divided into a discussion of attaining harmony of gender and ecology, colonial disruptions and Pacific bonds, and towards a poetics and ontology of oneness.

As mentioned, the novella is narrated by Rawiri, apart from the Prologue and Epilogue and certain chapters containing the cetacean narration, incorporating into his story the wider context of colonialism, past and present, as it shapes his and others’ lives. Both the medium of print and Rawiri’s narration allow for the development of an explicitly political discourse. In the film, by contrast, Paikea’s narration dominates. Prentice argues that confined to the experiences, perceptions and understandings of a child, as well as to her more limited sphere of movement within the space of the village itself and its surroundings, Pai’s narration lends the film a ‘naturalized’ or ‘innocent’ tone (255; qtd in Kennedy 208). The film’s simplification of the novel’s plot and perspective means that basic ancestral and

cultural background is given in the adults' answers to Paikea's questions, or is 'overheard' in brief scenes set in the whare wananga, but much more is implied in visual imagery. Director Niki Caro's choice of a predominantly realist mode of cinematography, as opposed to the more insistently magical-realist elements in the novella, means that the 'magic' in the film comes through the actions of a little girl, thereby communicating the universal message that what Pai is achieving is possible for many.

The original Heinemann version of the novella is only 122 pages long, with a Prologue, Epilogue and four sections, which include in their titles the four seasons. The Prologue is entitled "The Coming of Kahutia Te Rangi" and it tells the originating myth of the Ngāti Porou people in the arrival of the ancestor to the East Coast astride a bull whale, where he is given the name Paikea. He brings with him the sense of the sacred as well as being a progenitor who peoples the land. The first section, "Spring: The Force of Destiny", is set in the present, which begins the journey of the whale herd, led by none other than Paikea's whale, and it provides the context for the young Kahu's birth. "Summer: Halcyon's Flight" details the early wananga (house of learning) sessions and the young girl Kahu's struggle to be part of Koro's world. When she is four, Rawiri leaves for Sydney and then Papua New Guinea in "Autumn: Season of the Sounding Whale". The novel's final section culminates in "Winter: Whale Song, Whale Rider". The whales have been moving towards a crisis point where human and whale intersect as their futures are intertwined. The novel finishes with an Epilogue called "The Girl from the Sea". The female whale helps the ancient bull whale discover the true identity of this whale rider, just as Nanny Flowers had helped Koro Apirana accept the leadership potential of Kahu (122).

Ihimaera's framing myth in *The Whale Rider* depicts the inseparability of human and whale as companion species. In the ancient time Māori "oneness" was expressed by the capacity for *kōrero* (speech) with beasts and creatures of the sea, especially whales, and that the power of speech and communion was lost as the world aged. Naming the different sections of the novel after the seasons of the year reinforces the attempt to join nature with the human story.

The novel is centred on the tension between Koro Apirana's search for a male heir to lead the people, and his great-granddaughter, Kahutia Te Rangi's, inherent belief that *she* is the leader the people are yearning for. She transgresses the boundaries of *tapu* in being a female aspiring to knowledge reserved for men. She holds a consuming belief in her connection to her tribe, and this connection hinges on the obstacles to retaining a Māori way of life based on tradition, in the face of a present context that is weakened and distorted by colonisation. In essence both Koro Apirana and Kahu agree that Māori culture is the key to a strong identity in the present, though for Koro Apirana this stance is the result of his privileged status as chief and male in the Māori world. Kahu's belief is a result of the processes of destiny – even though she does not fully understand these processes from her childish point of view, her spirituality guides her into giving herself up to these processes all the same. Thus in Koro and Kahu's turning to the past for the answers to save the tribe, it is suggested that Ihimaera is espousing the redemptive potential of traditional Māori culture in a modern context. Kahu is born into a line of chiefs (sons of sons), though as a female she appears to displace this patrilineal descent. Nevertheless Kahu figures as the transmogrification of the past into the present, while Koro is of the present turning to the past.

The past to which each is connected mythically transcends human limits. The Prologue gives particular force to the inseparability of human and whale as companion species through its use of the perspective of a flying fish. Suddenly the sea was filled with awesome singing:

*You have called and I have come, bearing the gift of the Gods. The dark shape rising, rising again. A taniwha, gigantic. A tipua. Just as it burst through the sea, a flying fish leaping high in its ecstasy saw water and air streaming like thunderous foam from that noble beast. [. . .] Then the flying fish saw that astride the head, as it broke skyward, was a man. He was wondrous to look upon, the whale rider. The water streamed away from him and he opened his mouth to gasp in the cold air. (5)*

Hsinya Huang claims that by bringing nonhuman species, such as the flying fish, into the origins of a tribe's history, Ihimaera makes biotic "nature" the foundation on which forms of human, social and cultural life can be built, hinging on the notion of relatedness (134). The idea of "relatedness" that Huang refers to is termed "whakapapa" (genealogy) in the Māori sense and is ultimately about the interconnectedness between all things, including the relationship between man and whale. Included in the idea of whakapapa is the notion of the symbiotic relationship, where mutual benefits are exchanged, and each member is part of the whānau group.

In its beginnings, the story tells of the land and sea experiencing a great yearning and emptiness, and waiting for the blessing. It tells of the Ancients leaving Hawaiki in the East and travelling to Aotearoa, and returning again to Hawaiki. At last the land and sea would receive the gift that would put an end to the yearning! In time the Ancients sent the gift: tangata (man), beautiful to be-

hold, virile and strong, riding his whale. This man is Kahutia Te Rangi and as he approaches Aotearoa he flings small spears of mauri towards the land. He is described as “a small tattooed figurine, dark brown, glistening and erect”, and he seemed “to be pulling the whale into the sky” (12). The “figurine” resembles a tekoteko<sup>10</sup> on top of a meeting house, which links the past and present. In this particular case, this founding tupuna will sit astride the meeting house, Te Whitireia, in Whāngārā. This description also alludes to the majesty, power and virility of Kahutia Te Rangi and is symbolic of his life-giving qualities – both in peopling the land and through the life-giving mauri he is sending to the land and sea. Here, Ihimaera’s ability to integrate a mythic past into the text occurs through the notion of a protagonist with a lineage recorded in the time of the Gods and Ancients. Similar allusions to an ancient lineage are featured in the repeated recitation of the ancestor Kahutia Te Rangi/Paikea’s chant by various characters in the book. Ihimaera links the mauri planted by Kahutia Te Rangi to assist the people in terms of trouble, to the planting of Kahu’s whenua some 1150 years later, thereby linking this mythic context with the present, and with the contemporary figure of Kahu.

The human and whale narratives intertwine so that cetacean perspectives permeate the human tales, while the large sea world is imbued with humanity through the bull whale’s remembrance of his union with Paikea. According to Steinwand, such an anthropomorphic touch in the treatment of whales is “consistent with the Pacific ethic of genealogical connection among living beings”, in which there is “a long tradition of a non-anthropocentric environmental ethic”

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<sup>10</sup> Tekoteko is a carved human form (either the whole body or head), either freestanding or attached to the gable of a whare (house) (Royal, “Tangaroa”).

(186) that breaks down the divide between animal and human, nature and culture. In his telling of a story about whales and the dangers they have to negotiate in response to the advancement of humanity, Ihimaera's anthropomorphic extensions enable sympathies from the reader that are not human-centred. The reader develops empathy for the plight of the whales in the bull whale's nostalgic musings for a time that is now long past. Modernity has hampered the ability of leaders like the bull whale to keep their families safe from the real threats to themselves and their younger generations. The plight of the whales are an extension of the empathy the author hopes the reader will feel in response to the human struggle to retain a life premised on tradition.

Ihimaera fully recuperates the figure of the whale as emblematic of the continuing vitality of contemporary Māori culture and its unbroken links to the ancestral past. The novel depicts how the mother of the young bull whale was savaged by sharks. The orphaned whale was then fostered by a human, Kahutia Te Rangi, "who cradled him and pressed noses with the orphan in the first *mihimihi*" (10). In this fundamental greeting and exchange of breath, living connections between the past and present are established and remain unbroken. Human-cetacean interactions and communication feature in the processes of *whakapapa* (genealogy) and interconnectedness, healing the breach between humans and nonhuman animals. Beyond words, and in the absence of a common language between Kahutia Te Rangi and the bull whale, physical contact enables spiritual connection and communication so that man and whale exist as species within the same *whānau* (family) group.

The idea of family and relatedness is supported when, as a youngster, the orphaned bull whale chooses the human over the whale pod. While other whales

travel onward, the adopted whale remains with the human, and grows under the tutelage of the whale rider, and answers the call of his flute to sail to “the dangerous islands to the southwest” (11). Ihimaera refers to their ability to communicate through an “interlock[ing]” that helps to establish “oneness” between the species. The whale is an “ancient” figure upon which the cultural identities and life paths of Māori people are inscribed and which is symbolised by the moko swirl pattern on this whale’s forehead.

Moving to the human episodes, Rawiri, who narrates them, is connected to the characters through his familial relationship. He still maintains an objective distance, which enables him to report the events in a sometimes humorous, sometimes serious tone, using simple language. He is also representative of the Māori youth of the 1990s, providing thus a generational distance from the much younger main character. Faced with unemployment in their own, mostly small rural communities, many young people leave for the city and better prospects, in a phenomenon known as “urban migration”. This can result in disconnection from their land and traditional beliefs. While Rawiri is still very much connected to his home place, he has also succumbed to gang life. However, despite the temptations of an individualistic ethic, Rawiri is easily called back to his roots in a time of crisis. He is a character who tries to stay rooted to his cultural heritage but is also swayed by life in Pākehā New Zealand. As a narrator, who is messenger-like in his role, and who responds positively to the signs foretelling Kahu’s leadership, Rawiri also represents the new male in Māoridom.

As Rawiri can see, Kahu seems destined, despite her great-grandfather’s disapproval, to become chief of the tribe. Great-grandfather, Koro Apirana, holds rigidly to patriarchal beliefs about Māori traditions of leadership, succession, and

cultural authority. Nanny Flowers, his wife, unsettles his authority over the family and tradition, with her threats of divorce and her allusions to her ancestors, Muriwai (19-20) and Mihi Kotukutuku (81-82), women who had defied tradition to assume leadership and save the people. Tensions heighten as Koro repeatedly excludes Kahu from his list of potential successors to his leadership, despite the signs dotted throughout the novel. But Kahu proves to be gifted in precisely the Māori ways that will make her a viable leader.

The complementary cetacean narrative revolves around environmental deterioration and restoration, which are paralleled in the human struggle. The leader of the cetacean herd mourns over young calves dying from ocean radiation and contamination. While the ocean “had once, ironically, been the womb of the world” and “crystalline clear,” the leader is now “afraid of the genetic effects of the undersea radiation on the remaining herd and calves in this place” (48). Ihimaera is referring here to the nuclear experiments in the Pacific Ocean. Evoking the whale as an active and effective agent in mourning, Ihimaera touches on the harsh reality of the now alien ocean. The novel thus turns from the ancient, original story of the Māori settlement in Aotearoa to the fractured relationship between humans, the ocean, and its inhabitants.

Koro Apirana laments a changing modern world by pinpointing at the binaries and divides that characterize Western modernity. In a similar vein, the whale illuminates the traditional worldview that weaves close connections between humans and animals, and he shows how that worldview has changed over the centuries. The whale has a memory, just as the human does. On their migratory route, whales watch for danger “not from other creatures of the sea, but from the greatest threat of all—man. [. . .] Yet it had not always been like this, the

ancient whale *remembered*" (24; emphasis added). He remembered a time when the communication between humans and whales grew, and "so did their understanding and love of each other" (24). This worldview of humans once being able to communicate with sea animals goes back to the Māori inheritance of man's close kinship with the inhabitants of the ocean and of the land's connection with the sea: "This was the first communion" (39). Therefore the novel explores and seeks to repair communion through an ecological restoration of harmony within the human world and between humanity and nature.

## Ecological Harmony and the Place of Women

Where harmony and balance once existed, there now exists a fracture which has had detrimental consequences for the people in the ecological, social, economic and spiritual spheres. In the wananga sessions Koro Apirana teaches that once there was interlocking between gods and animals through human beings as intermediaries, but humanity, in its arrogance, drove a wedge through the original oneness of the world. Ironically, in his refusal to acknowledge the need for harmony between men and women, he has not only effectively blinded himself to the leadership potential in his great-granddaughter but also perpetuated a fracture that undermines the possibility for harmony. I will argue that this blindness to gender harmony, even though unwittingly pursued by Koro Apirana is an obstacle to oneness.

In the absence of her mother Rehua, who died shortly after her birth, Kahu looks to her grandmother Flowers for the model of feminine strength against her grandfather's formidable patriarchy. Nanny Flowers repeatedly reminds her

husband that she is a descendent of Muriwai, the greatest chief of her tribe, and Mihi Kotukutuku (1870-1956), a chief of Te Whanau-a-Apanui. As told by Angela Ballara (n.p.), Muriwai, according to one account, saved the Mataatua canoe from being swept onto rocks, resulting in the naming of Whakatane for her action (“to make myself a man”). Mihi Kotukutuku, a descendant of Muriwai, was among the few women of her generation who had the right to speak on the marae, at least within her own district. Often she did not speak herself, but there were occasions at important hui when, as the senior representative of her tribe, Mihi felt obliged to rise and speak.

Other tribal leaders challenged the right of women to take what was usually the role of male elders, and Mihi's position posed problems for them. In an exchange that became famous among Māori, a Te Arawa kaumatua told her to sit down and forbade her from trampling on the protocol of his marae. Mihi responded by giving her whakapapa, which established her own senior descent from Tama-te-kapua of Te Arawa canoe, and declared that he was junior to her. She then turned and exposed herself in the derisive act known as whakapohane, saying that he should not derogate women, since a woman had given him birth.

These are two significant exceptions—one mythic and the other historical—to the rule that women operate outside the sacred sphere. Despite Nanny Flowers' constant reminders, Koro Apirana willfully disregards the role of women in his quest to empower his people through male leadership. Koro may ignore this minority tradition of women acting in sacred roles, but as Kevin Dodd reminds us, Nanny makes certain he cannot claim ignorance of it (14).

This apparent myopic approach<sup>11</sup> by Koro Apirana is paralleled by the blinkered journey with which the ancient bull whale leads his herd. Taken with his nostalgic musings of his time with the whale rider, he leads the herd to the dangerous islands in the south, and needs persuading that at the end of the novel, the Paikea on his back is a young girl, and not his friend from centuries past. In his bliss at being ridden by his old friend, the whale dives deeply, but is stopped midway by his equally ancient lover who was also with him when Kahutia Te Rangi rode into Aotearoa; she redirects him to that time so he can discover for himself that the human on his back is not his master, but his descendant “flowering” in the time of need. His mind shifts from nostalgic memory to the actual present and future, and he realizes the connection that still binds him to this people, so he resurfaces to deposit her onto a bed of kelp, under the protection of

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<sup>11</sup> Brendan Hokowhitu explores how patriarchy within Māoridom came to be identified with “traditional” Maori masculinity in his article “The Death of Koro Paka: ‘Traditional’ Māori Patriarchy”. He attributes it to colonial constructions of Maori masculinity: “The ‘noble savage concept’ mutated with British imperial patriarchal values to produce a hybrid Māori patriarchy, now thought to be symptomatic of ‘traditional’ Māori masculinity. The hybridized forms of culture produced by the colonial union were, thereafter, seen as definitive of traditional indigenous culture” (Hokowhitu, “Death of Koro Paka” 119). Hokowhitu continues his argument with the claim that the imperial system Māori men inherited afforded them power by virtue of them being men, and furthermore, “Māori men were not entirely resistant to embracing this privilege” (119-120). Hokowhitu sees the compliance of Māori men as both a political strategy and a means of cultural survival (120). Finally, “[p]atriarchy served the useful purpose of aligning Māori culture with that of their invaders” (120). Therefore, Koro Apirana is the representative figure of the privilege Māori males inherited through the imperial system, although Ihimaera depicts this character along a continuum that includes traditional Māori views about gender equality, in particular those instances of gender balance derived from mythic sources that give authority to young Kahu’s empowerment as the descendant of a dual-gendered inheritance. Hokowhitu’s two articles therefore serve as crucial critiques about the role colonisation has played in the construction of so-called “traditional Māori masculinity”. Hokowhitu offers reasons why patriarchy has existed in Māoridom, namely due to the colonising process and the privileges it entailed for men, and makes it clear that this has never been Māori masculinity that was born from tradition. Ihimaera also concurs and his reclamation of mythic female ancestries provides a more authentic view of gender balance in Māoridom, while recognising the influence of colonisation upon gender roles through characters such as Koro Apirana.

dolphins, until she be discovered and given leadership by her people. The bull whale's willingness to see the wisdom of his lover's counsel prepares us for Koro's final conversion to the guidance he has received from the significant females in his life.

