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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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For my tamariki

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