Dodd discusses the ideologies of the Hawai'ian activist and scholar, Haunani-Kay Trask, who emerges from a similar movement to that which spawned the Māori Renaissance. She bases her demands for sovereignty precisely on the symbiotic and reciprocal relationship between the land and its people (cited in Dodd 17). She holds that a mythic genealogy links her people specifically to the Hawaiian islands as children to their mother (Papahānaumoku), and to everything on the land as to siblings. Other mythologies among different native peoples link them to other types of land in the same way. The loss of these genealogies leads to the treatment of land as a resource, as real estate, and as a dump, hence to the "rape" of the mother and the exploitation of siblings. Trask continues that the future health of the diverse lands and ecosystems on the planet depends on the restoration of these specific mythic interconnections between the lands and their people; the homogenizing drives of global capitalism can only result in wholesale ruination and pollution. So, the reassertion of a robust sacred mythology has political and economic ramifications with regard to the issues of Indigenous sovereignty, autonomy, and rights of prior occupation in land disputes (Dodd 17). This is unsurprising since it was the original assertion of a Christian mythological worldview that helped justify the imperial claims that dispossessed native peoples to begin with (Dodd 18).

The novel enacts "specific mythic interconnections between land and people" in its reclamation of mythic resources through the stories of the whale

rider, Muriwai and Mihi Kotukutuku. The book enters, as one voice among many, into Māori discussions about the public role of women—in tradition, in history, and in the present. Ihimaera, as we have seen, lifts the Muriwai story from the set of traditions surrounding the naming of Whakatane. As she claims her descent from Muriwai and Mihi Kotukutuku, Kahu is embracing her mana through these ancestors. Kahu is not only a descendent of Muriwai on her father's side, but also through her mother. Thus Kahu's mana as leader comes to her through a cross-gendered inheritance that encompasses both her father, Porourangi, and her mother, Rehua. The whole idea of this other descendant of Muriwai, Rehua, wanting her daughter's name to be drawn from Porourangi's people, so that "at least her firstborn child would be linked to her father's people and land" (17) haunts the story. Significantly, she did not draw it from the pool of female names. Dodd further claims it is like naming a daughter Abraham in the Abrahamic traditions, or Moses, or Jesus, or Muhammad. He continues that it is deliberately provocative and seems aimed to incite unrest in Koro's patriarchal world, to cause disputation between Nanny and Koro, to reveal the necessity of taking a stand for women's leadership by Porourangi and Rawiri, and to provide a sense of destiny for Kahu herself (Dodd 18). While this assertion is sound, it is also a customary practice among many Māori tribes to name children after illustrious forebears. Rehua, afraid that she may die, is anxious to link her child to her father's people and land.

In the void left by Porourangi's departure and Kahu's insufficiency, Koro Apirana searches for another male heir from the men at Whāngārā. When Koro Apirana explains to the men that they will be undertaking instruction in the manner of the traditional wananga, he also relates to them story after story about his

own instruction under a tohunga many years before. The instruction had taken the form of many tests and challenges: tests of memory, as in remembering long lines of genealogy, and tests of dexterity, wisdom, physical and psychological strength (38). One of the tests involved a deep dive to retrieve a carved stone dropped there by the tohunga. The tohunga could also talk to the beasts and creatures of the sea. Koro Apirana laments that this power to “interlock” has now been lost to man. Near the end of his own training Koro Apirana was taken into the tohunga’s nikau hut and instructed to “ngaua” – “bite” his big toe – a symbolic gesture of inheriting knowledge. At the very same moment this is told, Kahu, the baby, is found to be biting on Koro Apirana’s toe, marking her as the next recipient of his knowledge. Throughout the novel Kahu is seen to be completing these challenges, but it is only at the end of the novel, when Koro Apirana is presented with the stone and sees Kahu astride the whale, that he realises what the signs had been alluding to all along. Kahu is the representation of the *oneness* that ancient Māori believe is requisite for the ability to interlock or commune with nature and between genders, and in her case this oneness is expressed through a female.

## Colonial Disruptions and Pacific Bonds

In addition to the exploration of the ecological and gender issues, there is the post-colonial investigation, a continuing preoccupation for the author as a man struggling “with the dilemma of being Māori in a postmodern world” (Ihimaera, “Magnificent Accident” 359). From Whāngārā, Rawiri travels to Australia. Ihimaera uses Rawiri to provide a focal point of view for exploring the issues of post-coloniality in Aotearoa-New Zealand and other Pacific countries. Alice Te Punga Somerville provides a comprehensive investigation into this section of the

novella. Urban migration for many Māori causes a fracture from traditional ways. The move to the cities and away from papakainga (home lands) includes diasporic Māori who gather in Australian cities such as Sydney due to its relatively close proximity to New Zealand, and its promises of wealth. During his time in Sydney, Rawiri writes of the cousins who are reluctant for their family to see the way they live, “But always, in the early morning, when the sunlight was beginning to crack the midnight glamour, the memories would come seeping through. ‘How’s our Nanny? How’s our Koro? If you write to them, don’t tell them that you saw us like *this*.’ [...] they weren’t embarrassed, but hiding the way they lived was one way of maintaining the respect” (51-52). Away from familial obligation or the collective vision of the tribe, individual pursuits can take hold. Engaging in activities like prostitution become part of the fabric of big cities like Sydney, though the price “in [their] search for fame, fortune, power and success” comes at a cost that threatens the respect of the whānau (52). Sydney thereby becomes a “cloak” under which they can hide the way they live and maintain the respect of their whānau.

Rawiri settles into city life and moves into a flat with a friend Jeff whom he met playing rugby league. While they are living in Sydney, the racial difference between them is submerged. Their friendship is light-hearted and humorous and they share the same interests in rugby league and surfing. Thus the relationship of coloniser and indigene is not highlighted, and Jeff is not racially positioned until the two men move to Papua New Guinea. Although Rawiri’s description of his friend’s background parallels his own in that like him Jeff shoulders the burdensome ambitions of the parents and elders, Rawiri is about to discover the difference between them. This is a difference that views the Pacific

on the basis of continued colonial exploitation, on the one hand, and identification with it on the basis of Indigeneity, on the other hand. Jeff's whiteness is made explicit for the first time when he is summoned home by his parents. His mother says, "Your father's [...] had a run of rotten luck with the workers this year, and you know what the natives are like, always drinking" (54). His mother's racism collapses all Indigenous people into a singular type ("natives"), and this links the specific situation in Papua New Guinea to colonial racism globally, including New Zealand, of which Rawiri himself is a "native". Despite Rawiri's apparent equality with his friend in Australia, over the course of two years in Papua New Guinea Jeff's family redraws the boundaries of their relationship, aided by the explicit structures of white settler racism such as the Bridge Club (Te Punga Somerville 66).

Rawiri initially identifies with Jeff's family and their project of domesticating the landscape, through the use of the personal pronoun "we", effectively rendering himself as a collaborator:

I doubt if it can ever be tamed of its temperatures, soaring into sweat zones, or its terrain, so much of a crucible of crusted plateaus and valleys, and its tribalism. But *we* tried, and I think *we* won some respite from the land, even if only for a short time. (56-57; emphasis added)

However, he also draws on a particularly Māori view of their effect on the "countryside" and in this manner he differentiates himself from the colonial intrusion, "Man may carve his moko on the earth but, once he ceases to be vigilant, Nature will take back what man has once achieved to please his vanity" (57). Because the moko is a form of tattoo that reflects genealogies and histories, labour and the physical structures of the plantation become an expression of identity and history.

Rawiri recognizes that the carving of this genealogy and history will be ultimately resisted by the landscape when “Nature...take[s] back what man had once achieved” (57).

At first he describes his observations of Papua New Guinea politics as an outsider, marvelling at “the attempts by the Government to transplant national identity and customs onto the colonial face of the land” (56). He then proceeds to outline the barriers to the transplantation, turning to Māori terminology. The first barrier is that there was no pan-Papua-New-Guinean national identity, no concept of a homogenous nation, but rather that of a nation possessed of an innate diversity, arising from the impressive array of “iwi” groups who followed their own specific protocols and spoke their own language based on their tribal groups. Secondly, there were many outside influences on their inheritance, and the new technology demanded that the people had to live “one thousand years in one lifetime”, from loincloth to the three-piece suit and computer knowledge in a simple step (57). In a parallel discourse to Rawiri’s, Porourangi also questions Māori ability to cope with the new challenges and technology in the new century, which echoes the claims about “steps” taken by Indigenous people in Papua New Guinea. The juxtaposition of these two conversations about technology and preparedness for certain futures suggests a parallel between the situation of Indigenous peoples in Papua New Guinea and Aotearoa.

Rawiri’s test of where he belongs in the colonial-Indigenous divide comes when the car driven by Jeff, in which he is one of the occupants, strikes Bernard, a “native” of Papua New Guinea. Not only is Bernard a friend of Rawiri, but a young man full of promise, educated in the Western system. Rawiri’s position is no longer among the “we” who “tame” the countryside, but rather he is cast in a

limbo status as the car crunches into Bernard, throwing the latter into the air before he smashes into the ground. Te Punga Somerville tells us that Rawiri is forced to confront the impossibility of occupying a middle space within the sharply binarised hierarchy of Papua New Guinea's colonial context – he must stay in the blood-splattered car, or he must get out (Te Punga Somerville 168). Rawiri's response is unequivocal:

‘Let me out,’ I hissed. ‘Let me *out*. That’s no native out there. That’s *Bernard*.’ A *cous* is a *cous*. (60-61)

Rawiri's decision to leave the vehicle speaks to the realisation of the impossibility of occupying this middle space between native and white, while Jeff's action of driving away from the fatally wounded Bernard is an articulation of his acceptance of the racist and violent colonial project in Papua New Guinea. The colonial system in Papua New Guinea operates to protect the hierarchies in place, as the decision of the inquest suggests:

It was an accident, of course. A native walking carelessly on the side of the road. A cloud covering the moon for a moment. The native shouldn't have been there anyway. (61)

This decision lays the blame for Bernard's death squarely at his own feet, merely referring to him as a “native walking carelessly” on the road. Having made the connection -- that Rawiri is himself interchangeable with any other “native”, he heads home. This event is one of the three events connected to Rawiri that precipitates his return home. The second is the birth of Porourangi's second daughter, which Rawiri recognises as another obstacle to leadership and succession in Koro Apirana's eyes. The third sign is the portent of a giant whale with a gleaming moko on his head seen in a strange cloud formation (61-62). This last

omen supports Rawiri's messenger-like status as one who recognizes the signs throughout the novel.

Though Rawiri is not a native of Papua New Guinea, or white, but one occupying the in-between space belonging to neither group, his stint there serves as a comment on the postcolonial position in New Zealand. Ihimaera is highlighting that 1980s Papua New Guinea has its own unique challenges, where the Indigenous people have been confronted with advancing from primitive practices to modernity in the space of one lifetime. The incident in which Bernard is run down by Jeff unintentionally, but left to die quite deliberately on the side of the road, is testament to the value a native holds in his own country according to the coloniser. Thus Rawiri's foray in to Papua New Guinea provides him with an example of a country where the coloniser and Indigene are binarised with power sharply in favor of the coloniser. Within New Zealand the power structures are still defined by Pākehā, but the value of the comparison between the two countries is in the consideration of the advancement of technology. While Papua New Guinea has had to adjust from the loincloth to the three piece suit in one lifetime, Māori have had four to five generations to respond to the technology of the Pākehā and the colonial agenda. It appears the inference to be drawn from Ihimaera's comparison between the two countries is that the value of Indigenous lives is given to us through the lens of the coloniser. Assimilate to the Pākehā and modern ways, and inevitably the position of the "native", as Bernard's case clearly shows, will always be as a lesser copy of the master race.

## Towards a Poetics and Ontology of Oneness

Despite an obvious gender and eco-political thrust, it is in the novel's ideological and poetical staging of a transcultural conflict that the magical-realist elements are given an ontological rather than purely discursive validity. In other words, the novel asks for belief in the spiritual and supernatural as much as in the rational. In the village meeting-house Koro Apirana lectures:

'You have all seen the whale,' he said. 'You have all seen the sacred sign tattooed on its head. Is the moko there by accident or by design? Why did a whale of its appearance strand itself here and not at Wainui? Does it belong in the real world or the unreal world?'

'The real,' someone called.

'Is it natural or supernatural?'

'It is supernatural,' a second voice said.

Koro Apirana put up his hands to stop the debate. 'No,' he said, 'it is *both*. It is a reminder of the oneness which the world once had. It is the pito joining past and present, reality and fantasy. It is both. It is *both*,' he thundered, 'and if we have forgotten the communion then we have ceased to be Māori.' (96)

Koro Apirana refers to the holistic frameworks within Māoridom, which show a complementary relationship between opposing forces, such as the juxtaposition of the real and unreal (Ihimaera, "A Māori Perspective" 53-4). Ihimaera argues that the loss of this perspective stems from the cultural dislocation that is a consequence of urban migration. He repeatedly makes the point that these migrations "drove the wedge between the old and the new", emphasizing the difficulty urbanized Māori faced in imbibing the traditional concepts and worldview (Ihimaera,

*The Matriarch* 232). In his final statement above, Koro urges the reestablishment of rapport and communion with nature.

The novel nurtures this idea as it carves out its own space in regards to the use of the Māori language within the book as a link to a different worldview. Eckstein quotes Stephen Slemon from his essay “Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse”, noting:

In the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other [...], a situation which creates disjunction within each separate discursive system, rending them with gaps, absences, and silences. (409; qtd. in Eckstein 100)

In the Heinemann version of the book, such ‘gaps, absences and silences’ are indeed supported by the poetics and politics of language. Thus *The Whale Rider* is interspersed with the Māori language from the start and in increasing degrees, so that, towards the end of the novel, entire passages are rendered in te reo Māori. Eckstein continues that for readers who do not speak Māori such words and passages come as obstacles, and indeed produce gaps and silences. The opening paragraph of the novel serves to illustrate this:

In the old days, in the years that have gone before us, the land and sea felt a great emptiness, a yearning. The mountains were like the poutama, the stairway to heaven, and the lush green rainforest was a rippling kakahu of many colours. The sky was iridescent paua, swirling with the kowhaiwhai patterns of wind and clouds [...]. (4)

The first Māori word ‘poutama’ is more or less translated as “stairway” in the immediate narrative context; the following words, however, have to be inferred

through their syntagmatic relations. Processes of syntagmatic inference come to their limits with “kakahu”, “paua” and “kowhaiwhai”, because here the gaps and silences reach beyond the linguistic level to problems of cultural translatability (Eckstein 101). “Kakahu” may be interpreted as clothes but is also the name for the intricate cloaks often made of beautiful bird feathers. The “paua” is a shellfish whose shell of iridescent colours the novel evokes, but which also plays a highly significant part in Māori art and spirituality. This is even more so with the term “kowhaiwhai,” referring to the elaborate traditional scroll painting on rafters in Māori meeting-houses; the patterns represent tribal lineage, and thus introduces one of the novel’s core themes. This already shows that the use of the Māori language in *The Whale Rider* is instrumental in continually unfolding an alternative cosmogony, which resists satisfactory expression in the English language, and which readers may experience as unsettling gaps of comprehension (Eckstein 101). The poetics of the language are evident in the music of the words themselves; the beautiful visual element evoked by the words is supported by the beauty of their sounds.

It is through this discursive fracture between English and Māori that the original edition of *The Whale Rider* inherently resists easy appropriation into exoticist cliché (Eckstein 101). Ihimaera also resists the Western novel form by incorporating the spiral method of story-telling. This features the myth of Paikea and the whale as a starting point, the story spirals out to the cetacean-mythic and human narratives but enfolds within it the incarnate link of past and present in the figure of Kahu, and spirals out again in a future that envisions the restoration of balance between the sexes, the generations, and between man and nature.

The figure of Kahu thereby brings the past and its traditions to a contemporary context so that a future can be constructed. As Ihimaera suggests,

For us, there can never be only one story or one ending. All tribal cultures know that the one great truth to our narratives is that they do not end. They go on and on, an unending spiral going forward and returning in a balance of constant tension. (*The Dream Swimmer* 313)

Likewise, when Kahu hears an argument between her grandfather and grandmother, she likens their voices to those of the whales: “You two sounded just like the kai karanga and the koroua arguing” (121). Steinwand describes this kind of connection as a “restoration”, which is “not merely a nostalgic return to a pre-colonial or an invented Māori past”. Rather, “this restoration revalues Māoritangi - Māori identity - as the dynamic interaction between land and sea, between local human cultures and the immediate natural world, between precolonial tradition and postcolonial survivance” (Steinwand 187).

Though *The Matriarch* invites all New Zealanders to be part of the narrator’s idea of nationhood through the symbolic locus of the meeting house Rongopai, it is difficult to identify the same ideology in *The Whale Rider*. *The Matriarch* supports a collective identity for the Māori community, which envisages a culture that draws upon Māori as much as Euro-Christian elements, and merges them into a syncretic whole. *The Whale Rider*, on the other hand, is concerned with the restoration of balance and harmony in line with a Māori worldview, which includes the reclamation of nature in the genealogical link with mankind.

## *Whale Rider* – Female Empowerment

Continuing with this theme of a never-ending story could explain why Ihimaera agreed to a film adaptation. He was an Associate Producer for the film and Caro collaborated with local iwi as advisors during the film's production. The film begins with a view of the sea on the eastern coast of New Zealand and the deep blue marine world inhabited by the whales, who connect the Ngati Konohi tribe of Whāngārā to the sacred traditions of their ancestors. In the film Kahu is known as Pai, short for Paikea.

The film opens with a triple narrative of loss (De Souza 17). Pai suffers the traumatic loss of her twin brother and mother, who both die in childbirth, and Koro Apirana suffers the loss of an appropriate heir. Devastated, her father Porourangi departs for Europe to pursue a career producing modernist sculpture, leaving Pai with her paternal grandfather, Koro Apirana, the Whāngārā village chief, and her grandmother, Nanny Flowers. The film recommences 12 years later.

Koro has no need for a granddaughter and she is a constant reminder of his past and future loss. Porourangi, grieved by the loss of his wife and son, and unwilling to have another baby so soon, leaves behind the burden of his chiefly and whānau duties. Before leaving, he names his daughter Paikea, after the tribe's tipuna, therefore marking her as the true heir to the tribal leadership position. Her grandmother supports Pai in her quest for recognition and Pai invests all her energy into learning Māori traditions. Not only does she focus on male-dominated activities like learning the taiaha (a long-handled, close-quarter weapon), but she also focuses on female activities such as learning waiata (songs) and stories.

The main omissions in the film compared to the novella are the absence of the whales' voices, the lack of any post-colonial foray into other countries on the Pacific Rim, and the non-reliance on female mythic and historical heroines. In the film adaptation, the whale rider's supernatural ability to interlock with nature is articulated predominantly through the voice-over of Pai, thus giving her agency in her role as narrator. Her voice-over narration introduces us to the family and the events surrounding her birth. At the film's beginning, Pai's voice seems to emanate from a murky blue depth that is coincident with that "glassy sea known as the Pathway of the Sun" (*The Whale Rider* 16), thus associating the girl's voice with a primeval moment prior to the creation of Western civilisation (Wiles 182). Though this gesture is not commensurate with the articulation of a founding myth, it is an attempt to begin the film with an eerie, supernatural sense.

As tribal leader, the continuation of strong leadership is a vital consideration for Koro Apirana as it is important for ensuring the survival of the tribe. The void left by Porourangi's departure and the death of Pai's twin brother already places Pai at a disadvantage in his eyes. While Nanny Flowers is a constant source of strength and wisdom, Pai's life is profoundly affected by the emotional inaccessibility of her grandfather, who remains bitter about the death of his grandson, whom he regards as the sole legitimate heir to the chieftaincy. Pai is eventually excluded from her grandparents' home and the whare wananga (house of learning). However, something inherently spiritual and irrepressible keeps bringing her back. This spiritual drive is largely to be implied from her actions. In her knowing transgression of tapu and protocol, Pai seems to respond to her destiny as she unsettles the hierarchy of genders and, like Muriwai, "acts like a man," fulfilling the tasks of a leader through her successful completion of all tests.

At one point Pai decides to go and live with her father Porourangi, but she is summoned home by the mystical sounds of the sea. She stands at the threshold of the wharekai (food hall), where she greets Koro. Immersed in conversation with other male kaumatua (elders) in their search for answers to the community's dilemma, he sternly replies, "Not now, Pai." Wiles states: "While the meeting-house clearly serves as the focal point of the Whāngārā settlement, it forecloses the feminine voice, thereby reinforcing the sense of the unhomely in the home for women" (183). This is partly true, but it is also important to note that as a general-ity the first voice that is heard during a welcoming pōwhiri, and is included in other oral performatives like waiata and karakia, is that of a woman. The film represents the female entitlements by placing the child Pai as one of the first voices to be heard in her role as kaikaranga (responding to the ceremonial call), though this is unlikely to occur in a real life situation due to Pai's young age. However, the film uses this as an opportunity to give Pai further agency as a speaking subject in a tradition that appears to discriminate against females. Pai's voice-over attempts to repair the connection between the spiritual and real worlds as it appears to come to us from the murky depths of the sea, and appears to surround us, so that her inner thoughts take precedence as one of the main voices of the film. It is also her voice that calls the whales to the beach.

Pai is denied admission to the whare wananga where Koro Apirana provides the first-born sons with training in the rituals and customs of the old people. When the boys arrive at the marae for the first time, Nanny summons Pai for the opening karanga, as detailed above. Despite Koro's protests, Nanny begins the karanga to which Pai replies as she leads the young boys on, "Karanga mai karanga mai karanga mai" (*Call to me call to me call to me*). Once seated in the

marae atea Pai attempts to sit in the front row with the men. She is scolded by Koro because she is a girl. When she refuses to move, he throws her from the marae, prohibiting her right to speak. Despite Koro's protests, Pai feels compelled to act in a way that is traditionally reserved for men. As a young child, her spiritual side is driving her to these actions. She is aware of tradition and the operation of tapu and noa and the resulting prohibitions. Though she is descended from chiefs, and is of sufficiently high birth, Koro forecloses her right to speak. As in the novella, Pai navigates her way through the tests meant for leaders and masters these challenges, which include tests of memory, dexterity with the taiaha and retrieving the whale tooth.

In an earlier event, Paikea joins her grandfather when he is repairing a small boat engine and poses a question to him about her ancestors. He shows her a rope, observing that each strand is one of her ancestors; together they form an unbroken tie to their ancestor Paikea and the whale on which he rode. Her grandfather twists the rope around the engine and pulls, but it breaks. He leaves to get another rope. However, Paikea ties a knot in the broken rope, and then proceeds to start the boat engine. This angers Koro and he admonishes her. The symbolism is clear – Koro rejects the possibility that she, as a girl, could re-link her people with their ancestors and thereby revive them (Dodds 3). What may have been implied by the rope is that in addition to the linking of generations, each contributing strand attests to the equality between the genders, thus unsettling the hierarchies of genders that Koro Apirana adheres to. This interpretation of the rope symbolism supports Ihimaera's notion of a dual-gendered inheritance in which Pai receives her status as heir through her father Porourangi and through

Koro Apirana on the one hand, and through Nanny Flowers from Muriwai, on the other hand.

A further example of Koro's rejection of Pai as heir is enacted during the wananga sessions Koro holds for the first-born sons to teach them the ancient ways in order to find a new leader. Paikea is excluded but eavesdrops on the sessions nevertheless. Koro is aware she is there and plays on the boys' castration complex, in a graphic display which illustrates the physical difference between boys and girls. In his way Koro's teaching of Kahutia Te Rangi's chant stresses how this foundational myth relates to the young Paikea differently from the way it does to the boys by emphasising their male privilege and her lack.

Following this incident, one of the young boys, Hemi, sees Paikea lurking about with her taiaha; he lunges at her with his and she both defends herself and disarms him. But the noise draws Koro out. "Do you know what you've done?" he asks. "You have broken the tapu of this school. On this marae, the one place where our old ways are upheld." She apologizes but he replies, "You're not sorry. Right from the beginning, you knew this wasn't for you, but you keep coming back." This highlights the inherent force in her that drives her to fulfil her destiny as the future leader despite her grandfather's obstruction. As mentioned, she is aware of the operation of tapu. Her actions move beyond the essentialist labels of female and male to prove to her grandfather and others that she holds the necessary attributes to be leader by completing the traditional tests of leadership.

Within the novella Kahu reconnects with the whales through the use of the Māori language. At the end-of-year concert she delivers her winning speech in Māori, reciting her whakapapa, and stating that her main aim in life is to fulfill the wishes of her Koro and of the iwi (70). Koro is the exemplar of a person she

wishes to be. Rawiri, the narrator, tells us that Koro's absence from the concert had left Kahu feeling "aching" and defeated (71). In the film, as leader of the Māori Culture Group, she addresses her speech to her absent grandfather. She is not a leader yet, but could be regarded as the heir to her grandfather's chiefly position and to the speaking privileges it carries. She assumes her role as a breaker of tradition but also establishes her ancestral lineage as she addresses the empty chair in the front row:

My name is Paikea Apirana. And I come from a long line of chiefs, stretching all the way back to Hawaiki, where our ancient ones are, the ones that first heard the land crying and sent a man. His name was also Paikea and I am his most recent descendant. But I was not the leader my grandfather was expecting. And by being born, I broke the line back to the ancient ones. [. . .]. But we can learn. And if the knowledge is given to everyone, we can have lots of leaders. And soon, everyone will be strong, not just the ones that've been chosen.

Pai delivers her speech, not only to assert her new identity, but to articulate her hopes for the future in a statement which calls for collective leadership as a source of strength.

Another symbol that supports Pai's calls for collective leadership is the waka (canoe) carved by Porourangi, which lies unfinished and abandoned on the beach, a relic of the dreams for Māori nationhood. The waka is a sedentary symbol, limited by its inability to move beyond the beach and its community. In the novella, the plot line spirals out to include other nations in the Pacific, before returning to Aotearoa. This same movement is enacted in the film, only at the end, as the community launches the waka into the ocean, men and women togeth-

er, in a shared vision for the future, in which the novel seeks to repair the divisions between the gender and between humans and nature. In the interim, the waka offers a place of solitude and shelter, close as it is to the sea, for young Pai.

The sea and its creatures remain inaccessible to her grandfather and his male students but serve as an empowering space for Pai. Still searching for a boy to succeed him as chief, Koro takes the boys out to sea, where he throws in his whale tooth and asks them to retrieve it. When the seaweed closes over the whale tooth, effectively obscuring it from the boys, Koro is devastated. Pai is taken to stay with Uncle Rawiri as Koro falls into a deep depression. From the dark Koro calls on the ancient ones. However, this time it is Pai's voice-over narration that usurps the supernatural authority of the male voice in this scene to state that the ancient ones are not listening. It is only when Pai herself calls to the ancient ones that the whales respond. Pai's voice-over and mystical capacity to interlock with nature transcends colonial or patriarchal domination as she appears to be driven by her spiritual force, which seeks to repair the fracture between the spiritual and corporeal, and assert the complementary nature of the sexes. While the novel uses two narrative modes, human-realist and whale-mythical, Pai's voice-over shifts between both dimensions in the film.

In the face of Koro's prohibition to stay out of tapu areas normally reserved for men, Pai is forced to call to the ancient ones from her father's waka as an alternative to Koro's failure to summon them. Balanced on the periphery of the coastline, the forgotten waka serves Pai as an alternative home, which connects her to the sea, her true spiritual abode. Pai's transformation of the unfinished canoe into a space of female performance from narrator to a voice that the whales

recognize takes her beyond the preconceptions and prohibitions of patriarchal society.

This private space that she inhabits within the waka serves to commemorate the mythic past, which is allegorically expressed in the loss of family members and/or community but also allows her to look ahead to the unforeseeable future. Pai's destiny is clear, later in the film, when she retrieves the whale tooth from the ocean floor; the sounds of the ancient ones guide her to it and thus assure her ascendance to the chieftainship. In her unique ability to transform the village landscape through the traditional gestures, language and songs of the Māori, Pai usurps the traditionally male role of the storyteller and rewrites the initial scenario of loss as a narrative of resistance (Wiles 186).

On discovering the foreshore scattered with beached and dying whales, Koro Apirana asks the heart-felt question, "Ko wai te he" (*Who is to blame?*). He sees the beaching of the whales as a test and as a mobilising communal action in Whāngārā, and regards the fate of these sea creatures as intertwined with the plight of the people. Confronted with the dying animals, they attempt to turn the largest whale around in the hope that he will lead the herd to sea again. In an attempt to face the ocean, Rawiri ties a rope around the whale's tail. As in the scene with the boat engine, the rope breaks. In sympathy with the seeming loss of his people, this whale "wanted to die". As Koro explains, "There wasn't a reason to live anymore". At this realisation, the people of Whāngārā retreat, defeated, to let the last of the whales die alone.

In the face of this crushing defeat, the child, Paikea, approaches the large bull whale. She presses noses with him in the tradition of greeting and exchanges life's breath. Her words which had initially called the whales to their demise are

now insufficient to encourage the whales' return to the sea, so that she relies on the tradition of welcome and greeting to establish whakapapa links. She mounts the whale, and together they return to the sea, the surviving whales behind them, a symbol of the continued survival of the Ngati Konohi people, made possible by Pai's sacrifice. Koro sees Pai riding the whale and cannot comprehend what he is witnessing. It is not until Nanny Flowers presents Koro Apirana with the whale tooth retrieved by Pai that he finally recognises her place as the whale rider, and the future leader of the tribe. Though Pai urges the whale back to the ocean, and tells her grandfather, "It's OK Paka", the bull whale, along with a smaller whale, takes her too deep into the ocean, well beyond her tolerable limits, until Pai presumably passes out from lack of oxygen and floats off into the ocean's depths.

Fortunately, Pai survives and at her hospital bed Koro's final admission is, "I am a fledging, new to flight". Koro acknowledges his blindness, and recognises Paikea's leadership as the knot that ties the present generation to the ancestors, as well as being the embodiment of the ancestors themselves (Dodd 6).

The omission of obvious signs of Pai's spirituality in the film, compared with the novella, places more emphasis on realistic actions, such as in the retrieval of Koro's whale tooth (stone in the novel) and the riding of the whale, rather than the supernatural or magical realist elements in the novella. In contrast, the signs that Kahu is the future leader of the people are dotted throughout the novel, which include her ability to kōrero ("interlock") with sea-life, her completion of the traditional tests, the retrieval of Koro's stone, her progression to orator, and the irrefutable riding of the whale. These all point to the spirituality that drives Kahu to prove her worthiness as leader, and to the processes of destiny that determine her fate.

Devised for international audiences whose sense of magic is diminished, by the insufficient reliance on a mythic past, the film gives the impression that Pai's success is attainable for anyone, thereby failing to link it to her spirituality as the novella does. The role and function of the myths are also underplayed. Muriwai is referred to only once by Nanny Flowers, without the accompanying story. Mihi Kotukutuku is omitted altogether. However, their ancestor Paikea's chant is referred to on more than one occasion when the children sing this at the end-of-year concert and when Koro teaches the first-born sons in the meeting-house. In the absence of a mother, and the mythical and historical figures of Muriwai and Mihi Kotukutuku, Pai finds the source of her feminine strength through her grandmother, who supports and champions her path to leader of the tribe, and also through the symbolic locus of the waka.

Prentice points out that further omissions from the film include the absence of the whales' narrative point of view, so that this displacement at once relegates whales to a benign, natural position more familiar to a twenty-first century audience (104-105; qtd. in Kennedy 207). As mentioned, the symbolic locus for maintaining the focus on traditional Māori beliefs is in the image of the waka (canoe), left abandoned and unfinished on the beach. In the novel Koro represents a life steeped in the traditional Māori beliefs. Kahu represents a future for the Māori nation premised on traditional Māori beliefs and its renewal as a female aspiring to leadership in a seemingly patriarchal society.

Another important difference from the novella is the film's depoliticisation of the book, which Mandy Treagus maintains leads "to a romanticisation of Māori culture [. . .] in which the impact of colonialism can be ignored". "While *Whale Rider* is a highly successful New Zealand film," she writes, "it may not serve the

Māori pursuit of sovereignty as well as it at first appears to.” Pascale De Souza comes to a similar conclusion. He argues that while *Whale Rider* undoubtedly contributes to the celebration of Māori women, “the contradiction between Māori identity and twentieth-century life ‘continues unresolved in practical reality’” (25). Antje M. Rauwerda wonders if the positive international reactions to the film suggest something about ‘western’ viewers: “Perhaps [we] would so much like to be convinced that Indigenous populations can recover from European settlement that a film celebrating traditional Māoriness in a contemporary context relieves our consciences” (qtd. in Dodd 7). Tania Ka’ai comments on the scene when Paikea sits on the front row of the paepae, which no child would do, as an example of an outsider (Caro) steeped in “Eurocentric feminism”, misinterpreting Māori rituals as degrading to women. Ka’ai examines Māori leadership, uncovering an intrinsic flexibility and none of Koro’s rigid stress on male primogeniture (11). Importantly, politics and the broader political context that shape the lives of the Māori community are almost entirely absent from the film. The village is represented as a self-contained social space. But what is precisely at stake in the quest for a new leader for the community are issues such as what leadership will involve, what struggles the community faces, and what the ‘trouble’ is that precipitates the crisis of the whale stranding. The social and ecological imbalances that precipitate both the human and cetacean themes are not depicted as clearly as they have been in the novella. This allows the film to be enjoyed for its visual beauty and ‘family story’. Prentice claims there is no challenge to viewers to consider cultural politics as anything more than the most generalized and aestheticized senses of cultural identity (cited in Kennedy 208).

Ihimaera's novella ends with Kahu waking up in hospital, after having nearly drowned while riding the whale. In this way, *The Whale Rider* ends on a note of intimacy, with the whales, bringing together Koro and Kahu and thereby resolving the break in the conjunction between past and present, myth and reality, which Ihimaera describes throughout the text with the term "*interlock*". Caro's film adds one more scene after this moment, effectively extrapolating this connection from the familial to the tribal, giving the last word to Ngati Konohi and Whāngārā. In *Whale Rider*'s finale, set on the beach in front of the *marae*, the restored *waka*, led by Koro and Paikea, is set to sea with a traditional send-off. Until this moment, the film turns entirely around the village and its people, with all outside movement and interaction thwarted or denied: Koro scorns Porourangi's career as an artist overseas, rejects his son's foreign girlfriend, and Paikea tries to leave with her father but feels inexplicably drawn to stay. *Whale Rider*'s closing sequence features two significant breaks with local tradition and with Ihimaera's novella. The changes point to a future non-insularity for this remote East Coast community.

Porourangi's new wife is not a Māori woman as she is in the novel, but German, and instead of a local Ngati Konohi action song, the film closes with the chanting of "Ka Mate", the *haka* performed by the national rugby team, and an internationally recognized symbol of New Zealand. The mixed marriage and well known *haka* add points of identification for national and international audiences. The fact that these elements are clearly foreign to Ngati Konohi, but nonetheless accepted by the tribe in the story, is a more exaggerated version of Paikea's own newly accepted leadership. This scene indicates, as Kennedy claims, that the process of "hybrid authenticity" involves a translation across generations (from

Koro to Kahu), nations (from Ngati Konohi to Germany), and cultural codes (local *haka* to the All Blacks' *haka*) (208).

The film references 'the local' in the sense of a community with a definitive link to a specific region. The village, Whāngārā, is presented in almost solely self-contained terms. Though Porourangi departs after the death of his wife and son to work in Germany, there are no scenes shot outside the village and region itself. The only outside person is Ana, Porourangi's German girlfriend, pictured with the iwi as the formerly abandoned waka begins its new journey. Specifically the local is defined by, and attached to, the particular myths and ancestry of its Indigenous Māori community. Nevertheless despite the specificity of its local, Indigenous Māori context, the film relies on its story's 'universal' struggles between tradition and change, intergenerational tensions, and the quest for 'self' through recognition by others.

The final scene shows Pai, like her ancestress Muriwai, take command of the waka, restoring it to its position of pride. Seated in the centre beside her grandfather, Pai is surrounded by a crew composed of the male members of the Apirana family and both men and women who together move gracefully with the rhythmic chant "Hoe Hoe Hoea ra ..." that she provides, as they paddle the craft toward an open ocean. Finally, it is Pai's voice that we hear, not merely as a voice-over but in the main film. Here Pai plots her own future course and that of her people with the pronouncement: "I am not a prophet, but I know that our people will keep going forward, all together, with all of our strength." This is an echo of her earlier speech at the end-of-year concert.

## Conclusion of Chapter Two

*The Whale Rider* confirms that Ihimaera is concerned with affirming a distinctly Māori mythological and aesthetic tradition to support the cohesion of Māori nationhood in the contemporary context. Therefore the novella's themes include the reclamation of mythic prototypes and the renewal of tradition. Gender and inheritance are the focus of the relationship between Kahu and Koro Apirana, and sovereignty is explored in Rawiri's travels to two other Pacific countries. The novella attends to the deficits it sees through healing the fracture between genders, man and nature, and the past and present. The themes of gender and inheritance are the central focus of the film, and in its limited treatment of the novella's many themes, the sacred function of the originating myth of the whale rider has been compromised.

The book, therefore, is filled with a sense of ancestral providence: Kahu is called to restore the people to the promise of their original, collective mission in the world, one of uniquely interlocking with this environment (and therefore of their being implicitly tied to the need to reclaim their land). This aspect is reinforced by the story of the whale, trying to navigate through the waters of human cruelty and neglect to rediscover his lost link to humanity.

To restore the oneness with the ocean and the creatures it sustains, Ihimaera claims ancient heritage in the novella through Kahu, a female protagonist, who emerges as a link to past wisdom and a model of interconnectedness with the cetacean presence in Māori culture and identity. The conciliation with past and present is extended to include the repair of the intergenerational link in the grandparent-grandchild bond. As with *The Matriarch*, the grandparent-grandchild bond has become emblematic in Māori cultural productions of a Māori political renaiss-

sance in Aotearoa. This bond has been mobilized as a symbol of unity and political power that has worked to restore Māori pride in their cultural heritage and assert their legal and political claims to illegally appropriated Māori lands and natural resources (Allen 128).

Kahu's identity stems from her heritage – she is named after her Māori ancestor – and demonstrates her innate connection with the whales: “Can't you hear them? I've been listening to them for ages now. [. . .] The whales are still singing” (122). Later, when the ancient bull whale strands himself on the beach at Whāngārā, Kahu climbs onto its back and leads the surviving members of the pod back to the ocean. She remains on the whale's back as it dives beneath the sea. This spectacular scene revitalizes the Māori ancestral image of the whale rider breaking down the boundaries between human and whale. Ihimaera thus engages himself in a kind of multi-species ethnography, which advocates a radical rethinking that restores the whakapapa links between all living things.

In contrast, the film *Whale Rider* highlights the fact that recapitulations of sacred stories can be tricky. The film *is* reluctant to articulate the original story as the founding myth of a particular people the way the book does. It gives little information on the myth of Kahutia Te Rangi and the whale and its place among the Māori tribes. In fact, we are given so little about the whale, that its self-identification with this people remains elusive even at the end. So the film reduces the myth simply to how a people came to inhabit a land, losing its context by omitting the special relationship with the land, sea and the whales. Because the dialectic between land and the people is so enfeebled at the level of the original myth, its recapitulation in the film becomes mainly a cultural renaissance through female empowerment. Ritual in the finale, at the launching of the canoe, becomes

an end in itself, the spectacle of a heritage, rather than a means to cosmic, environmental, and social renewal.

The film has much to commend it, but it is primarily in terms of relationships. It works through the multiple tensions of the love that a grandfather has for his granddaughter, the resentment a leader feels towards someone he perceives is sapping the potential of his people, the resilient forgiveness of a granddaughter for her grandfather's hurtful actions, and the determination of an adolescent girl to restore her people's dignity through her mastery of tradition despite the obstacles. Therefore, the transformations of the medium from novel to film give prominence to gender issues but they come at a certain cost.

The extension of the whale rider myth to women works in the film, but only at the expense of its original sacred function. The film drives a wedge between the myth's sacred function of affirming interconnectedness and whakapapa links between man, land and sea and all living beings, and its extended intention to empower women.

What is it about women and girls that invites Ihimaera's fictional investigation of their role as leaders? He sees Māori women as a driving force for change, being as they are doubly Other-ed by their femaleness and by their status as Māori in a Pākehā-dominated society. He appears to use the idea of women, who begin from a place of deficit, as a symbol of the survival of Māori nationhood. The mythic and historical prototypes are exemplars for contemporary Māori to display the same attributes, and his fictional creations, like Artemis and Kahu, show strength, determination, and courage that women and girls manifest out of their love for their people. The creation of heroes and heroines from the mythic, historical and fictional sources aim to reawaken Māori pride in their heritage.

Reclaiming and creating these characters affirm Ihimaera's view, and confirm a Māori worldview, about the importance of myth to the Māori sense of history. Creations such as Tamatea and Rawiri are visionary as Māori men who transcend seeming Māori orthodoxies that are discriminatory to women. The fictional characters give symbolic force to Ihimaera's agenda, to place Māori at the centre, and yet transcend the binaries of racial difference and gender imbalance in the pursuit of the idea of a Māori nation that includes the Pākehā.



## Chapter 3: Historical Revisionism and Female Heroism in *The Parihaka Woman*

As Peter Addis claims, for most New Zealanders the horrors of warfare seem oceans away. Bombing, invasion, civilian losses, ‘scorched earth’ military strategy and cultural genocide are acts of violence that happen overseas, not in this country. And while many of us look on with sympathy for those casualties of war, it is almost unthinkable that any such event would reach these shores. The unfortunate reality is that these events have already occurred in this country, and in a not too distant past. For many reasons, these events seem to have been largely purged from the national consciousness. Certainly, Addis continues, they are not taught in any systematic way in the school curriculum (255). Certain histories have corrected this collective amnesia and Ihimaera’s novel, *The Parihaka Woman*, brings up the rear through its fictional recovery of the Crown’s attack on Parihaka.

In the friction between the mainstream of accepted beliefs and the new perspectives of historical revisionism, received historical ideas are either challenged, changed, or clarified. Many historians who write revisionist histories are motivated by a genuine desire to educate and to correct history; revisionist history is often practiced by those in the minority, including ethnic minority historians. As we have seen in novels such as *The Matriarch*, Ihimaera shows he is intrigued enough to revisit certain historical events and explore them again, in depth, from a Māori perspective. In so doing he reclaims the interpretation of history for a variety of reasons, which include rescuing from oblivion the subordinated view of Māori and of Māori women, educating the younger generation of Māori who do not have the luxury of learning

their history from orally recounted stories from their ancestors, and bringing these events to the readership in the hope that knowledge will help avoid repetition of past mistakes.

Pulitzer Prize winning historian James McPherson, writing for the American Historical Association, described the importance of revisionism, claiming

[T]hat revision is the lifeblood of historical scholarship. History is a continuing dialogue between the present and the past. Interpretations of the past are subject to change in response to new evidence, new questions asked of the evidence, new perspectives gained by the passage of time. There is no single, eternal, and immutable "truth" about past events and their meaning. The unending quest of historians for understanding the past—that is, "revisionism"—is what makes history vital and meaningful.

McPherson goes on to explain that without revisionism, we risk being stuck with stereotypical images that have developed from one prominent point of view: “Without revisionist historians who have done research in new sources and asked new and nuanced questions, we would remain mired in one or another of these stereotypes” (“Historical Revisionism”). What “nuanced questions” does Ihimaera ask in his writing of *The Parihaka Woman*?

Two burning questions jump to the fore: what happened to the men and boys of Parihaka following their arrest, and just as importantly, what was the fate of the women following the incarceration of their men and sons? There are various sources<sup>12</sup> that report the story of Parihaka, tell about the chiefs Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi and their people, and about the invasion and destruction of the

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<sup>12</sup> Sources include works by Peter Addis, Hazel Riseborough, Dick Scott, Rachel Buchanan, Kelvin Day, and Craig Harawira Pearless (refer to Works Cited).

village of Parihaka by the New Zealand government. And while Ihimaera goes to great lengths to present the story of the events leading up to and including the invasion, he is also concerned with rescuing the subordinated view of the Māori women who were also a part of this era marred by colonial violence. In his writing of the picaresque story in the Act entitled “Three Sisters”, Ihimaera writes about the heroism of the women who lived through these uncertain and harrowing times, who were deprived of all their men-folk through illegal incarceration, who supported Te Whiti and Tohu’s cause of non-violent resistance, and who followed their men and sons to the various prisons in a vain effort to help them. What must it have been like to see their loved ones taken away, so that they were left defenseless against the government hordes?

Ihimaera reclaims in this story the point of view of one of the women, Erenora, the Parihaka woman of the title, and records her travails in order to give voice to the heroic, often untold story, of the women who were left behind. As the last of the men were taken away these women continued the men’s work, rebuilding fences to stop the government building roads through their lands and crops. When their leaders were finally arrested, and their village was looted and ransacked, crops and livestock were destroyed, women and girls raped, the women did their best to provide for the children and people left behind in the face of starvation.

Thus *The Parihaka Woman*’s historical revisionism repositions women in the iconic story of Parihaka. This repositioning is a contribution to the project of decolonisation as well as an acknowledgement of female legacies. Therefore, Erenora’s story is told to us by one of her male descendants, who discovered her unpublished manuscript within the Anglican Church archives at St John’s Theological College in Auckland (13). The narrator thereby inherits this story from his ancestress. Erenora’s

manuscript is a fictional documentary source, written by a fictional character. However, the Theological College exists and this gives a seeming authenticity to the document, thus mixing fiction with fact. The re-appropriation of the fictional manuscript in Ihimaera's fictional historiography amounts to a reclamation of the lost female point of view in the Parihaka story. The novel is also carefully annotated throughout, both to avoid any claims of plagiarism following the reception of his previous novel, *The Trowenna Sea* (2009), and as a convention germane to historiography.

I will argue that the role of historical revisionism here is to enlarge the perspectives from which history may be accessed. Through the Parihaka woman's rediscovered account, we see events from a female, as well as from a Māori, perspective. In this way Ihimaera brings the lost view of the women to the on-going story of the events that culminated in the invasion of Parihaka. He resurrects a female eyewitness through the character of Erenora because it is only the women who lived through these events who can tell this particular story. The archival material is not only written by a female ancestor who provides an eye-witness history that is filtered through the narrator, but contains also the ancestor's own story of resistance, privation, quest and resurrection, which offers a compelling account of Māori resilience and survival.

Parihaka became a symbol of hope and an emblem of Māori sovereignty. The settlement was built on a foundation of Māori and Christian spiritual beliefs. Te Whiti's prophetic vision for the people who gathered at Parihaka paralleled the three stages of Jesus Christ in his betrayal, death and resurrection. In the same way that Te Whiti prophesied the three stages culminating in resurrection for the people, Ihimaera has mirrored these stages in his conceptual construction of *The Parihaka Woman*.

The first section of the book, which details the events before and after the Parihaka invasion, may be viewed as a betrayal by the colonial government and Johann Frederich Riemenschneider, their spiritual shepherd, in his spying and abandonment. The on-road adventure of the three sisters in the subsequent section gives an insight into the death of many of the exiled Parihaka men, as well as the death of the way of life in Parihaka, and the metaphorical death of Horitana in the depths of Peketua Island. The final romance section gives full voice to the operatic dimension of the novel and depicts the resurrection of the people through the symbolic story of Erenora and Horitana, and their resilience and survival.

In joining his voice to the other retellings that have occurred through historical books, art, music and theatre, Ihimaera brings us the story of those wives, sisters and mothers, and by extension, through the picaresque on-road adventure of the three sisters, the story of the husbands, brothers and sons of Parihaka. First of all, it is a novel, and therefore Ihimaera has the liberty to appeal to imaginative truths rather than merely documented ones, but he manages to have it both ways through his narrator's use of a neglected fictional archival source. Erenora's eye-witness account is authenticated by the three stages of narration we find in the book. Secondly, the novel is a hybridised narrative spanning the following genres: historical realism, picaresque-style narrative and romance.

The first stage of the novel, covering Acts One and Two, re-presents the story of the land wars and confiscation, the year of the ploughmen and the saga of the fences, and the events surrounding and leading up to the invasion of Parihaka by the government in 1881. Ihimaera's version differs from other histories such as those of Dick Scott and Hazel Riseborough in that he tells the story through the lost female perspective. Erenora retells the story from an insider perspective about the extreme

force brought against peaceful inhabitants who protested against the confiscation of their tribal lands in a non-violent way. Despite this abhorrent treatment of her whānau and community, Erenora holds on to her Christian beliefs. A mission station had been set up at Warea by Riemenschneider, known as Rimene, with the blessing of the two prophets. However, before the warship *Niger* commenced bombarding the unfortified Warea in 1860, Rimene had taken his leave. He was suspected of giving information to the Crown that enabled them to target the community. As Erenora tells us of the missionaries, “They were shepherds with Maori flocks, but their masters were Pakeha” (21). That is why many Māori tribes turned against the missionaries and also rejected the baptismal English names that they had been given.

In spite of Rimene’s abandonment, Erenora still remembers him fondly because he had given her a book of German phrases (21). Erenora’s syncretic spirituality which fused Māori traditions and beliefs with the Christian faith makes a wider statement about the Māori attitude towards Christianity during these turbulent decades. There was no fault in the Christian doctrine itself, but how these doctrines were applied by Pākehā in their dealings with Māori contravened the “love for thy fellow man”, which was a foundational premise of Christianity. The actions of the government also contravened the equality afforded to all British subjects; there was one set of rules for Pākehā and a more detrimental set of rules applied to Māori. The novel tells us that even during their incarceration, Māori prayed and sang hymns, as their faith in their God had still not been diminished.

The second stage of the novel, covering Act Three entitled “Three Sisters”, allows Ihimaera to explore Māori relationships with other Pākehā who are not British, to see the plight of the imprisoned men through the search by Erenora and her sisters

for their husbands, as they go from prison to prison from Wellington down to the South Island. The narrator poses the question:

How many Taranaki men kua ngaro i Te Po? What *was* the number exiled to Te Wai Pounamu? Would a thousand be too high? And what about the number not sent to the South Island but gaoled in New Plymouth or other North island prisons? The statistics are sketchy. We just don't *know*. (181; emphasis in original)

As Erenora and her two sisters visit gaol after gaol, the reader is given a glimpse of the hardships the Parihaka men endured during their exile and incarceration. In posing the question about how many men died away from home, or how many were exiled to the South Island, and answering with the comment about “sketchy” statistics, there rises the possibility that some histories may be hidden or written over to suit the powers of the day. This clearly impacts upon the future because it becomes impossible to ever regain those details.

The journey of the three sisters is a strategy to give further “details” about the story of the incarcerated men and the women who tried to find them. By recreating the aftermath of the passive resistance and incarceration in the second section of the novel, Ihimaera gives colour and depth to the experiences of the women through the characters of the three sisters. Ripeka was raped by one of the military men who invaded Parihaka, and she experiences extreme anxiety when she considers how she will tell her husband of the child growing inside her. Meri has left her small son behind to go in search of her husband and laments that she may never see either of them again. And Erenora experiences a type of purgatory when she is assaulted by the screams of the locomotives at the railway junction: “‘A moment ago I was in te Ao, the light,’ she cried to herself, ‘and now I am in te Po, the darkness’”(195). She had

been in the presence of God; now she was in some phantasmagorical space at the edge of heaven (195). We are told that it had been a long time coming, this sudden collapse of faith in her God. She questions the future for Māori if they continued to fight against Pākehā, asking whether the price would be deprivation of God's munificence and banishment, like felons, from his presence. Would Māori be erased all together (196)? Suddenly she hears Te Whiti's words and she arises from the pit of her darkness. This section of the novel is integral to Ihimaera's depiction of the Taranaki land wars as it conveys its traumatic effect upon the people. This section retraces the steps in the incarceration of the men and boys and the heartache of their women who followed them.

The third stage, containing the romance, and coincident with Act Four entitled "Horitana", takes place on Peketua Island, an island whose main function appears to be to accommodate the lighthouse. This section allows Ihimaera full range of the use of operatic registers to give effect to the intertextual influences derived from Beethoven, Shakespeare and Māori myth. Inspired by *Fidelio*, in 1993 Ihimaera wrote the operatic libretto *Erenora*, recasting Beethoven's heroine as a Māori woman. Ludwig van Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* is set in a Spanish prison during the eighteenth century. Marzelline, the daughter of the jailer, Rocco, sets her heart on the new errand boy, Fidelio. Fidelio is distressed by Marzelline's interest in him since he is, in fact, Leonore, a noblewoman of Seville. She has come to the jail disguised as a boy to find her husband, Florestan, a political prisoner. When Rocco mentions a man lying near death in the vaults below, Leonore, suspecting it might be Florestan, begs Rocco to take her on his rounds. The governor Pizarro, Florestan's enemy, advances with dagger drawn to strike, but Leonore stops him with a pistol. At this moment a trumpet

sounds from the battlements: Don Fernando, the minister of state, has arrived. Rocco leads Pizarro out to meet him as Leonore and Florestan rejoice in each other's arms.

Part of Ihimaera's purpose in writing *The Parihaka Woman* is the construction of a heroine in the figure of Erenora. The picaresque section had already established the grave dangers the sisters face in the search for their husbands. The final romance section lends itself to the exuberant registers that also exist in opera. Thus Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* and its plot allow Ihimaera the ability to give operatic weight to the sacrifice and struggle of the women who went in search of their husbands. The climax – when Erenora discovers the prisoner is indeed her husband – is dramatic and heart-wrenching, and the mercy Erenora and then Rocco display is given vivid expression through their mutual recognition of their shared humanity. Humanity thus acts as the third triangulating term, which diffuses the racial binary between Māori and non-Māori. This novel is history, but history imagined, which attempts to give voice to the author's strategy to promote historical knowledge, to resist Pākehā hegemony through the reclamation of Māori-centred history, and envision a future for Māori that includes other races. In the process, his fictional history constructs a Māori heroine.

In his writing of this historical novel, *The Parihaka Woman*, Ihimaera extends and gives texture to the Parihaka story, which has normally focused on the two spiritual leaders, Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi, who built their Promised Land in the Taranaki region of Aotearoa-New Zealand. Ihimaera's Parihaka story interrogates the cultural politics of Māori-settler relations through the story of passive resistance against attempted annihilation of Māori by the settler government. The gender politics of the novel is examined through the reclamation of a lost point of view through Erenora's manuscript. Female heroism is acknowledged through the

blending of fiction and fact, through historical women such as Wairaka, and through the characters of Erenora and her sisters, who represent those wives, mothers and sisters who lived through the wars, who were left to defend their families against colonial settlers and forces, and who followed those men into exile.

### Prioritising Māori Perspectives: *Always the Mountain*

The histories written about the land wars in Taranaki beginning in the 1860s are numerous and varied. Though the reasons for the violent actions and reactions by Māori and settler and colonial government are highly debated, some of the events cannot be denied. The presentation of history goes hand in hand with the ideology of the storyteller, so this account attempts to provide the context for Ihimaera's recapitulation of the Parihaka story. It is difficult to replicate, or even claim the same source as Ihimaera, despite his compilation in the Chapter Notes at the rear of the novel. Among his sources, he resurrects anti-colonial works written by non-Māori, such as G.W. Rusden's *History of New Zealand*, especially the previously suppressed Volume 3, and Dick Scott's *Ask That Mountain: The Story of Parihaka*. It is from this latter source and from various websites that this rendition has been created. Chapter 1 of Dick Scott's book *Ask That Mountain* begins,

In the first days of New Zealand's land war, on 29 March 1860, the British warship *Niger* stood off the coast of Taranaki twenty-five miles south of New Plymouth and hurled shells and rockets at the mission station at Warea [...]. The bombardment continues for two days and nights but bush cover and the long range tempered its destruction. (Cowan 157,176; qtd. in Scott 11)

The mission station at Warea was unfortified and undefended and only the church of the Reverend Johann Riemenschneider was left to mark the site of fourteen years of mission settlement. “A short distance inland Warea’s defensive pa on Mahainui hill, a bush fortress with palisades, moat, underground galleries, elevated firing platforms and a hundred warriors ready for battle, was left strictly alone” (Scott 12). Scott continues that this was a selective search-and-destroy operation, and that Warea was sacked “in punishment for resistance to land acquisition by the pakeha” (12). The background to the event was Taranaki’s wall of non-co-operation that the “land-hungry pakeha had found most irksome to breach” (Scott 12). But then Robert Parris, the province’s Land Purchase Commissioner had “produced results by the expedient of buying the 600-acre Waitara block from a man who did not own it. Teira (Taylor) the ‘seller’ received £200 – oddly enough, Maoris commented, the exact sum that he owed Parris and another New Plymouth businessman-moneylender” (Scott 13).

Government surveyors were sent to the Waitara block, and were turned away as they had no permission to enter from the Atiawa chief, Te Rangitake. One of the surveyors returned with soldiers and militia and they “fired the first shots of New Zealand’s ten-year war on 17 March 1860” (13). To a military ultimatum that he give up the Waitara block, Wiremu Kingi Te Rangitake replied that “he did not desire war, that he loved the white people very much, but that he intended to hold the land” (Scott 12). Waitara was reinforced by 500 men and at the Battle of Waireka on 28 March 1860, the invaders were thrown back. The vengeance exacted the next day by the naval bombardment of Warea and the punitive expedition that followed brought short-lived satisfaction, as Māori applied the scorched-earth tactic by burning farmers’ houses, livestock and property all the way to New Plymouth. Scott tells of how

“a Portuguese and a French settler were left unmolested – the war was not against the pakeha but only against the British” (Scott 14).

At Warea, the church had been spared but the conduct of the German Lutheran missionary, Riemenschneider, scarcely inspired deep interest in its continued use. Riemenschneider had shared the people’s bread for fourteen years but had abandoned his mission and moved to New Plymouth at the first hint of trouble. He supplied the command of the Warea expedition with a detailed description of the defenses at the bush retreat inland of the village (14-15). Riemenschneider made several bids to return to Warea but he was told to stay away unless prepared to support his flock. “‘If you are really our shepherd and father, come back to Warea and stand with us in our cause’, they said, ‘and we will believe that you love us’” (Scott 15). After fourteen months’ absence, he reappeared, but was told not to stay unless he was willing to acknowledge the supreme authority of the Maori King (Scott 15). Scott’s footnote says that “Riemenschneider had long acted as intelligence agent for the government” (Scott 15), and Riemenschneider is quoted by Scott as having written in 1855, “How very much and earnestly I wish for the sake of the natives themselves as well as for the sake of the peace and prosperity of the country at large that all the waste native land would pass, the sooner the better, away from them...” (Scott 15).

In 1863 all of Taranaki, except the uninhabited hinterland, was proclaimed a confiscated area by the government (Scott 19). Three million acres were confiscated in Taranaki, Waikato and the Bay of Plenty and on this security a loan of £3 million was sought from British financiers to accelerate European occupation (Scott 19).

However, leading the search for peace, following four years of fighting, were Edward Te Whiti and Tohu Kākahi of Warea. Te Whiti had known the Bible before

Riemenschneider, the first missionary, had arrived in 1846. Taranaki Māori returning from Hokianga and the Bay of Islands had brought back gospel tidings years before (Scott 27). Te Whiti drew on all the threads available to him in looking for a way to end the slaughter without surrendering the land. His thinking ranged over the subtle interplay of opposites: “Ko ta te rino e tukituki ai, ma te rino ano e hanga”, literally “what iron has broken, iron will rebuild”. In other words, the mission teaching (the fabric of life), would be stitched together by the new beliefs at Parihaka. He proposed an open village at Parihaka in sight of the mountain and the sea (Scott 28). And for inspiration beyond mere self-preservation, he looked to the tribes of Israel, a chosen people despite their bondage. While the war raged, Parihaka leaders hammered out an alternative strategy in seclusion (Scott 36). Tohu was claimed to be able to speak directly with the Atua (Gods). Te Whiti also had priestly powers; he was a healer and a seer (Scott 38).

The remaining parts of this discussion draw upon many websites, though the original source is difficult to determine, but the history that is thus put together gives an idea of the textual transformations the Parihaka story has taken on.<sup>13</sup> In 1879, European encroachment on Māori land threatened all Māori settlements. Te Whiti sent out his people to obstruct the surveys and to plough on confiscated land. When arrested the ploughmen offered no resistance but were often treated harshly. In 1880 the Parihaka people erected barricades across roads, pulled survey pegs and escorted road builders and surveyors out of the district. Parliament passed legislation enabling the Government to hold the protesters indefinitely without trial.

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<sup>13</sup> For example, refer to Harawira Craig Pearless, “State as Terrorist: Kāwanatanga Te Kaiwhakatuma: Parihaka 1881, Maungapohatu 1916, Ruatoki 2007”; Rachel Buchanan, “The Parihaka Album”; and Kelvin Day, “Contested Ground: Te Whenua i Tohea The Taranaki Wars, 1860-1881”.

By September 1880 hundreds of men and youths had been exiled to South Island prisons where they were forced to build the infrastructure of cities like Dunedin. Many never returned to Taranaki as they died during their incarceration. Meanwhile Taranaki Settlers continued to survey and take possession of land. The resistance continued, as did the imprisonments.

On the morning of 5 November 1881, the invasion force led by two Members of Parliament, both Cabinet Ministers, entered Parihaka. More than 2000 Parihaka people sat quietly on the marae while children greeted the army. The Riot Act was read and an hour later Te Whiti and Tohu were led away to a mock trial and incarceration in the South Island. The destruction of Parihaka began immediately. It took the army two weeks to pull down the houses and two months to destroy the crops.

Women and girls were raped, leading to an outbreak of syphilis in the community. People suspected of being from other areas of the country were thrown out. Thousands of cattle, pigs and horses were slaughtered and confiscated. In 1883 the Parihaka leaders were escorted back to Parihaka. Meanwhile, hundreds of their men and youths remained incarcerated throughout the South Island. The wives, sisters and mothers of these men often followed them down south hoping to assist their loved ones. These women often lived in poverty and died during their exile. On the 12th of July 1898 the last of the Parihaka prisoners returned to a hero's welcome at Parihaka. Their release brought an end to nineteen years of imprisonment of Parihaka men and boys.

*The Parihaka Woman's* stimulus comes from a retired high school teacher interested in researching the 'real' history of Aotearoa New Zealand as opposed to that offered in the 'official' curriculum. He finds a manuscript written by his ancestress, a Māori woman, Erenora (the Parihaka woman), who has kept a personal record

of her experiences, before, during and after the invasion of Taranaki in the late 1800s. Following the arrest of almost the entire male population of Parihaka, including the two prophet leaders, Erenora and her two sisters set out to find their husbands who have been taken as prisoners to the South island. These women set out on an arduous journey – both because they are women travelling without protection, and Māori, during a time of great national unease. Erenora disguises herself as a man in the hopes of affording a greater degree of protection to their small party. She gains her inspiration from Viola in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, as well as from remembering the East Coast story of Wairaka, who takes on the male task of paddling to save her people’s canoe from destruction (14).

*The Parihaka Woman* is divided into four “Acts”, as well as a Prologue and Epilogue, with an operatic dimension interspersed throughout, which together underscore its performative dimension. The Prologue is called “Taranaki” after the tribal mountain, which is considered to be an ancestor of the local people. The first Act entitled “Daughter of Parihaka” introduces the heroine, the confiscation of Māori land, the introduction of the prophets, the building of Parihaka as a beacon of Māori autonomy, and the government figures who legislated to legitimise the stealing of Māori land. The second Act, “The Village of God”, introduces the narrator and his view on history, the villain Piharo, the year of the plough and the saga of fences, the incarceration of the Parihaka men and its leaders, the sacking of Parihaka, and Erenora’s decision to find her husband. Act Three begins the quest of Erenora and her two sisters to find their incarcerated husbands in the South Island. Act Four is called “Horitana” and is largely devoted to Erenora’s search and rescue of Horitana from Peketua Island but is also interspersed with the romantic love that Marzeline entertains for Erenora in her disguise as Eruera. Acts Three and Four of the book are

based on the libretto *Erenora*, and inspired by Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Michael O'Leary points out in his review of *The Parihaka Woman* that the purpose of using this opera is useful to the novel as the *Fidelio* narrative of personal sacrifice, heroism and struggle for justice mirrors the political struggle of the Taranaki story (2). The Epilogue, "Always the Mountain", ties up the loose ends about the prophets, and includes a restorative scene between Erenora, Horitana and Marzeline, and the narrator's final words on history. The novel is thereby divided between the historical account of the passive resistance of Parihaka and its people, and the more personal, fictive section of Erenora's picaresque quest to find her husband, culminating in the rescue of Horitana.

Despite the two timelines involving the narrator's "present recollection" and Erenora's quoted passages from her manuscript, the two plots are quite simple to follow. What is more disruptive to the reading is the constant interjection of dates and names typical of a history book, the German arias from *Fidelio*, and the numerous quotations from various historical sources. Erenora's story of wars, resistance, and oppression are juxtaposed with lyrical and intimate scenes of whānau (family) and a community sustained by Māori and Christian teachings, complete as a microcosm of love and efficiency. The fantastic is almost completely absent from that part of the novel based on Parihaka as are the supernatural happenings, though the visions of the prophets feature as a normal occurrence in the fabric of a Māori worldview.

The image that the author paints in his re-presentation of Parihaka, and of Māori living in communion with beasts and nature, unencumbered by the individualism of Pākehā, is all the more bitter sweet when this exemplar of Māori values and belief systems becomes the target of calculated colonial attack. Its desecration, which encompasses the people, the land and the buildings, is all the more tragic for the symbol of non-violence it represents against the colonial acquisitive ethic. Though

the author appears to be revisiting the romanticized pastoral ideal of his earlier novels such as *Tangi* and *Whanau*, *The Parihaka Woman* recognizes the impossibility of such an enterprise in the present, and looks forward to the need to accommodate the hybridized realities of contemporary New Zealand society, by examining fulfilling, equitable relationships with Pākehā through the interactions with the Irish Donovans and the Germans, Rocco and Marzeline.

The point of using historical figures is to allow Ihimaera to reclaim and represent heroic figures for the younger Māori generation – as exemplars to light the future. Like *The Matriarch*, this is a novel of revisionist history, so that the image of the coloniser, is that of the Pākehā settlers and Government as land-grabbing, murderous people through the actions which took place in Taranaki in the 1860s to the 1880s. As with *The Matriarch* that included actual people who fought for the rights of Māori, Ihimaera continues this tack with Te Whiti and Tohu. In addition, Ihimaera directly attacks government persons who are famous for their brutality and suppression of the rights of Māori – not only under the obligations of the Treaty of Waitangi, but also in defiance of natural justice. The complete annihilation of the Māori race was a real threat, and Ihimaera uses this story to show this possibility through several quotations from the statements of government officials, such as from an ex-Premier, Harry Atkinson, who was reported as saying that he hoped if war did come, the natives would be exterminated.

Ihimaera takes this opportunity to depict fictional characters, such as Piharo, and actual historical persons, such as John Bryce and Harry Atkinson, the actual faces who led the projects for the colonisation and subjugation of Māori in the second half of the 1800s. The role of the fictional character Piharo is a symbolic concentration of the animosity levelled against Māori through the colonial project. Ihimaera blends

fact and fiction in his presentation of historical figures, and situates them alongside fictional villains such as Piharo, which gives symbolic weight to the violence and brutality of the colonising project of the British. Despite the violence meted out to them, Te Whiti and Tohu condemned violence and forbade the use of arms against the government. The prophets challenged the colonial government over the legality of the wars, the confiscation of the land, and the punitive policies enacted against Māori. By 1879 European encroachment on Māori land threatened Māori settlements. In the wake of their non-violent resistance, almost all of the men of Parihaka, including the prophet leaders, were incarcerated without trial and sent far from their homeland, to the South Island of New Zealand, leaving the women behind to provide and protect all that was dear.

### *Parihaka and Māori Sovereignty: What was wrong with a Māori Republic?*

Craig Harawira Pearless explores in his thesis the New Zealand policing practice during the invasions, expeditions, and raids at Parihaka 1881, Maungapohatu 1916 and Ruatoki 2007. In his work he tells of Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kaakahi who led the non-violent movement to resist the Pākehā invasion of their estates and to protect Māori independence. They drew on Māori ancestral kaupapa and Christian teachings to offer both spiritual and political leadership (Pearless 33). Pearless claims Parihaka was a symbol of autonomy and of the right of Indigenous people to maintain their society on their own terms, as well as to develop a peaceful relationship and partnership with the state. Thus autonomy under Te Whiti's direction was synonymous with prosperity and peace.

Parihaka was proof of that which governments past and present have sought to deny: that Indigenous autonomy works and is beneficial for both Māori and Aotearoa. It was only at Parihaka and similar enclaves throughout New Zealand that change was being made on Māori terms but elsewhere in Aotearoa the Māori population was in rapid decline (Pearless 36).

Ihimaera's intervention in the Parihaka story is to treat history as not just revised but as a contestable branch of knowledge. The most controversial source he uses is G.W. Rusden's *History of New Zealand*, which resulted in a libel suit brought by the then Native Minister, John Bryce, who took offense at the way Rusden had portrayed him. Rusden's three-volume history of New Zealand, published in Australia, arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand in the middle of 1883 and immediately became the subject of comment and controversy. The historian Hazel Riseborough tells us that Rusden was "motivated by humanitarian ideals and found the New Zealand government's native policy repugnant in the extreme" ("Policies and Prophecies" 2). Rusden devotes about half of the third volume of his history to the events surrounding the invasion of Parihaka on 5 November 1881, but in condemning successive ministries for their treatment of the Māori, especially in regard to their continued efforts to get possession of Māori land, he exposed himself to attack (Riseborough, "Policies and Prophecies" 3). Bryce succeeded in having Rusden's *History of New Zealand* suppressed. In addition, the novel tells us that Bryce tried to enforce a media blackout, threatening to arrest any newspapermen at Parihaka (139). The erasure of a people's history is a very strong strategy in the project of asserting cultural dominance, so in his use of the material from the suppressed Rusden books, Ihimaera's opportunity to tell the story of a repressed history is both an act of resistance and an

inviting opportunity to paint Bryce in the same unfavorable light that he had tried to avoid over a century earlier.

Parihaka was a threat because it was an example of Māori sovereignty in practice. It was its own self-sufficient state, with bank and mills and the ability to generate income and supply the village with all its needs. The hysteria that swept amongst the settlers and government could be said to result from the propaganda being circulated, that this was a haven for criminals and weapons; there was no allowance for the idea that these people would live in peace from their own land. These thoughts were quite preposterous to Pākehā, since their way of thinking hinged on the opposition of forces, not on reconciliation, peace, and equality that was part of the Christian teaching of the prophets. The spiritual connection Māori had with the land was disregarded by settlers and government alike, who turned it into an economic resource, and fought over its attainment through war and legislation. In short, the colonizing agenda aimed to steal all the land owned by Māori and exterminate the race completely. The inhuman act of encasing Horitana's head within the dead head of another, in other words, enclosing him within a space that almost completely obliterates the essentials of life, is paralleled by the actions of the New Zealand government who did everything within its means to ensure the extermination of the Māori people. As the narrator of *The Parihaka Woman* tells us,

The graphic muru of most of Taranaki and the raupatu without ending  
describe the holocaust of Taranaki history and the denigration of the  
founding peoples in a continuum from 1840 to the present. (144)

The narrator continues, "These words come from the conclusion of the 1996 Waitangi Tribunal report on the invasion of Parihaka and the taking of Taranaki land" (144). The government's systematic agenda against Māori included the erasure of a people's

history, atrocities against Taranaki Māori, and the denigration of the founding peoples (144). In his use of the word “holocaust,” the narrator elaborates:

I do not consider that any comparison was intended with the mass murder of six million Jews less than 100 years ago. Rather, the word describes what the survivors of any great injustice and plundering of land, treasures, bodies and souls have had to endure. More important, the crimes in Taranaki were justified for very similar reasons – the superiority of one race over another. (144)

It is “no wonder Parihaka became a symbol of hope and an emblem of Māori sovereignty not only to Taranaki tribes but also other iwi in Aotearoa” (58). The white feathers worn by the Parihaka people had Biblical and Māori inspiration: they stood for Glory to God, peace on earth and goodness to all men (102). In response to the encroachment on their land by government surveyors, the making of roads, the arrests without trials, the prophets still preached passive resistance without arms. In his post as Minister of Native Affairs, John Bryce was responsible for the infamous Māori Prisoners’ Trial Act, which meant that the men from Parihaka could be sent to prison without trial, or with their trials postponed indefinitely in a denial of justice (105), along with the suspension of habeas corpus, in evident conflict with the principles of the Magna Carta. Following his physical attacks on the people, Bryce also pulled their beloved meeting house down, afraid as he was of the “medicine-houses”. He may have completely misunderstood the purpose of the meeting house, but it is fair to assume that he was well aware of the devastation such an act of destruction would wreck on the spirits of the people of Parihaka.

The settler government could not and would not agree to a show of autonomy by Māori that contravened the hegemony of their rule. Ihimaera relates the story of

Te Whiti practicing passive resistance before Gandhi, which draws the inference that Te Whiti influenced Mahatma Gandhi in a profound way. In her article, “Why Gandhi doesn’t belong at Wellington Station”, Rachel Buchanan reports of the unveiling of the Gandhi statue at the Wellington Railway Station (1078). The then Indian High Commissioner, K.P. Ernest, said the statue acknowledged “the commitment of the people of New Zealand for setting an example to the world of a tolerant, open and inclusive society”. This statement was challenged only a few weeks later when 300 paramilitary police invaded Tūhoe country (a remote, mountainous part of the central North Island) and arrested members of the Tūhoe iwi (tribe) on charges initially laid under the Terror Suppression Act (2002). The charges were downgraded to carrying unlicensed arms. Buchanan quotes cultural theorist, Stephen Turner, who argued that “the real basis for this strongly overdetermined reaction to Tūhoe activities in the Urewera ranges would appear to be their long-standing claim to be independent of the settler nation-state” (1078). In the face of the rejection of the legitimacy of the nation-state that was imposed, the New Zealand government responded with swift, overwhelming force to crush any group that challenged its proclaimed authority. As Buchanan shows, this excessive show of military might was a familiar echo of nineteenth and twentieth-century settler violence against Māori communities. Parihaka, Maungapōhatu and Ruatoki were seen to challenge the rule of the Crown (1078).

## Resurrecting History

This section explores the issues of perspectives and subjectivities through which history is accessed, besides investigating the conjunction between history and fiction. It will discuss the equal value Ihimaera attributes to myth and oral history on the one hand, and official written history on the other hand. It will also explore Ihimaera's investigation of the ideologies of the storyteller in a narrative. Finally, this discussion is concerned with the female historical legacy Erenora bestows on her descendants, and the role of the imagination in Ihimaera's historicisation of that legacy.

Ihimaera's historicisation gives priority to the Māori perspective in the conflict at Parihaka. Therefore in beginning the novel with a Prologue entitled "Taranaki", the author is citing Māori history as the primary source, which includes the recitation of whakapapa (genealogical) links. Claiming genealogy to the mountain as ancestor and landmark strengthens the people's ties to that region and therefore this source of history has its beginnings in mythic time. In renaming Taranaki mouna (mountain) "Mount Egmont" on his discovery in 1770, Captain Cook wrote over Māori history (11). Despite Captain Cook's renaming of the mountain, the narrator claims, "The mouna has always been ours" (11). Taranaki mouna is sacred to the local people (11) and literally means "The Shining Mountain" – as it glistens and shines, as a beacon to the people. Not only is it a symbol of light, but a symbol of knowledge and enlightenment as Taranaki is a tipuna, an ancestor "[b]orn in a mythical past when mouna were able to move..." (11).

The narrator positions himself within a contested field in his retelling of the story of Parihaka. His justification for narrating the story is due to the discovery of a new manuscript. The narrator has been colonised, which includes the cultural erasure of his history from a Māori perspective. However, following the Māori Renaissance

of the 1970's, in particular the Land March led by Dame Whina Cooper, the narrator and others of his generation began the process of decolonisation. As part of this process of decolonisation he begins to re-evaluate history. With the discovery of this archival source, the narrator enters into a field already well travelled with new historical information, which he uses to refigure the received history. In this fictional refiguration of historiography, Ihimaera thereby reclaims the lost voice for Māori women who have been largely not represented, except as peripheral figures who have been written about. However, even though we hear the story from Erenora's words in this novel, the male narrator is the interpreter, offering his male point of view. He often holds an omniscient position, interposing selected aspects from Erenora's narrative. For example, he enters into Horitana's point of view in his musings about his wife, "The night was pouring into the sky but there, silhouetted against twilight's striated pinks and reds, was Erenora. [...] This was his wife. She was holding up the sky. She turned to him and smiled and the first evening star came out" (64). And so the narrator marries this historical account with a fictional narrative through authorial omniscience, which the narrator introduces into the writing at different times, making evident the fictional dimensions. The self-reflexiveness that the narrator exhibits shows that he is aware of the authorial choices he is making in his presentation of history, in order to support his perspective on the events. He thus avoids the blinding imperialism exhibited by characters such as Piharo. The binding on the manuscript had come loose, providing an incomplete record, so the narrator has licence to insert the fictional story, which includes Erenora's rescue of Horitana. Just as there are only fragments of the archival source, so history is an incomplete record as well. Thus different communities receive different versions so there is no such thing as one complete version. As the narrator muses, "Wasn't that what history was, after all? A

matter of perspective, determined by whoever told it? [...] Wasn't it their history, not mine?" (297). In the posing of this final question in which he dissociates himself from "their history," the narrator highlights that history is a narrative told from a certain perspective and implicitly suggests that perhaps subjective priority should rest with the people to whom the history belongs.

In the presentation of the facts from archival material, eyewitness accounts and the translated words of Te Whiti, the narrator interprets the facts from a Māori point of view. In doing so the voice of the female ancestor is restored to its context in the telling of the history that, recapitulated through the male narrator, amounts to an inheritance for the narrator. It is not an oral account passed from generation to generation. Instead the manuscript is a written transmission, which both men and women inherit, so that history is treated as a cultural inheritance.

We never learn what the narrator's name is, so his performance as "historian" or "storyteller" takes precedence over his identity. He has been brought up in some of the Māori ways though his training and education are testament to his colonisation. As he shows by his many interjections into the narrative, his objectivity as the storyteller often comes into question, supporting the idea that any writer of history comes to his task with pre-conceived ideas and ideological postures. The ability to speak and to be heard places the speaker within the symbolic order of power. Most of the written material about Māori, as with many Indigenous peoples, casts them as the observed by outsiders who are telling their story. The narrator's name is not important but his lineage is, as he takes his place from a long continuum of ancestors who have resisted the colonising agenda, some in their political actions and some in their writing of histories that reclaim a Māori consciousness.

Ihimaera places this source of revisionist history in a female to tell the untold story of how the events surrounding Parihaka affected women of that time. Written in the Māori language, Erenora's manuscript contained an inaccessible point of view, representing the repressed point of view of women and of Māori. This point of view is reclaimed by her descendant, and passed to more of her descendants through the narrator's written recapitulation of her story. As with most legacies, the idea of something precious being passed on also applies to Erenora's manuscript. Ihimaera extends this idea of the reception of a legacy to investigate the biases and ideologies of the storyteller in any presentation of history.

Woven throughout the novel is Ihimaera's recognition of the lack of objectivity in relation to the writing of history. The narrator states, "I'm a retired high school teacher who once taught history, and I'm not important," (10). To the contrary, he becomes very important, in that the history we receive is through his lens. He never gives us his name throughout the novel, so as to retain the title of "storyteller", but his self-reflexive moments show that he is aware of the impossibility of a wholly objective recounting of history. We are introduced to Erenora's voice in Chapter Two. Her personal paragraphs tell us of her early years, though they are quickly subsumed by the narrator's presentation of Parihaka.

It is worth noting that Erenora's words, which are directly quoted from the manuscript, heralded with quotation marks, are interspersed with the narrator's telling of the story, within each chapter. Even though Erenora's words are signposted for the reader, it soon becomes difficult to see the changes between the narrator and the protagonist. The effect of these subtle shifts in point of view contributes to the narrative taking on the aspect of one seamless story. In line with Hayden White, it seems to suggest that Ihimaera is claiming that history itself, and its telling, is a product of

fiction and non-fiction. It becomes difficult to distinguish the fiction from the non-fiction or calibrate exactly the role of the authorial imagination in their construction. What are we, then, as readers, to believe to be the ‘truth’ of the events?

A speech act or the effect of an action comes to us already inflected by the storyteller’s point of view or interpretation, rather than as a pristine, neutral event. In this respect a degree of imagination comes into play, so that a set of facts are presented, and then made into a story with a point of view, by the would-be teller. Hayden White in “The Historical Text as Literary Artefact” says that there is always a fictive element in every historical account. If this were acknowledged, then we could move historiography to a higher level of self-consciousness that acknowledges that a story presented from a particular perspective comes with the historian’s ideology, which mars the events told. It is almost impossible therefore to present a wholly objective account.

In White’s view historical narratives are verbal fictions, so they can only be presented as such from a particular historian’s narrative point of view (1534). In this way, history evokes reality but cannot reproduce or present it. The historical record is fragmentary and always incomplete, so that historians have to use “the constructive imagination,” which tells the historian, as it would tell the competent detective, what “must have been the case” (1538). What story is ultimately told depends on the story the historian wants the reader to hear. The historian or story-teller therefore seeks out the facts they need to tell their particular story, depending on their agenda. White supports this by positing that the historian receives story elements; they are made into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of them and highlighting of others, which includes privileging certain *points of view* or identification with them, in short, all the techniques of a novel or play (1539; emphasis added).

Ihimaera's writings tend to agree that history cannot come divorced from the historian's ideologies so that history is presented with the incumbent author's point of view or interpretation. It is written with a purpose to present a particular point of view, so that it can never be presented as wholly truthful or even objective. In supporting this idea, Alun Munslow discusses Michel Foucault, who argues that man is not able to stand outside society and history and therefore cannot generate objective and truthful knowledge. Both Foucault and White argue that language is an ideologically contaminated medium. What it can and cannot do is dependent on the use to which it is put, and for what social and political purposes, usually to maintain or challenge systems of authority and views of what is right or wrong, allowed or banned. Foucault says, "Truth is linked [to the ...] statements of power, which produce and sustain it" (131; qtd. in Munslow 13).

Thus the certainties of historical truth and methodological objectivity are challenged. Munslow argues in his *Deconstructing History* that the genuine nature of history can only be understood when it is viewed, not solely as an objectivised empiricist enterprise, but as the creation and eventual imposition by historians of a particular narrative form on the past (2). Munslow is highlighting the literary nature of historical knowledge and the significance of its narrative form (3-4). Thus in his historical revisionism, Ihimaera situates history so that it can be re-presented to suit the cultural imperatives for the Māori people which extends to "dismantling the binary logic that positions one race as the subject-producers of knowledge and the other race as the object of that production" (D'Cruz and Ross 299).

In summary, how a given historical situation is to be configured depends on the historian's subtlety in matching up a specific plot structure with the set of historical events that he wishes to endow with a meaning of a particular kind. This is

essentially a literary, that is to say fiction-making, operation. And to call it that, White argues, in no way detracts from the status of historical narratives as providing a kind of knowledge (1540). It appears Ihimaera would agree. He is interested in the intersections between history and fiction, but it would be fair to say that he also considers his creations as providing a kind of knowledge to the younger generation of Māori to whom his message is aimed (“Why I Write” 117).

In the chapter in the novel entitled “History & Fiction,” the narrator makes the self-reflexive confession that the story is sounding more like his, and less like Erenora’s. His wife Josie had taken him to task, “There’s too much of yourself going into the kuia’s story, [...] you made [Piharo] sound like a really bad piece of work” (236). However, the narrator says that Piharo was worse, but he didn’t want to demonize him like the Pākehā did Te Whiti and Tohu. His confession serves to diminish his own authorial imperialism. The narrator’s justification for taking over his kuia’s account is that he imagines her as a living person. He fictionalizes her story to give her life and colour: “This is my interpretation, and the situation on the ground is murky only because the Pākehā have made it so” (48). This points to the dominance Pākehā have exhibited in the production of history.

For Māori, history lies in the remembered oral tradition, which is constantly reshaped by re-telling the event. In mentioning the mouna as an ancestor in the narrator’s genealogy, the narrator links mythic time to the present, raising the question of different views of origin and where history begins. The cultural amnesia connected with Māori accounts, such as Erenora’s written manuscript in Māori, illustrates how issues of knowledge and power are relevant to notions of history. A disjunction between Indigenous forms of historical knowledge and western definitions of ‘history’ derive in part from assumptions about the fundamental role that

writing plays in validating history. Although Erenora's manuscript is a written artefact, it is wholly in Māori, not English, and this thereby relegates it to the dusty archives. The fact that it is written may add value and be the reason it was kept in the archives. What was once an inaccessible point of view, because it is a women's view and written in Māori, has been treated as having equal value through the narrator's blending of fiction and fact in the telling of Erenora's story.

The narrator's act of renaming the Taranaki Land Wars as the Pākehā Wars (as the narrator does in *The Matriarch* as "te riri Pākehā") illustrates the disjunction between Māori and Pākehā versions of history. Ihimaera's primary motive for writing was to challenge European accounts. He is also writing for a generation of young Māori who have learned their traditions from books written in English, rather than by oral instruction from their kaumatua. Tribal histories are important; the portrayal of those Parihaka men and women is a tragedy that Ihimaera cannot resist retelling – "lest we forget" (Buchanan, *The Parihaka Album* title page).

## Erenora as Hero and Historical Witness

This section discusses female heroism and its importance to the re-accessed history. Ihimaera discovers historical modes of female heroism, and this is permitted through the blending of fiction and history in the novel. The supposed historical recuperation produces female figures who supplement the mythic women. Erenora takes on the men's duties around the settlement of Parihaka to provide for the community in the absence left by their incarcerated men, as did Wairaka. The narrative gives prominence to Erenora's heroism through the fortitude she shows when the men are taken, through her decision to search for her husband, and in her unwavering testament to the values of Māori and Christian beliefs, which culminate in the rescue of Horitana.

Erenora's personal story, which she writes down for future generations, is important because the treacherous journey to find Horitana gives symbolic weight to the story of the many historical women who walked similar paths to find their menfolk. Her story is ultimately one of resilience and survival.

This discussion also considers the gender positions adopted by Māori as a result of the rupture caused by colonisation. Gender transformations have been forced upon women by the violent disruptions of community caused by colonial power. Transvestism becomes a means for positioning Erenora in historical counterpoint to the exiled and suffering Parihaka men, and Ihimaera does this through the picaresque plot he weaves around the journey she undertakes disguised as a man with her sisters, and through her position in the adapted plot from *Fidelio*.

Ihimaera presents his female protagonists as women capable of amazing feats, who blend soul, body and mind in the execution of their obligations. He constructs a heroine in Erenora who replicates, in a different context, the strengths of Artemis and Kahu from the previous two novels under discussion. These fictional heroines spring from a traditional premise in that their exemplars are Māori women of mana and courage from mythic and historical times. His final image of woman still encapsulates male and female traits. Ihimaera balances the story of heroes and heroines, conveyed through the figures of the prophets and Erenora and Horitana, with the representation of heinous villains such as Harry Atkinson and, more vigorously, John Bryce. Fictionally Ihimaera constructs Piharo, the villain intent on destroying Horitana and Erenora, as a composite representation of Pākehā power expressed through the racist politics that plagued the birth of a nation.

Ihimaera is aware that as the creator of this story he may be accused of presenting a version that runs contrary to official history. However, the self-reflexive

admissions by the narrator extend to the author in that he is interested in the operation and construction of history, and in the marrying of historical sources with the fictional creation of Erenora's quest. These give Ihimaera the opportunity to play out his hopes for this nation in a symbolic sense through the relationship of Erenora, Horitana and Piharo.

The female gender embodies a flexibility in his fiction in order to include the possibility that women can do men's work, such as the rebuilding of the fences, when the men are prevented from doing so. Just as Wairaka had to step in to paddle the canoe to safety in the absence of the men, Erenora takes on many male roles to protect and help her people. The influence of Christianity on the people of Parihaka cannot be dismissed in its influence on the appointed gender roles. The ultimate statement the author is making is that tradition sets the foundational premise, but tradition can be modified to suit the contemporary context. Te Whiti says, "Ko tama wa'ine" – a woman is a man (145), which suggests his approval of the dual strength of the masculine and feminine that he had always admired in Erenora.

As in *The Matriarch*, the temple or marae is primarily the domain of men, not women, but the matriarch's attitude in the book is that the men who have been guardians of that temple have allowed the white men to invade it. Consequently, she finds herself fighting not only the white men but also the Māori men in the novel. But to do this she has to confront many spiritual challenges and go through many tests, and at the end of each test there is a cost placed on her. To save her values and her people's values, she has to assert her spiritual strength, and in the confrontation there is a price to pay; and the price is death (Sarti 76). In *The Parihaka Woman* Erenora displays many masculine traits, not only in her doing men's physical work, but mentally too, in her giving her opinion to the prophet leaders. Unlike the matriarch who

intercedes in the domain of men because she feels they are doing a poor job, Erenora is forced to partake in men's activities – physical and mental – because of the absence created by the incarceration of the Parihaka men. Erenora's masculine traits are highlighted throughout the novel, including her "masculine interest" and "enquiring mind", which are adored by her husband (63). The masculine aspects of Erenora also make it more plausible for her to take on the role of Eruera during the sisters' quest. As in *The Matriarch* and *The Whale Rider*, masculine and feminine traits find a marriage as complementary forces in the female protagonists.

Ihimaera considers the future through his exploration of the relation between life and death, which is through the concept of light in *The Matriarch* and *The Parihaka Woman*. One of the most relevant Māori ceremonies is the awaiting of dawn, as Māori ancestors came from the East, following the ancient pathway made by the morning sun. Images of life associated with light are abundant in *The Whale Rider*; in their search for "The Well of the World," the ancient whale migrates towards the Aurora Australis: "The Aurora Australis was like Hinenui Te Po flooding above the radiant land" (*The Whale Rider* 81-82). Images of light (especially of a comet) are significantly recurrent in *The Matriarch* too, associating Artemis once more with Aida in the scene of the woman entering the sanctuary of the temple of Isis. Te Whiti's name means 'the shining path of the comet,' so that his light was a beacon to Māori. The name Erenora is an English derivative of Leonore, which means shining light. These Māori sources of enlightenment through the mythic mountain, the historical character of Te Whiti and the fictional character of Erenora are in sharp contrast to the supposed enlightenment provided by Pākehā, which ironically meant disablement for Māori. While it is a given that Māori have always made decisions for a future that is decades away, and had been open to the use of foreign technology to

enable their advancement, the stamp of progress for the people of Parihaka in the 1800s spelled disaster in the cultural, spiritual and social spheres. The lighting of the future for Pākehā came at the expense of Māori, since it resulted in forced acquisition of Māori land by the settler government. Symbolically, this is played out in the mask that Piharo forces Horitana to wear. It amounts to a loss of identity, and a type of death as he is buried in the bowels of Peketua Island, beneath the lighthouse. The accompanying motif is that what provides light for the Pākehā enablement and advancement becomes darkness for Māori.

Rachel Buchanan in her book, *The Parihaka Album*, details the role of roads, the telegraph and lighthouses, which helped the advancement of Pākehā to the detriment of Māori. Ihimaera also focuses on these, as well as trains, to depict the motif of Pākehā progress throughout the novel. In Chapter Four, entitled “Road, telegraph, lighthouse”, Buchanan claims that the construction of utilities “would be a show of European might against Māori but it would also maintain the veneer of peace [...] that was so important to settlers and to the narrative of harmonious, just race relations that they were so eager to establish (73). These utilities would “inscribe European modernity on Māori time and space” and provide “the colonial government with powerful literal and symbolic signs of their mastery of this once staunchly Māori locality” (74). In the campaign to destroy Parihaka, road-making was the first attack, followed by the construction of a web of telegraph lines at military barracks, and the third attack was the erection of a lighthouse. As Buchanan rightly surmises, the final attack that culminated in the invasion of Parihaka was made possible by these earlier acts of violence (75). Buchanan thereby links the concept of violence with the advancement of roads, railways, the telegraph and lighthouse to “destabilize the

pervasiveness of the ‘non-violent’ label that settlers used to describe their actions at Parihaka and elsewhere in New Zealand” (76).

Part of the idea of Pākehā advancement was to wipe out the memories of violence that had occurred. Therefore, Erenora as historical witness becomes important to Ihimaera’s idea of recuperating history, both in re-accessing a lost point of view as a person living during these times, and in promoting the memory of the violence from the past as an acknowledgement, and as a reminder, to prevent future occurrences. In this way, Erenora’s account serves to destabilise the image of “harmonious race relations” the settlers sought to portray to the rest of the world.

As mentioned, the roads, the telegraph and the erection of the lighthouse, the ploughmen, the fences, and then the invasion are all part of the historical facts of Parihaka. They reach a symbolic intensity in a confrontation that features Erenora. Piharo and his associates ride into Parihaka searching for Wiremu Hiroki who had killed one of the surveyors and who had been given refuge by Te Whiti. Piharo demands entry into Erenora’s whare, to which he has no legal access. She bars his way and a struggle ensues. Horitana arrives, and Piharo will not leave the doorway, so Horitana slaps him. Piharo responds by whipping Horitana around the legs, and then turning his whip onto Erenora, lashes her with his whip, culminating in a strangle hold on her neck. Piharo only drops the whip when he is tackled by Horitana, who then uses the whip to flay Piharo across the face and body. Horitana’s flaying of Piharo marks three men:

Wiremu would never escape implacable and vengeful justice.

Te Whiti was also marked, for in harboring Wiremu he gave John Bryce justification for closing Parihaka down.

And Horitana had just made an enemy. (79)

Piharo's face is also marked but more so internally marked despite the external scars, through an irrepressible hostility towards the Other, who must be defeated in his pursuit of an imperialism that will not rest until he destroys the Other. The binary politics that define the relationship between settler Pākehā and Māori is played out with intensity through the use of the *Fidelio* adaptations in the second part of the book.

However, Māori and Pākehā are not cast in strictly binary terms of good and evil, respectively. Ihimaera, through the mediated account that Erenora provides, offers a balanced view for the reader so that we also see the innate good and innate bad that is potentially in each race. Arapeta, the Māori owner of a trading post at Takapuwahia, kidnaps Erenora's sister, Meri, to sell as a sex slave. Likewise Ihimaera shows the humane and generous side of Pākehā through an old Irish couple, the Donovans, who go to visit their son in prison. They offer both protection and accommodation to Erenora and her sisters in Hokitika, which is overrun with drunken miners celebrating the Christmas and New Year period. Erenora's account goes into great detail also to paint the Scottish immigrants in a favourable light. Through her, Ihimaera is perhaps illustrating that, like Māori, both the Irish and Scottish people have been colonised by the English. Having suffered under the burden of British imperialism, these people have an affinity and ensuing empathy with Māori. And then there is the English character Piharo, whose actions are so reprehensible that he becomes a symbol of the relentless colonial pursuit towards the complete annihilation, subjugation and incarceration of the men of Parihaka. Erenora's role as historical witness reaffirms that in spite of the tribulation she has had to endure, and as a representative figure for all the Parihaka women, her heroism, displayed through

her faith in God and integrity to her beliefs, provides an alternative model that does not succumb to the animosity of severe racism.

We are not told what Piharo's English name is. In fact this is purposefully omitted by the narrator, so that he is *named* by Erenora for the dark and sinister life-force (ihi) that she sees within him. Piharo researches about Māori in an anthropological fashion, as one would any extinct race (86). In positioning Māori this way, Piharo forecloses any future for Māori. His dualistic thinking, which places Māori as the inferior term of the settler/Māori binary, does not allow for the conceptualisation of multiple subject positions, which envisions, not just an equal position, but any position at all for the Māori people within a Pākehā nation. The narrator researches Piharo in the same manner – imbued with his own ideologies that are levelled against this Pākehā man who terrorized the narrator's ancestors. However, he admits to his tendency to portray Piharo in an unfavourable light and makes promises to be more objective.

The mask Piharo designs for Horitana is a powerful symbol of dehumanisation. This symbolic reproduction of the fate of the incarcerated Parihaka men captured through Horitana's story is made available, and salvaged, through Erenora as historical witness as a character in the action. As he faces his final imprisonment in the bowels of Peketua Island, Horitana is devoid of sound and human contact so that his suffering is magnified by the continued darkness and silence. Despite the years of fighting battles with various chiefs against the Pākehā invader, and the unjust treatment that had landed him seemingly at the ends of the earth, Horitana's personal journey takes him to a place within himself where hope still survives. He gives himself completely to the will of God, so that he endures the suffering as penance. Horitana survives this dehumanisation through his love and affection for the many

tuatara that are drawn to him. Even after he returns to Parihaka, his tenderness for the tuatara remains with him. His spirituality displayed in his love of God and creatures has helped him survive a torment that would have killed a lesser man. In contrast, the mask that Piharo wears, in the physical flaying registered on his face and body, is a reflection of the tortured life essence he holds inside. Piharo, who seeks the death of the Other, is inadequate to survive the penance of the mokomokai as Horitana does. Through his triangulation with God and nature, Horitana is drawn away from the binary thinking that has placed Māori and Pākehā in antagonism.

*The Parihaka Woman* culminates with the romance, in which Ihimaera gives full flight to his operatic registers in the presentation of enduring love, mercy, and true fellowship between men. *Fidelio's* heroine is Leonore who goes in search of her husband Florestan, who is a political prisoner. The Māori names, Erenora and Horitana, are transliterations for their Spanish counterparts. Pizarro is Piharo. Rocco is a lighthouse keeper on Peketua Island who lives there with his daughter, Marzeline. She has recently rejected the affections of the lighthouse assistant, Jack (Jacquino in the original libretto), when Erenora is hired – in her guise as a young man, Eruera. Marzeline quickly falls in love with Eruera, the double for *Fidelio* in the opera, who is actually Leonore. Marzeline is a crippled teenage girl on the cusp of womanhood, seeking her independence from an overbearing but loving father. She is a strong woman who exhibits courage and warrior-like traits like Erenora, besides displaying independence in her role as provider within the home, and in her rejection of the belief in the hierarchy of races that her father attempts to instill in her.

Rocco discourages Marzeline's attraction and desire for Eruera. He points out to Marzeline, "I am master [...]. You are mistress- and Eruera is our servant". Marzeline replies, "Not in the eyes of God" (250). Rocco is trying to enforce a

hierarchical relationship, though Germans are not the ones who colonised New Zealand. Therefore Ihimaera is not dispelling the binary, but through the Germanic element in Erenora's story, represented by Rimene (Johann Friedrich Riemenschneider) and the Mission House at Warea, and the story of Rocco and Marzelline, Ihimaera shows other kinds of historical relationships between Māori and other Pākehā that do not require the subjugation of a race.

Eruera's relationship with the Germans develops but her intention is to locate and rescue her husband. As the Parihaka men begin to be released from their various incarcerations around New Zealand, Piharo becomes afraid that too many questions will be asked about Horitana's whereabouts so he decides that Horitana's murder has become a matter of urgency. In Piharo's attempts to completely obliterate the Other, he instructs Rocco to dig a grave in preparation for the murder of Horitana by one of his assassins. By now Erenora is almost certain that Rocco has been keeping Horitana prisoner, and she convinces Rocco to let her accompany him to dig Horitana's grave. However, at a critical moment in the dungeon Rocco shows compassion for the suffering of the prisoner and proclaims, "*O, armer Mann/Oh you poor man*" (277). Rocco recognises the humanity in Horitana, despite the dehumanizing mask he wears. To effect their escape Erenora hits Rocco over the head with the spade to overpower him, but cannot deliver the fatal blow in her mercy for Marzelline. Erenora then places her own and Horitana's fate in Rocco's hands. This mercy is reciprocated in Rocco's actions when he helps husband and wife to escape. Though Erenora and Horitana are wracked with doubt as to the certainty of the other's identity, they finally reunite in each other's arms.

Ihimaera is diffusing the dialectic of self and other through a kind of triangulation. Te Whiti and Erenora are Lutheran Christians, as are Rocco and Marzelline.

Each is looking to the humanity of the other, leading to a diffusion of the binary opposition in which one destroys the Other. Rocco is at the mercy of Erenora, and then Erenora and Horitana are at the mercy of Rocco. Triangulation thus occurs through God and the humanity of each, so that neither character can murder the other.

In the penultimate chapter, Erenora decides to pay Piharo a visit and teach him a lesson. She knows he is beyond reasonable discussion, and she cannot bring herself to kill him. But she is forced to act in order to prevent any further vengeance on her husband. In placing the tangata mokomokai on Piharo, was it Erenora's intention to kill Piharo? The silver mask is a terrifying enclosure because it is a dead man's face, which plunges the wearer into an eternal night. When Horitana wore the mask he likened this darkness to Te Po – the great night. Horitana used this experience to release the blood lust that had plagued him, taking it as penance, and emerging finally into the light, and the arms of his wife, resurrected. In contrast, the claustrophobia Piharo experiences is the impossibility of being able to liberate himself from the dark alley from which he has walked down. The more polarised he has made himself, the more difficult he finds to reach the middle ground of compromise. Erenora puts the mask on him but Piharo designed it – for someone else – but in wearing it he dies as a human being. The death of his humanity arises out of his obsession to hurt Horitana and enslave Erenora. Erenora put it on him, so she is culpable, but she is not responsible for his inability to survive it. Piharo's claustrophobia suggests a closed space and closed mindedness, so that he becomes a flat character. He is limited in his ability to respond to the mask because his obsession forecloses any vision of a future that is not predicated on the death of the Other. Horitana's love for mankind and God allow him to survive the mask, while no such avenue exists for Piharo.

### Parihaka's Legacy: *The Radiance of Feathers*

Even though the Christian belief system that arrived with the missionaries did not come divorced of its problems, aspects of spirituality and New Testament philosophies appealed to Māori and became the grounds for the passive resistance through non-violence exhibited by the prophets, Te Whiti and Tohu. In the face of government violence the faith in a God who preached reconciliation between peoples made more sense politically and spiritually for Te Whiti, Tohu, and their followers. Ihi-maera shows that despite the aim of reconciliation sought by Māori between the two peoples of this settler-nation, the belief in a hierarchical relationship by the settler government led to the extermination of Parihaka and all it stood for. He concentrates the power of Pākehā in Piharo's attempted annihilation of Horitana and his enslavement of Erenora. He also re-calibrates the coloniser-colonised relationship in the story of Erenora (as Eruera), Marzeline and Rocco and the mercy they extend to each other.

Piharo demonstrates the unrelenting mastery of the Pākehā villain who will not rest until the Other is destroyed in a binary battle. In the wearing of masks, both of the tangata mokomokai and the outer visage of Piharo's savage and black interior, the loss of humanity is conveyed. Erenora, realising that Piharo wants to enslave her, avoids it by maintaining an uncompromising integrity. Love of her husband and her spirituality drive Erenora so that she is compelled to work towards releasing her husband from his spiritual torment and physical incarceration despite overwhelming difficulties. She shows mercy to Rocco, and later to Piharo in her choice not to kill him, lest the action prevent her from joining her husband in heaven. Erenora experiences a shaking of her faith when she encounters the progress of Pākehā upon seeing a locomotive in Christchurch, a symbol of Pākehā advancement across Aotearoa,

likening this to a transition from light to darkness (195). In her abject terror, she laments, “In this kingdom of the Pākehā, erected to the glory of God, where does the Māori belong?” (195). If the fate of Māori were to be the fringe dwellers at the edges of the Pākehā world, where his waste goes, would it be the same in God’s kingdom in heaven (196). However as the narrator tells us, “From the death of her spirit came the birth of another” (196). In her resurrection, Te Whiti’s voice is heard, and in true Biblical fashion, he promises that they will inherit the land forever. The birth of new life is the third mobilizing factor, along with God and the recognition of humanity, that eludes the binary relationship that seeks to position Māori as inferior.

Horitana sees his travails as a necessary episode towards achieving his resurrected life. When Erenora saved him from the pit when he was a young boy early in the novel, he came to believe that God had saved him for some purpose: “He took me down into death so that I would get the taste of the land in my mouth and, behold, I am resurrected. Now that I have savoured our sweet earth, I will always serve it” (24). On three occasions Erenora had saved him from the dark, symbolically from death, and had been instrumental in giving him new life. Erenora’s life-giving capacity informs the novel. She gives life to the creation of this story in the writing of the manuscript. She gives life to the voices of women and their perspectives on the events surrounding Parihaka. She cannot give life through the birth of a child, but takes on the mantle of mother to her community once the men have been taken. And, finally, Erenora gives life to her husband after saving him from the pit as a boy, by introducing him to the Christian life at Parihaka, and through her resurrection of him from the death under the dehumanizing mask. Finally, life overwhelms death through the images of light that accompany Erenora’s rescue of Horitana from the sea cave. He is flooded with light, and resurrected to new life. This parallels the three stages

Te Whiti prophesied for the Māori people – betrayal, death and resurrection. This has obvious parallels with the betrayal, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which emphasises the holy sanction of Te Whiti's mission. Thus in the spiritual enlightenment that married Māori beliefs and Christian doctrine, Te Whiti and Tohu were able to foresee a future premised on prophetic tradition and on a vision of resurrection for the people.

The suffering caused by the confiscation of tribal lands, the invasion and the destruction of the Parihaka infrastructure, and the imprisonments without trial over the nineteen-year period to 1898, remains a painful unresolved legacy for the community and for the nation. The final blows were dealt to the Parihaka people throughout the twentieth century with the steady alienation of every scrap of land left to them, effectively leaving the community landless and unable to redevelop.

The 'legacy' left to a country where the colonial project used violent and illegal means to secure the land for European settlers is a hurt felt from both sides of the racial divide. These events prompted Māori and Pākehā to respond. Dick Scott's *Ask That Mountain: The Story of Parihaka* was first published in 1954, then re-released in 1975, and it brought the Parihaka story to the world. By the late 1990's an artistic legacy was created by some of the country's leading artists, including Ralph Hotere, Selwyn Muru, Tony Fomison and Colin McCahon. Plays had been written and performed by Harry Dansey, Mervyn Thompson and Brian Potiki. Poets such as Hone Tuwhare, James K. Baxter, W. H. Oliver and Elizabeth Smither had been inspired by Parihaka. Hazel Riseborough's book *Days Of Darkness* introduced a new generation to the Parihaka story. Musicians as diverse as David Grace, Moana and the Moa Hunters, and Tim Finn have recorded and released songs inspired by Parihaka. In the year 2000 a major exhibition of art works, photographs, film, music, writings

and lectures were staged at the Wellington City Gallery. An exhibition entitled “Parihaka: The Art Of Passive Resistance” was successful in creating art, dialogue, education and healing between Māori and other races. An award winning book of the same name accompanied it. So despite the official cultural amnesia that surrounded the violent response by the New Zealand government to Parihaka and the Māori autonomy it represented, both Pākehā and Māori have retold the story, and continue to tell the story, even today.

In the eye of an awakening Aotearoa that had been thrust into the coloniser’s world, which brought with it technology and attitudes foreign and largely detrimental to Māori, Parihaka was a Promised Land with a short life. It was Canaan, and had been built on a traditional Māori belief system while keeping an eye to the future. It was a model of success for Māori, one that cannot, and was not, tolerated by the settler government. Parihaka was a historical response to settler colonialism based on the land wars and land confiscations, rather than a parallel development that threatened settler desires for land. The prophets were looking for an alternative to war. They found their answer through the mythic connection to the mountain and through Christian doctrine. Parihaka was an emblem and locus of Māori sovereignty. In retelling the story of Parihaka, Ihimaera is giving utterance to how that sovereignty was expressed and how it was destroyed by settler greed. Not only is Ihimaera resurrecting a history that has been manipulated and suppressed, he is also resurrecting an image of the Māori nation predicated on peace and reconciliation. *The Parihaka Woman* is an important contribution to resurrecting, modifying and assuming ownership of these memories. In his acts of remembrance and reconstruction, Ihimaera’s novel forms part of the Parihaka legacy, which serves as a symbol of non-violence and a symbol of Māori sovereignty.

## Kōrero Whakamutunga: Conclusion

The silencing of Indigenous histories through the acts of repression and writing over, thereby changing the narratives, are actions lodged in abusive relationship frames. The resurgence of storytelling and narrative reconstructions as healing methodology is yet another form of Indigenous resistance and an extremely powerful way of correcting erroneous histories and colonial mythologies. This seeks to set the record straight through “amplifying the ‘other’ less publicly known side of the story” (L. Smith 15). Liberating strategies, such as giving voice to narratives buried by repression and oppression in a reframed context that recalls ancestral struggles, can be empowering and provide potentially powerful mechanisms for healing. Trask reminds us that “surviving as an Indigenous person in any colonial situation is a strange mix of refusal, creation, and assertion” (89), and that is what Ihimaera’s narratives are, part of that same strange mix.

The reclamation of a robust sacred mythology, our storytelling, which has political and social consequences with regard to the issues of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, remains a major preoccupation for Ihimaera. Therefore in his re-harnessing of mythic resources, Ihimaera makes fluid the boundaries between primordial ancestors and contemporary characters to produce a worldview in which specifically located spiritual and cosmological beliefs are visibly enacted to give imaginative force to the political positions that are espoused.

As a consequence, his stories should be viewed as acts of creative rebellion. It means closing the false gap that often exists between *speaking* and *acting*. His works highlight the crucial role that creativity and the imagination play in

processes whereby individuals and communities experience, interpret and create change within social orders. Ihimaera's strategy in reclaiming the past reveals how the Māori community may develop, not by forgetting, but by actively remembering and creatively reconstituting the past. Despite the repression of the past because of political and religious pressures, the past has not in fact been wiped out. Conversely, inspired by the active reclamation of myth, in a political act of defiance, the community may re-articulate the past, adapting its oral traditions to new circumstances of the present, as well as pointing to imaginative alternatives of how to construct the future.

Astvaldur Astvaldsson discusses cultural memory in his article "Myth, Cultural Memory and Resistance in Latin American Narratives". In explaining what "cultural memory" is, he offers that

it is not just about what people remember rationally – conscious memory – and express in words or narratives. It is also closely associated with how memories and knowledge about the past are processed, how they are converted into effective tools that help people to understand and deal with the present and plan for the future, and much of that process is at least as much about physical action and intuition, often a combination of both, as it is about rational thinking, strictly speaking. (622)

The works of many Māori writers, and Indigenous people in general, also deal with the issues of memory and the past, and of the role they play in determining both the form the resistance takes and the ideologies that inform the struggle.

Ihimaera's need to think about the past, to understand the present and to confront the future reflects Indigenous cultural reality in which the past is not

considered as something that *was*, but as a vital source of wisdom that guides people and helps them face the problems at hand. Ihimaera considers himself a political person intent on change and transformation for the Māori people:

I think I am [...] like Maui-trying to locate or fix a Māori destination for all Māori who negotiate their lives through the postcolonial constructs of a universal reality and a hybridized world [...]. I was an inhabitant of an essential Māori world. I am not trying to find my way back, but rather forward, to where Māori could be. (“This Magnificent Accident” 362-63)

Accordingly, Māori culture is not a static reality, but rather one that is itself pregnant with ideas of change. Hence, it is one in a process of continuous redefinition with regard to its complex relationship to tradition and modernity. In effect, Ihimaera is sensitive not only to the fact that we live in a world that is constantly changing but also to the need to respond proactively and creatively to this situation, influencing the transformation that is happening. In turning to the past, he highlights the importance of our ancestors’ influence in driving transformation for the Māori nation. He maintains, “Writing is my way of ancestralizing our generation, and in putting us before the people who are coming” (Ellis 173). He elaborates upon this:

“What I’m trying to say is, ‘Well there are all of these people in my background and here they are.’ I’m putting them in front of me so that all of you can see them and realize that these are the people who have now re-empowered me to keep on maintaining the same thrust of energy and *kaupapa* or purpose”. (Ellis 173; emphasis in original)

This “kaupapa or purpose” points to reconciliation between Māori and Pākehā living in a re-envisioned Aotearoa New Zealand.

The three novels that are the subjects of this thesis may be read as texts that openly stand up to the capitalist assault on Māori culture by highlighting its humanistic values and pointing to how they might be used to establish a different, more humane and more equitable modernity. Hence, the importance of our stories underscore the crucial role that the works of writers like Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace play in maintaining links with the knowledge of the past. Recovering such knowledge and passing this on to the younger generation, in particular to those who have grown away from their rural communities, is vital to the efforts of reinventing our traditions, and which would otherwise be difficult to access because of the sustained efforts of the oppressors to wipe out Māori cultural memory.

For Māori, and indeed for Indigenous peoples, stories are “open-ended processes for speaking reclamation and resurgence, dialogue and contestation, they are part of a cycle of renewal and recreation” (Sium & Ritskes VIII). Ihimaera cannot, and does not, separate his writing persona from his political affiliations, so his productions may be considered a decolonizing act that seeks to un-do the damage and re-imagine a more equitable future for Māori in Aotearoa. As a young(ish) Māori woman living in bicultural Aotearoa, I can say that Ihimaera’s productions will go beyond the moment of reading for me, that they will go beyond the intellectual and mental responses, to challenge my heart and feet to action.

To conclude, I argue that Ihimaera, through his oeuvre, makes an effort to reconstruct and dignify Māori cultural memory as an epistemological resource for

the cultural recognition of the Indigenous world. Moreover, the emergence of this recognition in art, song, literature and other cultural productions could support the proposition that the recovery of cultural memory is a vital part of the legacy of other groups as well, not just Māori but all those who have been or are faced with a similar plight of repression. This does not do a disservice to the Indigenous by claiming a homogeneity among the oppressed. Rather it attempts to indicate that a space can be created in which different groups of people can live together, and can share and respect each other's differences and similarities. Ultimately, I suggest that such a space can only be created through the recognition, restoration and regeneration of the Indigenous past, even while the Pākehā heritage also forms part of the basis on which our futures are founded.



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